

King Hui: The Man Who Owned All the Opium in Hong Kong

BIOGRAPHY / ORAL HISTORY

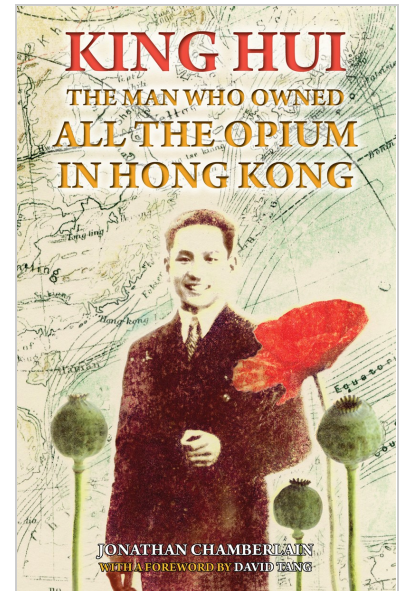
by Jonathan Chamberlain, with a foreword by Sir David Tang

Scandal and corruption, drugs and pirates, triads and flower boats; the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong and the Communist takeover of Canton. Peter Hui was there. He knew everybody and saw everything. This is the real story of Hong Kong, told with the rich flavours of the street.

If Peter had been only a little bit different he could have been an important man. But this is a riches to rags to riches to rags story. As we follow Peter's life – his ups, his downs – we see in sharp focus what it was like to be a Chinese man in the British territory of Hong Kong through most of the years of the 20th century.

And yet this book is not just one man's tale. It is the story of a time and place – colonial Hong Kong, Portuguese Macau and the South China hinterland – seen from the unique point of view of a man who was at home at all levels of society.

This is the bizarre story of a man who really did, for a very short time, once own all the opium in Hong Kong. *The World of Suzie Wong* was a best-selling novel in the 1960s – and this story is its background. If Suzie had been a real girl, Peter Hui would have known her.



Reviews

"A remarkably accessible depiction of life under British and Japanese control... it effectively exposes the sordid underbelly of colonial society as we're led down a path of scandal, corruption, drugs, espionage, and of course pirates, providing a fascinating alternative to the often stuffy discourse on the subject. The book is an incredibly informative read, and a must for all Hong Kong enthusiasts." – **HK Magazine**

"A rich account of Hong Kong (and at times Guangzhou) as seen at street-level: family life, food, schools, shops, and corruption, vice and squalor, set against a backdrop of colonial rule, Japanese invasion and communist revolution. The details are often fascinating; for example, details about how some Hongkongers prospered under Japanese occupation. For anyone who wonders what Hong Kong must have been like in those days – the sort of people who look in amazement at Hedda Morrison's barely recognisable low-rise, third-world town – this is the main reason to read this book." – **Hemlock's Diary**

"Because of his whimsical attitude toward money and underworld and upper-class connections, Mr. Hui's tales range across almost every imaginable stratum of Hong Kong society..." – **Far Eastern Economic Review**

(continued)

"This is a true story but it reads like a novel. It is a cracking read." – **Sir David Tang**

"Hui's story gives us glimpses of a Hong Kong – the opium dens, the pool halls, the nightclubs, the casinos and the girls, girls, girls – not adequately reflected in official histories of the city. The book's biggest achievement, however, is that its protagonist's triumphs and tragedies wind up underscoring the dynamism of the city and the times that shaped him." – **Asia Times**

"Chamberlain does a masterful job of relaying to his readers Peter's voice as he peels away a life that is as incredulous as the world that contained it. Moreover, as he spins his engaging tale, readers get a good taste of the intoxicating good times he enjoyed, while at the same time questioning his priorities and self-interest in not providing more for his family." – **BookPleasures**

"From time to time, I have the pleasure of meeting a person who can recount an episode of his or her life that is so captivating, I cease to care whether or not I believe the storyteller. I even know a few people who are full of such stories. I have never, however, had the delight of meeting someone with the breadth of stories told in *King Hui* by Jonathan Chamberlain." – **Inside-Out China**

About the Author

Jonathan Chamberlain was brought up in Ireland and Hong Kong. After graduating in Social Anthropology at Sussex University, he returned to Hong Kong where he lived for many years as a teacher and writer. He is now a full time author. His other works include *Chinese Gods: An Introduction to Chinese Folk Religion* and *Cancer: The Complete Recovery Guide*. In addition to his writing work he has founded two charities: The Hong Kong Down Syndrome Association and Mental Handicap Network China Ltd.

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