Hong Kong has remained the global metropolis for Asia since its founding in the 1840s following the Opium Wars between Britain and China. David Meyer traces its vibrant history from the arrival of the foreign trading firms, when it was established as one of the leading Asian business centers, to its celebrated handover to China in 1997. Throughout this period, Hong Kong has been prominent as a pivotal meeting-place of the Chinese and foreign social networks of capital, and as such has been China’s window onto the world economy, dominating other financial centers such as Singapore and Tokyo. Looking into the future, the author presents an optimistic view of Hong Kong in the twenty-first century, challenging those who predict its decline under Chinese rule. This accessible and broad-ranging look at the story of Hong Kong’s success will interest anyone concerned with its past, present, and future.

David R. Meyer is Professor of Sociology and Urban Studies at Brown University.
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Contents

List of figures  page viii
List of maps  x
List of tables  xi
Preface  xiii

1 Enigma  1
2 Intermediaries of capital  5
3 From Canton to Hong Kong  28
4 Hub of the China trade  52
5 Chinese and foreign social networks of capital  78
6 Trade and finance center for Asia  114
7 Industrial metropolis  143
8 Global metropolis for Asia  179
9 Hong Kong, China  219

Bibliography  248
Index  270
Figures

2.1 Intermediary A exerts power over other intermediaries in upper portion, but A has less power in lower portion  page 13
2.2 Dynamic model of global metropolitan intermediaries 16
2.3 Long-term dynamics of the world system of metropolises 26
3.1 Opium shipments to China, 1800–1838 33
3.2 Value per chest of opium imports at Canton, 1816–1837 39
3.3 Total value of opium imports at Canton, 1816–1837 40
4.1 Opium imports to China and Shanghai, 1837–1860 62
4.2 Total British exports to, and imports from, China and Hong Kong, 1834–1904 63
4.3 British exports to China and Hong Kong for total goods and textiles, 1834–1904 64
4.4 British imports of tea and raw silk from China and Hong Kong, 1834–1904, and of tea from India and Ceylon, 1864–1904 64
4.5 Exports of tea and silk from Canton, Foochow, and Shanghai, 1843–1860 67
5.1 Freight rates between Britain and Asia, 1869–1913 80
6.1 Population of Hong Kong, 1841–1931 115
6.2 Tonnage and number of ships and junks entering and leaving Hong Kong, 1844–1936 116
6.3 Hong Kong trade with Britain, 1843–1938 117
6.4 Hong Kong trade with China, 1869–1938 117
6.5 Population of Shanghai, 1840–1936 129
6.6 Exports of Singapore, 1870–1927 137
6.7 Selective view of the system of metropolises in Asia, circa 1880–1920 142
7.1 Assets of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, 1946–1979 148
7.2 Gross national product (GNP) per capita by political unit, 1964–1996 155
7.3 Structure of manufacturing in Hong Kong, 1950–1997 159
List of figures

7.4 Number of employees by total and selected type of manufacturing in Hong Kong, 1950–1997 162
7.5 Employees/establishment for total and selected type of manufacturing in Hong Kong, 1950–1997 167
8.1 Sectoral change in employment in Hong Kong, 1976–1996 185
8.2 Sectoral change in gross domestic product (GDP) in Hong Kong, 1980–1995 187
8.3 Value of domestic exports and re-exports of Hong Kong, 1918–1997 189
8.4 Domestic exports of Hong Kong to world regions, 1963–1997 190
8.5 Imports of Hong Kong from world regions, 1963–1997 191
8.6 Re-exports of Hong Kong to world regions, 1963–1997 192
8.7 Domestic exports of Hong Kong to Asia, 1963–1997 193
8.8 Imports of Hong Kong from Asia, 1963–1997 194
8.9 Re-exports of Hong Kong to Asia, 1963–1997 195
8.10 Number of licensed banks in Hong Kong, 1955–1997 198
8.11 Balance-sheets of licensed banks in Hong Kong, 1970–1997 202
8.12 Loans and advances of licensed banks in Hong Kong, 1973–1997 204
8.13 Annual foreign direct investment utilized in China by origin, 1985–1995 205
8.14 Number of regional headquarters and regional offices in Hong Kong, 1979–1996 210
8.15 Number of intermediary businesses and their support services in Hong Kong, 1976–1996 216
8.16 Employment in intermediary businesses and their support services in Hong Kong, 1976–1996 217
9.1 Emigration from and immigration to Hong Kong and foreign worker visas, 1985–1997 222
Maps

1 The global triangle of trade, *circa* 1820  
2 Hong Kong and the treaty ports, *circa* 1845  
3 Hong Kong and the Nanyang trade centers, *circa* 1870  
4 Asian political units and metropolitan centers, late twentieth century

Maps prepared by Donna Souza.
### Tables

3.1 Balance of trade at Canton, 1828 ($'000s)  
4.1 Number of non-Chinese adult male civilians in ports, 1850–1859  
5.1 Foreign commodity trade of China, 1867–1934  
5.2 Investments of Jardine, Matheson & Company, 1885  
5.3 Earliest branches, agencies, and agents of Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, 1864–1866  
5.4 Branches and agencies of Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, 1918  
6.1 Net profits of Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, July–December, 1887  
6.2 Trading areas of selected Chinese exporters and importers in Hong Kong, 1915  
6.3 Foreign population of treaty ports, 1870  
6.4 Percentage of total imports and exports of China passing through Shanghai, Canton, and Tientsin, 1870–1930  
6.5 Percentage distributions of annual average exports and imports of Singapore, 1871–1927  
7.1 Percentage distributions of manufacturing employment by industry in Hong Kong, 1950–1997  
7.2 Percentage distributions of value of domestic exports by industry in Hong Kong, 1960–1997  
7.3 Hong Kong manufactures typical of industrial metropolises, 1985–1997  
7.4 Growth rate of real payroll per person by economic group in Hong Kong, 1981–1996  
7.5 Foreign direct investment (FDI) by employment and value in Hong Kong, 1990 and 1996  
8.1 World's largest 500 banks with licensed bank in Hong Kong, 1986–1997  
8.2 Number of licensed banks in Hong Kong by political unit of beneficial ownership, 1986–1997
List of tables

8.3 Specialized financial institutions in Hong Kong, 1984–1997 208
8.4 Regional headquarters and offices in Hong Kong and their overseas parent firms by major business line, 1997 212
8.5 Regional headquarters and offices in Hong Kong by political unit of parent, 1997 214
8.6 Region of responsibility for regional headquarters of overseas companies in Hong Kong, 1997 215
8.7 Producer services in Hong Kong, 1984–1997 218
9.1 Selected comparisons of Singapore and Hong Kong 232
Preface

Hong Kong brims with energy, glitter, and excitement. From the heights of Victoria Peak, the cityscape of skyscrapers, apartment towers, forested hills, and harbor forms a spectacular panorama, and at night the sparkling light-show of the soaring buildings is second to none in the world. This glamorous city houses an extraordinarily talented people that made this research project a sheer delight. The citizens on the street, the storeowners, clerks, taxi-drivers, and my tailor graciously offered assistance whenever requested, provided directions, and gave me their opinions on the economy and politics. Officials across a wide range of government agencies and business organizations kindly met with me to answer questions, directed me to data sources, and provided materials. University faculty in Hong Kong willingly shared their knowledge, offered suggestions, and provided forums to debate ideas. Numerous business executives generously gave me an hour of their time to interview them about their strategic views of the economy and politics of Hong Kong and Asia, and they explained how they behaved as decision-makers in control of commodity and financial capital. Although I cannot cite them personally because they stated their views in confidence, their insights form critical components of the interpretations and explanations offered in this book; I am indebted to them.

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