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THE COLLABORATION OF CHINESE AND BRITISH RADICALS AND THE ROLE OF HONG KONG IN MODERN CHINESE HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

This study used the British colonial archives, old Hong Kong English and Chinese newspapers, and Chinese revolutionary archival documents. British radical journalists and the English press collaborated with Hong Kong Chinese revolutionaries and launched several revolutionary activities, which led to the killing of the Chinese revolutionary leader Yeung Ku Wan and the involvement of the British Hong Kong colonial government. The British government was also concerned about the tensions between Chinese revolutionaries and the Qing government and made Hong Kong an important place in the campaign to overthrow the Qing government.

Keywords: China, Hong Kong, Revolution, Yeung Ku Wan, British radical, Journalism, Qing government

LA COLLABORAZIONE TRA I RADICALI CINESI E BRITANNICI E IL RUOLO DI HONG KONG NELLA STORIA DELLA CINA MODERNA

SINTESI

Lo studio ha utilizzato gli archivi coloniali britannici, i vecchi giornali inglesi e cinesi di Hong Kong e i documenti d'archivio rivoluzionari cinesi. I giornalisti radicali britannici e la stampa inglese hanno collaborato con i rivoluzionari cinesi di Hong Kong e hanno svolto diverse attività rivoluzionarie, che hanno avuto come conseguenze l'uccisione del leader rivoluzionario cinese Yeung Ku Wan e il coinvolgimento del governo coloniale britannico di Hong Kong. Una delle preoccupazioni del governo britannico era rappresentata dalle tensioni esistenti tra i rivoluzionari cinesi e il governo Qing, rendendo Hong Kong una città importante nella campagna per far cadere il governo Qing.

Parole chiave: Cina, Hong Kong, Rivoluzione, Yeung Ku Wan, Radicale britannico, Giornalismo, Governo dei Qing

INTRODUCTION¹

The Boxer Movement's attacks on foreign missionaries started in the late 19th century and led to the invasion of Peking by the Eight-Power Allied Forces and the withdrawal of the Qing government from the city. At the time, the British economic interests in China were focused on the Yangtze River Basin, such as Shanghai and Wuhan. British Chinese policy also considered a large proportion of the interests in this region, although Hong Kong also had a certain position in the British policy considerations for China. As a former colony occupied by the United Kingdom from China, Hong Kong has had a complex and far-reaching impact on the development of Chinese history. In fact, as early as the beginning of the 20th century, Hong Kong posed a greater threat to China's political stability. This threat actually came from a conspiracy of a group of Chinese revolutionaries and British radicals. Light has been shed on the relationship between Sun Yatsen and Hong Kong Chinese elites, particularly Ho Kai, around 1900 (Choa, 2000). Moreover, scholars have disclosed that Chinese elites, such as Ho Kai, were involved in a double allegiance towards the Chinese and British governments, viz., disloyalty in the eyes of the Hong Kong colonial government (Fung, 2005; Law, 2009). In addition, John Carroll argued that Chinese elites collaborated with the British colonial government in the making of modern Hong Kong (Carroll, 2009). Nevertheless, the relationship of Chinese revolutionary and British radicals in modern Hong Kong history has not been fully studied and its impact on modern Chinese history has not been reviewed. Zou provided a picture of how Tse Tsan Tai communicated with Australian and British supporters of the revolution and planned to seek asylum (Zou, 2013). However, a grand view of how Chinese and British radicals endeavoured to promote revolution under the protection of the British colonial government has not yet been provided. The author argues that the British and Hong Kong colonial government policy of defending the sovereignty of and interests in Hong Kong provided a loose space for Chinese and British radicals to collaborate in Chinese revolutionary activities; as a result, Hong Kong played an important role in modern Chinese political development.

Regarding the relationship between Chinese revolutionaries and the British government, Yang Tianshi and Zhang Yufa both asserted that the British government had an economic interests-based foreign policy towards Chinese revolutionaries (Yang, 2002; Yan, 2010). British diplomats would oppose or sit watching on various occasions (Yan, 2010), which is why scholars have portrayed this British foreign policy as negative or non-interventionist (Deng, 2012). John Y. Wong pointed out that the philanthropic British Prime Minister and impartial British democracy saved Sun Yatsen from being shipped back to China for execution by the Qing government

1 This article is funded by the research grant of Shenzhen University – Lingnan University Joint Centre for the Greater Bay Area and International Studies (CGIS). My great thanks to the help and support of Professor LAU Chi-pang, Professor Mark Hampton, my wife, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments.

(Wong, 2004). Wong's observation expanded scholarship implying that the British political convention benefitted Chinese revolutionaries.

As result of Yeung's connections with the British in Hong Kong and the relatively loose policy of reform, the study of political assassination could uncover the nature of Hong Kong and Chinese reformers in Sino-British relations around the turn of the twentieth century. Robert Bickers, who studied British settlers and British concessions in China during the first half of the twentieth century, noted that the group of different British-owned interests and opinions regarding British foreign policy towards China subsequently influenced Sino-British relations (Bickers, 1999). Chan Lau Kit-ching focused on twentieth century Hong Kong in Sino-British relations, including the aforementioned revolutionary network in Sino-British relations. She asserts that the British and Hong Kong governments failed to resolutely curb the expansion and development of Hong Kong reformers; rather, with tolerance, the reformers were sheltered and even assisted. In the case of Yeung Ku Wan, she emphasizes that the Hong Kong government and the Colonial Office were subject to the decisions of the Foreign Office, the final decrees of which were shaped by British Minister to Peking, Ernest Satow (Chan Lau, 1990).

In this article, the author describes the complex international political struggle behind a political murder. The first section discusses the assassination of the Chinese revolutionary leader Yeung Ku Wan by the Qing government; the second section reveals the involvement of the Hong Kong governor, who sympathized with the Chinese revolutionaries in the political assassination investigation and asked the British government to exert pressure on the Chinese government; the third section points out that Chinese and British radical journalists and British businessmen in Hong Kong were in solidarity with the case and even launched revolutionary activities to exact their revenge; and finally, the author emphasize that the British in Shanghai made concessions, and London believed that Yeung Ku Wan's case was less important than other British interests in Shanghai and control of other port cities. The British minister did not believe that murdering a Chinese reformer and the violation of British territoriality in Hong Kong were sufficiently serious to challenge the Qing government, so official protest should be abandoned.² To secure British interests in China, the British Foreign Office had to downgrade the urgency of Yeung's case, but it still protected the sovereignty of Hong Kong, thus providing a haven for Chinese revolutionaries.

THE QING GOVERNMENT MURDERED YEUNG KU WAN

Yeung Ku Wan, the top leader of the Reform Party in South China, threatened the security of the Qing Guangdong government. Therefore, the Qing government had a strong motive to arrest and murder Yeung Ku Wan. Yeung was the leader of the 1895 Guangzhou Uprising, which was an attempt to overthrow the Qing. He fled to South Africa after the revolution failed (Tse, 1924, 10).

2 Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne December 7th 1904 (CO 129/330, 365–366).



Fig. 1: Photograph of Yeung Ku Wan (first row, second from the left) and Sun Yatsen (second row, third from the left) in Japan (Wikimedia Commons).

His name was on record with the Qing government, while Sun Yatsen's name, Sun Man, was on the record as being wanted for arrest. Yeung Ku Wan chose to continue the revolution. He remained confident of success when he led the Huizhou Uprising and committed the assassination of Tak Sau, the Two Guangs Viceroy (Tse, 1924, 18–19).

Shi Jianru, a member of the Revive China Society, reported to Yeung Ku Wan at the time. After the assassination of Tak Sau failed, Shi Jianru went to Hong Kong and met secretly with Yeung Ku Wan at Yeung's house (Yang, 1955, 27). Shi had been persuaded by his uncle to return to Guangdong for family business reasons. However, his family sent Shi Jianru to the government because Shi's brother did not want to be implicated in Shi Jianru's revolutionary activities. Shi Jianru went to the Qing government and pled guilty (Yang, 1955, 27). Shi Jianru



Fig. 2: Hong Kong Governor Sir Henry Arthur Blake and a Qing official Cen Chunxuan (岑春煊) (Wikimedia Commons).

finally provided the information that the Qing government needed,³ which was entirely different from what the Nationalists propagandized about Shi Jianru, a hero (Deng, 1957).

When the Hong Kong government managed to obtain the record of Shi Jianru's confession, it was proof that the Qing government considered Yeung Ku Wan a principal criminal and planned to eliminate him and his threat. It was possible that Yeung Ku Wan could have been extradited to Guangdong at the request of the Qing government if it claimed that Yeung Ku Wan was a Chinese national, although he was a British subject. However, the British Hong Kong governor, Blake, believed that there was no extradition treaty between Hong Kong and China.⁴

3 Blake H.A. to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan, British National Archives at Kew (CO 129/305, 507–509).

4 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 495).

In 1900, Yeung Ku Wan did not know that Shi Jianru, who was aware of his address, had disclosed his secret involvement with the revolutionaries. Assassinating a British subject in a British colony was not wise behaviour on the part of the Qing government. When Yeung Ku Wan was in Hong Kong, Tak Sau had been demoted to governor of Guangdong from his position of Two Guangs Viceroy. Li Ka Cheuk was the commandant of the Canton City Guard in Canton. Thus, Tak Sau and Li Ka Cheuk had strong motives to remove Yeung Ku Wan and directed a series of attempts on his life in British Colonial Hong Kong.

Tak Sau and Li Ka Cheuk regarded Yeung Ku Wan's life work as a reformer intimidating to the Qing, particularly the Guangdong government. In 1895, the Qing government offered a reward on Yeung Ku Wan's head of 1,000 taels.⁵ Yeung Ku Wan's daughter Jinxia also reported overhearing one murderer say that he had secret information indicating that the head of Yeung Ku Wan was worth 100,000 taels (Yang, 1955, 13). If Yeung Ku Wan's life meant such a vast sum of money, it proved that the Guangdong government would pay a very heavy price to get rid of him, even if the act challenged British territorial rights. At least three plots to murder Yeung Ku Wan between 1900 and 1901 were uncovered.

In September 1900, four revolutionaries – Kong Kung Hi, Lu Lian, Wang Geting and Lu Tai – fled to Hong Kong from Huizhou with the failure of Huizhou Uprising.⁶ When they were in Hong Kong, Kong Kung Hi was hired by the Qing government to murder Yeung Ku Wan sometime in November 1900.⁷ Kong Kung Hi, a witness at the later trial of the murder suspect, claimed that a Qing official came to Hong Kong and promised to reward him with 20,000 HK dollars and a position as a government official were he to kill Yeung Ku Wan.⁸ Ng Lo Sam, a Hong Kong police agent, was the middleman who introduced Kong Kung Hi to the Qing government official. Kong Kung Hi admitted that he took some money from the Qing official, but he also met with and disclosed this plot to Yeung Ku Wan. Kong Kung Hi asked Yeung Ku Wan to escape with him to Thailand, but Yeung Ku Wan rejected the idea, and Kong Kung Hi went to Thailand.⁹

Five days after Kong Kung Hi fled to Thailand upon the failure of the first assassination attempt, Ng Lo Sam hired another killer from mainland China: a notorious thief named Ma Wong Hoi and his gang. In November 1900, Henry May, the British Superintendent of Police, learned of this association and warned Ng Lo Sam against involvement with Ma Wong Hoi. May testified that Ma Wong Hoi left Hong Kong on November 30 and that he had received an apologetic letter from Ng Lo Sam stating that he had asked Ma Wong Hoi to leave, had never wished to cause trouble and would not do so again.

5 Zhongxian Shangge (重縣賞格) (Chinese Mail (香港華字日報), 10. 12. 1895, 4).

6 The Story of Yeung Ku Wan in a Prosecution (提解案引出楊衢雲故事) (Chinese Mail (香港華字日報), 16. 8. 1911, 3).

7 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 518–519).

8 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 518–519).

9 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 519).

However, it was later disclosed by Kong Kung Hi that, on January 4, 1901, Ng Lo Sam met Li Ka Cheuk, who hired him to assassinate Yeung Ku Wan. Subsequently, they left with a team of killers on the evening of January 7 and arrived in Hong Kong on the morning of January 8.¹⁰ A team of assassins led by Chen Linzai shot Yeung Ku Wan at his home on January 10. The other killers were Tung Cheung, Li Kwai Fan and Tsui Fuk.¹¹ The killers embarked on the gunboat Kin Yui from Guangzhou and fled back to Guangzhou in the same gunboat without clearance through customs. The Hong Kong police boat did not catch up with the gunboat (Yang, 1955, 21).¹²

The lawless actions of the Qing government were well covered, and frightened Chinese residents who lived in Hong Kong feared being witnesses, even in a British court. As a result, it took nearly two years for the Hong Kong police to obtain sufficient evidence, and they arrested only one suspect in this complicated situation. Revolutionaries including Kong Kung Hi caught Li Kwai Fan on April 5, 1903, and turned him in as one of the killers. Li Kwai Fan had no address in Hong Kong and spent his time in a brothel and casino.¹³ Li Kwai Fan was hanged on June 17, 1903, although he and his lawyer never admitted that the defendant himself had been involved in the murder and claimed that the witnesses were not trustworthy. However, the judge said that, although the prisoner claimed that he did not commit the murder, it could mean that he did not kill Yeung Ku Wan in person but could still have been involved in the murder.¹⁴

The final report from the British noted Li Kwai Fan had confessed his complicity with the assassins up until a few minutes before the murder. Another fish seller said that Li Kwai Fan persuaded him to kill Yeung Ku Wan on January 10, 1901, the day of the murder, but he rejected the offer. Nevertheless, that evening, he went to have a look at Yeung Ku Wan's residence and saw two men go upstairs. Li Kwai Fan was watching outside, standing guard. Another witness testified that Li Kwai Fan was merely the lookout for the assassins. Regarding the witnesses, one said that he heard Li Kwai Fan talk about the assassination of Yeung Ku Wan. Li might have killed or assisted in killing Yeung Ku Wan (Zhongguo, 1968) *guo min dang dang shi shi liao bian zuan wei yuan hui*, 1968). Yau Ma Tei fisherman Tan Zong also confessed that Li Kwai Fan told him that he had killed Yeung Ku Wan, and he kept this secret until April 1903, when a policeman in Hong Kong asked him about the murder. He had been afraid to disclose the truth even after two years (Zhongguo, 1968).

Although the remaining suspects were not brought to the Hong Kong court, witnesses left evidence that Qing government soldiers, including Chan Linzai, were the true murderers who shot Yeung Ku Wan. Zhou Yunpei said that he was a cook on a ship, and he knew Li Kwai Fan. He also said that he had a brother who was the killer.

10 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 506).

11 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 507).

12 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 506).

13 The Gage Street Murder (China Mail, 21. 5. 1903, 5).

14 The Gage Street Murder Trial—Sentence of Death (Hong Kong Daily Press, 22. 5. 1903 2–3); Murderer of Yeung Kui Wan Hanged (China Mail, 17. 6. 1903, 4).

Li Ka Cheuk found two letters from his brother and finally killed his brother. He had read the two letters beforehand, one of which asked him to go back to Hong Kong; the other one was from Henry May. The ‘brother’ whom Zhou Yunpei mentioned might have been a man named Chen Linzai. He claimed that Chen Linzai shot Yeung Ku Wan. The killers received 2,000 taels as a reward and the rank of fifth official (Zhongguo, 1968).

Fisherman Wang Sheng said that, before the assassins killed Yeung Ku Wan, they wanted to borrow his boat. Wang Sheng did not lend his boat to them. Later, they came back and said that they had killed Yeung Ku Wan and had no further need of his boat (Zhongguo, 1968). It was also said that these witnesses dared not tell the police the truth in 1901 because they feared revenge from the Guangdong government. However, they and their families would still be in trouble if they became witnesses with their testimony, unless they had no relatives or wives in Guangdong who could be used for leverage (Zhongguo, 1968).

THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSES

Yeung Ku Wan was shot four times. At the hospital, it was determined that surgery would be futile, and he later died of exsanguination. Three bullets were later extracted from his body (Liu, 1947). Yeung Ku Wan’s last words begged the British government to discover the identity of the assassins from Kong Kung Hi and address this injustice to his family.¹⁵ Before Yeung Ku Wan died, he mentioned Lu Lian, Lu Tai, Kong Kung Hi and Wang Geting. On his deathbed, Yeung Ku Wan told Henry May that, if he knew where the four people were, they would find the assassins. Governor Blake and Henry May, as the superintendent of the Hong Kong Police and colonial secretary (and later governor), attempted to arrest the suspects. In addition, the Hong Kong government offered a reward of 500 HK dollars for information leading to the arrest of the murderer. Under a request from the Hong Kong police, Lu Lian, Kong Kung Hi and Wang Geting went to Hong Kong, where they learned that Chen Linzai and Li Kwai Fan were the killers. Chen Linzai was going to be a witness in Hong Kong back in 1903 but was killed by the Qing government; Li Kwai Fan was arrested by Kong Kung Hi and Lu Lian at Dabeipu.¹⁶

The death sentence for Li Kwai Fan did not bring the end of the case because Governor Blake still wanted to extradite all of the criminals complicit in the murder.¹⁷ Both Blake and May sympathized with revolutionary activities in Guangdong, so they attempted to protect and help Yeung Ku Wan, who was a Brit-

15 The Story of Yeung Ku Wan in a Prosecution (提解案引出楊衢雲故事) (Chinese Mail (香港華字日報), 16. 8. 1911, 3).

16 The Story of Yeung Ku Wan in a Prosecution (提解案引出楊衢雲故事) (Chinese Mail (香港華字日報), 16. 8. 1911, 3).

17 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain, J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 495).

ish subject. Yeung's father had been born in Singapore, the capital of the British Straits settlements of what is now Malaysia (1826-1959).¹⁸ They also expected the Qing Guangdong government to compensate Yeung Ku Wan's family with 50,000 HK dollars and a promise that senior government officials, including the acting viceroy, Tak Sau, would be dismissed by the Qing government.¹⁹

There was no extradition treaty between China and Britain in 1903, and it was impossible for the Hong Kong government to extradite Chinese national suspects to Hong Kong courts, although Hong Kong Chinese witnesses had occasionally been invited by the Qing government to identify suspects in Chinese courts.²⁰ Governor Henry Blake was clearly cognizant of these legal obstacles, but he obviously felt irritated by the "grave outrage that has been committed upon the territoriality of this Colony" and "the serious menace that the action of the Chinese Authorities involves against all residents of whatever nationality or standing in this Colony".²¹ When the Guangdong government breached British territoriality in Hong Kong, Blake was seriously shocked; thus, he begged the British government "most strongly to urge that the extradition" occur of Tung Cheung, Yeung Tsing Kai and Ng Lo Sam.²² Blake was keen to receive approval from the British government on the decision for extradition, so he sent complete testimonials to the British Colonial Office. In addition, he also proposed to the British government to exert "the strongest possible pressure" on the Chinese government at Peking to instruct the viceroy of Two Guangs to extradite the suspects.²³ Moreover, Blake also expected British government to pressure the Chinese government to dismiss government officials implicated in the murder.²⁴

Governor Blake completed his tenure in Hong Kong in 1903, and Henry May, the colonial secretary, stepped into the role of administrator in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, he did not receive news of the vehement protest that the British Minister to Peking, Ernest Satow, made at the time but thereafter only the negotiation over the case details with Satow's personal analysis.²⁵ As a result, Henry May discussed the case with the consulate-general in Canton, C.W. Campbell, and decided only to sue Tung Cheung and Ng Lo Sam in a Chinese court, with the presence of Campbell in Canton.²⁶ Governor Matthew Nathan came one year later, in 1904, and discovered that the whole intricate case of Yeung Ku Wan was almost in a dead end. One of the assassins whom Henry May wanted to prosecute in Canton, Tung Cheong, died in 1904, and only Ng Lo Sam was left as suspect for any further action that Governor

18 The Late Yeung Ku Wan (China Mail, 16. 1. 1901, 2).

19 From May F. H., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/321, 353–358).

20 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 495).

21 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 496).

22 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 496–497).

23 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 497).

24 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 498).

25 Ernest Satow to the Officer Administrating the Government July 11th 1904 (CO 129/326, 354–359).

26 C.W. Campbell to Ernest Satow July 11th 1904 (CO 129/326, 501–502).

Nathan could take.²⁷ Nathan reviewed the documents of Yeung's case and failed to take "further action in this murder case beyond suggesting to Sir Ernest Satow the advisability of making some representation at Peking which will make clear the serious view taken by the Hong Kong government of any attempt by Chinese officials to violate British territorial rights".²⁸ Nathan also attached the opinion of Henry May and Campbell, who concurred that "nothing will be gained by taking further action" with regard to the murder.²⁹

Henry Arthur Blake became the governor of Ceylon after he left Hong Kong, so he could do nothing about the unexpected result – not to mention his suggestion to British government to force the Chinese government to hand over the suspects. However, it left a question of why there was the smell of gunpowder in the period of Governor Blake but an anti-climactic ending in the period of Governor Nathan. There were at least a handful of suspects and witnesses that Nathan could investigate further, such as Ng Lo Sam, Yeung Thing Kai, Tsui Fuk, and Li Kacheuk. The account and available information from the Hong Kong government essentially influenced British foreign policy towards a case involving the breach of territoriality and the intimidation of residents. The author must point out the evolution of the role of the press in this incident in the first five years of the twentieth century.

THE POWER OF THE BRITISH COLONIAL ENGLISH PRESS

Governor Blake's strong response in light of Yeung's death was not rare. In fact, before Blake formed his suggestion to the British government, he faced serious pressure from the British colonial Hong Kong English press, which pushed him to make progress in handling the case of Yeung Ku Wan. The Hong Kong English press had a few thousand English readers at most in 1901, but their editors were radical journalists and supporters of Yeung Ku Wan's reform movement. As early as 1895, British radical journalists who were familiar with the revolutionaries, particularly Tse Tsan Tai, published revolutionary news and announcements to promote local support for the Chinese revolution. In other words, the special relationship between Tse Tsan Tai and British journalists formed an invisible but important power behind the words in the newspapers.

Immediately after the murder, there appeared a series of letters from Chinese elite readers in Hong Kong Telegraph, China Mail, Hong Kong Weekly Press, and the Hong Kong Daily Press asking for justice for Yeung Ku Wan. In the "Notes and Comments" column of the Hong Kong Telegraph on January 15, 1901, one commentary seriously criticized the Hong Kong police, pointing out that the Hong Kong police force was "barely strong enough to properly patrol the city", and it could not bring anybody to

27 From Nathan M. to Alfred Lyttelton, Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/324, 352–357).

28 From Nathan M. to Alfred Lyttelton, Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/324, 356).

29 From Nathan M. to Alfred Lyttelton, Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/324, 357).



Fig. 3: Photograph of Tsen Tsan Tai (Wikimedia Commons).

the Hong Kong court for the case of Yeung Ku Wan”.³⁰ In the Hong Kong Telegraph, a correspondent in Canton also pointed out that the Qing government likely murdered Yeung Ku Wan because “the murder will be rewarded for his dastardly crime”, which was the “policy of the Canton officials regarding reformers”, including commissioning certain officials to hunt down reformers and destroy them, as well as hiring secret agents to watch reformers in British colonial Hong Kong.³¹ Furthermore, the same letter provoked the readers of the paper, who were mostly Christian, to believe that the Guangdong government regarded “the Christians as in some way connected with reform, and in the eyes of the officials reform means treason”.³² The English press not only publicized anger, concern and anxiety, but it also encouraged the Hong Kong government to make forceful resolutions in handling Yeung’s case:

³⁰ The Policy (Hong Kong Telegraph, 15. 1. 1901, 2).

³¹ The Murder of Mr. Yeung (Hong Kong Telegraph, 15. 1. 1901, 3).

³² The Murder of Mr. Yeung (Hong Kong Telegraph, 15. 1. 1901, 3).

“Yeung Ku Wan...was a British subject, having been born and educated in this Colony. His father was also a British subject, and was born in Singapore. It is alleged that the murder was instigated by the Chinese Government through its representative at Canton; that only recently the Acting Viceroy Tak Sow issued a proclamation offering a handsome reward for Yeung Ku-wan, dead or alive... This is a serious allegation to make, and if the information has not already been supplied to the British authorities our correspondent should at once communicate with the Captain Superintendent of Police...to bring home the charge of murder to the property parties...Our correspondent suggests that His Excellency the Governor, holding the Acting Viceroy responsible, should demand the immediate production of the murders and that the British Government should adopt active measures to obtain redress.”³³

The voice was loud and strong, particularly considering that it was the most significant article in six columns of news reports, while 75 percent of the newspapers were full of varieties of advertisements.³⁴ Hong Kong government officials read English newspapers every day and, from time to time, sent newspaper clippings to the British government. Readers also felt safe using the English press to pass their opinions on to the British Hong Kong government and mould consensus with other audiences. Four weeks after the death of Yeung Ku Wan, his friends were still frightened and feared donating money directly to Yeung Ku Wan’s wife and children.³⁵ Nevertheless, they still wanted to help Yeung Ku Wan, so one of their representatives advocated that: first, people send donations to the Hong Kong Daily Press anonymously, without any information to trace the donors; second, that the Hong Kong government should “keep a strict watch on all suspicious Cantonese visitors” to protect the reformers in Hong Kong; third, Hong Kong detectives should be more efficient in arresting the authors of this murder; and fourth, the Hong Kong government should increase the bait from five hundred dollars to one thousand dollars to induce the accomplices of the assassins.³⁶ Upon receiving such information, the Hong Kong police soon increased the bait from five hundred dollars to two thousand dollars.³⁷

Simultaneously, after reading the news reports in the English press, the acting chairman of the China Association Hong Kong branch, R. Chatterton Wilcox, wrote an uncompromising report to the China Association in London (China Association, 1903, 19). In the report about Yeung Ku Wan’s murder, the Hong Kong committee felt that the Chinese government seriously challenged British interests and expected the Foreign Office to make a strong protest to the Qing government (China Association, 1903, 19–20). Wilcox, together with his British merchant committee

33 The Late Yeung Ku Wan (China Mail, 16. 1. 1901, 2).

34 The Late Yeung Ku Wan (China Mail, 16. 1. 1901, 2).

35 The Late Yeung Ku Wan (Daily Press, 8. 2. 1901, 2).

36 The Late Yeung Ku Wan (Daily Press, 8. 2. 1901, 2).

37 The Capt.Supt. of Police, Regarding the Offer of a Reward for the Arrest of the Actual Murderer, Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/305, 524).

members who were doing business in Hong Kong and the Guangdong area, felt that the deliberate invasion, with obvious “ignorance of internationalized law” by the Qing government, must be punished, so the “sanctuary of Hong Kong can never be violated with impunity” (China Association, 1903, 19–20). The China Association was very influential in the Foreign Office, and the Marquess Lansdowne replied that he would carefully consider the matter after reading Governor Sir Blake’s despatch (China Association, 1903, 21).

After the death of Yeung Ku Wan, Tse was busy working with radical journalists. In May 1901, Tse discussed the freedom and independence of China with the editor of the Hong Kong Daily Press, Alfred Cunningham, who later organized revolutionary activities, including seeking the approval and support of the Commander of British Troops in China and Hong Kong, Major-General Sir William Julius Gascoigne (Tse, 1924, 20–23). In November 1901, he also reached agreement with G.E. Morrison, the representative of the London Times in Peking, who showed friendly sympathy and support by saying, “I am quite willing to help you and shall do my best to further and support the movement. My support means the support of the Times, and the support of the British people. My policy is the Times policy” (Tse, 1924, 21).

Unfortunately, all of these collaborations with British radical journalists vanished into smoke after the failure of the January 1903 Damingshun Heavenly Rebellion. Afterward, Tse Tsan Tai avoided publishing radical correspondence about overthrowing the Qing government publicly in the English press because he had to care for his large family.³⁸ Nevertheless, the media skills and power that he learned from revolutionary propaganda helped him to found the South China Morning Post in 1903 as a platform for Chinese to express their opinions more freely in British colonial Hong Kong (Zou, 2015).

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT COMPROMISED

Considering that this case would be a situation in which the Qing government violated British sovereignty, Hong Kong governors, including Sir Henry Arthur Blake and Sir Matthew Nathan, would be more likely to represent this matter. Beginning in 1901, Governor Blake sent reports and Hong Kong newspaper clippings to the Foreign Office to attempt to force the Qing government to punish the criminals. It was the first time in 1901 that the British government reviewed the case of Yeung Ku Wan as a whole. After the death of Yeung Ku Wan in 1901, British Minister Ernest Satow was not influenced by the Hong Kong English press and did not consider the political assassination to be a priority in defence of British territorial rights, but he only asked Canton Consul-general James Scott to “do the best he can, but not to let it interfere with more important matters” (Ruxton, 2006). After the investigation by James Scott, Satow concluded that the evidence was insuf-

38 Tse Tsan Tai to C.C. Greenway, 9. 11. 1903 (Greenway Family Papers, CY Reel 271, 321).

ficient to warrant the British minister to take action against the Qing government.³⁹ Before Satow's suggestion about the policy regarding Yeung Kuwan's case in 1901, Governor Blake had influenced the British Foreign Office to consider protesting to the Qing government. Nevertheless, to Satow, who was busy handling post-Boxer Rebellion issues, including the treaty, ports, railways and taxes, the Yeung Ku Wan case was not a British cardinal interest.

Upon receiving Blake's despatch in June 1903, the Secretary of State Colonial Office Joseph Chamberlain not only simply ordered that "we should ask F.O. [Foreign Office] to put it strongly to the Chinese government" but also sent the F.O. a "proposed application for extradition, [which] should be given to the Governor of Hongkong". The Secretary of the Foreign Office, the Marquess of Lansdowne, concurred with the Secretary of Colonial Office Joseph Chamberlain that the British government should pressure the Chinese government, but the differing wording assumed various degrees of threat. The Marquess of Lansdowne declined the motion of Blake and Chamberlain to extradite Chinese suspects to a Hong Kong court, although he supported the suggestion of pressuring the Chinese government to dismiss Tak Sau and Li Kacheuk, and he requested compensation from the Canton government.⁴⁰

Hong Kong Governor Blake, Peking Minister Ernest Mason Satow and the Marquess of Lansdowne, Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, Secretary of State, Foreign Office, all concurred that the Chinese government should not violate British territorial rights. The new Hong Kong governor, Matthew Nathan, also hoped that the case of Yeung Ku Wan would "be brought to the notice of the Central Government of China with a view to that Government discouraging by such means as may be in its power any attempt of Chinese Provincial Officials to violate British territorial rights in the future".⁴¹

Although the British and Hong Kong governors would have liked to protect the territorial rights of Hong Kong, a parallel reform movement in Shanghai significantly disturbed the handling of the Yeung Ku Wan case. Subao was an influential newspaper publishing articles on overthrowing the Qing government and a serious irritant to the Qing government. Nevertheless, because Subao was a newspaper in the Shanghai Concession, the Qing government had to negotiate with foreign representatives from different countries to press for extradition of arrested Chinese journalists who maligned the imperial family. The British not only disliked the action of the Qing government in arresting Chinese in the Shanghai Concessions, but it also believed that the journalists had the right to express themselves freely in the press (Wang, 2009). While the Subao case became a much larger event than the case of Yeung Ku Wan in Britain and China, the influences of the Subao case

39 Murder of Yeung Kui Wan February 20th 1902 (CO 129/314, 201–203).

40 Foreign Office to Under Secretary of State Colonial Office, Murder of Yeung Kui Wan August 19th 1903 (CO 129/321, 273–274).

41 M. Nathan to Ernest Satow, Murder of Yeung Kui Wan November 17th 1904 (CO 129/330, 368).

attracted not only common readers but also parliament members in Britain, who continued to pressure the British government to intervene in the Subao case but not the case of Yeung Ku Wan. On August 4, parliament member James Weir asked Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs Lord Cranborne to decline to surrender the Subao case prisoners to Chinese authorities because of the Qing government's practice of torturing radical journalists to death.⁴² Although Lord Cranborne could not immediately grant the request,⁴³ the next day, Prime Minister Arthur Balfour replied to another member of Parliament's repetitive question about protecting the Chinese journalists in the Subao case that Ernest Satow had been "instructed by telegraph that in the opinion of His Majesty's Government the prisoners should not be surrendered".⁴⁴

As a result, although there was pressure from the China Association, particularly from its Hong Kong Branch, the Marquess of Lansdowne did not approve former Governor Blake's suggestion to extradite Chinese officials for judgement in British Colonial Hong Kong. In contrast, he speculated about the legal arrangement between the Qing and British governments, declining to turn in the two Chinese Subao journalists to the Qing government on the grounds that lower level administrators and representatives of the British and Chinese governments had reached an earlier deal. Consequently, Britain compromised in the case of Yeung Ku Wan by agreeing to abandon the option of extradition of the Chinese government of lower level official suspects to the Hong Kong court.⁴⁵ The compromise protected the Subao revolutionaries. Without the extradition of suspects from Guangdong, Yeung's case entered an impasse, with the failure to gather enough evidence or suspects for a trial. Within one year, more suspects died or disappeared, which prevented the British Hong Kong governor, Mathew Nathan, from pushing the case forward. He could only hope that the Qing government would refrain from violating Hong Kong's territoriality.⁴⁶

Bearing this point in mind, Satow wrote to the Marquess of Lansdowne that "the serious view taken by the Hong Kong government of any attempt by Chinese officials to violate British territorial rights has been frequently made clear to the Chinese government", and the evidence in the case of Yeung Ku Wan could not be used to "prove serious misconducts" of the central government of China, not to mention that it was a case that happened "nearly four years ago".⁴⁷

Before arriving at the aforementioned conclusion, Satow attempted to use evidence to analyse the viability of the case:

42 Surrender to the Chinese Authorities of the Prisoners in the Supao Sedition Case (Hansard HC Deb, 4. 8. 1903, Vol 126, cc1439–cc1440).

43 Surrender to the Chinese Authorities of the Prisoners in the Supao Sedition Case (Hansard HC Deb, 4. 8. 1903, Vol 126, cc1439–cc1440).

44 Imprisoned Chinese Journalists at Shanghai (Hansard HC Deb, 5. 8. 1903, Vol 126, c1586).

45 Foreign Office to Colonial Office, August 19–31st 1903, (FO 17/1718,600–607); Marquess of Lansdowne to Mr. Townley, Affairs of China. Further Correspondence August, 1903 (FO 405/135, no page).

46 Governor M. Nathan to Colonial Office November 17th 1904 (FO 17/1718, 714).

47 Ernest Satow to the Marquess of Lansdowne December 7th 1904 (CO 129/330, 365–366).

The most reliable witnesses were dead or withdrew testimonies;⁴⁸

The known assassins or suspects were dead, had disappeared or been banished;⁴⁹

The observation of the acting attorney general of Hong Kong, B.B. Sharp, was that there were groups of people who conspired to murder Yeung Ku Wan, but he did not have sufficient evidence at the time to “warrant proceedings against them” on murder.⁵⁰

Satow did not believe that he had enough evidence to question the Qing government in 1904.⁵¹ He assumed that Britain could not ask the Qing government to punish their officials simply on suspicion.⁵² The British government finally concluded that there was not sufficient evidence to link this murder with the Qing government. It would be almost impossible to investigate the case, so they had to order the Hong Kong government to drop the matter.⁵³

In comparing two influential political assassination cases during the era, essential differences arise between that of Yeung Ku Wan and that of the fake body of reformer Hong Quanfu. First, the Hong Kong government sent witnesses to Canton to prosecute accused Qing government officials in the latter case. Second, the British government concluded that there was not sufficient solid evidence to charge officials in the Guangdong government for the murder of Yeung Ku Wan because they wanted to repair the relationship with the Qing central government after the Boxer Rebellion, rather than risk losing relations over a Chinese revolutionary leader, a British subject who arranged the rebellion to blow up the Viceroy Yamen and sought relevant indemnity for the rebellion.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

As an intrinsic territory of China, Hong Kong became a Trojan horse within the Qing government after being colonized by the British. Although there were various uprisings and riots in the second half of the 19th century, the capitalist revolutionary movement that was required for the establishment of the Republic for China had been difficult to produce. Unexpectedly, in the colony of Hong Kong, the early fire of the Chinese revolution emerged, although the Qing government tried to extinguish it. The Chinese revolutionaries cooperated with British radical journalists to promote the revolution. They were supported by the governor of Hong Kong and the Chinese Association in Yang’s assassination case and exerted pressure on the British government to influence British policy

48 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 494–495).

49 Blake, H.A., to Chamberlain. J., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/317, 495–498); C.W. Campbell to Ernest Satow July 11th 1904 (CO 129/326, 501–502).

50 Opinion of Hon. B.B. Sharp, K.G., Acting Attorney General of Hongkong (CO 129/317, 504).

51 From Nathan M., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/324, 356).

52 From Nathan M., Murder of Yeung Kui Wan (CO 129/324, 359).

53 From Foreign Office to the Secretary of States, Murder of Yeung Ku Wan (CO 129/330, 362–369).

54 Ernest Satow Telegram No. 114 May 10th, 1904 (FO 17/1718, 660–665).

towards Chinese revolutionaries in Hong Kong, viz., at least not to collaborate with Qing government to arrest the revolutionaries. However, it must be clarified that the British failed to support the activities of the Chinese revolutionaries and only protested to the Qing government, which uncovered that the nature of the protest was because the Qing government's assassination had violated the sovereignty of the British government and the security interest of British businessmen in Hong Kong and not supportive of Chinese nationalist revitalization. In light of this fact, the early revolutionaries obtained a sheltered space in Hong Kong, from which it could carry out small-scale democratic revolutions and implicit democratic initiatives and gradually evolve the sparks of revolution into a raging fire that overthrew the Qing government.

SODELOVANJE KITAJSKIH IN BRITANSKIH RADIKALOV TER VLOGA HONG KONGA V MODERNI KITAJSKI ZGODOVINI

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POVZETEK

Članek navaja, da so kitajski in britanski radikalci sodelovali pri spodbujanju sodobne kitajske revolucije v britanskem kolonialnem Hong Kongu okoli leta 1900. Veliko pozornosti je bilo posvečene kantonskemu revolucionarnemu aktivistu Sun Yatsen, katerega vpliv v Hong Kongu je bil omejen in mu ni uspelo tekmovati z najvišjim voditeljem družbe Revive China. Medtem ko je bil Sun Yatsen izgnan iz Hong Konga, sta Yeung Ku Wan in Tse Tsan Tai zasnovala več vstajnih uporov iz svoje baze v Hongkongu, da bi izpodbijali vlado Qing-a, ki so potekali pod pokroviteljstvom britanskih radikalnih novinarjev. Članek prikazuje naraščajoči politični pomen Hong Konga od 20. stoletja dalje po izbruhu kitajske revolucije. Prikazuje naraščajočo napetost med kitajskimi oblastmi in revolucionarji, ki je povzročila podporo kitajske revolucije z strani angleškega tiska in britanskih radikalov. Smrt vodilnega revolucionarnega voditelja Yeung Ku Wana je prav tako vplivala na britansko reakcijo na intervencije kitajske deželne vlade v Hong Kongu. Poleg tega je britanski kolonializem v Hong Kongu ponujal zatočišče revolucionarjem v imenu obrambe britanske suverenosti v Hong Kongu.

Ključne besede: Kitajska, Hong Kong, revolucija, Yeung Ku Wan, britanski radikalci, Novinarstvo, Qing-ova vlada

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