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Chan Sui-jeung (陳瑞璋)

War and Revolution in South China

The Story of a Transnational Biracial Family, 1936–1951

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Introduction

In recent years there has been a remarkable upsurge of interest in the Second World War among Western historians of China. This follows, and indeed is most likely a consequence of, a change of attitude toward the war within post-Mao China. As historian Parks Coble has observed, “for much of the early history of the People’s Republic of China—the Maoist years—mention of the anti-Japanese war of resistance almost vanished from view. . . . Maoist China largely lacked memorials, museums, and historical writing and literature devoted to the war.” Instead, “the party mandated a historical narrative that privileged the revolution and the leadership of the Communist Party.”¹ It was only in the 1980s that, as part of Deng Xiaoping’s new strategy of “reform and opening out,” the party decided to rewrite history; it began to downplay the narrative of revolution in favor of the narrative of war, including the party’s long-suppressed collaboration with Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists against the Japanese. As Rana Mitter gratefully acknowledges, his book of 2013, *Forgotten Ally: China’s World War II, 1937–1945*, “is a beneficiary of [this] remarkable opening-up process in China.”² Similar beneficiaries are the many other English-language books on the war published in the past decade.³

The War of Resistance against Japan, as the war is known in China, began in north China in July 1937, then quickly spread southward to the border of French Indo-China. Yet, with few exceptions (notably the books by Macri and Zhu), the above-mentioned publications all tend to focus on the war in North and Central China and largely ignore what went on in South China. Thus, there are accounts of battles on the North China Plain and at Shanghai, of the breaching of the Yellow River dikes and the Henan famine of 1942–1943, of Wuhan and Chongqing as refugee capitals, of Shanghai as a “solitary

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1. Parks M. Coble, *China’s War Reporters: The Legacy of Resistance against Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 140–143.
 2. Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China’s World War II, 1937–1945* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), pp. 11–12.
 3. These include the following monographs (listed in chronological order of publication): Stephen R. MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938: War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China* (2008); Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937–1945* (2010); R. Keith Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness: Refugees during the Sino-Japanese War* (2011); Franco David Macri, *Clash of Empires in South China: The Allied Nations’ Proxy War with Japan, 1935–1941* (2012); Micah S. Muscolino, *The Ecology of War in China: Henan Province, the Yellow River, and Beyond, 1938–1950* (2015); Pingchao Zhu, *Wartime Culture in Guilin, 1938–1944: A City at War* (2015); and Hans van de Ven, *China at War: Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of the New China, 1937–1952* (2017). Yet other recent English-language publications on the war are compilations of essays, such as Stephen R. MacKinnon, Diana Lary, and Ezra F. Vogel, eds., *China at War: Regions of China, 1937–1945* (2007); James Flath and Norman Smith, eds., *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China* (2011); Mark Peattie, Edward J. Drea, and Hans van de Ven, eds., *The Battle for China* (2011); and Joseph W. Esherick and Matthew T. Combs, eds., *1943: China at the Crossroads* (2015).

island,” of the terror bombing of Chongqing, of the “scorched earth” policy in North China, and of refugees in Zhejiang. But what of South China, here defined as “Lingnan” 嶺南, the region “south of the mountain range” that separates the West River from the Yangtze? What of the battle for Hong Kong, or the famine of 1943–1944 in Guangdong, or Qujiang as the wartime capital of Guangdong Province, or Hong Kong as another “solitary island,” or the terror bombing of Guangzhou, or the “scorched earth” policy and refugees in South China? These events hardly figure, or figure not at all, in the above publications.

Also, most of the above publications tend to be macro-histories, viewing the war from above and describing it in broad strokes. With rare exceptions (notably the books by Lary, Muscolino, and Schoppa), they downplay the effect of the war on individual people on the ground. Yet, as Parks Coble has also observed, “Millions were displaced by the Sino-Japanese War, but it is clear that there is no one, no master narrative of this experience. . . . The diverse range of experiences of mobility during the war reflects the complex reality of wartime China.”⁴ To capture that “complex reality of wartime China,” a micro-history might work better than the macro-histories that are offered to us.

There is, thus, much to gain from looking at the Sino-Japanese War from the perspective of South China and from the perspective of an individual family. This book tries to remedy the shortcomings in current scholarship by answering two questions: How did the war affect South China? And, more specifically, how did it affect one particular family in South China? In this account I go along with Hans van de Ven’s idea that for the Chinese the war did not end in 1945 but continued through the postwar civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists up to Communist China’s intervention in the Korean War.

The family whose experiences I have chosen to examine is my own. I was born in 1938 in Guangzhou (Canton), and, except for one year in Chongqing and one year in the United States, I lived in South China for the first thirteen years of my life. My mother, a Chinese from a well-to-do family with a middle-school education, was a trained stenographer-typist; my father, an American college professor. What they and I, together with our nanny Ah Hoh, went through from 1936 to 1951 forms part of “the complex reality of wartime China” to which Coble referred. This is history from the bottom up. However, though it’s a micro-history (down to the level of local street addresses), it is written within the framework of the macro-history. My family’s wartime experiences were not necessarily typical, but neither were they atypical.

The happenstance of my birth and upbringing led me to study modern Chinese history, with a particular interest in the South. Thus, my first scholarly publication was a case study of the Revolution of 1911 in Guangdong Province. Though I have always been curious about my Chinese past, I—like many children—was never curious *enough* to interrogate my parents, and my parents themselves hardly ever talked about their past either. My younger sister and I were never told, for example, that my mother had been divorced before she married my father. As a recent family historian wrote, “Maybe all fathers [and mothers too] are unknowable. Maybe all families are mysterious. If we’re lucky, we get interested in ours before it’s too late. Memories silt over, lives are cut short. By the time we’ve come up with the questions, there’s no one left to answer.”⁵

4. Coble, *China’s War Reporters*, p. 103.

5. Janny Scott, *The Beneficiary: Fortune, Misfortune, and the Story of My Father* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2019), p. 26.

About fifteen years ago, long after the death of both my parents and following my retirement from the University of Texas at Austin, I set out more systematically to learn what they (and thus, coincidentally, I) had been doing in China. At the time, I knew the basic story but not the details. My father was from Philadelphia and went to China in 1936 to teach at Lingnan University in Guangzhou. There he met my mother, a native Cantonese. They married and, in 1938, had me. (Though employed at one of China's ten-plus "Christian" colleges, my father was never a missionary, and thus I was never, technically, a "mish kid.") Soon after I was born, the Japanese invaded and occupied Guangzhou, at which point we, along with the university, relocated to Hong Kong. Three years later, when the Japanese overran the British colony, my father, as an enemy alien, was placed in an internment camp in Hong Kong, while my mother and I sought refuge in what was called "Free China" in northern Guangdong Province. After my father was repatriated to the US, he managed at some point to rejoin his family in northern Guangdong. Sometime later, we had to flee once again—this time to Chongqing (Chungking), the wartime capital of Nationalist China, where my father found employment with the Office of War Information, an American propaganda agency. Following Japan's surrender in 1945, we were able to return to Guangzhou and to Lingnan University. In 1948–1949 my father took a year's furlough (or sabbatical), which we spent in Philadelphia. By then the anti-Japanese War of Resistance had given way to the Revolutionary Civil War between the Nationalists and the Communists, and the Communists were winning. Nevertheless, at a time when other foreigners were fleeing China, we went back. But in February 1951, after more than a year under the Communists, we were forced to leave China for good. Altogether we were refugees not once, not twice, but four times—in 1938, in 1942, in 1944, and, finally, in 1951.

Written history depends upon sources. What sources were there for a fuller account of my family's experiences in China? Unfortunately, not many. Hardly anything that my parents might have written about their wartime experiences—for example, letters to family members—survived. There are no reminiscences (written or otherwise), no family papers. What might be considered the Rhoads family archive consists of my father's US passport, my mother's Chinese passport, my father's insurance policy, my mother's divorce paper, my parents' marriage certificate, my birth certificate and that of my sister, my baptismal certificate, my mother's application for a US visa, some of my Chinese school report cards, some family photographs, and the deed to a cemetery plot in Philadelphia (where my parents are buried).

Though I shared many of my parents' experiences in wartime and revolutionary China, I myself am not much of a source either. I was thirteen years old when we left China in 1951, and it might be thought that I would have been old enough to remember a fair amount of what had gone on, particularly toward the end of our stay in China. But perhaps because we had had to move around a lot during those thirteen years, what I do remember is very confused in my mind. On the one hand, I am not at all sure that what I think may have happened actually did happen. For example, I think I hid under the bed when my father showed up in northern Guangdong in 1943 after having been gone for a year and a half; but did that really happen? There is no way of knowing. On the other hand, there are things I now know happened to me that I have no recollection of at all. Such as the first time I went to school, usually a memorable event in one's life. This was in the fall of 1944, soon after we arrived in Chongqing, when as a six-year-old I enrolled in the Chee Min Boys' School. The only reason I know this is that among the documents

in the small collection of family papers is my report card from the school. Yet armed with this information, I still have no memory of this event. In short, this book is, most definitely, not a memoir. It is, rather, a document-based history, or so I intend.

If I myself don't remember much and if there are few family papers, how then is it possible to write a history of my family in wartime China? More generally, how much can one learn about the past when sources are scarce? The answer, in this case, is, quite a lot. As with any historical research, I have gone in search of other documents. My initial and principal source of information was the archive of the Board of Trustees of Lingnan University, a New York-based organization that hired my father to teach at Lingnan and that for all but one year of his stay in China was, technically, his employer. The original hardcopies of these papers are at the Harvard-Yenching Library at Harvard (with a set of microfilm copies at the Divinity School Library at Yale). Another important archival source was the Records of the Office of War Information at the US National Archives at College Park, Maryland: the OWI was the American agency for which my father worked for the two years before and after the end of the war. Additionally, I have sought out and found, at various university libraries, the papers of some of my father's colleagues at Lingnan (notably William W. Cadbury, Henry Brownell, and Gilbert Baker) and with the OWI (Christopher Rand, William L. Holland, and Everett Hawkins). Yet other archives that yielded pieces of useful information include the Maritime Customs Service Archives at the Second Historical Archives of China at Nanjing, the Needham Research Institute in Cambridge, England, the American Friends Service Committee Archives in Philadelphia, the Presbyterian Historical Society also in Philadelphia, and the Yale Divinity School Library. For information about my mother's family and upbringing, I have learned much from one of my maternal uncles, several of my cousins, and a nephew and also from the Records of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, in Seattle and in New York City.

On the basis of all this archival research, I now have a much better understanding of our family's experiences in wartime China than when I first began the project. Does this mean that I now know all that I would like to know? Not quite. I don't know why my father chose to go to China in the first place. I don't know, aside from his name, who my mother's first husband was. I don't know how exactly my mother, together with me (then four years old) and Ah Hoh, made our way from Japanese-occupied Hong Kong into Free China in early 1942. I sketch out the three escape routes taken by other refugees, but I don't know which one we ourselves took. Also, while I now know how my mother was employed once we reached Free China (she worked for the Maritime Customs Service in Qujiang), I have no idea where exactly we lived for the year and a half that my mother and father were separated. Regrettably, I know very little about our amah (or nanny), Ah Hoh, though she was very much a part of our family once she came to live with us in Hong Kong in 1939 (or perhaps 1941). Because of the near absence of family papers, I know very little about what my parents felt about all that they were experiencing. I have been able, I believe, to reconstruct their lives but not their thoughts.

Finally, what did I learn from this research? Two things. One, I learned that the war in South China was no less turbulent than it was in North and Central China. And two, I came to appreciate the important role that my mother, as one of China's New Women, played in the history of our family during the war. The following account is as much her story as it is my father's.

My Mother

My mother, Ngan Chi Kit 顏志潔, was born near the end of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), three years before it was overthrown in the Republican Revolution. The birthdate she always gave in later years was 26 November 1909. It is possible, however, that she was actually born a month and a half later. Since China did not utilize the Gregorian (or solar) calendar until after the revolution, it is likely that at her birth her parents were still using the traditional lunar calendar. In which case, my mother's birthdate might well have been the twenty-sixth day of the eleventh month in the *siyou* 己酉 year, which in the Gregorian calendar was 7 January 1910. Either way, she was born in the first year of the reign of Puyi, China's last emperor.

My mother was a native of Ngan Bin Village 顏邊村 in Nanhai County, Guangdong Province, in southern China. Ngan Bin is now, administratively, part of the city of Guangzhou (or Canton); when my cousin, Ngan Cheong Shun 顏昌順, and I visited in January 2016, it belonged to Hexi Village 河西村, Dali Township 大瀝鎮, Nanhai District 南海區 of Guangzhou Municipality. Back in the nineteenth century, however, it was still a separate rice-growing village, situated in Im Po Township 鹽步堡, near the mid-point of what an old county gazetteer called the “Guangzhou-Fat Shan highway” (*Sheng-Fo tongqu* 省佛通衢), running from the West Gate of the provincial capital to Fat Shan 佛山, a commercial and industrial city ten miles to the southwest.¹ Ngan Bin, as its name suggests, was a predominantly single-clan village, a common feature of rural society in South China. Most inhabitants of the village shared my mother's surname, and in the community today there are no fewer than three standing ancestral halls dedicated to members of the Ngan lineage. One is the main ancestral hall—Yanshi dazongci 顏氏大宗祠—and two others are smaller branch halls, Zhenyu Yan gongci 鎮宇顏公祠 and Xiangting Yan gongci 向亭顏公祠. There are remnants of a fourth ancestral hall, Chujing Yan gongci 處靜顏公祠, as well.

The Ngan 顏—or Yan in Mandarin—is an ancient and illustrious lineage. At the main shrine in Ngan Bin Village is a picture gallery of notable ancestors, the oldest of whom (sixth century BC) is Yan Zhengzai 顏征在, the birth mother of the great sage, Confucius. However, the lineage also traces its ancestry to Yan Hui 顏回 (d. 481 BC), the favorite disciple of Confucius, who was much admired for his love of learning and his virtuous behavior. Given their shared surname, it is likely that Yan Hui was somehow related to Confucius's mother. The principal tenet of the “family instruction” (*jiaxun* 家訓) of the Ngan lineage, as spelled out by my mother's father, was to emulate Yan Hui. In particular,

1. *Nanhai xian zhi* (Nanhai County gazetteer: 1835 ed.), *juan* 3, pp. 3b–4a, 36b–37a.

immediate family fit into the larger Ngan lineage; efforts to locate a lineage genealogy or clan book during my visit to the village were unsuccessful.

My mother's father was Ngan Sai Wing 顏世榮 (1873–1958), who was better known in later life by his “literary name” (zi 字), which was Ngan Heung Cho 顏向初. He was born in Ngan Bin in 1873 or possibly a year earlier.⁴ Once upon a time, perhaps in the 1830s, when the main ancestral hall was rebuilt, the village had been a prosperous place, a thriving commercial center with pawnshop operations extending to neighboring Guangxi Province. However, by the time Ngan Sai Wing was born, in the late nineteenth century, it had become, according to a contemporary French missionary, quite “poor and in debt.”⁵

About all that is known about Sai Wing's early life is that he was the offspring of Ngan Wing Cheung 顏永暢, who evidently had some wealth and most likely multiple wives. According to Ngan Ki Ping 顏其平, my maternal uncle, Sai Wing was “the only son of a young widow who got deprived of [her share of her husband's] assets.” Sai Wing's mother, nevertheless, managed to take him to nearby Hong Kong and to enroll him in St. Joseph's College, “one of seven boys from China wearing their pigtails.” On their departure from Ngan Bin Village, Sai Wing supposedly promised his mother that he would one day recover the properties in the village that had been stolen from her.⁶ He was to make good on this promise.

Ngan Sai Wing's move to Hong Kong may also have been due to the Sino-French War of 1884–1885. China had gone to war to oppose French encroachments in Vietnam, which at the time was a vassal state of the Qing dynasty. The result was a defeat for China, which was forced to give up all claims to Vietnam. The war, however, had stirred up anti-foreign sentiment in Guangdong Province, which then bordered on Vietnam and where some of the fighting took place. The popular hostility was directed at the Christian missionaries—principally French Catholic missionaries—and their native converts. The missionaries were particularly disliked because they often intruded into local disputes on behalf of their converts and because they forbade their Chinese followers from participating in key communal activities that they regarded as idolatrous. There was a significant Catholic presence in Ngan Bin: among its population of about 3,000 were 105 Christians, including Ngan Sai Wing and his mother. In the fall of 1884, at the height of the anti-foreign movement, their village came under assault for two days by so-called bandits. According to the local French missionary, M. Delsahut, the Christian villagers “were all robbed and nearly all of them had to exile themselves to [Portuguese] Macao or [British] Hong Kong.”⁷ It was probably at this time and under these circumstances that Ngan Sai Wing—who in 1884 would have been twelve years old—was taken to Hong Kong.

St. Joseph's College, founded in 1875 and staffed by De La Salle Christian Brothers, was the oldest Catholic boys' secondary school in the British colony. At the time, it was

4. Ngan Heung Cho's gravestone, in St. Michael's Catholic Cemetery, Happy Valley, Hong Kong, gives his birthdate as 18 April 1873; his US immigration papers, however, give it as 24 May 1872. See American Consulate General, Canton, “Precis in re Ngan Heung Cho,” 2 December 1926, Case File 6500/4-3 (Ngan Heung Cho), RG 85, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, USNA-S. As with my mother's birthdate, there may be a (partial) explanation for this discrepancy. 24 May 1872 turns out to be, in the lunar calendar, the eighteenth day of the fourth month (whence, perhaps, “18 April”) in the *renshen* 壬申 year; the *renshen* year, however, was 1872, not 1873.

5. Adrien Launay, ed., *Histoire des missions de Chine: Mission du Kouang-tong, Monographies des districts par les missionnaires* (Paris: Anciennes Maisons Douniol et Recani, 1917), p. 16.

6. Ngan Ki Ping, personal communications, 2 September and 8 November 2014, and “Memo #4,” 10 June 2015.

7. Launay, *Histoire des missions de Chine*, pp. 16–17; Jean-Paul Wiest, “Catholic Activities in Kwangtung Province and Chinese Responses, 1848–1885” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1977).

located on Robinson Road in the Mid-Levels of Hong Kong Island. It offered an English-language curriculum that prepared its students to work as translators in the colonial government and foreign trade firms. It had about three hundred students, two-thirds of them Europeans (mostly Portuguese) and one-third Chinese. Ngan Sai Wing, if he had stayed for the full course of study, would have graduated around 1891.⁸ It was undoubtedly because of this schooling that he acquired an excellent command of English, especially written English.

He, predictably, became a treaty port merchant, a common occupation along the South China coast in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to my uncle, Ngan Sai Wing (now more commonly known as Ngan Heung Cho) started out as a cargo inspector for the Kowloon Wharf group in Hong Kong; later he worked for an unidentified foreign firm in Taiwan, “before beginning [around the turn of the century] the saga of his life as an entrepreneur in Canton.”⁹ When, in November 1926, he applied to go to the United States, he stated that he had worked as a “clerk in various foreign firms” in Guangzhou from 1897 to June 1924, at which point he became a “merchant” in the Wing Tai Loong Silk Company 永泰隆絲莊. According to his US immigration file, he was, in 1926, the “general manager” of the Wing Tai Loong Company; at the same time, he “represented,” in some unspecified capacity, “the well known firm of Li & Fung,” 利豐公司, an import–export company founded in Guangzhou in 1906 by Fung Pak Liu 馮柏燎, who like Ngan Heung Cho was Hong Kong-educated and Catholic.¹⁰

By the 1920s, raw silk had replaced tea as China’s leading item of export, and the Canton delta was, along with the Shanghai region, its major producing area. Wing Tai Loong was a silk “commission house” (*sizhuang* 絲莊), which meant that it acted as an intermediary between the domestic filatures, which reeled the silk thread from the cocoons, and the foreign (mostly US and French) export firms. There were twenty or thirty such commission houses in Guangzhou at the time, of which Wing Tai Loong was one of the largest. The company had been founded around 1919 by Shum Kwok Wah 岑國華, a native of Shunde County who, like Ngan Heung Cho, had risen from poverty to commercial success.¹¹ My grandfather, according to his visa application, had a big stake in the company; his investment of \$90,000 (gold) accounted for about two-thirds of the firm’s total value. The Wing Tai Loong office was on Sun Hing Street 新興街, adjacent to

8. On St. Joseph’s College, see Thomas F. Ryan, *The Story of a Hundred Years: The Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions (P.I.M.E.) in Hong Kong, 1858–1958* (Hong Kong: Catholic Truth Society, 1959), pp. 82, 87, 88. I have not been able to confirm Ngan Sai Wing’s attendance at St. Joseph’s. School records do not go back that far, and his name does not appear among the lists of college prize winners for 1880, 1884, 1886, 1888, and 1890 as published in the *China Mail* and the *Hong Kong Daily Press*. These newspapers are available online at Old HK Newspapers, Digital Collection, the Multimedia Information System of the Hong Kong Public Libraries, <http://mmis.hkpl.gov.hk> (last accessed 14 November 2017).

9. Ngan Ki Ping, personal communications, 8 and 9 November 2014.

10. Ngan Heung Cho’s application for a US visa, Canton, 26 November 1926, courtesy of Ngan Ki Ping; American Consulate General, Canton, “Precis in re Ngan Heung Cho,” 2 December 1926, Case File 6500/4-3 (Ngan Heung Cho), Chinese Exclusion Case Files, RG 85, Records of the INS, USNA–S. On the Li & Fung Company, see Feng Bangyan, *Bainian Lifeng* [A hundred years of Li & Fung], enl. ed. (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 2011).

11. C. W. Howard and K. P. Buswell, *A Survey of the Silk Industry of South China* (Guangzhou: Ling Nan Agricultural College, Canton Christian College, 1925), pp. 147–149; “Siye juzi Cen Guohua zhi nü Cen Yufang huiyi fuqin shengping” [Cen Yufang, daughter of the silk industry giant, Shum Kwok Wah, remembers her father’s life], *Zhujiang shangbao*, 9 June 2014; “Fuhao pian—Cen Guohua: Guangdongren cong chipin dao haofu de zaoqi renzheng” [Annals of the rich and powerful—Shum Kwok Wah: The authentication of the early life of a Cantonese who rose from abject poverty to power and fame], *Nanfang dushi bao*, 29 August 2008.

The War Comes to South China (1936–1941)

My father arrived in China, in September 1936, at a seemingly most hopeful time. This was during the “Nanjing decade” (1928–1937), when Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party had nominally unified the country, whose new capital was located at Nanjing. Chiang had driven his Communist rivals out of their rural bases in south-central China and forced them to retreat to the barren northwest, where they barely survived under their new leader, Mao Zedong. Chiang had also overcome various factional opponents in South China, including Chen Jitang 陳濟棠, who had ruled Guangdong as an autonomous region from 1929 to 1936. Referring to Chen’s fall from power, James Henry, Lingnan’s provost (and my mother’s boss), wrote in September 1936, “This is a crowning achievement on the part of Chiang Kai-shek and those associated with him . . . China can now face her internal problems with new assurance and her external problems with a courage and determination that have not heretofore been possible.”¹

The Nanjing decade was also an era of railroad and highway building. Chen Jitang’s overthrow coincided with the long-delayed completion of the Guangzhou–Hankou railroad. As Henry wrote, “The opening, within the last few days, of the through train to Hankow [now a part of Wuhan] is symbolic of the new unity which has been brought about.”² One could now go by train from Guangzhou to Beijing and, indeed, all the way to Europe via the Trans-Siberian Railway. In addition to 3,300 kilometers of railroad lines, the Nationalists, in the regions they controlled, also built 6,000 kilometers of public highways. Chen Jitang in Guangdong had been even more productive. Between 1929 and 1935 he added 14,000 kilometers of highways, making Guangdong, according to historian Alfred Lin, “first among all provinces in length of highways completed.” As the medical missionary Dr. Frank Oldt (1879–1976) later observed, “It was fortunate that these roads were built before the War. It made possible the great refugee treks. The transportation facilities were a big factor in resistance against the Japanese, not only from a military standpoint but also for civilian life.” Both railroads and highways were to play important roles in our family’s wartime experiences.³

1. James M. Henry to Members of the Lingnan National Advisory Council, 11 September 1936, Box 68, TLUA–HYL.

2. James M. Henry to Members of the Lingnan National Advisory Council, 11 September 1936, Box 68, TLUA–HYL.

3. Van de Ven, *China at War*, p. 38; Alfred H. Y. Lin, “Building and Funding a Warlord Regime: The Experience of Chen Jitang in Guangdong, 1929–1936,” *Modern China* 28 (2002): 179; “Frank Oldt, Medical Missionary: His Story,” p. 965, in Dr. Frank Oldt Papers, HC-48, The Center for the Evangelical United Brethren Heritage, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH.

As to what Provost Henry called China's "external problems," the main one was Japanese expansionism. Since taking control of Manchuria in the northeast in 1931, Japan had been encroaching steadily on adjacent areas of North China. Chiang Kai-shek's reluctance to confront the Japanese led eventually to his being "kidnapped" in Xi'an in December 1936 by his own generals, who forced him to stop battling the Communists and instead form a "united front" with them against the Japanese. Paradoxically, upon his release from captivity, Chiang was hailed as the one person around whom all Chinese, including the Communists and other erstwhile domestic enemies, could rally. China, for the first time in a quarter-century, was united and at peace.

With the departure of Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition in 1927, Guangzhou had "receded from the center of national politics and resumed its status as a provincial capital." Nevertheless, the city was prospering, as a consequence of Chen Jitang's reformist efforts. "With Guangzhou as his base, Chen [had] embarked upon an ambitious modernization program for the province, emphasizing industrialization, educational reform, infrastructural development (including plans for a province-wide road network), cooperatives, and the urban renewal of Guangzhou and other urban centers." With a population of over a million, Guangzhou had become, next to Shanghai and Hong Kong, probably the most modern city in China. Emblematic of the "New Canton" was the completion in 1933 of the Pearl River Bridge (now known as the Haizhu Bridge 海珠橋), a drawbridge linking the city's downtown with Ho Nam Island to the south.⁴ Ho Nam now is largely urbanized, but in the 1930s, except for the bund along its north shore, it was "a large piece of farmland with a collection of small villages."⁵ It was here that Lingnan University was located.



Figure 3.1: The Pearl River Bridge in the mid-1930s. From Folder 3, Box 306, RG 8, Special Collections, YDSL.

4. Shuk-wah Poon, *Negotiating Religion in Modern China: State and Common People in Guangzhou, 1900–1937* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011), p. 8; Graham E. Johnson and Glen D. Peterson, *Historical Dictionary of Guangzhou (Canton) and Guangdong* (Lanham, MD, and London: Scarecrow Press, 1999), p. 128; Lee, *Modern Canton*, pp. 20–21, 24.
5. Lee, *Modern Canton*, pp. 12, 26.

Lingnan was one of thirteen colleges founded by Western (mostly American) Protestant missionaries in China, and it was one of the three best (along with Yenching in Beijing and St. John's in Shanghai). Alone among the Christian colleges, it was non-denominational. All the others were affiliated with one or more mission boards (Episcopalians in the case of St. John's, Methodists and three other denominations in the case of Yenching). In contrast, Lingnan, although founded by Presbyterians, was financially and administratively independent of the Presbyterian Church, as was its Board of Trustees in New York City.⁶

Moreover, according to historian Peter Tze Ming Ng, "Lingnan University was probably the first Christian University that was turned over directly to Chinese control." This took the form of a local and predominantly Chinese Board of Directors, headed by Sun Yat-sen's son, Sun Foh 孫科, that was separate from the American Board of Trustees.⁷ Also, when it registered with the National government in 1926, James Henry, son of the university's co-founder, B. C. Henry (1850–1901), had stepped down as its president and been replaced by a Chinese, Chung Wing Kwong 鍾榮光 (1866–1942), who, though a Christian, was a Confucian scholar as well. (In the old civil service examination system, Chung was a *juren* 舉人 [provincial degree holder] of 1894.) And when President Chung resigned in 1937, he was succeeded by another Chinese, Lee Ying Lam 李應林 (or Y. L. Lee, 1892–1954), an Oberlin graduate (BA, 1920) and a former secretary of the YMCA in Guangzhou. (Lee's lack of an advanced degree troubled some on his academic staff; this shortcoming was somewhat mitigated in 1939, when he was awarded an honorary LLD by his alma mater.)⁸ In the meantime, James Henry (College of Wooster BA, 1901; Union Theological Seminary DD, 1924) had stayed on in an ostensibly subordinate position, as provost (or adviser [*guwen* 顧問], as he was known to the Chinese). In contrast, Yenching, though it registered with the Chinese government in 1928, continued to be run by a foreigner, John Leighton Stuart, before he was ousted by the Japanese. St. John's, too, was headed by a foreigner, Francis Lister Hawks Pott, until 1939, and it did not register until after the war.

Another consequence of registering with the National government was that Lingnan became nominally a secular school. It could no longer propagate religion, nor could it include religious instruction among its required courses.⁹ Nevertheless, Lingnan remained in spirit a Christian school. Thus, at his installation ceremony in 1927, President Chung Wing Kwong had defined the educational objective of Lingnan as follows: "to equip Chinese leaders with the application of a scientific mind and the Christian spirit of service and sacrifice, so that those who are educated will continue to serve the community and the nation in the spirit of selflessness and the Christian love." A couple of years later,

6. Ng Tze Ming, "Cong Guangzhou sili Lingnan daxue kan jidujiao daxue ying yi hezhong xingshi wei guojia jiaoyu shiye fuwu" [How should Christian colleges serve the nation's educational enterprise, as viewed from Guangzhou's Lingnan University], in *Zhongxi wenhua yu jiaohui daxue* [Christian universities and Chinese-Western cultures], ed. Zhang Kaiyuan and Arthur Waldron ([Wuhan]: Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), pp. 242–245.

7. Peter Tze Ming Ng, "Nationalism, Democracy and Christian Higher Education in China: A Case Study of Lingnan University, Canton (A Preliminary Report)," a paper prepared for the Workshop on the History of Christian Higher Education in China, Yale University, New Haven, 17 February 1990.

8. For a brief biography of Y. L. Lee, see Xie Qionsun, "Li Yinglin xiaozhang yu Lingda" [President Y. L. Lee and Lingnan University], *Zhujiang yiyuan* (March 1985): 33–43, in Folder 92, Box 14, RG 175, Sarah Refo Mason Papers, Special Collections, YDSL.

9. Corbett, *Lingnan University*, p. 105.

The Fall of Hong Kong (1941–1943)

Hong Kong's "isolation" from the war that had been going on in China for four and a half years ended abruptly at the beginning of December 1941, when the Japanese launched an audacious, simultaneous attack on various American, British, and Dutch territories in the Pacific. Thus, on 8 December 1941 (7 December in the US)—hours after the bombing of the American naval facilities at Pearl Harbor—the Japanese Twenty-Third Army invaded Hong Kong from its land border with China. After Japanese planes had immobilized the colony's token air force on the very first day, Japanese troops advanced quickly across the rural New Territories and within four days had captured urban Kowloon. The British were forced to retreat to Hong Kong Island, which then came under heavy aerial bombardment and artillery shelling. On the night of the 18th, after the British had twice brusquely rejected a demand to surrender, the battle-hardened Japanese troops crossed the harbor, landing at North Point, and engaged the defenders in vicious battles. A week later, on the afternoon of Christmas Day, the British capitulated.¹ On the 28th the Japanese army celebrated their victory with a parade through the streets of downtown Hong Kong.

Chaos and terror reigned on Hong Kong Island, where my parents and I were then living, throughout this three-week period and afterward. During the first ten days, before the Japanese landed on the island, there had been air raids and bombardments, directed primarily at military targets, which however were scattered everywhere. A British police officer later recounted that "being bombed, shelled or mortared is an extremely frightening experience. You have absolutely no control over the situation. Nothing seems to offer adequate protection; the awful explosions, the unbelievable noise, the violent shock waves and the sickening apprehension as to where the next one will land, can combine to produce terror and inertia in all but the most courageous individuals."²

Over the next ten days, after the landing on the north shore of the island, there was street-to-street fighting, with hapless civilians caught in the middle. Zaza Suffiad was a Hong Kong University student living with her parents and siblings in an apartment on Tin Hau Temple Road in Causeway Bay, the same neighborhood as ours. She describes the scene on 19 December, the day after the landing, as she and her family made their way to her grandmother's house on Leighton Hill Road, next to the racecourse in Happy Valley:

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1. Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance: The Defence of Hong Kong, 1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); see also Kwong Chi Man and Tsoi Yiu Lun, *Eastern Fortress: A Military History of Hong Kong, 1840–1970* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), ch. 8.
 2. Wright-Nooth, *Prisoner of the Turnip Heads*, pp. 54–55.



Figure 4.1: Japanese victory parade, Wan Chai, Hong Kong Island, 28 December 1941. Image courtesy of Ko Tim Keung.

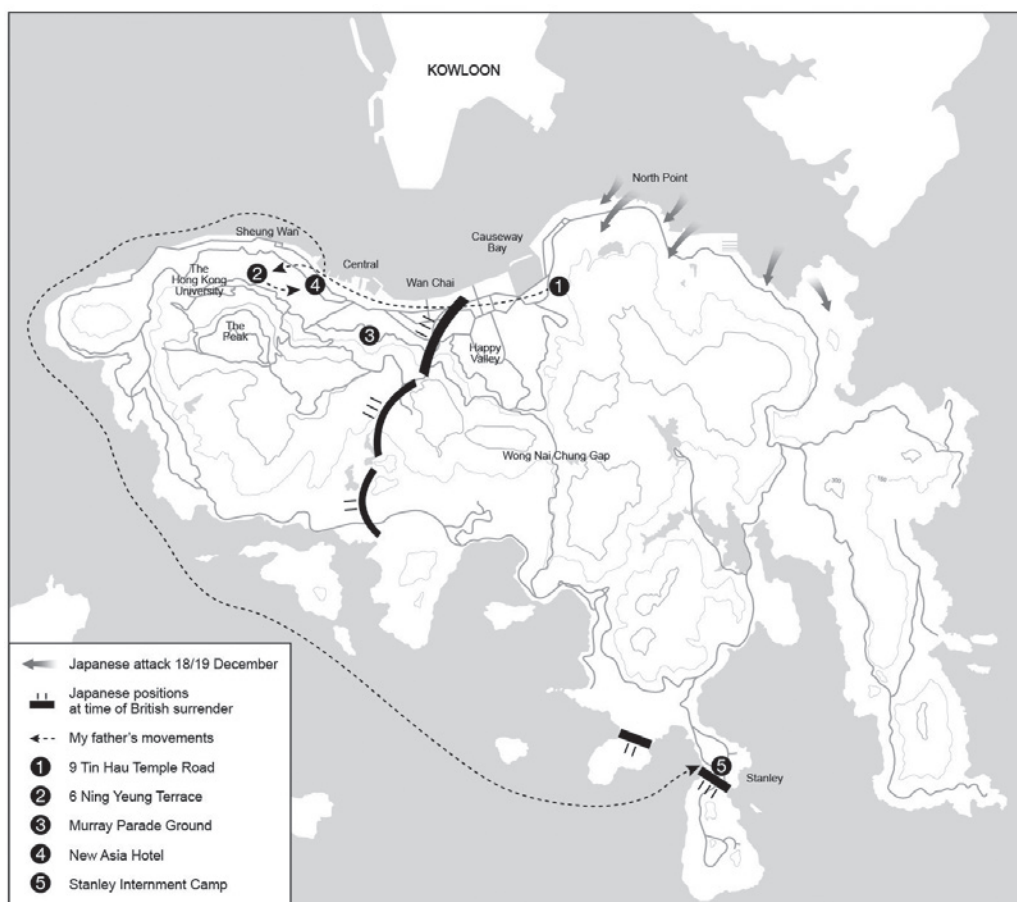
In our hurry to get there, we stepped over many dead bodies. People were shot in the street, in cars and trucks, and even in ambulances. It was a terrifying sight. Reaching our grandmother's house, we met cousins and friends who had also gathered there thinking it was safer ground. Unfortunately, that was not to be. That very night, there suddenly came loud banging on the door. Three Japanese soldiers entered, armed with guns and bayonets. In the darkness—the electricity was out—they shone their flashlights at our faces and hands. When they saw a wrist watch, they snatched it. They were also looking for women. When a soldier approached my oldest sister, who was sitting on the floor holding her two-year-old baby, she quickly pinched the baby and he started to cry. That was enough of a distraction that the soldier turned his attention elsewhere. They pulled three of the women upstairs and raped them.³

After the British had surrendered on the 25th, until the Japanese restored some semblance of order and held their victory parade on the 28th, some of the Japanese troops engaged in unruly behavior that, to some observers and historians, was reminiscent of the Rape of Nanjing.⁴ As they invaded people's homes and plundered, raped, and killed at will, some local Chinese, taking advantage of the disorder, looted abandoned shops and private homes. Food prices shot up. Bodies of dead British soldiers lay unattended everywhere. It was dangerous to be out and about.⁵

3. Zaza Hsieh, "My War Years in Hong Kong, China and India," in *Dispersal and Renewal: Hong Kong University during the War Years*, ed. Clifford Matthews and Oswald Cheung (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1998), p. 40.

4. See Snow, *Fall of Hong Kong*, pp. 81–82, and Li, *Hong Kong Surgeon*, pp. 108–111.

5. Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, ch. 1–2; Norman Briggs, *Taken in Hong Kong, December 8, 1941: Memoirs of Norman Briggs, World War II Prisoner of War*, comp. Carol Briggs Waite (Baltimore: PublishAmerica, 2006), Section II.



Map 4.1: Hong Kong Island, December 1941–January 1942. Map by Ada Au-Yeung.

Causeway Bay, where we and the Suffiads were living, was near the Japanese beach-head at North Point and in the path of their advance up toward the Wong Nai Chung Gap; along with Happy Valley, it was also where “poorly disciplined Japanese rear-area troops” may have been doing the plundering and raping.⁶ At some point amid all this turmoil, my parents, with their soon-to-be four-year-old son in tow, fled their flat on Tin Hau Temple Road and joined three other members of Lingnan’s Western Languages Department (Wenzell Brown, Carlton L. Castle [1916–1989], and Ernest J. Kelley [1897–1979]) in seeking refuge with their senior colleague, chemistry professor Henry Frank. (The fifth member of the department, John C. Guthrie [1916–2007], had enlisted in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps and joined the armed resistance.) Frank, who had returned from the US without his family, had rented a two-room apartment at 6 Ning Yeung Terrace, near Hong Kong University, which was on the opposite side of the island from the fighting.⁷ According to journalist Emily Hahn, “On that side of the island we didn’t have any shells except a stray one that came hurtling now and then across the Peak.

6. Chi Man Kwong, personal communication, 20 July 2020.

7. “Lingnan University Staff List, 1940–41 (Correct up to January 1, 1941),” Box 82, and Y. L. Lee to ODW, Kukong, 27 January 1942, Box 87, TLUA-HYL; Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, pp. 37–41.

Planes were bombing Mount Davis nearby, but they left us pretty well alone.”⁸ Meanwhile, according to Wenzell Brown’s fictionalized account, Japanese troops had broken into our home at Causeway Bay, threatened the younger of our two servants with rape, and had taken away an odd assortment of items, including “a razor, a picture of a dog, [my mother’s] bracelets and some jade.”⁹

In the week after the British surrender, my parents and I remained at Frank’s apartment. In Brown’s book, I make a cameo appearance as “Joe Pearson,” who “was never quiet.” Once, “when the Chinese landlord told us that Japanese officers were in the apartment below . . . [w]e were ordered not to make a sound,” so as not to attract the attention of the Japanese. “Mrs. Pearson tried to hold Joe who was not old enough to understand. She talked to him softly in Cantonese. Joe squirmed and banged and tried to free himself.” Fortunately, after half an hour, the Japanese left the apartment downstairs. The crisis passed: I had not betrayed our presence. Brown and Castle (“Clayron”) soon left Frank’s place; we stayed.¹⁰

Japan’s justification for its military actions had been to liberate the oppressed peoples of East and Southeast Asia from the yoke of Western imperialism; its slogan was “Asia for the Asians.” During the three-week war in Hong Kong, its planes had dropped leaflets calling on the local Chinese—and Indians too—to reject their British overlords and rally to the Japanese side. These appeals met with indifferent success. Most Chinese residents stood on the sidelines, neither coming to the aid of the British nor welcoming their “rescuers.” In those parts of mainland China it already occupied, including Guangzhou, Japan had set up indigenous, collaborationist regimes, such as that of Wang Jingwei. Oddly enough, however, the Japanese, having thus dramatically ended ninety-nine years of British colonial rule, never returned Hong Kong to the Chinese. Instead, they simply replaced British colonial rule with Japanese military rule.¹¹

As the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands were now openly at war with Japan, their nationals in Hong Kong were soon rounded up and incarcerated. Enemy combatants (including John Guthrie, the English teacher at Lingnan) were sent to prisoner-of-war camps at Sham Shui Po and elsewhere; civilians, like my father, were dealt with separately. On 4 January 1942, ten days after the surrender, the Japanese gendarmerie (Kempeitai) published an order directing all “enemy civilians” (principally British, American, and Dutch) to assemble the following morning at the Murray Parade Ground in the central business district of Hong Kong Island (now the site of the Cheung Kong Centre). They were not told the purpose of the assembly, and afterward they were not allowed to return home to fetch their belongings. Instead, those who showed up, numbering about one thousand, were led off to several hotels along the waterfront near the present-day Macau ferry terminal in Sheung Wan district.¹² Among them was Wenzell Brown: “We marched, down the main streets of the city [principally, Des Voeux Road Central]. Chinese coolies gazed at us, sombre-eyed. The Japanese guards made a show of

8. Emily Hahn, *China to Me: A Partial Autobiography* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doral & Company, 1944), p. 273.

9. Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, pp. 39–40. Of Brown’s book, published soon after the events, Tony Banham, *Not the Slightest Chance*, p. 392, says the following: “this book does more to capture the atmosphere of wartime Hong Kong than any other. Well worth reading to understand what the experience must have been like.” Brown became, in the 1950s and 1960s, a prolific pulp fiction writer.

10. Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, pp. 40–41.

11. John M. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 121.

12. Geoffrey Charles Emerson, *Hong Kong Internment, 1942 to 1945: Life in the Japanese Civilian Camps at Stanley* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), p. 36.

their authority and prodded us with their sticks.” Brown eventually ended up opposite a Wing On department store at what he in his book calls the South Asia Hotel but was most likely the New Asia Hotel, at 206–210 Des Voeux Road Central.¹³

Not all enemy aliens showed up at the Murray Parade Ground on 5 January, however. My father, for one, did not. Instead, the head of Hong Kong University had been “able to arrange with the Japanese military authorities for the campus to be reserved as a temporary internment camp for University staff, other British nationals and some of the expatriate staff of Lingnan University.” Thus, our family had stayed put with Henry Frank. But it turned out to be just “a short reprieve.”¹⁴ Several days later, according to Brown, my father—together with Henry Frank (“Dobson”) and Ernest Kelley (“Murphy”)—showed up at the waterfront hotel, “staggering under the weight of heavy suitcases” and evidently accompanied by my mother and Ah Hoh.¹⁵ Other families, including the Brownells and the Lairds among the Lingnan contingent, managed to remain at liberty even longer—until the beginning of February—and so avoided being sent to the waterfront hotels altogether.¹⁶ My mother and I, however, were not subject to internment, as we were not considered “enemy aliens.” If Austin Frank is correct, it was at this time, after his father had been interned, that Ah Hoh came to work for us.

Though Brown described the four-story New Asia Hotel as “a waterfront brothel before the war” and “a tenth-rate dirty little Chinese hotel,” it seems to have been, in fact, a fairly respectable establishment, part of a small hotel chain with branches in Guangzhou and Shanghai.¹⁷ Nevertheless, conditions for the 350 men, women, and children who found themselves confined there in January 1942 were pretty awful. Six people were jammed into a room with only one bed and no lights; according to Brown, “it was almost impossible for all six to get into the room at the same time.” Bathing and toilet facilities were scarce and primitive: “A solitary bathtub . . . was soon filled high with filth and rubble. There was no water and no opportunity for bathing. One toilet seat served the ninety-odd people on our floor.” They were fed “spoiled food.” They “were never permitted to go out for air or exercise.” Many came down with dysentery. Historian Geoffrey Emerson concurs that the internees at the hotels experienced “appallingly overcrowded, filthy conditions with very poor food.”¹⁸ According to Brown, “Dr. Pearson [his name for my father] sat hour after hour on the edge of Dobson’s [i.e., Henry Frank’s] bed, staring

13. Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, pp. 53–54, 69; but elsewhere, in “‘Tell America What They Have Done to Us . . .,’” *Saturday Review*, 9 January 1943, p. 6, he calls the place where he was taken the New Asia Hotel. For the address of the hotel, see “G.R. [George Rex] Licensing Sessions,” *South China Morning Post*, 17 October 1932, p. 4.

14. Cunich, *History of the University of Hong Kong*, vol. 1, p. 403; Jean Gittins, *Stanley: Behind Barbed Wire* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1982), p. 32.

15. Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, p. 64. Austin Frank, personal communication, 7 July 2013, tells a wonderful story about Ah Hoh at the time of his father’s internment. “Ah Hoh accompanied my father to the hotel to which he had to report and before entering he handed her his gold pocket watch. This was a lovely engraved hunting-case Elgin, a watch which had been given to his maternal grandfather by his wife at the time of their fiftieth wedding anniversary in the 1870s. My father asked her to keep it for him if she could, but said if she became desperate she should sell it to take care of herself. Then, when he returned to the [Lingnan] campus in 1946 she handed it back to him. . . . I now have the watch.”

16. C. N. Laird [to Family], [Rio de Janeiro], 6 August 1942, and Laird [to no name] Washington, 6 May 1943, Folder 155, Box 23, RG 175, Sarah Refo Mason Papers, YDSL.

17. Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, p. 54; Wenzell Brown, “I Was a Prisoner of the Japs [Part 1],” *Liberty* magazine, 10 October 1942, p. 18; “New Canton Hotel,” *South China Morning Post*, 28 June 1929, p. 13; “A New Chinese Hotel [in Shanghai],” *South China Morning Post*, 23 August 1932, p. 16.

18. Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, pp. 54–83; Geoffrey Charles Emerson, “Behind Japanese Barbed Wire: Stanley Internment Camp, Hong Kong, 1942–1945,” *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 17 (1977): 31.

into space. We knew that he was thinking of his wife and son, yet his attitude of dejection soon got on our nerves.”¹⁹

Finally, beginning about 21 January the internees were released from their several waterfront hotels and taken to an internment camp on the south side of Hong Kong Island. “Many were dazed by the first sunlight they had seen for more than three weeks,” Brown wrote. For the moment, however, they were relieved. “No matter where we went,” they reckoned, “it could not be worse than the filthy brothels from which we had come.” As they left their hotels, they “were paraded through the main streets again in order that the Chinese might witness the fall of the white man.” An old ferry boat took them around the island to Stanley.²⁰

The internment camp, which covered about one square mile, was located on the neck of a small, hilly peninsula between Stanley Village (now the site of the tourist-friendly Stanley Market) and Stanley Fort, and had beautiful views of the sea, the sky, and offshore islands. The camp occupied the grounds of St. Stephen’s College (an Anglican preparatory school) and portions of Stanley Prison (though not the prison itself). The internees by early February 1942 numbered close to 2,800. Most (2,400) were British; 325 were American, and 42 were Dutch “and perhaps as many Canadians.” They included about 1,300 men, 1,000 women, and 400 children. Among the Americans, besides my father, were eight of his Lingnan colleagues, three of their wives, and two teenage daughters.²¹

Meanwhile, with the US now at war with Japan, the Lingnan campus in Guangzhou had lost its diplomatic immunity and was taken over by the Japanese, as was the Anglo-French settlement of Shameen. The Americans who had remained at the campus, including Provost James Henry, were interned separately in Guangzhou, where for more than a year they were subject to a loose form of house arrest. According to Greg Leck, who has compiled a voluminous study of all the internment camps in China, “Canton camp was probably the best in China in terms of food, housing, and treatment.”²²

The Hong Kong internees arrived at Stanley less than a month after the fighting ended. St. Stephen’s College had been the scene of last-ditch resistance by the British and of a brutal retaliatory massacre of wounded soldiers and attending nurses by the Japanese. “Everywhere was littered with the debris of war,” British police officer George Wright-Nooth recorded in his diary. Some of the dead still lay about; others had been hastily buried in shallow graves. The building where Wright-Nooth initially lodged “had a shell hole through the roof, all windows were smashed and the walls scarred by bullets or shrapnel. The water pipes had burst, the drains were blocked and overflowing, blood was splattered everywhere.” It was up to the inmates themselves to fix the place up.²³

19. Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, p. 77.

20. Brown, *Hong Kong Aftermath*, pp. 85, 87.

21. Emerson, “Behind Japanese Barbed Wire,” p. 31; Emerson, *Hong Kong Internment*, p. 59; “Staff members of Lingnan University,” 17 January 1942, Box 87, TLUA-HYL. The Lingnan internees at Stanley, aside from my father, were Wenzell Brown, Henry Brownell (with wife Jane and daughter Betty Jane), Carlton Castle, Henry Frank, Charlotte Gower, Ernest Kelley, Arthur Knipp (with wife Rene and daughter Margaret), and Clinton Laird (with wife Mary Soles).

22. Greg Leck, *Captives of Empire: The Japanese Internment of Allied Civilians in China, 1941–1945* ([Bangor, PA]: Shandy Press, 2006), pp. 434–437, 528–529. The Lingnan internees in Guangzhou were William Cadbury (and wife Catharine), J. Linsley Gressitt (with wife Margaret and baby Sylvia), James Henry, William Hoffmann, and Wilfred MacDonald (and wife Mabel). Mathematics professor MacDonald died of cancer just before he could be repatriated in 1943, and Mrs. Hoffmann was separately interned in Manila and not released until the end of the war.

23. Wright-Nooth, *Prisoner of the Turnip Heads*, pp. 87–88.

An American Interlude (1948–1949)

The year we were away from Lingnan, 1948–1949, was a particularly momentous one in China. Popular support for Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government, particularly among the urban population, evaporated, as the regime continued to fail to solve the problem of hyperinflation. In August 1948 it finally got rid of the Chinese National Currency, replacing it with the "Gold Yuan" (*jinyuan* 金圓), at a conversion rate of three million (!!!) *yuan* of old currency to one new Gold Yuan note, and it set the new foreign exchange rate at four Gold Yuan to one US dollar. But according to historian Odd Arne Westad, "By the end of October it was clear to everyone that the August reforms had collapsed, and with them the last vestiges of ordinary economic activities in and around the cities. . . . the Gold Yuan started to depreciate even more rapidly than its predecessor."¹

Soon thereafter, the military tide turned decisively against Chiang and the Nationalists and in favor of Mao Zedong and the Communists. Having already established their control over the countryside in northeastern and northern China, the Communists began driving the Nationalists out of their urban strongholds. Shenyang, the major city in Manchuria, fell to them in November 1948, followed quickly by Tianjin and Beijing in January 1949. The Communists then swept southward across the North China Plain, crossing the Yangtze River on 20 April and capturing Nanjing, Shanghai, and Hankou soon afterwards. Amid such tribulations, Chiang Kai-shek, in January, stepped down as President of the Republic of China and was replaced by Vice President Li Zongren. In late April, after Nanjing had fallen, Li Zongren relocated the national capital to Guangzhou. Meanwhile, Chiang, having fled to Taiwan, kept his more important post as head of the Nationalist Party.²

At Lingnan, too, the year was one of change. It was the first year of the presidency of Chen Su-ching. At the time of his appointment there had been concerns in some quarters about Chen's Christian convictions and his suitability as Y. L. Lee's successor. A year later, however, Provost Henry Frank happily reported to the American trustees that the new president, "although not a professing Christian, [had] gained the confidence of the various mission bodies in Canton, both for himself and for the Christian purpose and character of Lingnan, to an extent not equalled for decades."³ While we

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1. Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 182–185; Shun-hsin Chou, *The Chinese Inflation, 1937–1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 146.
 2. Westad, *Decisive Encounters*, pp. 185–255.
 3. Corbett, *Lingnan University*, p. 152.

were away, S. C. Chen lived in our otherwise empty house. It is unclear whether Ah Hoh worked for President Chen in our absence, or what she did. Meanwhile, in New York, Olin Wannamaker, the longtime director of the American trustees, retired in February 1949; he was succeeded by James Henry, the former provost of the university, who had resigned as adviser to Governor T. V. Soong and returned to America.

In Hong Kong, as we awaited our departure for America, we ran into Gilbert Baker. Baker, who had previously taught at Lingnan and had baptized me there, was now the chaplain at St. John's University in Shanghai. He and his wife stood as my sister Janet's godparents as she was baptized at St. John's Cathedral.⁴

My father took his year-long furlough in Philadelphia. We traveled to the US aboard the SS *Cape San Martin*, a freighter (a cargo ship that carried a few passengers as well). (For the Lingnan trustees, who paid for our transportation, freighters were preferable to the more costly passenger liners.) The ship departed Hong Kong on about 30 July, a few days after my sister's baptism. For me personally it was a wrenching experience to leave Ah Hoh, the amah who had brought me up and who had been with me for close to ten years, from Hong Kong to Qujiang and Chongqing and back to Guangzhou. Perhaps even more than my mother she was the person to whom I had felt the closest attachment. I cried and cried as we left the harbor. The ensuing voyage took thirty-three days. We stopped at Honolulu, went through the Panama Canal, and arrived at New Orleans on 2 September 1948.⁵ "On the trip over," my mother recounted, "Howard had a restful time; Edward had the grandest time—he even ran the boat for half an hour, painted the boat and did all sorts of things—and has expressed the desire of being a sailor when he grows up; Jenny had two French playmates part of the way, was not seasick, but found it too long a trip sometimes; but poor me! I was seasick whenever we ran into trade winds and suffered altogether about two weeks and had the worst spell after Honolulu."⁶

As a native-born American citizen, my father, of course, had no difficulty entering the United States. My sister and I, though born abroad and with an alien for a mother, both claimed to be citizens by descent from him. But our claims to citizenship were possibly contingent. Under the US Nationality Act of 1934, there was an important residency requirement for us: we had to live in the United States for at least five years continuously previous to our eighteenth birthday; otherwise, we would lose our citizenship.⁷ This proviso did not jeopardize our citizenship claim in 1948 since neither my sister nor I was then within five years of our eighteenth birthday, but it might in the future. So in 1947, our father had written to the American consulate in Guangzhou arguing that a new nationality law, enacted in 1940, had set this residency requirement aside under the following circumstance: "if the American parent is at the time of the child's birth in the employ of the United States Government or of a recognized educational, missionary, or philanthropic organization whose principal place of business is in the United States." This exemption clearly applied to my sister, because when she was born in 1945 our father was working for the US Office of War Information. But did it apply to me? My father contended that it

4. Gilbert Baker to his parents, Hong Kong, 30 July 1948, Folder 24, Box 5, RG 8, China Records Project, Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collection, YDSL.

5. HGR to ODW, Canton, 8 July 1948, Box 120, and Philadelphia, 13 September 1948, Box 121, TLUA-HYL; "Port and Shipping," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 3 September 1948, p. 46; CKR's Republic of China passport, in my personal collection.

6. CKR to Dr. and Mrs. William W. Cadbury, Philadelphia, n.d. [but letter postmarked 22 December 1948], Folder Last names O-S, Box 42, Collection No. 1192, Cadbury & Cadbury Papers, Haverford College Library.

7. ER's "Report of Birth" for ER, 13 June 1938, in my personal collection.

Our mother, on the other hand, was traveling on a Chinese passport that had been issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Chongqing on 30 December 1944. Extended in January 1948 for one year, it was valid for travel specifically to the “U.S.A. via India & all necessary countries & ports enroute.” A month later the American consulate in Guangzhou issued her a visa allowing her to enter the United States as a Temporary Visitor. Her stamped passport indicates that she was granted “shore leave” when we stopped in Honolulu and that she was admitted into the United States at New Orleans on 3 September 1948, the day after the ship docked.⁹

After New Orleans, the *Cape San Martin* was supposed to sail on to Philadelphia, but for some reason it went no farther. We had to disembark and travel the rest of the way by train. Because my father was in the employ of the Lingnan trustees, nominally a Christian organization, we were “entitled to the half fare railway rate granted to clergymen.”¹⁰ Philadelphia was, of course, my father’s hometown. It was where he was born and had gone to school and gotten his doctorate. It was where his parents and grandparents were buried, and where his closest relative, his cousin Anna Pugh, lived with her husband and family.

Immediately upon our arrival in early September, my father had two main tasks. One, made urgent by the fact that the academic year was about to begin, was to find me a school. In this regard my father was able to have his colleague and neighbor at Lingnan, Dr. William Cadbury, pull some strings on my behalf. A medical missionary, Cadbury had been with Lingnan since 1909, when it was still the Canton Christian College. By 13 September my father was able to report, “I have got Edward into the Friends’ Select School . . . This was possible only through the good offices of Cadbury, who went to work on his various friends and relatives in Quaker circles and got them to make room for Edward over others on a long waiting list.”¹¹ Friends’ Select was (and still is) a historic private Quaker coeducational college-preparatory school located two blocks northwest of City Hall. My application for admission, filled out by my father, noted that I had “lived all [my] life in China” and that I was particularly weak in English, both spoken and written. Nevertheless, I was placed into the fifth grade, though perhaps as a special or visiting student rather than as a regular student (there are no report cards in my school records). My sister, then three and a half years old, was enrolled in the kindergarten.¹² Tuition fees at Friends’ Select for the two of us were \$325 and \$200.¹³ In late December my mother wrote to reassure Dr. and Mrs. Cadbury at Lingnan that I was “doing more than satisfactory work.”¹⁴

My father’s other main task, even more urgent, was to find convenient and affordable lodging. Because such a place would have to be within walking distance of the Friends’ Select School, he looked primarily in Philadelphia’s Center City. As he wrote Wannamaker in mid-September, “In the week I have been here I have done little besides walking my legs

9. CKR’s passport, in my personal collection.

10. ODW to Augusta Walker, New York City, 23 August 1947, Box 114, and HGR to ODW, Philadelphia, 13 September 1948, Box 121, TLUA–HYL.

11. HGR to ODW, Philadelphia, 13 September 1948, Box 121, TLUA–HYL.

12. ER’s Application for Admission, Friends’ Select School, 7 September 1948, courtesy of Dick Hoffman. The school has now dropped the apostrophe from its name.

13. ODW, Memo for conference with Mr. Hayes re “Furlough budget of Dr. Rhoads,” 4 October 1948, Box 121, TLUA–HYL.

14. CKR to Dr. and Mrs. William W. Cadbury, Philadelphia, n.d. [but letter postmarked 22 December 1948], Folder Last names O-S, Box 42, Collection No. 1192, Cadbury & Cadbury Papers, Haverford College Library.

Epilogue

Lingnan University: Its Demise and Revival

In the summer of 1952, a year and a half after the departure of its Western staff, Lingnan University passed from existence; it had lasted sixty-four years (1888–1952). It and the dozen other so-called Christian colleges in China were simply carved up and abolished. In Lingnan's case, the physical campus was turned over to Sun Yat-sen University, which also took over its Arts and Sciences colleges. Lingnan's College of Agriculture became part of the South China Agricultural College, its Medical School became part of the South China College of Medicine, and its Engineering Department became part of the South China Institute of Technology.¹ Lingnan's last president, Chen Su-ching, joined the History Department of Sun Yat-sen University; in 1956, he was appointed a vice president of the university. Ten years later, during the Cultural Revolution, he was denounced as a "reactionary academic authority" and a "traitor." Chen died soon afterwards, in February 1967, and was not posthumously rehabilitated until 1979.²

While many members of Lingnan's Chinese faculty stayed on in Guangzhou, others sought refuge in British Hong Kong, where in 1951 they helped found a new post-secondary school, Chung Chi College, with many links to the old Lingnan. Thus, the founding president of Chung Chi, from 1951 to 1954, was Y. L. Lee, the former president of Lingnan, and its third president, from 1960 to 1975, was C. T. Yung, who had been a professor of botany at Lingnan. In 1963, during Yung's presidency, Chung Chi was authorized by Hong Kong's colonial government to join two other colleges to create the Chinese University of Hong Kong as a complement to the English-language Hong Kong University.³ Chung Chi is now one of the nine constituent colleges of CUHK.

The formation of Chung Chi College notwithstanding, the demise of Lingnan did not sit well with its many former students and graduates. As historian Lutz puts it, when the Christian colleges in China were disbanded and dispersed in 1952, "it was almost impossible for alumni and members of the college community to retain any sense of continuing identity through the successor institutions."⁴ The Lingnan alumni in Hong Kong, some of whom had become quite wealthy and influential, felt no sense of identity with Sun Yat-sen University and only some with Chung Chi College.

1. Lutz, *China and Christian Colleges*, p. 482; Li and Hill, *Nanguo fenghuang*, p. 108; Au, *Lingnan Spirit Forever*, pp. 7–8.

2. "Chen Xujing nianpu jianbian," pp. 559–561.

3. Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, pp. 484–485; Corbett, *Lingnan University*, p. 164.

4. Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges*, p. 474.



Figure 10.1: Dedication of Lingnan College, Hong Kong, 19 November 1967. From *Lingnan University, 1888 to Present: A Pictorial History*, commons.ln.edu.hk. To the left of the plaque are President Qian Naixin 錢乃信 and Anglican Bishop Gilbert Baker; to the right, Trustee Kan Koam Ching 簡鑑清. My father is at the extreme right (on edge of photo).

Instead, they worked tirelessly, and with some success, to resurrect the old Lingnan. In 1967, building upon the long-existing Lingnan Middle School in Hong Kong, they founded Lingnan College 嶺南書院 as a private post-secondary school.⁵ Twenty-five years later, as the Hong Kong government prepared for the colony's retrocession to Chinese rule, Lingnan College was among five institutions selected to join the ranks of Hong Kong University and the Chinese University of Hong Kong as a university. First, in 1991, it was recognized as a degree-granting tertiary institution; then in 1995 it was relocated from Hong Kong Island to Tuen Mun in the western New Territories; finally, in 1997, it acquired university status and was renamed Lingnan University 嶺南大學. It distinguishes itself from Hong Kong's other universities with its liberal arts curriculum, and it claims to be, via the Lingnan Middle School and Lingnan College, the lineal descendant of the original Lingnan.⁶

Concurrently with their efforts to elevate Lingnan College to a university, Lingnan's Hong Kong alumni, as they did more and more business on the mainland in the post-Mao era, began to press for the resurrection of their alma mater at its original location. Among those active in this movement was my cousin Luo Ren, Ngan Chi Kin's second son, now living in Hong Kong after a long stint in Xinjiang. In 1986 he and a fellow member of the Class of 1953 compiled a pamphlet with numerous essays calling for the "revival" (*huifu*

5. Li Ruiming, *Lingnan daxue*, pp. 230–231; Au, *Lingnan Spirit Forever*, pp. 37–38; *Lingnan College, Hong Kong, Prospectus, 1972–1974*, http://commons.ln.edu.hk/lingnan_calendar (accessed 29 August 2019).

6. See "Milestones and History" on the website of Lingnan University, Hong Kong, ln.edu.hk (accessed 29 July 2019).

恢復) of Lingnan University in Guangzhou. Their main argument was that Lingnan had been mistakenly classified in 1952 as a “missionary college.” Though founded by missionaries, Lingnan was never supported by a missionary board, nor was it affiliated with any particular Christian denomination. Since 1927 it had been registered with the Chinese government, it had had a Chinese president and a Chinese administration, and it had practiced freedom of religion. Also, Lingnan had never been a part of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia. In short, unlike the other Christian colleges such as Yenching and St. John’s, Lingnan should never have been abolished.⁷

Though the Chinese authorities rejected out of hand the idea of returning the Hong Lok campus to Lingnan, they did, rather surprisingly, consent to the creation of a separate, semiautonomous unit within Sun Yat-sen University that would be called Lingnan (University) College 嶺南(大學)學院. This arrangement was announced in March 1988, on the one hundredth anniversary of Lingnan’s founding. In September 1989, L(U)C held its first classes. Located in the heart of the Hong Lok campus, it has become an international business management school, with English as the medium of instruction.⁸ As Lingnan alumnus Lee Sui-ming (Class of 1947) remarked, with the founding of Lingnan University in Hong Kong and of Lingnan (University) College in Guangzhou, the desires of all Lingnan people to “love and cherish” their alma mater have finally been realized.⁹

The Trustees of Lingnan University

Although Lingnan University in Guangzhou ceased to exist after 1952, the Board of Trustees of Lingnan University in New York did not. Independently chartered in New York State in 1893, it continued to operate, although on a much reduced budget. It helped exiled members of the “permanent” faculty (like my father) relocate to the United States and find new employment. It looked after its retirees (like William Cadbury and Henry Brownell). It funded the writing and publication (in 1965) of Charles Corbett’s history of the university. And it took an active interest in Lingnan’s several successor institutions in Hong Kong and made some financial contributions to programs at Chung Chi College, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Lingnan College. But up through the 1970s its ability to do more was constrained by the modesty of its endowment.¹⁰

Its fortunes changed, however, in 1979. Eight years earlier, the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission of the United States had estimated that when the Communists abolished Lingnan and confiscated all its property, the American trustees had suffered losses totaling \$5,700,000. As part of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China, the two countries came to an agreement relating to competing property claims. Under one part of the agreement, China would pay “approximately 41 cents on a dollar to American claimants with no interest due,” with the payment spread out over several years. Forty-one percent of the \$5,700,000 that the Lingnan trustees claimed came to about \$2,337,000. The trustees received the first payment, \$800,000, in November 1979, and the last payment, \$72,000, in July 1990.¹¹

7. Li Ruiming, *Lingnan daxue*, pp. 219–221; Au, *Lingnan Spirit Forever*, p. 12; Luo Ren and Huang Daren, comps., *Lingnan daxue fuxiao husheng* [Voices calling for reviving Lingnan University] (Hong Kong, 1986).

8. Li Ruiming, *Lingnan daxue*, p. 232; Li and Hill, *Nanguo jinghuang*, pp. 143–251; Au, *Lingnan Spirit Forever*, pp. 80–82.

9. Li Ruiming, *Lingnan daxue*, p. 221.

10. Au, *Lingnan Spirit Forever*, ch. 2–7.

11. Au, *Lingnan Spirit Forever*, pp. 14, 58–59.

The settlement, according to Douglas P. Murray (a former president of the trustees), “almost doubled the organization’s endowment.” The trustees could now do a lot more toward helping the various successors to Lingnan University. By the late 1990s, “Lingnan’s grants had reached approximately one million dollars annually.”¹²

In November 1988, in recognition of the reality that they had long ceased to be a degree-conferring university, the trustees of Lingnan University voted to reorganize themselves into what they actually were, a grant-making foundation. The trustees had considered making this change for several years but had been “asked by Lingnan alumni in Guangzhou and Hong Kong to refrain from any change until the matter of re-establishing a Lingnan presence in the People’s Republic of China was settled.” With the founding of Lingnan (University) College at Sun Yat-sen University in March 1988, the way was clear to make the change. In July 1989 the Board of Trustees of Lingnan University became the Lingnan Foundation.¹³ Since then its grants have gone primarily to Sun Yat-sen University (including, of course, Lingnan [University] College) and to Lingnan University Hong Kong. Its assets in 2020 totaled slightly more than \$20,000,000.

My Parents and Me

Finally, what of my family and me? When we left China in February 1951, the American trustees, in addition to paying our extravagant fare on the *President Wilson*, found a rental house for us in Claremont, a retirement community in southern California for China missionaries, where some other Lingnan faculty families also landed. According to my father’s most recent contract, in the event that he was called home ahead of time, the Lingnan trustees would give him a “regular furlough, of approximately \$4,200 a year.” We were in Claremont for about a year and a half. My sister and I resumed our (American) schooling, and I entered the seventh grade at the Claremont Junior–Senior High School in mid-year. My mother worked part-time for a local attorney and did some typing for an author.¹⁴ My father, in the summer of 1951, taught an orientation course for foreign students at the Claremont Graduate School.¹⁵ But his main preoccupation was to find permanent employment, which at his age (he was now 51) was not so easy. He was also concerned about the prohibition on interracial marriages in numerous American (usually southern) states—a ban that the US Supreme Court declared illegal only in 1967. In March 1952, however, he landed a job in Springfield, Massachusetts, with the G. & C. Merriam Company, publisher of the Webster dictionaries. He left Claremont for Springfield in mid-March; the rest of the family joined him in August, after school had let out.¹⁶ As their final financial obligation to him, the trustees paid for his and our train fare to the East.

My father worked for the G. & C. Merriam Company (now known as Merriam-Webster) for the next thirteen years. He was a senior member of the team of lexicographers that in 1961 produced the controversial unabridged Webster’s Third New International Dictionary. (It was controversial because of its permissive attitude toward usage, such as

12. Douglas P. Murray, Preface to Au, *Lingnan Spirit Forever*, pp. vi–vii.

13. Au, *Lingnan Spirit Forever*, pp. 84–86.

14. CKR to Ethel Montgomery, Claremont, 17 April 1952, Folder 276, Box 20, Archives of the Trustees of Lingnan University, RG 14, YDSL.

15. HGR, Curriculum Vitae and testimonials, 28 December 1951, in my personal collection.

16. HGR to Ethel Montgomery, Claremont, 19 March 1952, Folder 276, Box 20, Archives of the Trustees of Lingnan University, RG 14, YDSL.

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