

Chapter 3

Being and colonial collaboration

Everyone who completes a humanities PhD looks back on a book – a single book – that cast a long shadow over their thesis. The book was perceptive, free of obvious bias, and exhilarating in style. The book seemed at home in the salons of decision and in smoky speakeasies. Whether its concerns were what happened on the chandeliered Bund or a back alley mattered nothing. It was perfectly incredulous about everything in the world. Contexts had no bearing on the same unwavering voice of reason. Finding such a book drains ambition. For a time, there seemed no point in writing.

In my case, it was John Hunter Boyle's *China and Japan at War: The Politics of Collaboration*. From the outset of his book, Boyle said that just about every government was the puppet of another to some extent and that only 'the fiction of international law' permitted the enduring myth of national independence.¹²⁵ Like every prescient retrospective, he had an unqualified voice. But that was not his main attraction.

Boyle had a special view of what an academic should be: they catapulted into the public domain those ideas everyone thought true but no-one wanted to hear out aloud and they did not care to fit into contemporary foreign policy discussions as useful contributions. For him, colonial occupation was a contest on several levels and no moral judgment should be applied especially to anyone. That contrarian pragmatism meant that the *dasein* of occupied colonial subjects, although fleeting and widely thought to be incredible, was something to be assembled inside a frame of its own making and taken seriously because 'the they' had been proven variable. Everyone deserved to be interpreted by how they acted. Their *dasein* choices, authentic or unauthentic, turned not on whether pro-they or not but pro-self or pro-human. Boyle could view Americans as the Filipinos did, the British as the Burmese did, and the Dutch as the Indonesians did. He understood Wang Jingwei like no-one else. Japan's New Order of East Asia could at times shimmer as real to him as the European colonialism it had disturbed.

Consider how mythical Boyle could make look not only the post-war explanations of nation, but the justifications people used for their actions at the time. For instance, a collaborator who pocketed gains from the oppressive power could be decried by 'true' nationalists as unpatriotic for no reason other than themselves being left off the gravy train. Or, elements of the oppressive colonial power often bickered over continued supported or replacing their collaborator. Backing them allowed a corrupt slice of an economy to be maintained without the losses caused by disturbance; it was seldom about economy among the middlemen being necessary for national development. In each example, however, when the transcendental of nation was stripped away both as an ostensible cause of a particular action and a retrospective myth, the actions of parties only maximized personal benefit – no 'they' conferred *dasein*, no authentic *dasein* could be generated through being summoned out of it. The change of the nation in charge made the government one of individuals grouped in official buildings, but not institutions, acting officially but for private reasons. How, exactly, the British could be seen differently when they resumed their power in Hong Kong in September 1945 is not at all clear.

In his own way, Boyle – a plain-speaking Californian – offered an invitation to write de-Westernized history of colonial East Asia. He made possible a genuinely post-colonial relativism for the Far East. He did so by framing competing nationalist critiques of invasion and accommodation without fear or favour he peered with a rare humanism into fractured constituencies creating a new 'they' from scratch.

The un beholden Boyle was all but ignored for his efforts. Too lacking in partisan perspective to attract a Western political base, no-one in the East on the winning side wanted anything to do with him either. *Dasein* floated up on the air away from an endless plantation or the muddy depths of a tin mine. It was caught and banked in a heavy safe by sharply dressed company men. Alienated *dasein* was as real as the tung-oiled floorboards they walked over, the wicker chairs they reclined in, and the pens they pushed. Such *dasein* conferred legitimacy on their own version of it. Taking boardroom space, monitoring share prices, estate outputs, and the like, could not only be treated as *dasein*, but it had a silencing effect on the careful handiness of the countryside that had made their worthless supervision – forgive me, 'taking care of' – possible. Boyle attacked narrow nationalistic views of collaboration, as in effect

‘they-less’ self-indulgence ranked according to the observances of a football fan – complete with a scarf, the Guernsey and an appearance on the terrace. In this way, Boyle laid bare the post-war colonial order itself. No-one thanked him for it. But I do, very much.

This chapter makes an argument that during a colonial occupation there is a distortion of dasein by allocating its merit to those who do not openly or mindfully participate in its transformative practice. i.e. the civic compact of supplying dasein to others by putting one’s own intention into practice, and developing a creative network, was not only impoverished by food shortages and the failure of unconditional social security networks, but embodied a voluntarism severely underestimated by colonial states in value until it dissipated in periods of food privation or colonially induced economic recession.

An example of a land owner in Hong Kong who was absent when the Japanese took control of the former British colony in 1941 is used to show how collaborative cooperation became a legal test for commercial opportunity. Yet the colonial fiddle not only had implications for those who achieved wealth or stability in their lives by returning to the colony and accepted indeterminacy of dasein measures. Loss of colonial love affected those who fled the Japanese and left their property behind, because such people, in particular, forsook the ‘temporality of taking care of things’ and the ‘mode of circumspectly having to do with things at hand’.¹ It was not only that one got a shot at dasein by working for the Japanese, but flinging open windows to catch an evening breeze, guarding and repairing what you owned were possessory dasein recognized even by the rapacious war monster.

The chapter continues through a study of a certain incident in the British Embassy in Tokyo in 1961 showing that its ratification of decisions made by the former enemy Japanese state and its collaborators over privately-owned Hong Kong property confirmed that the state, and its prescriptions of inauthentic dasein, holds a gravitational pull that must be resisted by all people and things. The ‘they’ of the state find and expose their limits in misuse of misallocation of private property prompting a practice of dasein in communicative works and portable vestiges of creativity to enrich a network, making the dasein of protest especially

¹ Heidegger, 322.

important not only for political change but as a destination of individual and therefore collective or 'side-by-side' dasein.

Collaboration and dasein

Hong Kong provides a useful testing ground for the effect on dasein of colonial collaboration. In the Korean context, Ou Byung-Chae noted that, 'from the perspective of active collaborators, their behaviour was a function of their belief that collaboration was the only available means for preserving the nation'.² On that account, collaboration became nationalistic because Western ideology ceased to offer a source of inspiration or comparison for the people of an occupied nation.³ An individual did not simply switch to the inauthentic chatter of the usurping colonial state in a seduction or diversion from pursuit of dasein; one followed its edicts as a matter of personal and national survival.

Prasenjit Duara argued for rejection both nationalism and humanitarianism as foundations for judgment on collaborators; instead we should focus on nothing more or less than the extent of a collaborator's inhumanity.⁴ Duara's inhumanity index gives us a place to begin accounting for deeds of the past without importing human rights notions influenced by the West's ultimate victory in the Pacific theatre of the Second World War, or retrospective Leftism, or any nationalist-infused accountancies of atrocity. Yet tracing the flow of dasein's proceeds between the occupant state and the collaborator, or between collaborators, offers something more than shame shaming, comeuppance or reconciliation. It permits us to see how asymmetrical colonial states trade in dasein, how they manipulate and misappropriate credit for being. That, surely, is transformative knowledge even if the world continues to ignore the lessons of history.

Esselstrom followed a similar theme. He described how Korean collaborators saw collaboration with Japan as a means of checking the 'predatory tendencies' of Western

² Ou-Byung Chae (2010) 'The 'Moment of the Boomerang' Never Came: Resistance and Collaboration in Colonial Korea, 1919-1945' *Journal of Historical Sociology* 23(3): 418.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Prasenjit Duara (2008) 'Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China' *The China Journal* 59(1): 142-144.

powers and thought that reform and social improvement could come from collaboration.⁵ In a discussion of the defection and collaboration in the later 1930s and early 1940s of various members the Mainland Chinese National Socialist Party to the Japanese cause, Jeans argued their motivation was to achieve the reunification of China, to end the suffering of their compatriots, to regain lost economic rights and because they held a belief that, in a world overrun by the Axis powers, there was no real prospect of help from the West.⁶ Personal sacrifice to a life in collaboration under a transcendental ambition to hold the nation together appears founded on a view that it would be better to have people collaborating with thoughts of eventually raising their flag and having their national anthem played, or finding a measure of autonomy for an economically important part of their polity, than to have collaborators drawn into the colonial 'they' by the promise of big houses or on-selling bags of rice at an extortionate mark-up.

The colourful Hong Kong collaborator King Hui cited numerous senior people in the business world who were collaborating with the Japanese as a reason for him to follow suit and that, by accepting a position in the Japanese administration (1941-1945), he 'would be helping Hong Kong return to normal'.⁷ Having given full account to Hui being a very unreliable memoirist – little more than a fast-talking and a-moral merchant – he seems genuinely unaware that with such words he appropriated the 'national salvation' argument i.e. better him than the vile opportunists. Moreover, colonial arbitrariness and ultimatums might be less important than widely assumed; there could be a space in the idle talk of the colonial 'they' filled willingly and with full permission with the 'national salvation' argument if it is understood that the symbols of a sovereign people are earned.

The diverse population of Hong Kong was too riven by Nationalist, British, Mainland Communist, clan, Mainland village and nascent Hong Kong regional sympathies for there to be discerned a unifying approach to collaboration as preserving a shared idea of the territory's independent polity. Understood this way, collaboration in Hong Kong had a more self-

⁵ Erik Esselstrom (2006) 'Japanese Police and Korean Resistance in Prewar China: The Problem of Legal Legitimacy and Local Collaboration' *Intelligence and National Security* 21(3): 351.

⁶ Roger Jeans, 'Third Party Collaborators in Wartime China: The Case of the Chinese National Socialist Party' in David Barrett and Larry Shyu (eds), *China in the Anti-Japanese War 1937-1945: Politics, Culture and Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001) 127-128.

⁷ Chamberlain, King Hui: The Man Who Owned All the Opium in Hong Kong, 138.

preserving character that could hide behind 'national salvation' without meaning a syllable of it; that the narrowest dasein of 'self' merely transferred to the overlord of the day who maintained its slightly contained expression.

Cultural theorist Poshek Fu noted that a spectrum of collaboration ranging from 'selfless resistance' to 'shameless collaboration' should be regarded as less than helpful.⁸ The collaborator him- or herself might not reflect on their behaviour in terms of shamelessness or even mild guilt due to a strong psychological underlay which incorporates ideals of national reunification, or the disappearing hope of salvation from the West, or a view that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' and the like. The Wang Jingwei government signed an agreement with the Japanese on 9 January 1943 to pass to the collaborationist government all foreign-owned concessions in China.⁹ This was with the exception of Hong Kong. It remained firmly under direct Japanese rule under martial law. Nevertheless, in the form of the collaboration government of Wang Jingwei, the Chinese people of Hong Kong had an archetype of an administration based on a purportedly nation-saving ideal. Many never had direct experience of a Chinese civilian government trying in vain to normalise a pro-Japanese platform.

The foreign affairs minister of the collaborationist government in Nanjing, Chu Minyi, frequently depicted the Pacific War as a fight with imperialist aggression and colonial domination – it was a war of liberation waged by East Asian peoples against the imperialists.¹⁰ The basis of collaborationist rhetoric was usually the frustration at not being able to end the domination of China by imperialist European powers¹¹. This made the military muscle of the Japanese a necessary evil if the European imperialists were to be forced out permanently. Beyond the cultural and racial ballpark inhabited by the Chinese and Japanese, it was unclear why it was better to have dasein alienated by a militarist and unempathetic Asian nation than a European one. Chinese collaboration implied that Japanese colonial governments would come to be seen as placeholders for post-war tribute-paying Chinese national government. Perhaps the Japanese in victory would operate as a protection racket preventing European

⁸ Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance and Collaboration, Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai 1937-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993) xiv.

⁹ Wai Chor So (2011) 'Race, Culture and Anglo-American Powers: Views of Chinese Collaborators' *Modern China* 37(1): 95.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

exploitative influence. This intensified the jockeying to surrender *dasein* and embrace ambiguity among collaborators. It also powered their abrupt rebuke when failing to give satisfaction to their Japanese overlords.

Collaborators and the transfer of property

By adopting an approved course of conduct, a collaborator established an immunity from the legal, administrative and political changes that always occurred when one ruler took over from another. Mrs Kwok Wai Hing, for example, had a perfectly understandable reason to sell her apartment in the early months of the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong: to put the proceeds towards a new house on an up-market subdivision in Shameen, Canton (now Guangzhou).¹² Although Kwok was a landlord who had committed the sin of being absent when the Japanese received the surrender of Hong Kong, she was treated quite differently from other those listed as absentee landlords. Although hasty sale of real property was used as a source of tax revenue by the Japanese, it also controlled and rewarded people in occupied areas. Mrs Kwok instigated the 128th property transfer registration of 1942. Some special absentees were permitted the privilege to deal freely with their Hong Kong property from a place outside the so-called 'Captured Colony'. Kwok was one of them. One could easily conclude that Kwok was known to the Japanese before the Occupation.

The Japanese Deed and associated documents records the sale by Kwok of her 875 sq ft family apartment in December 1942.¹³ She sold her apartment in 40 King Kwong St, Happy Valley to Mr Lau Chau Ping, a grain and dried food merchant, who lived above his shop in 3F/3 Wing Lok St, Western District. Lau performed the role of middleman supplying food to the Japanese Imperial Army. The bulk of the invading force was transferred to Southern theatres of battle in July 1942. A garrison force of some five thousand soldiers remained behind in Hong Kong to police it.

¹² HKRS 57-6-128 (JD); I.L. 3330. Translated by Dr. Guobin Zhu, with additional assistance from Dr. Rita Cheung.

¹³ HKRS 57-6-128 (JD); I.L. 3330.

The identity and civic suitability of locals, such as Kwok and Lau, had to be put beyond doubt before they could engage in property transfers under the new regime. For instance, to purchase the apartment, Lau Chor Ping needed to satisfy the 'Certificate of Identity' process imposed by the Occupation authorities. This required proof of house occupation, right of residence, evidence of an appointment letter from the House Registration Office, and a receipt showing payment of property tax. In other parts of the Japanese Empire, this vetting process was called a 'Good Citizen' test. It was not only authentic dasein that reached out to use and supply like kinds of dasein to others. The 'they' did it too and its success, no doubt, relied on the confusion created around dasein itself. One was less likely to see the stamp duty or administrative fees paid to a colonial master as vanishing dasein in circumstances in which one was told that transfer of land was a privilege given only to trusted collaborators. The new power proclaiming 'Asia for Asians' surely did so to end alienation of dasein and to end the politics of its referral to any state. Did it not?

Kwok, the transferor in this case, was resident outside of Hong Kong. Living across the border in 35 Yi De Road, Canton, she executed a power of attorney with a Hong Kong lawyer who sold the apartment on her behalf for ¥320, 000.¹⁴ To sell her house she was not required to cross the border but, like Lau Chor Ping in Hong Kong, she was required to satisfy the bureaucratic routine of residency and occupational legitimacy in Canton, which she did. During the Japanese occupation of the colony it became renowned for poor rental returns, non-paying tenants and inflation devaluing already paltry rents. The Japanese, despite the complaints of landlords, did next to nothing about non-paying tenants, or tenants who divided the property of landlords among several sub-tenants, because they saw little point in involving themselves in matters of civil enforcement. It was against this background that Kwok Wai Hing sold her Hong Kong apartment. The last thing she wanted was a tenant.

Fig. 1 The Power of Attorney Between Kwok and her Lawyer

¹⁴ Ibid.



The transferee, the dried food merchant Lau Chor Ping, had ¥320, 000 to spend on an apartment after nearly a year of occupation. Clearly not quite everyone in Hong Kong was starving or liquidating their possessions. Kwok got a fair price from a Hong Kong collaborator and did so early in the Occupation before runaway inflation took hold. Kwok no doubt had collaborated in some way to avoid being regarded as an absent landlord and a presumed enemy in the landlord audit of 1941-2. Given Lau's profession, it is hard not to see the transaction as a way of shifting money between fellow collaborators with the consent of the Japanese. Monetization of *dasein* occurred among a network of speculators comfortable with ambiguity and indeterminacy. Kwok could spend the money while it was still worth something and Lau received a spare flat to care-for that would soar in value and utility if the British returned to their colony.

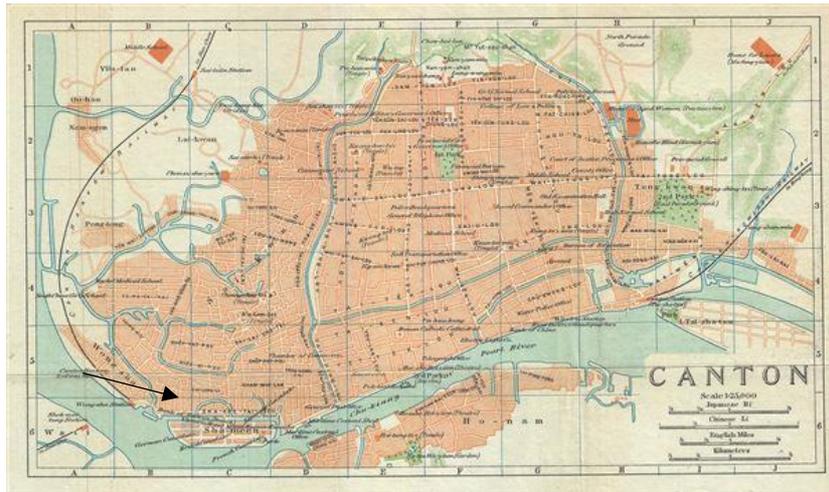
The documents detailing the transaction between Lau Chor Ping and Kwok Wai Hing suggest that 'Good Citizenship' was a status an individual needed to take care of in order to be able to continue to make transactions in property. To enter such transactions, one needed a profession or a livelihood and this could only be the case if one continued to offer commercial support to Japanese military objectives. The *how-to* consciousness of the colonial state could

be evidenced in bureaucratic procedures to buy and sell property but its greatest impact was in its community-creating role among collaborators.

Fig. 2 The Identity Document of Lau



From the map of Guangzhou (below) Kwok Wai Hing bought a new house on a recently developed street on the other side of the river (the British called this part, “The Creek”). It was a new part of town that was proximate to the Shameen Island district but only just beginning to be subdivided and built on in 1942. Kwok Wai Hing’s house in Canton has long since been replaced with a towering, up-market apartment block. No. 35 was a large block of land fronting directly on to the river. The Hong Kong proceeds bought a large second floor apartment that would have enjoyed an outlook on riverside parkland stretching from the concession at Shameen toward the Pearl River estuary.



Most collaboration studies deserve to be seen as unremarkable. Although local people willingly answer the call of the inauthentic 'them', most collaboration was a bet placed on the proceeds of pre-occupation previous *dasein*. Yet the commonplace sheds no light on how individuals try to manage political uncertainty through collaborative permissions to engage in land transfer practices. The Kwok-Lau transaction was in the early days of the Occupation when food was relatively plentiful. The Japanese were not using land transfers as an acute tool of wealth extraction as they did as 1944 dawned.

Not allowing self-preservation measures of locals, or not taking steps to support it, even when their occupation was a failure, was believed by the members of the Japanese occupying force to be within its rightful remit as the operative military ruler. Yet people of an occupied territory relied on a degree of commercial conditionality. They could become unbound from their new colonial ruler if basic requirements for livelihood were not met. This was attested to in Hong Kong by sharp acceleration in informal transactions in Japanese Occupation era rural land after 1943. Many remained within the bureaucratic grip of the Japanese during the desperate denouement of their Hong Kong colonial experiment confirming to them that the snatch of *dasein* – the property proceeds of being – although begun by the British continued on under the Japanese despite the experience of collaborators not being obviously negative in the early years of the Occupation.

The early part of the Occupation tended toward optimism. After the ransack of chattels in Christmas/New Year 1941-2, and once the identity of locals was verified, real property began

to change hands from ruler to collaborator, and from collaborator to collaborator, in a measured atmosphere of trust and mutual back-scratching. After the Battle of Midway in June 1942, however, the ability of the Japanese to indefinitely wage war in the Southern sector was impaired by the loss of most of their aircraft carrier fleet. Holding on to territorial gains, and their commodities, became the name of the game. This meant extracting from the new colonies gold, cash, rice, ammunition, petrol, pig iron and rubber to keep the war machine chugging until peace on reasonable terms could be sued-for. Part of the impoverishment phase was to widen the circle of participants to include the suspiciously ambivalent. Increasingly, the ambivalent were drawn, kicking and screaming, into a game in which there was no collaboration contract, no gentle subtraction of the proceeds on dasein, but merely abuse of extortive property taxation.

The people who own residential property on the REP list are, with one exception, on a form of probation. Li Sam's property found its way to being second on the list. He had a four-bedroom house in the Western style in Shelly St, Hong Kong. These days the Mid-Levels escalator passes by where his house once stood. The documents in Chinese accompanying his Japanese Deed show that he identified himself at the Japanese Consulate in Macao in late 1942 and indicated a willingness to return. In April 1943, he returned to Hong Kong and the Japanese permitted him to register the house under their new registration system almost immediately.¹⁵ He had no period of probation. This in itself calls for a rebuttable presumption that he was involved in pro-Japanese activities from the get-go. Probably a rainmaker for gold, fuel, rice or ammunition. By being willing to return to a city that was, by the first months of 1943, starving and destitute, Li Sam had left a comfortable life in Macao to do so (a neutral place under Portuguese rule and a haven for many people who had fled Hong Kong). The Japanese clearly had no reason to suspect him of making trouble and facilitated his return. He slotted quickly into his dasein network of objects and people and neither were used to pressure him to behave. Others were not as fortunate as Li Sam.

Non-collaborators and the transfer of property

¹⁵ HKRS57-6-8651 JD I.L. 125 [translated by Dr Guobin Zhu 20 May 2010]

Lau and Kwok gladly answered the call of the 'they' to join them in an inauthentic orthodoxy conserving the proceeds of their dasein for personal gains. I take as my next example the land transfer and taxation arrangements used on those who were ambivalent about their new ruler, and which occurred in the last eighteen months of the Japanese rule of Hong Kong (1943-1945). A signal feature of Chinese-owned residential property on the list of absent landlords in the Register of Enemy Properties (REP list) was revealed by examination of the corresponding Japanese Deeds. Those who were on the list and returned to their homes in Hong Kong were usually given a very hard time in regard to taxation. Those who were not troubled, who sailed past bureaucratic obstacles with their good citizenship rating, could only be presumed collaborators. It is quite easy to see the difference between the two categories because the Japanese implemented a wait-and-see approach to registration of properties held by absent landlords. That is, the administrative scheme instituted by the Japanese ensured that landlords could have no legal dealings with their property until they had proven their submission to the new colonial ruler. Proof of civic loyalty mattered more to the Japanese in this respect than receipt of stamp duty and other transfer taxes. Toward the end of the Occupation, however, the extractive demands steadily widened and intensified. Being characterised as a bad citizen did not prevent registration of property. But it came at a very high premium nonetheless.

The Japanese house registration system was implemented by Proclamation No. 30 on 23 July 1942. It was mandatory but it took brothers Li Shing Liang and Li Shing Hiu nearly two years to establish their worthiness to the Japanese to register their property under the new registration system. They were finally permitted to register their one bedroom house of the Chinese style in Hollywood Road, but had been kept waiting until 4 April 1944 to do so.¹⁶ In contrast, Li Cheung On had been permitted to register his property under the Japanese system without any serious delay on 3 December 1942. In April 1945 he found a willing buyer, Yeung Yu Lok, for his five compartment storage unit.¹⁷ This assignment was permitted by the Japanese provided that a relatively modest 'stamp duty payment' of M¥16, 800 was paid.¹⁸ This was a preferable course for the Japanese to secure cooperation of local people – give

¹⁶ HKRS57-6-8669 (JD) I.L. 4205 [translated Dr Guobin Zhu 20 May 2010]

¹⁷ HKRS57-6-9221 (JD) I.L. 3940 (translated by Dr Guobin Zhu 20 May 2010]

¹⁸ HKRS57-6-9221 (JD) I.L. 3940.

them the benefit of doubt, allow them to register their property and impose a moderate tax on land transactions. The plan had first been revealed in the Senji Geppo (Monthly Report) in April 1942. Although it was generally carried out, overall, it was compromised in other cases. The progressive settings encountered by collaborators became shaded by extortion-like practices used on people who had come forward to the Japanese too late in the day.

Wong Wing and Wong Kwong were brothers co-owned a modest three bedroom tenement in Yong Li St, Hong Kong.¹⁹ Wong Wing and his partner were only permitted to register their property on 24 April 1944. Their property, like the others, had been listed in the Register of Enemy Properties for being held by an absent landlord. Wong Kwong was a shipbuilding engineer born in Hong Kong in 1875. He had worked for Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping and Bailey and Co's shipyard in Hong Kong. These affiliations were no doubt regarded by the Japanese as pro-enemy in nature. He spent most of his working life outside of Hong Kong and in 1933 he became managing director of the Sui Fung Co and the Mutual Trading Company, Hankow. Yu Kwong was granted power of attorney over the house as soon as it was registered. Wong Kwong would have been 69 years of age in 1944. It seems likely that Yu Kwong was a concubine on civil terms with both brothers.

So Hung Shi (alias Fung Dong) was also a local Chinese listed in the REP as a suspect house owner. He had the double misfortune of his father, So Hoi Sui, dying and it occurring so close to the Japanese Occupation that the British had not been able to complete the probate process.²⁰ The will stated that his father was a merchant by trade. The Japanese had Hung Shi in a difficult bind. If he wanted to take possession of the godown (warehouse) that his father had left him in the will, he would have to give something up. The adjoining tenement house in 57 Wing Lok St was occupied by him and his bereaved mother, who had been left the house by her husband. The Japanese solution to the situation was to require the son to pay a steep ¥33, 000 'conveyancing fee'.²¹ He did in 1944. The choice he was effectively making was either to sell the contents of the godown to secure the warehouse itself or sell the adjoining house to keep the godown with its goods.

¹⁹ hks57-6-8639 (JD) I.L. 423 (translated by Dr Guobin Zhu 20 May 2010).

²⁰ HKRS57-6-9091 (JD) (translated by Dr Guobin Zhu).

²¹ HKRS57-6-9091 (JD).

From the So Hung Shi transaction it was apparent that, by 1944, the Japanese had perfected their extortion techniques. Economic privation cause an ever-wider number of participants to come into their system. They were clearly extorting him and this is further shown by the fact that So Hung Shi could prove by receipt that he had paid \$HK4, 677.35 estate duty to the British on the death of his father. Thus, the Japanese administration did not flinch at the unjust prospect of forcing a man to pay twice either because he was suspected as pro-enemy or, perhaps more prosaically, because they thought he was good for it.

By early 1945, the Japanese Empire was shrinking as one military loss followed another; by mid-February of that year Iwo Jima was under attack by the Americans and by the end of the month Manila would be liberated. In Hong Kong, the imperative for Governor Isogai (and Governor Tanaka after him) was to carry on punishing unaligned locals at all costs. They failed to sense that, as the extortions like those visited on So Hung Shi grew ever more outrageous, the already frail Japanese claim to observance of their system became weaker. Control of a recognisable progress narrative was key to long and short colonial tenures alike. Enemies stood outside the progress narrative as needing punishment for delayed assignment of dasein proceeds. They did not enter quickly enough into the circles of idle talk and ambiguity such as would confirm them among the elect of the 'they.'

Dasein and the compulsion of colonial states

A state's representatives act as if the state was eternal. A state's officers and agents never gave up hope. Even when ousted, they plotted their return. They always let sleeping dogs of the previous administration lie. If the chance to recolonize a place was offered, the subject could be confirmed in their property long as the subject stayed loyally with their property, and did not make waves. The British usually did not legally or politically undo what was done by the Japanese in Hong Kong. Instead they proceeded in a pragmatic acceptance of Japanese property crimes as if they had the absolution of a conquering sovereign's acts. The colonial state's indifference to political disloyalty of a real property grantee does not turn on the nationality of the occupant or their commitment to fair play or foul. When the state is frail or

transitioning, the risks people take with their dasein assignments, and their likely faultlessness if coerced out of its proceeds, unite the departing, arriving and returning colonial states in a singular hopeless aim: to confirm their legitimacy.

The fortunes of the Khaleeli family of Conduit Road, Hong Kong seems a case in point of colonial indifference to the fate of individual possessory dasein, but deeper digging revealed its purpose was to recognize another's. The infamous Robert De la Sala in Kowloon Tong, and the forgotten Milly Wood of Tsim Sha Tsoi also supply their own examples of it. The Khaleelis had at least eight members residing in Hong Kong. They enjoyed a large house on 20 Conduit Rd given a grandiose value by the Japanese of HK\$983, 000; this property appeared in the REP where it provoked my curiosity.²² The family was Muslim and likely to be Northern Indian or Pakistani. The house in Conduit Road was registered in both the names of Mr A. Khaleeli and several 'Begums' – to denote an honoured woman.

Situated in the Mid-Levels, the Khaleeli house overlooked Mosque St, indicating the piety of the family along with its fabulous wealth. Having occupied the house since at least 1902, a long list of transactions existed relating to the land from that date, including assignments and several mortgages. From these it can be inferred that the house was used regularly as collateral for business-related loans.²³ The Khaleelis were merchants who borrowed off the British. During the Occupation, this area of Conduit Road was taken over by the Bank of Taiwan, a Japanese government proxy, as residences of senior bank officers: above things but not too lofty. On the List of Enemy Properties (LEP) compiled by the British on their return, the Bank of Taiwan properties were listed as No. 30 (acquired legitimately for \$60, 000 in September 1918) and Nos. 17, 19, 21, 23, 25 and 27.²⁴

The Khaleelis were listed by the Japanese as enemies because their commercial affiliations made them British allies. The Japanese-owned Bank of Taiwan did not take their house as part its sweep of Conduit Road. The Japanese administration instead sold the Khaleeli's property to merchants Ching Chan Kau, Kwong Tak Tam and Lu Tak Tong in 1942. After the war, there

²² REP vol. 2, 5; I.L. 1549.

²³ HKRS265-11A-1834-1 to 5; HKRS58-1-69-41; HKRS265-11A-1834-5 to 10; HKRS265-11A-1835.

²⁴ HKRS53-3-420.

was a deed of surrender of the property dated 8 April 1961 signed, sealed and delivered by Ching Chan Kau in the British Embassy, Tokyo, in the presence of Vice-Consul Deryk Bakes concerning two parcels of land on Conduit Road; the Khaleeli's house stood on one of them.²⁵ The British had no reason to question that the title was Ching's to surrender. No doubt he was giving it up because he had been treated as an ongoing tenant in a property burdened by the debt of the Khaleelis to a British bank before the war.

The British Crown resumed the Conduit Road properties but did not subsequently return them to their original owners. Ching, unless he was on holiday, presumably had a business or residential connection in Japan after the war. This has all the hallmarks of a dubious transaction because the property had not returned to the Crown *bona vacantia* – as ownerless goods – everyone involved knew the history of the property. The property rights of the Khaleeli family were transgressed by both their enemy in 1942 and also by their old 'ally' in 1961. The indifference of the surrendering and returning colonial state to the Khaleelis was due to the victorious British having a sharp memory of debt to it. The British administration presumed to deal with their possessory dasein as entirely a matter of debt to it; they had ceased to exist because they had stopped taking care, but the taking care was about repayments. That the British had let Ching Chan Kau remain in the property from 1945 to 1961, then to surrender it, suggests more than a loose end – it has an overture of British colonial gratitude to a man who, having bought a mansion cheaply during the Japanese Occupation, was allowed to continue occupying it for a reason to do with his collaboration with the British.

Collaborators with the Japanese could be given a perfunctory arm burn by the British administration when they returned to their colony, before reverting to a state of business as usual. In Shanghai, Japanese rulers relied greatly on so-called 'Third Nationals' – aligned nationals such as Italians, Spanish and Germans among them – to collect intelligence and manage the city.²⁶ In Hong Kong, the Japanese had little use for Third Nationals with the exception of certain figures in the maritime salvage and ship sales industry where their

²⁵ HKRS265 11A/1835.

²⁶ Bernard Wasserstein (1998), 'Collaborators and Renegades in Occupied Shanghai' *History Today* 48: 20-25.

ducking and diving were everywhere to be seen and rewarded. Their efforts had been extraordinarily successful as, by the end of the war, the Hong Kong fleet of lighters and short distance cargo ships had largely been dissipated to new owners or capitalized on for scrap metal. One report claimed that of the 2000 craft before the war, only 500 remained after it.²⁷ Some had succumbed to war damage; there were wrecks of eleven ships and 72 small craft littering the harbour at the beginning of the Occupation.²⁸ However, most of the lighter fleet was sold off by one of the two remaining shipbrokers left in town, Joseph Carroll and Roberto Perez De La Sala. De La Sala was such a Third National businessmen who elected to stay on and managed as best they could in occupied Hong Kong to take advantage of any commercial opportunities the Japanese bestowed.

Born in 1908, De La Sala was a Spanish national who owned John Manners and Co, a tramper and steamer line operating out of Hong Kong. Although initially misidentified by the Japanese, De la Sala was ultimately permitted by the Japanese re-register his new house on the corner of Boundary St and College St.²⁹ He lived in a house in Boffin Rd, Deer Island District (now Kowloon Tong) while constructing the new house and this was a district which during the Occupation was almost exclusively inhabited by Japanese officers of middling rank and above. De la Sala's new place was one storey high, 16, 000 sq ft and built in concrete in the western style and the Japanese valued it at \$HK119, 000.³⁰ It had not been completed by 1942. It had three large bedrooms, a motorcar garage and storage garage and a huge circular staircase wending down to a grand foyer.³¹ The two garages-cum-storerooms were nearly twice as big as the generously sized bedrooms. De la Sala was a man who needed to store things and to do so securely; he also owned a motor car. He had bought the land from the Crown in May 1940; no purchase price was referred to in the Japanese Deed.³²

²⁷ T. N. Chiu, *The Port of Hong Kong: A Survey of its Development* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1973) 73.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁹ HKRS57-6-16070 (JD).

³⁰ HKRS57-6-16070 (JD); REP vol. 2, 19.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

By August 1944 the Japanese certificate of incorporation registered Robert Perez de la Sala as the majority shareholder of John Manners and Co Ltd. Incorporated in 1916 and again under the Japanese system in 1944, this company carried on the business of traders, commission agents, ship owners and transport agents in 'Hong Kong, Shanghai, Japan, China and India'.³³ Also on the share register in 1944 were Wallace John Hansen, a businessman who had become Finnish Consul in Hong Kong in 1935 and two Finnish businessmen Karl Kastman and Borge Herschend. Finland was a co-belligerent with Nazi Germany (1939-1944) but not a *de jure* member of the Axis. Although freight in and out of Hong Kong was drastically reduced throughout the Occupation because of the decision to give control of the port to the Army, what cargo there was almost exclusively to be transported, stevedored and transit managed by John Manners & Co. Robert Perez De La Sala had a hundred shares and the others in the company had shareholdings ranging from ten to seventy. He enjoyed the lion's share of the company income, and although the Occupation was a straitened time, he was allowed to pursue his business interests unhindered in a monopoly environment. He was required to pay the Japanese a sum of money to discharge his pre-war enemy-held (British bank) mortgage when the Japanese bank liquidations occurred. In return, he enjoyed a free hand throughout the Occupation. It would seem a small price to pay for de la Sala.

Strangely, de la Sala's name appeared initially in the Japanese-compiled REP as an enemy owner. This was how I learned of the transactions relating to the house. The mix-up was clearly remedied quickly. Perhaps he made some Francoist noises to show he was aligned with the Germans closely enough for the Japanese to consider him an ally and permit the registration of his new house. They did register it under their system in 1943. After the war, in 1952 De la Sala contacted the Land Office to tell them that he would surrender his Japanese receipt if they would tell him the conditions of sale. Presumably he wanted to sell it. Presumably he needed to clear the pre-war mortgage (fancifully repaid to the Japanese) or at least find out whether the British would recognize the Japanese receipt. He may have had a genuine receipt from the Japanese for a repayment of the pre-war mortgage. It would seem that, either way, de la Sala had been hoping to get his new house for a large discount on the

³³ HKRS122-5-22.

pre-war mortgage if the Japanese won the war and for some discount now that the British were back in control.

In de la Sala's file relating to the new house, there is also a chain of correspondence between him and the Land Office where the officials have great sport with him by, in essence, blocking his registration of the house under the British system by saying that it the land on which the house sat was registered before the war in the name of "Robert La Sala" and that, as that was not his name, he had no interest in the house.³⁴ The Land Office eventually relented to allow the title to vest in him as it had made its point about his wartime activities. He died in 1967. Since the late 1980s, a high-rise residential complex, Sheffield Garden Estate, has stood where the old house used to be. Although having its fun in the discomfort of De la Sala, the Land Office treated him far better than they did their loyal subjects the Khaleelis.

Unlike the Khaleelis, if a subject was a white Briton, and returning to Hong Kong, recovery of their pre- Occupation property occurred unremarkably. Mrs Mildred Lorel Wood first came out to Hong Kong with her husband as a 41 years old tourist in 1925.²⁸ Wood left Hong Kong before 25 December 1941 because she did not enter internment. Her name appeared in an absentee landlord entry in the Japanese REP³⁵. In 1947, she turned up in Shanghai. From there, Wood negotiated with the administration in Hong Kong for the return of her shop houses in Tsim Sha Tsui (TST) on the Kowloon-side. Wood was a married woman who owned Numbers 19 and 21 Hankow Road.³⁶ Her husband had worked as a manager in the Hong Kong Realty and Trust Company.³⁷ Theirs was a dasein of acquiring, improving and off-loading; their being-in-the-world inhabited the up-and-up of pre-war real property.

Wood could not be accused of not taking care-of or failing to live in the world. Her properties were handsome side-by-side steel and cement shophouse dwellings of four stories built in the Chinese style and recorded as being in good condition after she left.³⁸ Not much more than a stone's throw from The Peninsula Hotel, the houses were in a desirable neighborhood.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ REP vol. 2, 19/29(2), 6; HKRS141-19-29-2.

³⁶ I.L. 3482 and I.L 3483.

³⁷ HKRS58-1-102-34; C.S.O. 1493/1921.

³⁸ HKRS 57-6-746 (JD).

The size of each floor was modest 18 metres by 5 metres³⁹. When one accounts for her owning both Numbers 19 and 21, it seems likely she was a landlord. The Japanese put a value on it of \$HK 72, 900.⁴⁰ The REP records the former owner and nationality of the former owner but not the assignee of the property. The Japanese Deed records the Occupation-era assignee as Mr Wong Tse-lin. It does not record the name or nationality of Mrs Wood. For the purposes of the official document the Japanese government took the role of assignor. Perhaps it was a grab of Wood's dasein. It was certainly an ambiguous offer of inauthentic dasein to Wong.

Mr Wong already had a shop house in nearby Lock Rd, TST. His freshly minted Japanese Deed conferring ownership of Mrs Woods' shop houses records him as paying some tax on the house but not paying a purchase price despite its listed value.⁴¹ One could suspect that Wong was pinching his old neighbour's property. Although it seems likely that he wanted the houses to rent them out that is not the full story. He seemed to be playing the role of property manager. In 1947, Wood entered a contract with the Commodore in Charge of Hong Kong providing for the repayment of £14, 300 which was doubtless the extent of the pre-Occupation mortgage.⁴² She paid the first 10% and promised to pay the balance a month later and the Commodore promised then to convey it free of encumbrance. Wood quietly dusted off her abandoned dasein and prepared herself to be a landlady in a city with insufficient apartments for its population. Suggesting a racial dimension, the Wood case concerned the untroubled rebound of dasein to a white woman of the upper middleclass after she had returned to Hong Kong to re-possess it.

Having surveyed the lot on a sweaty afternoon in 2008, it can be confirmed that the properties Mrs Wood owned are no longer there. They were replaced in the 1960s by a ten storey composite-style building with shopfronts in the ground floor and residences above. The newer building sits on the same short length lot. The numbering arrangement remains the same as it was. In the case of the British in the Khaleeli and De La Sala cases, the ultimate indifference of the colonial authorities to foreign friends and Japanese collaborators were

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ REP vol. 2; HKRS141-19-29-2, 19/29(2), 6.

⁴¹ HKRS 57-6-746 (JD).

⁴² HHKRS 57-6-746.

instances of an colonial state pursuing flexible possessory principles not concerned destining and promoting individual *dasein* but rather calling on it and returning it conditionally.

Conclusion

We can all adopt standards that lower the degree of difficulty in finding our adversary unworthy, or especially culpable. Such claims made against collaborators have been entertained in this chapter. Everyone finds ways to navigate their own confusion, complicity or bloodlust. We can all play pin the atrocity on the donkey without being blindfolded, without being spun around. Although no-one wants to interview for donkey. Anyone assigned that role plays out a role inexorably and predetermined in history. If a desire to kill or exploit others is latent in human nature, turning only on finding an unrestrained opportunity to enact it, then any measure relenting on legal and political oversight not only implicates widely but puts conditions on free use of objects and people existing in creative and constructive *dasein*.

In Heidegger's contention, *dasein* 'supplies' *dasein* such is its 'tendency to nearness'⁴³. This innate constructiveness rises above do-good cheer. A responsibility to enter a network of creation is attached to *dasein* as an inoculation to inauthenticity. The least most people could do is consider what role they play in Heidegger's pantomime. Viewing one's own villainy or constructiveness lightly, theatrically, offers a way to begin to changing without using the recriminating language of nationalist collaboration. This is a hopeful message. It asks how is being in an individual case expressed and communicated, how does it take advantage of others in the best possible way?

This chapter considered what state colonial practices suggest about the nature of the state itself. British ratification of Japanese property decisions in the Kwok-Lau transaction, the Kahleeli saga and, ultimately, the de la Sala transaction suggested a policy to discourage closer inspection of their prerogative to govern, or its principles, after the Pacific War. The examples in this chapter have highlighted that property was highly fluid, but no less a tool of *dasein* or unauthentic unity, in the view of both Japanese and British colonial states. It was not static or

⁴³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 98.

protected by rule of law as its grantees wanted to believe. Fluidity in *dasein* recognition processes, not lasting rights, mattered most to state agents when a colony was being set up, or established, or re-established. What does this say, exactly, about *dasein* management of a colonial state? Each in their own way, the Kwok-Lau transaction, the de la Sala case, and the return of Li Sam, showed the Japanese colonial state satisfied itself with a non-negotiable test of collaborative intent that felt to participants like spot-check but was a Japanese confirmation of a share in the colonial *dasein* design.

A flow of *dasein* recognition for property cared-for or improved, or mortgaged for state-sanctioned black market participation – illegitimate but calling subjects into the ‘they’ – seems a constant feature of colonialism *per se*. The British side of things does not seem different from the Japanese. The hard time given to de la Sala, the *realpolitik* shown to the Khaleelis, and the love shown to Wood, offer examples of the state recognizing *dasein* via convenient of property transactions, or their purposeful difficulty, sound out calling out to subjects into the ‘they’ or suggesting a frosty calling-off of mutuality.

In a colonial occupation, the labour of some yielded them wages and victuals. Others got land and rent or commercial opportunity. A hierarchy of collaboration declared itself through the time it took for locals to subscribe to the new ways and the depth of their greeting bows. Both were acceptances of servitude rather than waiting to be roared into slavery. Although forced labour features prominently in the historiography of the Japanese Empire, in many parts of it a scale of labour cooperation prevailed. It suggested that collaboration could be a matter of free choice or, much the same thing in war, a quickly understood personal imperative. Imported civilian nationalist *zaibatsu* cronies jostled with local hard-ups for crumbs from the war machine. Collaboration was seldom quite as glamorous as its portrayal as end-of-the-world abandon. Plotting both gentle and desperate was needed to find favour and/or avoid starvation.

In Hong Kong in 1942, a new ‘they’ had arrived in town and, as the law was understood, the authenticity of the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong depended on its occupation culminating in conquest. This less than subtle game found its winners among those who, in every fragment of news, treated ambiguity as if foreboding a certain victory. *Dasein* sat glumly

in a strange state-contingent suspension. The new occupiers condemned those who took shortcuts. Casinos were shut down. A hungry man stole a duck, was caught, and was tied by a noose of wire to a tree so that, when he could not stand, he slowly strangled himself to death. Soldiers were disciplined for using dynamite in ponds and inland waterways to catch fish. The sturdy products of past *dasein*, however, once de-installed became valuable scrap pickings: copper piping, stair rails, hot water tanks, abandoned cars and filigree iron decorations were packed into barges and towed to the smelters of Tokyo. Even after a hostile take-over of a territory not offering a *dasein* schema to inhabitants was to kill them or let them slowly wither. The politics of a colonial *dasein* scheme made a new ruler's *how-to* consciousness into a manipulation of an individual's being-there. Its its constitution in an individual's relationship to community members could be twisted around by affecting their relationship to nearby objects. Colonial collaboration played around with personal property to create communities of support for the colonial state. This game had effects for post-colonial societies.

John Boyle wrote what he thought, and although he made it clear that you and he were probably not going to be friends, he was compelling anyway. He entertained a conviction that the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere of the Japanese was no greater a sham than the multitude of European excuses to rule and profit in colonial Asia. Asians were not 'unified' by the Japanese any more than they were 'civilised' by the British. Both invaders stole on grand scales. Both enslaved and killed non-combatants. And so the tendency in the history of winners has been to choose a moral marker and say: '*that* was who the Japanese were' and '*that* was the side that lost the war'. The two statements were claimed to mean pretty much the same thing, but there was no time to gloat. Although the *dasein* deal under the British claimed to be materially better for local inhabitants, American and European colonial powers could not wait to reinstate their foe of old, and get trading. The moral marker, and the 'ism' of Japanese evil, had to be made into history, fast.

'Being' is bought and sold, and its products shunted from one place of utility to the colonial state to another, depending not only on whether the presumptive holders of *dasein* are black or white, male or female, on the plantation's veranda or in the fields etc. The risk in

this system is funnelling acceptable being so tightly that the colonial 'I' strangulates everything.

