Educational Research Journal《教育研究學報》, *Vol. 13, No.2, Winter 1998*

The Beginnings of English Language Education in Hong Kong, 1842-1859

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This article seeks to reconstruct and interpret English language policy in Hong Kong education in the first two decades of British colonial rule. The article begins with an analysis of the political, economic, social and educational factors which shaped the development of educational language policy during this period, and then goes on to examine in detail early initiatives in English language education in the Anglo-Chinese mission schools and Chinese village schools. The article concludes with a summary and assessment of developments in English language education in Hong Kong between 1842 and 1859.

Key words:English language education; lar.guage policy; language in education

Introduction

In the current academic year (1998-99), the Education Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region introduced the first stage of a new educational language policy which requires the vast majority of territory's English-medium secondary schools to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction for all academic subjects apart from English language.

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The controversial policy to restrict English-medium education to an elite group of 114 schools has reinvigorated the debate over language policy which has raged since the mid-nineteenth century, when the foundations of Hong Kong's system of education were laid. Although the debate has inevitably focused on the merits of the policy, the controversy over the new English language policy has underscored the need to view current issues and problems in language in Hong Kong education from an historical perspective. Indeed, there is an increasing realisation in education circles that the language-related issues which have confronted policy makers in the post-war period owe their origins to the unique set of historical forces which have shaped the development of education and society in Hong Kong since the early years of British colonial rule. However, despite increasing scholarly interest in various aspects of language, education and society in nineteenth-century Hong Kong (e.g. Bickley, 1997; Boyle, 1997; Flowerdew, 1998; Pennycook, 1998), our knowledge and understanding of policies and practices in the field of language in education in the Victorian era are still limited. This is particularly true of the early years of British colonial rule, which saw the emergence of the dual system of education - one sector with its roots in Victorian Britain, the other in Confucian China - which has characterised Hong Kong education for much of the past century and a half. This article, which examines developments in English language education in Hong Kong in the first two decades of British colonial rule, is designed to add to our at present limited knowledge of language policy in education in mid-nineteenth-century Hong Kong.

As in other periods of Hong Kong's history, English language policy between 1842 and 1859 was not formulated *in vacuo*: it was closely bound up with wider developments in Hong Kong society and education. These developments - political, economic, social, educational - are examined in the first section of the article. The next section describes some of the early government and private initiatives in the field of English language education. The article concludes with a summary and assessment of developments in English language policy in education in early Hong Kong.

Developments in Hong Kong Society and Education, 1842-1859

In the first two decades of British rule, the provision of educational opportunities for Hong Kong's growing Chinese community ranked very low on the colonial administration's list of priorities. The government's lack of initiative in the field of public education was largely determined by the somewhat unusual political, economic and social circumstances in which the colonial administration was forced to operate in the 1840s and 1850s.

Political, economic and social developments

Until well into the 1850s, there was considerable uncertainty over Hong Kong's long-term political future. Even when the government in London finally accepted Hong Kong's permanent status as a British colony, the island was primarily regarded as a trading station and a base for the promotion of British commercial interests in China. There is no evidence that the colonial and metropolitan governments viewed Hong Kong as a suitable location for the establishment of a large colonial settlement, which would necessarily commit the British to the development of an elaborate and expensive infrastructure. According to Tsai (1993, p. 38), Hong Kong's primary role as a centre of commerce shaped the colonial government's attitude towards its Chinese subjects:

> Far from seeking to assimilate them, British rule in its early years left the Chinese to their own devices, so long as public order was maintained and trade enhanced. The British did not have a blueprint for governing Hong Kong. In an empirical manner typical of the English they changed their administrative policy according to changing times and circumstances.

Even if the Hong Kong government had wished to play an active role in the field of education, its ambitions would have been constrained by the disappointing economic progress made by the colony in the 1840s and 1850s. The parlous state of the Hong Kong government's finances was such that it was in no position to devote large sums of money to educational develop-

ment in the colony. The government's financial difficulties in the first two decades of British rule, particularly between 1849 and 1856, are clearly revealed in Table 1. The priorities of the government, and, in particular, the importance which it attached to the provision of education for the Chinese community, can be gauged by the fact that during this period the percentage of expenditure devoted to public education ranged between only 1% and 3%, whereas spending on public order accounted for 20%-40% of total revenue.

Another factor which militated against the development of a system of public education was the unusual nature of the overwhelmingly Chinese society which emerged in Hong Kong in the early years of British rule. As the figures in Table 2 reveal, Hong Kong in the 1840s and 1850s was a

Table 1 Revenue and expenditure of the Hong Kong government, 1844-1859.

			Percentage of Expenditure devoted to				
Year	Revenue*	Expenditure	% Education	% General Admin.	% Public Health	% Public Order	% Public Works
1844	£63,769	£53,108	2.40	24.38	1.64	21.41	50.17
1845	£74,787	£72,841	1.13	26.22	1.23	26.10	45.32
1846	£54,270	£60,351	1.26	29.34	1.16	32.44	35.80
1847	£40,473	£50,960	1.32	29.38	1.51	33.27	34.52
1848	£65,374	£62,309	1.32	27.55	1.46	29.33	40.34
1849	£35,527	£38,986	2.04	40.97	3.11	37.55	15.76
1850	£37,677	£34,314	1.97	44.74	3.16	41.64	8.11
1851	£43,875	£34,115	2.68	43.72	2.67	42.52	8.35
1852	£43,331	£34,766	2.70	36.84	3.09	39.58	17.74
1853	£34,200	£36,419	1.83	36.49	2.78	39.60	19.16
1854	£33,011	£34,035	3.17	33.89	2.06	41.90	18.95
1855	£47,974	£40,314	2.15	28.40	1.50	39.02	27.72
1856	£35,000	£42,426	2.36	27.12	1.48	43.90	24.99
1857	£58,842	£65,426	1.93	26.03	1.23	38.10	32.38
1858	£62,476	£62,979	2.69	24.71	1.87	37.82	32.91
1859	£65,225	£66,109	3.07	23.02	4.03	39.76	29.58

*Between 1844 and 1854, part of the Hong Kong government's revenue was derived from the British government. Source: Hong Kong Government (1932).

predominantly adult, male society. The Chinese who came to the island after its cession to Britain viewed Hong Kong primarily as a place to make quick money before returning to their homeland. As Eitel (1890-91, p. 309) noted, education (still less the acquisition of English) was hardly uppermost in the minds of the Chinese who flocked to Hong Kong in the early 1840s:

> ... boat people, common labourers, scaffold-builders, bricklayers, carpenters, stone-masons, blacksmiths, and provision dealers, all of whom had come to Hong Kong, in defiance of Mandarin prohibitions, for temporary employment rather than as settlers and left their families on the mainland. They had neither time nor inclination to think of the education of the young.

Given that educational provision is inextricably linked to social development, it is instructive to examine the influence of demographic trends on educational policy making in the early years of British rule (Table 2). To begin with, it should be noted that these figures are unlikely to be wholly accurate since conditions in early Hong Kong were chaotic, and the classifications, definitions and procedures employed by officials charged with conducting censuses tended to vary from year to year. However, despite the questionable reliability of the fine detail, the general trends which the figures reveal do nevertheless allow us to draw several tentative conclusions about the impact of population change on educational policy.

Table 2 Population trends on Hong Kong Island, 1844-1859.

Year	Total Population	Chinese Adults		Chinese Children	
		Males	Females	Males	Females
1844	19,463	NA	NA	NA	NA
1845	23,748	18,438	4,679	NA	NA
1846	21,067	15,519	4,930	NA	NA
1847	21,059	27,864	3,602	NA	NA
1848	20,980	15,716	4,622	2,235	1,101
1849	28,953	22,225	6,862	2,672	2,189
1850	33,292	24,494	8,014	3,262	2,466
1851	32,983	24,217	7,956	2,722	2,269
1852	37,058	27,264	8,520	3,257	2,585
1853	39,017	29,271	8,776	3,177	2,495
1854	55,715	33,103	10,417	6,220	4,332
1855	72,607	44,040	13,056	8,216	5,339
1856	71,790	43,693	12,001	7,041	4,317
1857	77,094	39,483	8,270	3,608	3,883
1858	73,303	47,536	13,586	8,407	5,079
1859	86,941	50,175	16,736	10,671	7,678

The figures for 1857 include only Chinese adults and children in Victoria and the villages. They do not include people living on boats: these comprised 14,897 males and 8,120 females. The number of adults and children is not specified. Source: Collated from census returns in *Hong Kong Blue Books*, 1844-1859.

Firstly, the census information in the *Blue Books* of the 1840s and 1850s clearly reveals that adult males formed the majority in early Hong Kong society, and that most of these Chinese men lived and worked in the town of Victoria on the northern shore of the island rather than in the outlying villages. Although the population expanded rapidly during this period, the census returns tend to hide the fact that the vast majority of the male Chinese population were transients who returned to their families on the mainland after working for a short period. As Eitel observed, these men had no interest in educational provision for their children. Secondly, the census data indicate that Hong Kong's population began to expand very rapidly in the mid-1850s. What is particularly revealing is the significant increase in the number of women and children living in Hong Kong during this period.

The sharp increase in the number of Chinese families in the colony can largely be attributed to the influx of refugees from the mainland, where social conditions were disturbed by the Taiping Rebellion. Reminiscing about life in early Hong Kong, James Legge, who was to lay the foundations of the colony's public education system in the early 1860s, believed that the arrival of a "better class" of Chinese as a result of the turbulence in China proved to be a significant factor in Hong Kong's social and economic development in the nineteenth century:

> It has always seemed to me that this was the turning point in the progress of Hong Kong. As Canton was threatened, the families of means hastened to leave it, and many of them flocked to this Colony. Houses were in demand; rents rose; the streets that had been comparatively deserted assumed a crowded appearance; new commercial Chinese firms were founded; the native trade received an impetus... (Legge, 1971, p. 184)

Apart from the stimulus provided by the influx of Chinese from Taiping-ravaged China, Hong Kong's economy was also invigorated by its role as the main point of embarkation for waves of Chinese emigrants, mostly labourers, who were bound for Malaya, the West Indies, and the gold-rush towns of California and Australia (Endacott, 1964). The steady development of Hong Kong's economy in the 1850s, particularly the emigration business, created an increasing demand for various kinds of commercial, financial and professional services, whose operation depended on the availability of a small corps of English-educated Chinese personnel (Tsai, 1993).

Educational developments

The educational policy of the colonial government was also influenced by educational developments outside Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government's reluctance to undertake major initiatives in the field of public education reflected tradition and practice in both England and the colonies. In England, education was organised and controlled by agencies affiliated to various charitable or religious bodies, among whom the Church of England was pre-eminent. Although the mid-nineteenth century witnessed the

beginnings of state intervention in education in England, the extent of government involvement was very limited, and it is only in hindsight that we recognise the grant of £20,000 in 1833 to the Anglican and Nonconformist societies for school buildings as the beginning of England's state education system. Government involvement in education was also negligible in Britain's colonial possessions in India and the Straits Settlements, where the provision of English language education was mainly in the hands of various Protestant and Catholic missionary bodies. If the English language policies for Indian education outlined in Macaulay's Minute (1835) and Wood's Despatch (1854) were to serve as blueprints for educational language policy in early Hong Kong (and there is no evidence that they did in the period between 1842 and 1859), public expenditure on English language education would have been so limited that only a minority of the native population would have benefited from it. Finally, although it is not explicitly stated in the government records of the time, it is highly unlikely that there was a great demand for English teaching in the colony's schools during this period. The lower class Chinese who formed the majority in early Hong Kong would have seen little need for their children to be educated in the language, although some Chinese in Hong Kong and the other treaty ports did apparently recognise its commercial value. When more "respectable" Chinese families began to move to Hong Kong in the mid-1850s they preferred to send their sons to Chinese schools both in Hong Kong and the mainland, where they would receive thorough preparation for the civil service examinations. For much of the nineteenth century, therefore, Western schools in Hong Kong found it difficult to compete with Chinese schools which provided an education in the Confucian classics (Leung, 1989).

In the period between 1842 and 1859, government initiatives in public education were confined to the provision of modest financial assistance for the island's Chinese village schools. In December 1845, Charles Gutzlaff, the government's Chinese Secretary, wrote to Governor Davis to suggest that – "as in all other British Colonies" – the Hong Kong authorities support the native schools, which he claimed were in a "miserable" state.

Gutzlaff recommended that the government contribute $10 per month to schools with more than fifteen pupils, a gesture which he felt "would leave a most favourable impression upon the minds of the parents" (Gutzlaff, 13 December 1845, p. 30). Davis forwarded Gutzlaff's proposal in a despatch to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Stanley, adding that a "very limited contribution" to the support of the native schools would create a "good effect" (Davis, 20 January 1846, p. 27). After a protracted correspondence, which was characterised by repeated requests for more information about the proposal from officials in Whitehall, the Colonial Office, noting the "very moderate" sums involved, finally gave its assent in a despatch to Davis on 12 August 1847. The policy to support the Chinese village schools rather than the Anglo-Chinese mission schools appears to have been motivated more by the desire to avoid denominational rivalries than the wish to promote vernacular education (Ng Lun, 1984), although the desire to create a favourable impression with the Chinese community may have been a contributory factor. In December 1847, the government established an Education Committee, which was charged with investigating the state of the Chinese schools at Victoria, Stanley and Aberdeen, and recommending appropriate ways to use the government grants (Lobschied, 1859). The Education Committee, which was dominated by Protestant missionaries, supervised educational development in the colony until 1860, when it was superseded by the more powerful Board of Education. Since government support for educational development centred on the Chinese village schools, initiatives in the field of English language education in the first two decades of colonial rule were largely in the hands of the missionaries.

Early Initiatives in English Language Education in Hong Kong

The colonial government's *laissez-faire* approach to educational development meant that early initiatives in English language education in Hong Kong were for the most part organised and controlled by the various Protestant and Catholic missionary bodies which moved to Hong Kong after

the signing of the Treaty of Nanking. The missionary bodies which were to play the most influential role in the development of English language education in nineteenth-century Hong Kong were from Britain, the most important among whom were the London Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society, who during the period under consideration administered the Anglo-Chinese College and St Paul's College respectively. However, missionary societies from continental Europe and North America, representing many different Christian denominations and orders, also arrived on the China coast in the 1840s and, during the course of the nineteenth century, played an instrumental role in both the development of the colony's education system and the provision of English language education in Hong Kong.

The English language initiatives of these foreign organisations in British Hong Kong are significant for the study of educational language policy in several ways. In the first place, the activities of American, French, Swiss, German and other foreign missionary bodies in Hong Kong education meant that the task of promoting the English language in the colony's schools, both as a subject and as a medium of instruction, was not necessarily the exclusive preserve of British educational agencies. While it is true that British missionary organisations played a prominent role in the beginnings of English language education in Hong Kong, it would have been misleading to associate developments in this area entirely with the British: the English teacher in a mission-school classroom in early Hong Kong would have been as likely to speak in the accent of Boston or Berlin as that of Oxford or Edinburgh. Secondly, the importance of European missionary societies in educational development is reflected in the leading role which a number of foreign missionaries played in shaping educational policy in the colony during the course of the nineteenth century. The most influential of these foreign educationists were both German by birth: William Lobschied of the Rhenish Mission, who was appointed the first Inspector of Government Schools in 1857, and E.J. Eitel, originally of the Basel Mission, who was the colonial government's Inspector of Schools from 1878 until his retire-

ment in 1897. Thus, while initiatives in the field of English language education in Hong Kong are inevitably associated with the British, it is important to recognise the significant role which continental Europeans and North Americans played in the teaching of English in Hong Kong and the other treaty ports. The introduction of English language education in Hong Kong was therefore a Western rather than exclusively British initiative, and might usefully be viewed as just one aspect of the impact of the West on China in the nineteenth century.

While it is possible to outline the factors which influenced educational policy in early Hong Kong and to make generalisations about the nature of English language education policy, the fact remains that British and Hong Kong government records of the 1840s and 1850s contain very few explicit statements of policy objectives on the role of English in the education system. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is no Hong Kong equivalent of Macaulay's Minute or Wood's Despatch which might have acted as a guide to the development of English language policy. The absence of clear documentary evidence about educational language policy means that our knowledge and understanding of English language policy can be derived only from the reconstruction of educational practice during this period. In other words, by examining what actually happened in the field of education in the 1840s and 1850s (as far as the sources allow) rather than by examining what officials claim did or should happen, we can begin to make sense of the policy which shaped the beginnings of English language education in Hong Kong.

A "bottom up" rather than a "top down" approach to the identification of policy necessarily involves answering such fundamental questions as:

- How many schools were operating in Hong Kong in the 1840s and 1850s?
- In what ways did the curricula of these schools differ?
- How many children were receiving instruction in English?
- Who administered the schools?
- How much money did educational agencies, including the government, devote to their schools?

The information about educational trends in Table 3 provides answers to some of these questions. These figures are derived from the government's annual reports on education which appeared in the *Hong Kong Blue Books* between 1844 and 1859. The reports in the *Blue Books*, which are one of the few sources of information about government involvement in education during this period, provide a simple record of the number of schools and students in the colony in a particular year. It was not until the mid-1850s that these reports were accompanied by a hand-written report of several paragraphs. However, during the period under consideration, these brief written reports perhaps not surprisingly provide little information about the government's policy on education for the Chinese, or its position on the role of English within the education system. In the absence of explicit statements about policy, we must seek to extrapolate it from figures.

The schools in Table 3 are classified into three main types according to language of instruction. Schools classified as Anglo-Chinese are ones in which (mainly) Chinese pupils were taught both English and Chinese. While the Chinese curriculum used in these schools would presumably have focused on the Confucian classics and the scriptures (which, incidentally, could hardly be described as an integrated course of studies), the *Blue Books* do not indicate whether English was taught as a subject (or set of subjects) or whether it was used as a medium of instruction for Western subjects. Schools classified as Chinese are ones in which native students received a traditional Confucian education. However, while Chinese subjects constituted the core of the curriculum of the village schools, in the 1850s these were supplemented by religious instruction and English language teaching. Schools classified as English are ones in which British or European pupils received a Western education in English (although it would appear that Chinese and Eurasian children also attended such schools).

Table 3 Trends in Western and Chinese education in Hong Kong, 1844-1859.

Type of School					Number of Pupils				
Year	Anglo-Chinese	Chinese	English	Others	Anglo-Chinese	Chinese	English	Others	No. of children in HK
1844	4	8	0	0	88	106	0	0	NA
1845	2	9	2	0	53	149	47	0	NA
1846	2	15	1	1	48	181	32	21	NA
1847	2	9	1	1	50	175	48	20	NA
1848	2	12	1	2	56	231	45	31	3,336
1849	1	5	1	2	42	45	15	39	4,861
1850	2	5	1	4	84	88	7	49	5,728
1851	2	6	1	3	90	131	7	76	4,991
1852	2	6	0	4	89	142	0	85	5,842
1853	2	6	1	3	66	150	8	52	5,672
1854	2	6	0	3	66	129	0	52	10,552
1855	2	13	1	3	129	301	45	68	13,555
1856	3	20	1	3	172	476	61	49	11,358
1857	2	15	1	3	57	506	97	55	7,491
1858	1	17	1	0	40	628	137	0	13,486
1859	1	19	1	1	49	788	83	17	18,349

Source: Collated from *Hong Kong Blue Books,* 1844-1859.

A number of other types of schools were established in Hong Kong in the 1840s and 1850s (such as Catholic seminaries and schools for the Portuguese), and most of these would presumably have provided some form of instruction in English. It is important to note that the figures presented in Table 3 may not be entirely accurate, particularly those in the 1840s, when conditions in Hong Kong were somewhat unstable. It is quite likely that a number of schools were omitted from the government's reports each year, particularly private Chinese schools and small tutorial establishments run by Europeans. In the case of schools classified as Anglo-Chinese, while it is unlikely that any major institution of this type has been omitted from the reports in the *Blue Books*, it is nevertheless quite likely that information about a number of small, short-lived Anglo-Chinese institutions has not been included in the official records. For example, according to Eitel, the chroni-

cler of nineteenth-century education in Hong Kong, the Rev. Schuck of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions opened an Anglo-Chinese school with 20 boys and 6 girls on 23 September 1844 in a "newly-built two-storied house in Gough Street" (Eitel, 1890-91, p. 311). However, there is no record of this institution in the education report of 1844. There also appear to be discrepancies between student numbers recorded in the official records and those reported by Eitel, who, though not resident in Hong Kong during the 1840s and 1850s, would (as Inspector of Schools in the late nineteenth century) have had access to government records from the early years of British rule. Although the figures presented in Table 3 need to be treated with a degree of caution, they do nevertheless provide a useful starting point for the analysis of educational trends in Hong Kong during the first two decades of colonial rule.

English language education in the mission schools

Early developments in English language education in Hong Kong were largely associated with the work of the Anglo-Chinese mission schools. As the figures in Table 3 indicate, in the first two decades of colonial rule only a handful of schools on the island offered Chinese students intensive instruction in English. Apart from 1855 and 1856, when enrolments in the colony's Anglo-Chinese schools were unusually high, for much of the 1840s and 1850s the number of Chinese boys and girls receiving a bilingual education in English and Chinese ranged between 40 (1858) and 90 (1851). In other words, only a very tiny minority of Chinese children in the colony received an Anglo-Chinese education. In fact, during this period only three Anglo-Chinese schools appear to have made any progress: the Morrison Education Society School (1842-1849), the Anglo-Chinese College (1845-1856) and St Paul's College (1850-1867).

The Morrison Education Society School, which had been established in Macao in 1839 as a memorial to the life of the first Protestant missionary in China, was the first foreign school to be set up in Hong Kong after the British occupation. The school, whose curriculum gave equal emphasis to

the English and Chinese languages, continued until its closure in the spring of 1849, when some of its remaining students were transferred to the newly established St Paul's College. The Morrison Education Society School's move to Hong Kong from Macao had been facilitated by the colony's first governor, Sir Henry Pottinger, who in 1842 granted a plot of land for the erection of its school building. In the following year, Pottinger in his capacity as Superintendent of Trade approved an annual grant of $1,200 to the Morrison Education Society. This grant had previously been allocated to the Anglo-Chinese College, which had been established at Malacca in 1818 with the aim of promoting the diffusion of Christianity in China and the "reciprocal cultivation of Chinese and European Literature" (London Missionary Society, 1825, p. 8). Colonial Office records indicate that Pottinger's withdrawal of support for the Anglo-Chinese College stemmed mainly from his annoyance at its failure to assist the British in the first Opium War: "not one person of any class could be found either at Malacca or elsewhere in the Straits who would come to assist in the department of Interpreters in the late war with China" (Pottinger, 21 August 1843, p. 265). When the Anglo-Chinese College moved to Hong Kong in 1843, the London Missionary Society petitioned Pottinger for a lot of land for the college, but this request was refused on the grounds that the society's plans were "altogether too premature and uncalled for, to say nothing of the self-evident political objections which might exist to some parts of them" (Pottinger, 22 August 1843, p. 252). In a despatch to Stanley in August 1843, Pottinger, though "not opposed to the diffusion of European knowledge and education", argued that there was little need for two similar institutions in the colony:

> ... two Institutions of this sort in a small place like Hong Kong - where I conceive it to be extremely doubtful whether any respectable Chinese will ever voluntarily avail themselves of the intended boon - will be totally superfluous. (Pottinger, 22 August 1843, p. 252)

Pottinger informed the British government of his decision to transfer financial support from the Anglo-Chinese College to the Morrison Education

Society School in a despatch to Stanley in December 1843. He justified the move, which involved a "very trifling" expense, by describing the valuable services which some of the school's students had already given as interpreters and translators for the British consular officials in China (Pottinger, 20 December 1843, pp. 435-438). The Foreign Office accepted Pottinger's decision, but Aberdeen emphasised that in return for the annual subsidy "the utmost facility shall be afforded to Her Majesty's Government for obtaining the services of persons educated by them for the performance of public duties in China" (Foreign Office, 25 March 1844, p. 65). However, before any payment was made, Pottinger's successor, John Davis, withdrew British government support for the school, primarily it would appear because of the excessive American influence in the society:

> I regret to say that the Morrison Education Society, the conduct of which has fallen exclusively into the hands of Americans, refuses altogether to coalesce with the Anglo-Chinese College or any other establishment. On this ground, and as well that of its exclusively educating Chinese, and not European youth, I deem it very little deserving of encouragement, since we want European interpreters and not Chinese, who are seldom to be trusted. (Davis, 3 May 1845, p.3a)

In the absence of official support, the society was forced to rely on donations from the Western business community in Hong Kong and Canton, and subscriptions from overseas. By the late 1840s, the financial position of the Morrison Education Society gradually deteriorated. The decline in the society's revenues was partly the result of the establishment of schools run by other missionary bodies, which meant that voluntary contributions to educational initiatives were spread more thinly, but was mainly caused by the economic depression which affected Hong Kong in the late 1840s. It is also significant that a number of the society's leading benefactors, notably Lancelot Dent, left Hong Kong during this period. Finally, as a result of the "almost hopeless condition" of its funds, the school was forced to close in the spring of 1849, having according to Eitel (1890-91, p. 317) "lost its hold upon the sympathies of the foreign community".

The Anglo-Chinese College moved to Hong Kong from Malacca under the headmastership of the Rev. James Legge after the signing of Treaty of Nanking, which had opened Hong Kong and the other treaty ports to missionary influence. Legge, who had assumed the headmastership of the college in 1839, set out his educational objectives for the institution in a letter dated 25 February, 1844: "I hope to see a flourishing school and a Theological seminary, with an Institute for native girls, all flourishing here" (Legge, 1905, p. 49). According to the *Blue Book* for 1846, the Anglo-Chinese College opened in January 1844, although there is no record of the school in the report in the *Blue Book* for that year. In his report on educational activities for 1844, Eitel (1890-91) states that the Anglo-Chinese College started its operations with 18 boarders, who were all being trained for the ministry. According to Eitel (1890-91, p. 311), these students "were engaged during the forenoon of every day in English studies and devoted the afternoons to their Chinese lessons". However, it would appear that Legge's hopes of training a body of native ministers at the college were not realised - in fact, the Anglo-Chinese College failed to produce a single native minister - and in his notes for the year 1851, Eitel (1890-91, p. 319) reported that the college was 'serving the purpose of a public school rather than that of a theological seminary as originally intended". The apparent failure of the religious objectives of the Anglo-Chinese College stemmed largely from the fact that its students were more interested in acquiring a knowledge of English than training for the priesthood. The majority of students who enrolled at the Anglo-Chinese College (and other mission schools) during this period appear to have done so for purely pragmatic reasons: a smattering of English was apparently sufficient for an enterprising Chinese boy to work as an interpreter or clerk for a European concern in Hong Kong or one of the other port cities of China. The economic advantages of an English education are illustrated by the fact that a graduate of an Anglo-Chinese mission school could expect to earn between $25 and $100 per month in the China-coast business sector, whereas a minister could hope for only around $20-25 (Eitel, 1890-91). Thus, one of the main problems

facing the administrators of Hong Kong's mission schools during this period was that their students were often primarily motivated by the prospect of a potentially lucrative career in business rather than the spiritual satisfaction which would doubtless be derived from the conversion of their fellow countrymen to Christianity. The key role which English played in socio-economic advancement in the treaty ports meant that students often left school after acquiring only a rudimentary knowledge of the language: "This is the great complaint of the schools in Hong Kong. The boys cannot be kept long enough to get even a tolerable acquaintance with English" (Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions records, cited in Smith, 1965, p. 173). The pragmatic attitude of mission-school students who were "tempted after a time into some mercantile office by the inducement of high pay" (Legge, 19 February, 1849, cited in Leung, 1989, p. 127) was a source of great disappointment to Legge. Indeed, Legge's recognition of the fact that few mission-school graduates became genuine converts was to prove a significant factor in his thinking on the future direction of educational language policy in the colony. According to Eitel (1890-91, p. 347), the Anglo-Chinese College closed at the end of 1856 after failing to achieve its religious and educational objectives: "though it had trained some useful clerks for mercantile offices, it failed from a missionary and educational point of view."

The other significant initiative in English language education during this period was the establishment in 1850 of the Church of England's first educational venture in Hong Kong, St Paul's College. According to Eitel (1890-91, p. 316), the college's first headmaster, James Summers, arrived in Hong Kong in 1848, and "commenced teaching a number of Chinese boys, collected from the lower classes of the Chinese population". In the following year, the education report in the *Blue Book* states that the school had an enrolment of 34 boys who were learning through the medium of Chinese, although Eitel (1890-91, p. 317) in his notes for the same year maintains that Summers' pupils "studied both the English and Chinese languages, besides receiving Christian instruction". The first official record

of St Paul's College appears in the *Blue Book* for 1850, when enrolments apparently stood at 21 and the mode of instruction was described as "general". The impetus for the development of St Paul's College seems to have come from the arrival in Hong Kong of the colony's first Anglican bishop, the Rev. George Smith, who was both an active teacher at the school and a strong influence on the government's Education Committee (Sweeting, 1990). According to Eitel (1890-91, p. 317), St Paul's College was set up with the objective of "training a body of native clergy and Christian teachers for the propagation of the Gospel in China according to the principles of the Church of England". However, in a letter written in 1849 to Lord Grey requesting British government assistance for the school, Smith argued that the education provided by St Paul's College might have a somewhat wider purpose than the propagation of the gospel:

> Indirectly, however, the British Government may expect to reap many advantages from the existence of such an institution in a newly acquired dependency like Hong Kong. After the greatest care in the training of native youths - we are prepared to experience not a few cases in which the highest intellectual qualifications will be unaccompanied by those peculiar moral qualifications & natural Xtian principles, indispensably necessary to every Chinese set apart for the office of a Xtian teacher. In such cases, we should not deem our time & labour lost, if we were only permitted to realize a portion of our primary aim. We should thus be enabled to add to the number of intelligent, well-conducted, and well-educated native youths, who would be in a position to render valuable services as interpreters - to spread abroad a favourable estimate of British Xtianity & civilization, - and to raise generally the tone of international intercourse. (Smith, 28 July, 1849, pp. 284-286)

After a delay of two years, the Foreign Office approved the payment of an annual grant of $1,200 to St Paul's College on condition that each year the college trained a certain number of students as government interpreters (Eitel, 1890-91). During the 1850s, enrolments at St Paul's College appear to have ranged between 20 and 40, although it should be pointed out that these were boosted by the demise of the Morrison Education Society School in 1849,

and perhaps by the closure of the Anglo-Chinese College in 1856. At the end of the period under consideration, St Paul's College (with 40 boys) was the only remaining Anglo-Chinese school in Hong Kong.

As the figures in Table 3 reveal, in the early years of colonial rule a handful of institutions provided an English education for the small number of European children who were in Hong Kong. In the 1840s, the Anglican Colonial Chaplain, the Rev. Vincent Stanton, administered a school for native English speakers, which until its closure in 1849 provided a European education for between 30 and 50 children. The most significant initiative in the 1850s was St Andrew's School, which was established in 1855 after a public meeting at which a number of prominent European residents expressed dissatisfaction with the limited educational opportunities available to English-speaking children. As a result, the meeting resolved that a public school be established "for the Education of Children, of whatever Nation, Religion, Class, or Condition" (*China Mail*, 1855, p. 38). Although English language education for European children is not directly relevant to this article, it is important to note that Chinese and Eurasian pupils appear to have attended European schools in early Hong Kong. The *Blue Book* for 1855 states that students at St Andrew's were "without distinction of countries, including Chinese" (p. 259). It is interesting that the brief report on St Andrew's in the *Blue Book* for 1859 states that "The principal attendants at this school are Portuguese and Chinese besides some Parsees and children belonging to other countries" (p. 190). It would seem quite likely therefore that until its closure in 1861 St Andrew's School provided language instruction for both native and non-native speakers of English, who were presumably all taught in the same class and by the same methods.

Apart from the Anglo-Chinese schools and English schools, a number of other types of Western schools were operating in Hong Kong in the 1840s and 1850s. From the late 1840s onwards, a number of small schools were established (usually with the support of the Catholic Church) for the colony's Portuguese community. Although the mode of instruction at these schools is generally described as Portuguese in the *Blue Books*, since many Portu-

guese worked as clerks in nineteenth-century Hong Kong, it is highly likely that these schools provided some form of rudimentary English teaching. Indeed, according to Braga (1971), English was the principal medium of instruction in the Portuguese schools in early Hong Kong. A number of Roman Catholic institutions also appeared to flourish during this period, notably the Seminary at Queen's Road, which, according to the *Blue Books*, provided Chinese pupils with instruction in Latin and Chinese from 1850 to 1857. Government records indicate that enrolments at the Seminary remained quite steady during this period (between 14 and 25). The apparent stability of enrolments at the Seminary contrasts quite sharply with the fluctuating numbers and rapid turnover of students experienced by the Anglo-Chinese mission schools. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the Chinese students who attended the Seminary presumably did so for purely religious reasons, and unlike their counterparts at the Protestant schools were not tempted to look for work in the China-coast business sector, where, unsurprisingly, a knowledge of Latin was of limited value.

English language education in the Chinese schools

While the Anglo-Chinese mission schools led the way in the provision of English language education for the colony's Chinese community, educational development in early Hong Kong was dominated by traditional Chinese education. As the figures in Table 3 indicate, enrolments at the Chinese schools were higher than those at the Anglo-Chinese schools, particularly from the mid-1850s onwards, when, as we have seen, the number of Chinese families in the colony began significantly to increase. The content and methods of education employed at the five government-aided vernacular schools were similar to those of the Chinese *ssu-shu* on the mainland, although from 1850 the traditional curriculum was supplemented by Bible reading, which reflected the influence of the Protestant churchmen on the Education Committee (Ng Lun, 1984).

In his account of educational activities in 1853, Eitel (1890-91, p. 322) reports that English teaching was introduced in two of the five government

schools "by means of two Chinese pupil teachers obtained from St Paul's College". The Education Committee's report in the *Blue Book* for 1854 refers to this historically significant development, but provides little information about the initiative other than the fact that the "two Chinese lads" were paid £5 per year between them for their services. The report also recommended "the appointment in each school capable of enlargement of an assistant schoolmaster, with a knowledge of the English language" (Education Committee Report, 1854, p. 120). The introduction of English language teaching in the two vernacular schools seems to have been closely connected with the appointment of James Legge to the Education Committee in 1853. Legge was also apparently instrumental in the introduction of half-yearly prizes for pupils in the government-aided Chinese schools, including one of $1.00 for greatest proficiency in the English language.

It would appear from the education reports in the *Blue Books* that rudimentary English teaching was extended to some of the other government-assisted Chinese schools in the late 1850s. The *Blue Book* for 1857 reports that "some of the principal schools have a class of instruction in English" (p. 85), while in November of the following year an announcement appeared in the *Hong Kong Government Gazette* (1858, p. 104) informing parents that "schools for gratuitous instruction have been established by the Government of Hong Kong ... wherein the Chinese Elementary books, their Classics, Geography, etc., and the English language, are taught by competent Native Teachers". The *Blue Book* for 1859 indicates that the government employed three peripatetic Chinese teachers "to give instruction in the elements of English reading" in "eight of the Schools in Victoria and its immediate vicinity" (p. 100). The surviving records give little information about the nature of the English instruction given in the government-assisted schools, although according to Alfred Weatherhead, who lived in Hong Kong in the late 1850s, pidgin English rather than the Queen's English was the focus of instruction: "In the Government school for Chinese children this strange jargon forms a regular branch of their studies" (Weatherhead, n.d., ?1859, p. 14).

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this article indicates that the colonial government attached little importance to the promotion of English language education in Hong Kong in the first two decades of British rule. The lack of initiative in the field of English language education resulted from the interplay of a series of political, economic, social and educational factors. The most significant external influence on educational policy in Hong Kong was the *laissez-faire* approach to education which was prevalent in early Victorian Britain. However, the colonial government's reluctance to embark upon major educational initiatives also stemmed from developments in Hong Kong society during this period, most notably the uncertainty over Hong Kong's long-term political future, the parlous state of the government's finances, and the somewhat unusual, predominantly adult, male society which emerged after the arrival of the British.

In the period between 1842 and 1859, government initiatives in public education centred on the provision of modest financial assistance for some of the colony's Chinese village schools. In the mid-1850s, rudimentary instruction in English was added to the curriculum of a handful of government-assisted vernacular schools. The introduction of English teaching in the Chinese schools appears to have resulted from a combination of factors: the influence of James Legge on the government's Education Committee; the government's desire to create a favourable impression with the colony's Chinese community during a period of tension and hostility in Sino-British relations; the arrival of increasing numbers of "respectable" Chinese families from Taiping-ravaged China; and the growth of the economy and the government machinery, which created the need for a corps of English-speaking Chinese to act as middlemen between the European and Chinese communities.

In early Hong Kong, the British authorities in Hong Kong and London gave only modest assistance and encouragement to initiatives in English language education organised by the various Protestant and Catholic mis-

sionary bodies. Colonial Office records, particularly those of the 1840s, reveal that the British had no great desire to see the indiscriminate promotion of English language education in the colony. Indeed, the limited pecuniary support which the British government gave (at different times) to the three mission schools in early Hong Kong sprang more from the short-term need to create a pool of reliable interpreters and translators to assist its diplomatic staff in the treaty ports than a desire to promote English language education in Hong Kong. During this period, it would appear that the religious and educational aims of the Anglo-Chinese mission schools were continually undermined by the somewhat different motives of the colonial authorities and the Chinese students who attended the schools. The former appear to have viewed the mission schools as a relatively cheap means of supplying the government with bilingual functionaries, while the latter tended to see an English education, no matter how rudimentary, as the means to economic advancement in the China coast business community.

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