E.J. EITEL'S *EUROPE IN CHINA*: A REAPPRAISAL OF THE MESSAGES AND THE MAN

ANTHONY SWEETING

Introduction

Ernst Johann or - to use the Anglicized version of his names that he preferred to use (at least, from the 1870s) - Ernest John Eitel, 1838-1908, might well have thought of himself as the natural follower of that eminent Victorian, James Legge. Like Legge, he was a scholar-missionary who, during almost thirty years' residence in Hong Kong, became actively involved in education practice and policy. Like Legge, he was an accomplished translator who made himself an acknowledged expert in aspects of Chinese culture. Like Legge, he openly espoused a pre-Kipling and pre-Lugard form of 'the White Man's burden', through which he emphasized the duties of the British to help develop and modernize China. He achieved this most conspicuously in his *Europe in China*, a book originally published in 1895 and since then re-published on a number of occasions. Unlike Legge, however, he failed to attract an almost invariably 'good press', either during his own lifetime or posthumously. Indeed, it is by no means certain that James Legge would have welcomed or would have even accepted being selected as a model by Eitel and all the kinship that this implies. The basic purpose of this article, therefore, is to investigate why *Europe in China* and its author earned, if not an irredeemably bad press, at best a mixed reception, both contemporaneously and subsequently. In so doing, it attempts a reappraisal of both the man and his messages.

The messages

Eitel's substantial *Europe in China: the history of Hong Kong from the beginning to the year 1882*, first published by Kelly & Walsh in 1895, was a significant

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contribution to the early histories of Hong Kong. It was by no means his only publication, but its importance was enhanced by the fact that it was heralded by journal articles - one focusing on the history of education in Hong Kong and another couple providing a brief appetizer with a focus on the inconsistent policies and fluctuating circumstances that led to the actual establishment of the British colony.

Apologia for British imperialism?
The most obvious message presented by the book was as a celebration of British colonialism. The book concludes:

Hongkong has clearly fulfilled up to this point, the purpose of its establishment as the guardian of the interests of Europe in China. Notwithstanding all its faults and shortcomings, this British Colony has set before the people and Mandarins of China a praiseworthy example of free trade principles and humane government. Floreat semper.

In an effort to provide an accurate historical perspective, however, one should emphasize here that in contrast to current postmodern modishness, the mainstream political (and academic) correctness among Europeans of Eitel’s time was pro-colonial and quite comfortably accommodated even aggressive imperialism. It was the age that witnessed the Scramble for Africa, of course, as well as “Western” encroachments in Asia. Benjamin Disraeli and Joseph Chamberlain in Britain, King Leopold II of Belgium, and Theodore Roosevelt in the United States all owed at least some of their prominence and support to their advocacy of imperial expansion. More specifically with regard to Hong Kong, Eitel’s comparable predecessors and contemporaries such as Samuel Brown, George Smith, James Legge, and Frederick Stewart often conveyed opinions at least equally compatible with colonial presuppositions. Indeed, contemporary reservations about Europe in China were much more likely to have been derived from suspicions that its German author was seeking to appear as British as the British, or even more so. Especially from within the mercantile class and bureaucratic ranks of the time, they were certain to have been influenced also by his close association with Sir John Pope Hennessy, the person whom that class and those ranks regarded as probably the most unpopular Governor of Hong Kong. It is only much more recently, especially as post-colonialism and anti-colonialism became fashionable, that Eitel’s book attracted criticism for being so pro-colonial. Nearly fifty years ago, Endacott opened his pioneering appraisal with the words:
Students of the history of Hong Kong can hardly avoid familiarity with Eitel's Europe in China: the history of Hong Kong from the beginning to the year 1882, if only because of the paucity of such histories, and many will echo the author of this brief essay in expressing gratitude to a local historian who has placed all his successors so splendidly in his debt.  

Lethbridge also began his introductory notes for a new edition of Europe in China in 1983 by boldly asserting that the book 'will continue to remain an indispensable source for historians of Hong Kong'.

More recently Gillian Bickley concluded a brief biographical sketch of Eitel with a sting in its tail 'there is no doubt that Eitel was a conscientious, learned and energetic man, who made a real contribution to Hong Kong, including its educational system; a sincere man sometimes out of his depth'. Earlier in the same sketch she claims that 'Reverend Dr Ernst Eitel is probably best known generally as the first historian or chronicler of Hong Kong under British administration; and his work, Europe in China, 1895, is still used almost as a primary source, when other records are missing'. However, these hints of approval tend to be overwhelmed by other comments, including some that appear anachronistic. For example, she confidently asserts:

There is no doubt that Eitel's intervention and work in the area of Hong Kong education favoured the development of Christian Mission schools and the inclusion of religious teaching. His assertion of the triumph of religious over secular educational policy in Hong Kong (based on imperfect knowledge of facts and an inaccurate interpretation of personalities and events) accords with the vision of the destined and coming world-mastery of Britain, expressed in Europe in China, and for which the writer of its modern Introduction feels it necessary to apologise; quoting a contemporary obituary comment, which states, 'the best of men have the faults of their best qualities'.

In fact, Lethbridge, the writer of the modern Introduction, did not feel it 'necessary to apologize' for Eitel's vision, but he did feel it important to explain it in its historical context. As Lethbridge took pains to point out, Eitel 'was influenced by the Zeitgeist of late Victorian England and Continental Europe. It is understandable, then, that he justified colonialism (there is certainly no criticism of it as a system imposed upon non-Europeans) and believed that Anglo-Saxon domination was immanent in history'. Nevertheless, Bickley tends to disparage Eitel, perhaps in order to inflate the importance of his predecessor as Inspector of Schools, the admired subject of her biography, Frederick Stewart.
Pioneering the history of Hong Kong?
If modern (and postmodern) critics were to retreat from their simplistic generalizations and spend time examining the few other instances of early attempts to write histories of Hong Kong, they might reach alternative and more complex conclusions. Ironically perhaps, a class of Chinese students at the earliest western school to be opened in Hong Kong, the Morrison Education Society School, produced the first attempts at writing historical studies of Hong Kong. Under their American principal, Samuel Brown, they completed a composition project, which, particularly in view of Stewart's remarks about the absence of history from traditional Chinese education, probably merits some quotation here:

In the year eighteen hundred and forty-one the English commenced to build houses in Hong Kong. A few years ago there was not one place which is in China which belonged to the British. It was said that the mandarin had put poison into those streams of water which are in this island because the last three or two years ago, many Chinese who came here got sick and many of them died, therefore they thought so. I think that this story was only exaggerated by the Chinese, but now it is in a more flourishing state, I think it will be better than Macao.

About three years ago, there was not one Chinese governor, who dared to hold a banquet with the English, as they were afraid of them. But now this year in the month of May there were two imperial commissioners came to this island and visited the British governor and took dinner with him; and one evening they came to the Morrison Education Society school and Mr. Brown played on the instrument and the boys sung several pieces, and the visitors seemed very much please [sic] to hear our teacher play and sing; but a few years ago I never heard they did such a thing, and I hope they will gradually become good friends and I [hope] that this country will improve.\(^7\)

The first known history of Hong Kong to be written by an Englishman, William Tarrant, the co-editor of an early local newspaper, opens itself to the interpretation of representing the viewpoints of many European and American merchants, especially in its reservations about the activities of missionaries and his criticisms of the Hong Kong colonial government. He wrote, for example:

The Medical Missionary and Morrison Education Societies had commenced operations, as before stated, in 1842 and in 1843, Hong Kong became the head quarters of the Ta-choo mission, under the Rev. Mr Dean, and of the London Mission under Dr Legge.

In connection with the latter Society the following appeared in the Colonial Gazette:
Connected with Hongkong, we observe an intimation in the daily journals which may not give unmixxed satisfaction to Government. It is that the Missionary Chinese College at Malacca is to be immediately transferred to Hongkong. Since its misunderstanding with the Jesuits and Dominicans, the Chinese Government has been, if possible, more jealous of missionaries than of any other class of foreigners. If it become aware of an intermitting effort of missionary zeal in the Island of Hongkong, the Chinese Government will be hard to be persuaded that the English authorities cannot stop it; and our relations with China may be embarrassed on this account ... The patrons of missionary efforts must be aware of how much the progress of Christianity has at all times been accelerated when those sent to propagate it have been able to impart new and useful information to the tribes they addressed. They must therefore see the advantage of making their College at Hongkong as complete a seminary of instruction as they can, and of not confining its advantages to neophytes. Let them give instruction in the useful and ornamental arts, the sciences, and above all medicine ....  

In 1877 two other publications with more dubious credentials as genuine histories of Hong Kong attracted public attention. Both were pamphlets, published anonymously. The one, which its title suggested, had the stronger claims to the status of a history, was Dates and Events (1857-1877) connected with the history of education in Hong Kong, printed at the St Lewis Reformatory. This included the following comments about a meeting held at the City Hall on 25 June 1872 to discuss issues concerning the perceived need for a new school to cater for children of western middle-class parents:

About 30 people attended it. Sir Arthur Kennedy [then Governor of Hong Kong] was present and expressed his idea that if a school should be had, it ought to be a secular one. His Excellency openly declared that he had no earthly sympathy with sectarianism. Mr Francis warmly advocated religious education. Mr Stewart, the Inspector of Government School[s] spoke in favour of the secular. He denied that the education given at the Central School was atheistical but admitted the term Un-Christian. He said that one of his rules was, that the words Protestantism and Catholicism were never to be mentioned in the school. On being asked parenthetically by Mr Francis how history was taught Mr Stewart said he only wished to defend himself.  

The whole tone of this pamphlet is polemical and, more specifically, pro-Catholic, reducing impressions of historical impartiality.

Even the title of the other anonymous pamphlet published in 1877 detracted from the possibility that it represented an objective historical account. This was The Central School: can it justify its raison d'être? It included such other rhetorical questions as 'Is it right that the Central School should be a Government School, its Masters Government Officers, and its entire support be derived from the public treasury? Is it right that it should absorb nearly the
whole of the money the colony can afford to pay towards education?' (p. 15). In much the same spirit, it also presented the following question, together with its eloquent answer:

... and what sort of education do these favoured few [pupils at the Central School] get at the expense of the community? No moral training whatsoever, less than none, for they deteriorate. They lose all reverence for their parents, of whom they become intellectually the superiors. They learn to disregard the sages of China and the old-fashioned proprieties of Chinese life. They add the vices of Europeans to the follies of Chinese youth.20

When one turns from the pamphlets, from Tarrant’s book, and from the efforts of the pupils at the Morrison Education Society School, to Europe in China, one can detect marked differences in tone, intention, scope, and, on the whole, in both accuracy and impartiality. This is not to suggest that Eitel was entirely above trying to implement his own agenda or score off people who had previously shown him hostility. As Lethbridge comments, however,

It is remarkable, and a testimony to the better side of Eitel’s character, that in Europe in China he gives a very balanced treatment of Sir John Pope-Hennessy’s administration. In his final chapter, however, he allows a little spleen to creep out when he writes:
As for Sir J.P. Hennessy, the less said the better. His acts speak powerfully enough. The centre of his world was himself. But with all the crowd of dark and bright powers that were wrestling with him, he could not help doing some good and the Colony emerged out of the ordeal of his administration practically unscathed.21

Both Endacott and Lethbridge, as well as, much earlier, Joseph Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, acknowledged his impartiality. Chamberlain referred to the book as ‘a most interesting and useful publication’.22 Endacott emphasizes that ‘Eitel was telling the truth as he saw it, and if we do not see the same events in the same light to-day, who is to judge? In sixty years’ time, the present generation of historians will no doubt seem equally outmoded’.23 Lethbridge, while recognizing that Eitel’s top-down approach, organized and periodized according to the various Governors of Hong Kong may seem ‘old-fashioned’, pays tribute to a very different aspect of the work:

On the other hand, Eitel does not neglect the Chinese component, which grew more important with the passage of time. He highlights the rise of an alternative elite, a Chinese elite, and the associations and committees they founded, such as the Tung Wah, the Po Leung Kuk, and the District Watch. He is also alert to Chinese commercial enterprise and the important part it increasingly played in Hong Kong’s progress.24
Further instances of Eitel's readiness to appreciate the importance and value of the Chinese contributions to Hong Kong's history appear in the chapter he devoted to 'The pre-British history of the island of Hong Kong' and numerous other comments he made about Chinese initiatives, including those they had taken in the field of education. 25

**Personal agendas?**

As mentioned above, largely because of the fact that he was a foreigner, 26 Eitel was by no means universally popular, either in Hong Kong or in Britain, especially among bureaucrats and merchants. His own recognition of this may have influenced him in attempts to ingratiate himself with such people. Endacott writes of his 'tendency to be swayed by public opinion and by popularly-held ideas', submitting as evidence of this his criticisms of Sir Henry Pottinger, the first Governor of Hong Kong, his 'equally cavalier treatment' of Sir John Davis, Pottinger's even more unpopular successor, and his account of the 'Hong Kong blockade, by which the Colony was ringed with Chinese customs stations to examine and control junk trade to and from the Colony in 1867'. 27

Fair-minded commentators, such as Endacott and Lethbridge, are, however, understanding and forgiving of these relatively few peccadilloes. Even after over two pages that focus on Eitel's limitations and inaccuracies, Endacott concludes: 'It would be less than just to end this review on a critical note, and it may be confidently predicted that Eitel's painstaking and informative volume will be a necessary starting point for all historians of Hong Kong for some time to come'. He supplements this with the further comment that 'in a book packed with detail - dates, figures, statistics and names - the surprising thing is not that there are errors, but that there are so few'. 28 While noting that *Europe in China* contains 'some minor errors, some mistakes in dates and names, and a number of misprints', Lethbridge quotes Endacott's judgment approvingly. He also reports that, 'apart from a lyrical and visionary preface, Eitel sticks closely to the facts. He does not indulge in much moralization, speculation, or even generalization, although he does, grandly so, in his preface'. 29 Moreover, for by far the largest part of his book, Eitel refrains from waging a type of vengeful war against individuals who had treated him dismissively or contemptuously. 30
Contribution to the history of education in Hong Kong

Influenced by his almost twenty years' experience as Inspector of Schools, Eitel devoted a significant part of his time and scholarly activities to historical accounts of education in Hong Kong. He did this both via education-specific articles and by means of his book, the multi-thematic, *Europe in China: the history of Hong Kong from the beginning to the year 1882*. With specific regard to the fact-heavy nature of this book, Lethbridge offers the following acute comments:

... the history of any small community is inclined to take that form. In late 1841, Hong Kong had a population of 24,000; 160,000 in 1881; that is to say, about the size of a small English municipality. As with any English county history, a record of nineteenth-century Hong Kong is likely to be factual, anecdotal, and parochial. Song Ong Siang's *One hundred years' history of the Chinese in Singapore*, 1923 is, for example, similar to *Europe in China* in content and form. When Eitel wrote, social and economic history was not as influential as it has since become. At that time, serious history for Englishmen was principally diplomatic history, about those presumed to make history, not about the hoi polloi.

Although, *Europe in China* certainly includes plenty of diplomatic history, organized as already mentioned, mainly in a conventionally top-down fashion and periodized according to the terms of office held by the various Governors and Acting Governors, Eitel also found sufficient time and motivation to focus on economic and social history. He paid attention, for example, to commercial relations, to the development of trade and industry, to the emergence of a Chinese elite in Hong Kong, to religious affairs, and, of course, to education. In connection with the last-named subject area, Eitel did not confine himself to amassing factual detail in the manner of a chronicler, but often attempted to identify trends. For this reason, despite Bickley's unsubstantiated attack on the accuracy and objectivity of his 'Materials for a history of education in Hong Kong' and her reservations about *Europe in China*, Eitel deserves acknowledgement as the first modern historian of education in Hong Kong.

The man

Two of Eitel's principal followers as writers on Hong Kong history, both widely respected scholars in their own right, recognized the paucity of reliable information about Eitel's personal life and character, but did much to augment this through reasoned inferences. One of these, George Endacott, concludes:
The impression Eitel gives is of a thorough, painstaking official, competent and devoted, but with no great originality or constructiveness... His colleagues spoke well of him, and this was equally so in the missionary field. He seems to have been a man of solid worth, but not inspired by or capable of inspiring enthusiasm.35

The other, James Lethbridge, noting that Eitel was 'widely distrusted by members of the small European community', queries whether the reason for this was that he was 'too Teutonic, humourless, didactic, opinionated', but offers a reflective statement by Eitel in his own defence and comments on 'the better side of Eitel's character'.36

This article seeks to analyze briefly Eitel's main roles. It does so as a contribution to his reappraisal, especially in the face of recent anachronistic and possibly prejudiced criticisms. It proceeds under the impression that he was a multi-faceted character, who was (and still is) capable of provoking suspicion and controversy, as well as appreciation.

**Eitel as a missionary**

He spent most of his professional life as Lutheran minister, including over sixteen years as a missionary in southern China. Unlike the career of the stereotypical missionary, however, Eitel's was not simple and straightforward. After graduating from Tübingen University with an M.A. in Theology in 1860, he accepted an appointment in the State Church of Württemberg, not far from his birthplace. Within little more than a year, he had become much more adventurous when he applied successfully for leave of absence in order to join the Basel Mission37 in China.
Only three years later, however, while acknowledging that he had joined
the Basel Mission with the conviction that ‘he had a call from the Lord to
preach the Gospel to the heathen’ and the intention to devote the rest of his
life to this work, he admitted that ‘much of his enthusiasm is now gone by
reason of what I have seen of the hardness of the Chinese hearts’. In the same
letter, an application to switch from the Basel Mission to the London
Missionary Society, LMS, he added that this had provided him with a stronger
determination to persevere with missionary work, though now under the aegis
of the LMS. It also made clear the reason for his decision to leave the mission
station ‘where I had found it my happiness to work for the Lord by teaching
and preaching’ was the refusal by his seniors in the Basel Mission to countenance
his intended marriage to the young English lady, Miss Mary Anne Winifred
Eaton. Further correspondence, this time from senior missionaries of the local
LMS, the Revs James Legge and John Chalmers, who had forwarded Eitel’s
application to the LMS Board approvingly, described him as ‘an earnest and
devoted missionary, a sound theologian, and an able scholar’. Moreover,
they reported that, despite the disapproval of his marriage by the Revs Lechler
and Winnes, his seniors in the Basel Mission, ‘Lechler and other German
missionaries all paid tribute to his missionary work’ and that the Anglican
Church Mission Society, the CMS, had already offered him a post, which he
had declined because of his preference for the LMS.

Eitel spent the next five years, 1865-70, in Guangdong, working at the
LMS station for the Hakka at Poklo. In 1870, he successfully requested a
move to Hong Kong, partly because of the difficulty in finding a suitable
house for his burgeoning family in Guangdong and partly because the Canton
church was not as involved as the Hong Kong church in efforts on behalf of
the Hakka. He remained in Hong Kong until 1897, becoming the Secretary
and Treasurer of the local LMS station, while also using some of the time for
scholarly activities and some for contributions to governmental business,
especially concerning translation and education. The latter led him, however,
to resign from the LMS and further missionary activity in 1879 so that he
could take up more intensive work as an official of the Hong Kong
Government. In this context, it is significant that, although the Rev. John
Chalmers had commented, ‘it is high time that his intentions were known at
the Mission House’, he added, ‘I regret exceedingly his purpose of leaving the
Society. It will be a personal loss and trial to me and the Mission can ill spare
such a valuable man’. Thus, aspersions cast on his dedication as a missionary
by such contemporaries as Bramston and the anonymous writer of Frederick
Stewart’s obituary in the Pall Mall Gazette,\textsuperscript{43} plus those by such recent commentators as Bickley, might have been motivated more by malice than concern for the truth. They certainly fail to recognize that Eitel’s personal circumstances, especially his own relatively humble family background and his sense of commitment to his wife and children, are not necessarily grounds for condemnation.

\textbf{As a scholar}

With one notable exception, in this field at least, Eitel received a reasonably ‘good press’, both in his lifetime and later. His books and journal articles on such subjects as Chinese Buddhism (including reference to a Buddhist Purgatory for Women), the Hakka Chinese and their language, \textit{feng shui}, Flogging, Spirit-rapping in China, the Uighurs, the history of Chinese philosophy, the Cantonese dialect, and the Protestant Missions of Hong Kong, demonstrate a wide range of interests in, understanding of, and enthusiasm for Chinese culture. They also burnished his reputation as a sinologist. This is what persuaded the Hong Kong Governor, Sir Arthur Kennedy, to appoint him (unpaid) chairman of a school textbook committee and Kennedy’s immediate successor, the Acting Governor, Gardiner Austin, to describe him as ‘a renowned Chinese scholar’.\textsuperscript{44} More recently, an academic who merits acknowledgement as the father of the more modern academic field of Hong Kong Studies, Maurice Freedman, referred to ‘the fascinating study [of \textit{feng shui} by Ernst J. Eitel].’\textsuperscript{45} There are also numerous respectful references on internet websites to Eitel’s scholarly work, especially, but not only, those influenced by ‘New Age’ approaches.\textsuperscript{46}

The only significant exception derives, as noted above, from a few recent references to Europe in China. This book provoked harsh criticism from Stewart’s biographer, Bickley, and an almost total disregard by Steve Tsang in his Modern history of Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{47} The two references to Eitel that appear in Tak-wing Ngo’s Hong Kong history are at least equally dismissive and seem to imply a postmodern brand of anti-colonialism.\textsuperscript{48} Both Endacott and Lethbridge, however, are more fulsome, if qualified, in acknowledgement of the book’s strengths and values.

\textbf{As a government official}

Several of the sections above have already noted the distrust Eitel generated amongst other (especially senior) officials.\textsuperscript{49} His record as chairman of the
committee for the compilation of Chinese textbooks; member of the Board of Examiners in Chinese for Government officers; acting, then substantive, Inspector of Schools; private secretary to Governor Hennessy; and Supervisor of Interpreters and Translator to the Supreme Court was not unblemished. However, in his most important, if relatively 'lowly', role as Inspector of Schools, his support for the Grant-in-Aid schools was not necessarily the result of personal prejudice and was certainly compatible with contemporary developments in Britain. Although several of his publicly acknowledged views might seem conservative and old-fashioned according to current beliefs, it should be noted that they were shared by most of his contemporaries.

He deserves credit for the perceptive comments he made on Hong Kong society, especially his attempts to refute the comparisons of Hong Kong's Eurasian population with the 'mean whites' of the southern states of the USA, made by the Chief Justice, Sir John Smale. The extended notes he made on the mui-tsai (young girls adopted into Chinese families to work as domestic servants) were similarly well informed. He also merits appreciative recognition for his pioneering work in the fields of female education, early childhood education, teacher education, physical education, technical education and industrial training, and even comparative education.
As a husband

There is convincing evidence to show that Eitel gave priority to his relationship with the woman who became his wife over his commitment to the Basel Mission. He had seven children with her, took special care of his disabled daughter, Theodora, named one of his other daughters ‘Oi-wa’ (Cantonese for ‘love the Chinese’), used ‘domestic reasons’ to apply to change his place of abode to Hong Kong, and dedicated his most important publication on education in Hong Kong to his wife. Despite this, Bickley cites the terms of the dedication in order to impute ignominious motives to him and to infer from Eitel's own words a 'comment on their personal relationship' that was 'slightly discreditable to her'. An alternative and more plausible interpretation of the dedication, reproduced as Figure 1, is that it was an honest and loving appreciation of his wife and of the inevitable vicissitudes of married life.

Other roles

As already intimated, these include the parts Eitel played as a rival to other educators, as an ally, for a time, of an unpopular Governor, and as a foreigner, particularly a German, in a British colony. The last-named role could well have irritated numerous contemporaries, especially when he presumed to apply for naturalization and might have appeared to have been acting as more British than the British. Although he did not flinch from engaging in public controversy, another possible role - that of anonymous author of either or both of the 1877 pamphlets - does not seem to have gathered much supporting evidence. It is significant that, at the very end of his Hong Kong career, the press commented that he had 'won the open sesame to the Chinese mind', having 'discharged his duties in a thoroughly conscientious manner from first to last and deserved well of the Colony.'
Conclusions

The reasons for the mixed reception of both *Europe in China* and, especially, its author must be equally mixed. Some were generated by a personality that even his friends suggested was complex and rarely comfortable with or adept at social relationships.\(^6\) Some probably tell more about his critics than they say accurately about Eitel, himself, or his book. The book would have alienated those of his contemporary readers who did not consider local Chinese initiatives worthy of inclusion in a history of a British colony almost as much as it now irritates readers who take umbrage about his praise for British colonialism in Hong Kong and, more generally, for the perceived role of *Europe in China*.

A balanced, historically informed verdict on the book's messages and on the man, himself, affirms that the book is by no means a perfect history (if any such product could ever exist) and the man was certainly not a saint. It also suggests, however, that the book deserves recognition for the firm foundation it provided for later studies and the man credit for his talents, his interests, and even his human fallibilities. This reappraisal will, I hope, shed some light on the nature of Europe's old and new empires, as well as on the ahistorical excesses of 'post-everything' analysis, especially post-structuralism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism. It certainly suggests that Eitel, along with numerous other similarly motivated Europeans, was not primarily either exploitative or patronizingly dismissive of Chinese culture, but devoted a lifetime to efforts at understanding and innovation, as well as to service. And, however old-fashioned it may now sound, the title of his book, *Europe in China*, was meant to celebrate an illuminating beacon of progressive thinking, not a mindless and selfish take-over.

Notes

2. Legge resided mainly in Hong Kong from 1843 to 1870; Eitel resided mainly in Hong Kong from 1870 to 1897.
3. For example, as early as 1861, Legge referred to hopes that, through the teaching of English, 'an influence may go forth from the Island [Hong Kong], which shall be widely felt in China enlightening and benefiting many of its people'. See 'The New System prepared by the Rev. Dr. Legge', *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 1861, pp.
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106-107. Eitel began his 1895 publication, *Europe in China*, by emphasizing the ‘unbridged chasm ... separating the social life of Europeans and Chinese’, but then also asserting that ‘the people of Hong Kong are inwardly bound together by a steadily developing communion of interests: the destiny of the one race is to rule and the fate of the other is to be ruled’ (pp. i-iii). Rudyard Kipling’s famous (or, in these more politically correct times, infamous) poem, ‘The White Man’s Burden’, appeared in 1899. Frederick Lugard explained his concepts of duties, responsibilities and holding to principles ‘in trust for those who shall come after us’ in *The Dual mandate in British Tropical Africa* (1926), especially pp. 606-619.

4. See, for example, Ernest John Eitel, *Europe in China*, edited and with an introduction by Henry James Lethbridge. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1983, as well as the paperback version, published in 2002 as an Elibron Classic by the Adamant Publishing Corporation, and a 1968 reprint published in Taipei. Neither the first edition of 1895 nor any of the subsequent editions includes an adequate index. An impression of accuracy and reliability is, however, enhanced by the fact that the first edition appeared so soon after the events it narrates and interprets.

5. The education-centred articles were the two parts of Eitel’s, 1890-91, ‘Materials for a history of education in Hong Kong’, *The China Review*, XIX, 5, pp. 308-24 and XIX, 6, pp. 335-68. The more military and diplomatic relations oriented articles were his 1891 ‘Supplementary notes on the history of Hong Kong, 1882-1890’, *The China Review*, XX, 2, pp. 532-543, and his 1892/93 ‘Selected chapters from an unpublished history of Hong Kong’, *The China Review*, XX, 3, pp. 173-201, and 4, pp. 201-245.


7. The colonial activities of Americans would seem to justify this modification of the descriptive term. It is not, however, fully accurate since the Japanese, too, had begun to seek opportunities for expansion, especially towards Korea and China before the end of the nineteenth century.

8. Samuel Brown, the first ‘western’ (American) principal of a school in Hong Kong, mentioned in an official report that his Chinese pupils ‘differ as much as others, but there is usually a universal expression of passive inanity pervading them. The black but staring, glassy eye and open mouth bespeak little more than stupid wonder gazing out of emptiness’, Report of the Morrison Education Society, 1844, *Chinese Repository*, XII, pp. 632-34. George Smith, soon to become the first Anglican Bishop of Hong Kong, reported that ‘the lowest drags of native society flock into the British settlement, in the hope of gain or plunder’, George Smith, *A Narrative of an exploratory visit to each of the Consular cities of China*, 1847. Reprinted by Ch’eng Wen Publishing Co., 1972, pp. 508. Referring to the Chinese traditional education received by the vast majority of his students before they entered his school, Frederick Stewart, the first Headmaster of the Government Central School, who was also Inspector of Schools, commented that it ‘embraces then, neither History nor Geography, nor Arithmetic, not the simplest elements of Science - subjects which, in the West, are considered so indispensable. There is nothing to gratify the youthful imagination, to cheer the learner
in this course, or to explain to him the most ordinary occurrences in his life’. See Frederick Stewart, ‘Annual report on the state of Government schools’, Hong Kong Blue Book, 1865, pp. 280. Even James Legge, otherwise noted for his sympathetic attitude to Chinese culture, helped a colleague disrupt a temple service in Malacca because it reminded him of idol-worship, see N.J. Girardot, op. cit., pp. 37-38 and, towards the end of his career in Hong Kong, spoke of ‘Britannia standing at the [Hong Kong] Peak’, looking down ‘with an emotion of pride on the great Babylon which her sons have built’. See J. Legge, ‘The Colony of Hong Kong’, lecture in the City Hall, Hong Kong, 5 November 1872, reprinted from The China Review, III, 1874, in the Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 11, p. 172.


10. Endacott, ‘A Hong Kong history’, p. 41. In Hong Kong, Sir George Bowen, Governor from 1883 to 1885, described Eitel as a German ex-missionary who had been ‘mixed up with unsavoury scandals’ and who was ‘thoroughly discredited in the general opinion of this community’. Ibid.


13. Ibid., p. 199. Bickley’s description of Eitel as ‘the first historian or chronicler of Hong Kong under British administration’ is inaccurate. See the reference to William Tarrant in n.18, below.

14. Ibid., p. 204.

15. Lethbridge, ‘Introduction’, p. xiv. Lethbridge’s quotation from the obituary, by Eitel’s friend, the Rev. T.W. Pearce, is in no way related to Eitel’s pro-colonial vision, but referred, instead, to his ‘human limitations’ and the remark about the best of men having the faults of their best qualities was, according to Lethbridge, p. xi, ‘added obliquely’.

16. Examples of such disparagement occur in Bickley, Development of education, 2002, pp. 19, 21, 64, 202-203, 437, 557. In her eulogistic biography of Frederick Stewart, Gillian Bickley, The Golden needle: the biography of Frederick Stewart, 1836-1889. Hong Kong: D.C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University, 1997, she asserts that ‘Eitel had acted with such lack of judgment in more than one matter that he was not trusted either by Hong Kong or by Colonial Office officials. Some of
the latter in fact betray personal dislike for him as a man and contempt for him as an official: "Dr. Eitel’s ideas - if he has any. Twaddle! Lacking in moral sense". Comments like this regularly occur in Colonial Office minutes when Eitel is concerned', pp. 194-95. Bickley omits to record, however, more positive comments, such as those made by Sir Arthur Kennedy and Gardiner Austen, quoted above, and Sir William Robinson’s remark about the ‘satisfactory’ nature of the Education Report. This includes: ‘I may mention that the Physical Drill instituted by Dr. Eitel has proved very successful, and that I lately witnessed a parade on the Cricket ground of 528 school-boys who went through their exercises very creditably. Dr. Eitel is to be congratulated on the success of his efforts’, see Despatch No. 320 from Sir William Robinson, Governor of Hong Kong, to the Marquis of Ripon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 November 1892, in CO129/256, p. 432. And, as far as the Colonial Office is concerned, Bickley fails to report that, over the Hallyar affair, Eitel’s cause was ‘championed, unbeknownst to him, by fair-minded persons at the Colonial Office, who wished to get rid of the dreadfully troublesome Irishman, Hennessy, but felt considerable sympathy for the German’. See Endacott, ‘A Hong Kong history’, p. x.

17. Fourth Specimen, in Article IV, ‘History of Hongkong: Given in specimens of compositon by pupils in the school of the Morrison Education Society’, in the ‘Fourth Annual Report of the Morrison Education Society, read September 28th 1842’, Chinese Repository, XI, October 1842, pp. 544-45. Another example of either a type of deculturation of the pupils or a form of prejudice by their teacher occurs in the next year’s report, which includes:

During the whole of the last year, the morals of the school-boys have appeared to me in general unexceptional. No instance of theft or falsehood in the upper two classes has come to my knowledge. I believe, indeed, that it may be said without the least exaggeration, that they are all habitually impressed with a feeling of contempt for the character of a liar. I have heard them, when some instance of falsehood has occurred among the natives around them, say with a look of disgust, ‘That is Chinese’.


Frederick Stewart’s remarks about the absence of history from traditional Chinese education are quoted in n. 8, above.

18. William Tarrant, Hongkong. Part I, 1839-44, printed at The Friend of China Office, Guangdong, 1861. Tarrant’s less than scrupulous regard for historical truth receives some reinforcement, not only from his generally polemical approach, but also from the way he creates an unacknowledged quotation of himself. In the early 1840s, the full title of the newspaper he edited was The Friend of China and Colonial Gazette.

19. Anon., Dates and events (1857-1877) connected with the history of education in Hong Kong, printed at the St Lewis Reformatory, 1877, p. 28. The apparent glee with which the anonymous author reports the discomfiture of Frederick Stewart (caused by his defeat in repartee by Francis) suggests that the anonymous author may well have been
J.J. Francis, himself, a leading Catholic barrister, who revelled in debate.

20. Anon., *The Central School: can it justify its raison d’être?* Hong Kong: Noronha, 1877, p. 30. The library of the University of Hong Kong attributes the authorship of this pamphlet to E.J. Eitel, presumably on the grounds that, in his later career as the Inspector of Schools who succeeded Stewart, he tended to support the expansion of the Grant (mainly religious) schools, but the style and tone of the pamphlet suggest that a more likely candidate is, again, J.J. Francis.


23. Ibid., p. 58.


25. See, for example, Eitel, *Europe in China*, 1895, Chapter X, and pp. 282, 575.

26. As also mentioned above, his lack of popularity was increased by his close association, for several years, with Governor Hennessy. See accounts of the case involving Y.C. Hallyar and F.B. Johnson in, for example, Endacott, *A Hong Kong history*, 1957-58, p. 50, and Lethbridge, ‘Introduction’, 1983, pp. ix-x.


28. Ibid., p. 63.


30. Such individuals included, as notes 10 and 16 suggest, such persons as Sir John Pope Hennessy, Sir George Bowen, C.P. Lucas, and John Bramston. Other critics/rivals included Frederick Stewart and, from the early 1880s, his successor, George Bateson Wright, whom, in his book, *Europe in China*, Eitel treated, at worst, with circumspection.


33. Her suggestion that ‘after Stewart’s death, Eitel got his own back by rewriting Hong Kong’s educational history to suit his own views’, Bickley, *The Golden needle*, p. 195, for example, needs substantial correction since, apart from Tarrant’s journalistic essay and the scabrous ‘Dates and events’, there were no other histories of education in Hong Kong for Eitel to rewrite.


36. Lethbridge, ‘Introduction’, 1983, p. xi. See also, the fuller quotation from Lethbridge,
37. The Basel Mission (Evangelische Missiongesellschaft Basel) was founded in 1816 in the Swiss city of Basel as an international and interdenominational contribution to the upsurge in European Protestant evangelism that extended its activities, imbued by a desire to abolish the slave trade and emancipate slaves in European colonies, at first into Africa and later into Asia. In this sense, it was comparable with the Baptist Missionary Society founded in 1792, the interdenominational London Missionary Society, 1795, the Church Mission Society, Anglican, formed in 1799, the Wesleyan Missionary Society, Methodist, 1799, the Scottish Presbyterian Missionary Society, 1799, the Rhenish Mission, 1799, and the Berlin Missionary Society, 1824. Most of the recruits into the Basel Mission were, like Eitel, men of modest backgrounds from the countryside or small towns of Switzerland and southwest Germany, especially Württemberg. Among other contributions to Hong Kong’s history of education, the Basel Mission was noted for its establishment of the first kindergarten. See Anthony Sweeting, Education in Hong Kong, pre-1841 to 1941: fact and opinion. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1989, p. 215.

38. South China letters, Box 6, Folder 4, Jacket C, LMS Archives, cited in Endacott. ‘A Hong Kong history’, p. 42.

39. Ibid. This, as Endacott noted, was praise, indeed, from ‘two great missionaries who were themselves scholars’.


41. Eitel explained his willingness to leave the LMS by noting his sixteen unbroken years of missionary labour, from which he could now ‘fairly take a rest’ and by adding that the claims of his family, especially the education of his children, ‘deserve, to say the least, as much consideration as the claims of work exclusively among the heathen’. See Endacott, ‘A Hong Kong history’, 1956-58, p. 48.

42. Ibid., p. 47.

43. As cited by Bickley, The Golden needle, 1997, p. 203, this obituary writer described Eitel as ‘a missionary ... who resigned to take a better paying post’.

44. See Endacott, ‘A Hong Kong history’, p. 45, from Despatch No. 81, 6 July 1875, in CO129/171, p. 45.


47. This article has already sufficiently arrested to Bickley’s criticism. Steve Tsang’s disregard is shown by the absence to any reference whatsoever to Eitel either in his index or in his endnotes, even though Eitel’s Europe in China does appear in his bibliography. See Steve Tsang, A Modern history of Hong Kong. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004.
48. See, for example, Christopher Munn, 'The Criminal trial under early colonial rule' (p. 46), and Tak-wing Ngo, 'Industrial history and laisze-sfaire', p 120, both in Tak-wing Ngo, ed., Hong Kong history: state and society under colonial rule. London: Routledge, 1999.

49. At least part of this distrust seems to have been generated by resentment that an outsider (both a foreigner and a missionary), without the training then deemed appropriate, appeared to be gaining preferment over individuals who had risen through the bureaucratic ranks in the conventional way. See the Earl of Kimberly's statement to this effect, cited by Endacott, 'A Hong Kong history', p. 48. Hennessy gave as a reason for his initial distrust of Eitel 'his connection with the local press', which, 'together with other reasons, render him in my opinion unfit for a government appointment, honorary or otherwise'. Ibid, p. 46.

50. As noted above, the principal criticisms related to the Hallyar 'scandal' which, according to Endacott, was 'not one that reflected in any way on Eitel's personal character', see Endacott, 'A Hong Kong history'. p. 51, and the allegations of maladversion as Supervisor of Interpreters. Added to these were attacks made by supporters of the Central School and its successor-institution, Queen's College, such as the Headmaster of the latter institution, George Bateson Wright, partly from personal animosity and partly because they perceived Eitel to be favouring Grant schools over Government schools.

51. Lethbridge described the position as 'lowly' in his 'Introduction', p. xi.

52. In another effort to disparage Eitel to the apparent benefit of Frederick Stewart, Bickley cites the following of Eitel's views:

I should say the government ought to confine itself to giving gratuitous education to the common people, and only in its elementary form, and let the people who wish to have a higher class of education pay for it. And 'There is no object in burdening our boys in ... elementary schools with more than is necessary to promote the spread of the English language'. And, 'I think, as a matter of principle, anything can be done well by the people themselves should not be done for them by the Government'. Bickley. The Golden needle, p.110.

She fails to note, however, that many people, including Governors, senior officials, and members of Education committees and boards shared such views well into the twentieth century. See, for example, quotations in Sweeting, Fact and opinion, pp. 272-78, 361-66, 390.

53. See Minute by Eitel, 1 November 1879, Hong Kong Government Gazette, 4, February 1880, p. 117ff.


55. For his contributions to female education see, for example, his cover letter to the Government Education Report for 1889, in CO129/342, pp. 80ff, cited in Sweeting, Fact and opinion, pp. 247-49, and the Government Report on Education for the year 1891, p. 964, also cited in Sweeting, Fact and opinion, p. 254. For his encouragement
of early childhood education see the same Report, p. 970, and also his Report on Education for the year 1896, Supplement to the Hong Kong Government Gazette, No. 31, 30 July 1897, p. v. The part he played in development of teacher education in Hong Kong is outlined in Anthony Sweeting, 1992. 'Historical perspectives: the Long March towards teacher professionalism in Hong Kong', in Dino M. Chincotta, ed., Professionalization and education, Hong Kong: Education Papers 15, Faculty of Education, pp. 12-15 and his 'An Introduction to the history of teacher education in Hong Kong: in-service, pre-service, and lip-service', in Teacher Education in the Asian Region: Proceedings of ITEC'95, Hong Kong: Department of Curriculum Studies, the University of Hong Kong, 1995, pp. 337-339. Eitel's championing of physical education is made clear in the 1891 Report, pp. 971-72, as well as by the photograph that appears in this article, as is his support for technical training and industrial, or what nowadays, would be termed, prevocational education, p. 972. One of the many examples of his attempts to use lessons from what may be described as an early version of comparative education appears in his cover letter to the Report of 1889. At various other times, he tried to influence policy by citing developments in China, India, England, Wales, 'European countries', and the United States of America. See Bickley, Development of education, p. 202.

56. The Cantonese expression, Oi-wa, can mean 'Love the Chinese Language', 'Love the Chinese people', or simply 'Love China'. For Eitel and his daughter, it might well have carried all three meanings.

57. Ibid., p. 204.

58. Although they may well be some truth in this allegation, it should be noted that Eitel dared to object to, and succeeded in abolishing, Sir George Bowen's scholarship scheme, which enabled boys from Hong Kong to continue their education in England in law, medicine, or civil engineering. His success in this matter, as in others, casts doubt on Bickley's judgment that Eitel 'seems never to have acquired the effective administrator's method of making points only with a view of taking them further into action'. See Bickley, The Golden needle, p. 195.

59. China Mail, April 1897, cited in Endacott, 'A Hong Kong history', p. 56.

60. See, for example, the references to Eitel's obituary, written by the Rev. T.W. Pearce, in Lethbridge, 'Introduction', 1983, p. xi.