

“Caution! The bread is poisoned”: The Hong Kong mass poisoning of January 1857

The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 43:2, 2015, pp. 189-209

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Abstract

This article examines the Hong Kong mass poisoning of 15 January 1857, in which bread from a Chinese bakery that supplied the colonial community was adulterated with arsenic. Even though there is a wealth of printed and manuscript documentation available many vital aspects of the poisoning remain unclear. What kind of incident was it: an act of terrorism and attempted mass murder, a war crime, a criminal conspiracy, an act of commercial sabotage, an accident or even an imagined or imaginary event? Throughout, our focus remains firmly fixed on the central act of the poisoning itself and on what it reveals about the precarious nature of early colonial Hong Kong. Interpretations have swarmed over the available ‘facts’. Equally ironic is what happened to the afterlife of how the event was understood. This article seeks to rescue the Hong Kong poisoning from being a freakish and isolated footnote of only local interest. Accepting this historical verdict would be a mistake as it is of significance not only at a local level, but geopolitically in Britain and across the empire.

Introduction

The Hong Kong mass poisoning of 15 January 1857, in which bread from a Chinese bakery that supplied the colonial community was adulterated with arsenic, was a unique event in terms of its potentially devastating consequences, unparalleled not only in the history of Hong Kong but also in the British Empire. Our investigation focuses on why it is so difficult to classify this poisoning incident. What kind of incident was it: an act of terrorism and attempted mass murder, a war crime, a criminal conspiracy, an act of commercial sabotage, an accident, or even an imagined or imaginary event? We are interested primarily in the colonial and imperial dimensions of this case so the views of Hong Kong’s Chinese community are not represented here. Even though there is a wealth of printed and manuscript documentation available – a published but incomplete transcript of the trial, Colonial Office records, Hong Kong and English newspapers and magazines, parliamentary reports, and several contemporary or near contemporary short memoirs and exchanges of letters still unpublished or in manuscript in England or the United States – many vital aspects of the poisoning remain unclear. For example, it is not known who added the poison to the bread, or on whose orders it was done. One technique used here to counteract or neutralise these conundra has been to attempt to separate certainty from probability or possibility, to divide what is definitely known to have happened from what probably or may have happened. Another technique has been to dig deep into the context of key elements of the poisoning, some of them unfamiliar, across a range of geopolitical and local issues. In geopolitical terms, the key elements are the usual ones. The

background to the poisoning is supplied by the resumption of hostilities between China and the recently established British colony, and by new legislation introduced into Hong Kong taking this war footing into account, that particularly affected the Chinese residents. In local terms, in the colony, attention is centred on rather different topics to the usual ones: on the availability of arsenic, the state of bread-making, and the character, contacts and social position of the prime suspect, the baker, Cheong Alum. For the final section, the investigation moves to how and why there were attempts in Britain to deny that the poisoning had ever taken place. Throughout, the focus remains firmly fixed on the central act of the poisoning itself, and on what it reveals about the precarious nature of early colonial Hong Kong.

In this Hong Kong narrative, there are a number of definite 'facts'. On the morning of 15 January 1857 all the residents of the colony who ate bread from the Esing bakery on Queen's Road¹ owned by Cheong Alum suffered in varying degrees from nausea, vomiting, intense stomach pain, dizziness and general malaise. One witness estimated the number of victims at 300-400, and another at 400-500. There was also a military garrison numbering c. 1,000 in Hong Kong, but Esing's bread did not reach the troops in time for their early breakfast.² There was no immediate death as a result of the bread poisoning. In the course of the morning various medical practitioners and government officials (including the Governor, Sir John Bowring) suspected foul play in the form of poison. Tests conducted in the ensuing days and months in laboratories in Hong Kong by Dr. Harland³ (in conjunction with four other local doctors: Bradford, Kenny, Watson and Dempster),⁴ in England by the official War Office chemist, F. A. Abel,⁵ and in Germany by Justus von Liebig,⁶ all concurred that the bread contained large quantities of white arsenic.

Esing's shop was open at least by 6.30 am (but probably much earlier). Cheong Alum, his father, his wife, his children and a couple of servants left Hong Kong for Macau on the *Shamrock* at 8 am that morning. The family group was detained that evening, and brought back to the colony the following morning. By the evening of 16 January, fifty-two Chinese men (including Alum and his father) who worked at the bakery and shop had been arrested in connection with the poisoning. Governor Bowring insisted on the rule of law, declaring that Cheong Alum and his accomplices must be tried by jury, rather than subjected to a 'drum-head court martial', as preferred by Attorney General, Chisholm Anstey, and the majority of the colonists.⁷

By 19 January ten Chinese men (including Cheong Alum and his father) had been committed for trial at the Supreme Court. On the 21 January, a preliminary interrogation took place at the Central Police Station (represented here in a drawing published in *The Illustrated London News* [Fig. 1]). The remainder of the detainees were remanded under Ordinance no. 2 of 1857 and were confined in a fifteen foot square, twelve foot high cell at Cross Roads police station at the bottom of Wellington Street. Several were deported on 26 January and 3 February. The poisoning case at the Criminal Sessions lasted from Monday 2 February until Friday 6 February; it was the longest criminal trial so far in Hong Kong's history as a colony. Under the title 'The Queen versus the Poisoners', the ten defendants stood accused of 'administering poison with intent to kill and murder James Carroll Dempster, Colonial Surgeon'. On 6 February the six-man jury retired for fifty minutes before returning a five-to-one verdict of 'not guilty'. The defendants were re-detained immediately as being 'suspicious characters'

under the Peace and Security Ordinance No. 2 of 1857. Cheong Alum was finally released and banished from Hong Kong on 31 July 1857.

I.

These 'facts' of the mass poisoning cannot, however, be dissociated from their context, which was alarming and difficult for colonists and Chinese residents alike. As a result of increasing pirate attacks on shipping, Chinese holders of Crown leases were given the right to record their vessels on a colonial register of shipping, and to sail under the British flag and protection. On 8 October 1856 a lorcha, *The Arrow*, owned and registered by a Chinese merchant based in Hong Kong and manned by a Chinese crew, but captained by a British citizen, was boarded in Canton.⁸ The crew were detained on a charge of piracy and smuggling. The captain insisted that the British ensign had been removed by the Chinese boarding party, whereas the Chinese insisted that the lorcha was not flying a flag. Consequently, it was not a British vessel and not entitled to British protection. Harry Parkes, the British Consul at Canton, demanded the release of the prisoners and sought redress. The Chinese refused to apologise, reiterating their charges against the *The Arrow*. For Parkes, the general principle was that British ships had to be free from Chinese interference as laid down in the supplementary clauses of the Treaty of Nanking. Despite the confusing and contradictory claims and counter-claims, Sir John Bowring, without authorisation from Whitehall, used the incident to re-open the question of British access to Canton. When the imperial commissioner for foreign affairs, Ye Mingchen,⁹ did not respond, Bowring sanctioned the bombardment and occupation of Canton in October 1856, and the conflict escalated. On 14 December, the Chinese retaliated by setting fire to the by then vacant European quarters of Canton, and in early January 1857 by burning British mercantile property at Whampoa. A series of attacks on British shipping in the Canton delta culminated on 29 December in the murder and decapitation of all eleven of the European passengers, including the Spanish vice-consul at Whampoa, on board the postal steamer *The Thistle*.¹⁰ The attack was carried out by Chinese soldiers disguised as passengers. This incident seemed to confirm the veracity of claims that Ye had issued a proclamation containing a tariff of rewards promised to those who succeeded in killing foreigners:

Whoever catches an English or French rebel chief will receive a reward of 5000 dollars.
Whoever cuts off the head of a rebel barbarian will receive a reward of 50 dollars.
Whoever catches a rebel barbarian alive will receive a reward of 100 dollars. Whoever catches a traitor, will, on producing satisfactory evidence, receive a reward of 20 dollars.
Whoever can manage to burn or take a large war steamer will receive a reward of 10,000 dollars. Whoever can manage to burn or take a shallow water steamer will receive 200 dollars, and can be remembered for further reward.

The proclamation added:

All those who are in the employ of the foreign dogs must leave their employment in one month, and after one month, if they still stay with the foreign dogs, and do not return to their native villages, the elders of the villages will hand over their families.¹¹

Between November 1856 and April 1857 a terror campaign against Hong Kong was unleashed by Ye, presumably in an attempt to force the colonists to abandon the no longer

quite so barren rock. Dr. Thomas Boswall Watson, who moved from Macao to Hong Kong in 1856 and was part-owner of the Hong Kong Dispensary, wrote at the time that it was considered a serious possibility that the British might have to give up the colony.¹² Local newspapers recorded the cutting off of supplies to the colony, pirate attacks on British vessels, ordering the Chinese inhabitants to leave the colony (an estimated 5,000 Chinese residents left the colony in early 1857 in response to proclamations, which would still have been a relatively small percentage of the total of 75,000),¹³ setting fire to European property, and most pertinently, assaulting and killing colonists. A siege mentality was cultivated by newspaper reports of the latest audacious Chinese atrocities and rumours of plots, impending arson attacks and invasions of the colony. Colonists could not be sure, for example, whether hostilities such as the unsuccessful attack on Jardine Matheson's premises on 26 December, were opportunistic criminal acts carried out by pirates, or political acts co-ordinated by a Chinese enemy resident in Hong Kong.¹⁴ The American merchant Augustine Heard – who was however labelled by his brother Albert as 'of an excitable and nervous temperament'¹⁵ – described the mood of that time:

the Winter of 1856-7 was a difficult one to pass. We were at war with China - that is to say the English were, and all foreigners were involved. Our servants were ordered to leave us and, as their families were on the mainland, in the power of the mandarins, they were compelled to obey. They went home by detachments, and two or three were usually left in the house. A price was set on our heads, varying with the station of each individual.¹⁶

This sense of siege generated increasingly fractious relations among the European colonists as well as between the European colonists, the Chinese and the Hong Kong authorities.¹⁷ During 1856, the colonists repeatedly petitioned Sir John Bowring to tighten legislative controls over the Chinese populace. There was particular concern about the unregulated influx of lower-class Chinese as a result of turmoil in the mainland. For example, on 16 October a public meeting of ratepayers protesting about the state of public safety in the colony and an ineffective police force, demanded that strict registration be introduced.¹⁸ By December seventy additional police officers were appointed to increase patrols; H.M.S. Acorn was moored off Central Market; a military picket was stationed in the town centre; empty houses were being used as temporary barracks; a fire-brigade was established; and European residents were sworn in as Special Constables.¹⁹ The agitated state was compounded by the rumour that on 10 January there would be an attempt to torch Hong Kong. Arson was increasingly deemed to be the weapon of choice that the Chinese authorities would deploy against Hong Kong.

There is also evidence of increasing discontent among respectable Chinese residents about new forms of discriminatory treatment by the colonial authorities. On 20 November 1856 Chinese traders shut up shop and presented a list of grievances to William Caine, the Colonial secretary.²⁰ The Chinese were angry about how the police were enforcing the Buildings and Nuisances Ordinance No. 8, which was enacted in April 1856 to deal with overcrowded unsafe and unsanitary tenements.²¹ There were also grievances about the over-zealous enforcement of Ordinances No.s 11 and 12 of 1856; general police brutality and discrimination; and the tighter regulation of public festivities associated with Chinese New Year.²² However, on

20 November there was also widespread disorder involving ‘a rabble of idle and vagabond population’²³ in the centre of Hong Kong. What became known as the ‘Anstey Riots’ resulted in the military being deployed to support the police. The government activated Registration Ordinance No. 7 of 1846 requiring all un-registered Chinese to leave the colony. R. D. Caldwell was also appointed as Registrar General and Protector of the Chinese to work with the ‘respectable class’ of Chinese to agree an acceptable anti-vagrancy law. On 16 December 1856 a notice was published, notifying the Chinese inhabitants that they must carry a pass and a lantern if on the streets after 10 pm. Emergency legislation in the form of Ordinance No. 2 for ‘better securing the peace of the colony’ was passed on 6 January 1857, confirming the requirement to carry night passes, and giving the authorities general powers of arrest and deportation, as well as giving the police the right to ‘shoot to kill’ between the hours of 8pm and sunrise.²⁴

II

Alongside the ‘facts’ of the mass poisoning and their localised context, we would argue that there are three hypotheses as to why the bread from Cheong Alum’s bakery was poisoned, each of which leads to different classifications of the event. The first and dominant hypothesis is that it was an audacious China-sponsored attempt to eradicate the colonists, orchestrated either by Cheong Alum or someone in his employ, acting on instructions from Ye in Canton. The second hypothesis is that the bread poisoning was an opportunistic act devised by one of Cheong Alum’s commercial rivals, seeking to exploit the turmoil in Chinese-colonial relations, and to frame one of Hong Kong’s most prominent Chinese entrepreneurs for mass murder. This positions Cheong Alum not as the guilty party, but as the primary victim of the mass poisoning. The third hypothesis is that the inclusion of arsenic in the bread mix was an accident, which was transformed into a criminal act by a colonial community in the grip of a conspiratorial mentality.

We would like to examine these hypotheses about the mass poisoning by analysing: first, the choice and use of poison, second, Cheong Alum’s character and social position in Hong Kong, and third, the denial of the incident in England. Let us start with: why was poison chosen as the preferred method, and why was bread chosen as the most suitable vector? Poison is known to have been feared in the colony at this date, although it was expected in water rather than bread, and guards were placed at certain wells. There had been previous poisoning incidents reported in Hong Kong – for example, on 8 July 1848, there was allegedly an attempt to poison twenty-five men of the Royal Artillery,²⁵ and the *Overland Friend of China* reported in its ‘daily chronicle of atrocities’, precisely on 15 January 1857, the ‘temporary stupefaction of two or three Europeans after eating soup believed to have had poison in it’.²⁶ Arsenic was known as the quintessential criminal poison, and white arsenic was the commonest source of arsenical poisoning in the nineteenth century.²⁷ It has little taste and no colour, is easily mixed with food and is extremely fast-acting, so it makes an ideal poison. In one of its forms, it is white and opaque and looks like flour, for which it has been mistaken on occasion with fatal results. China is one of the countries that has naturally occurring white arsenic, and arsenic was

used in traditional Chinese medicine, so procuring arsenic in Hong Kong would have been a simple matter.

Bread must have been chosen as the vector because of the possibilities for targeting that it offered. The Chinese population of Hong Kong at the time was estimated by contemporaries at between 65,000²⁸ and 70,000,²⁹ and the non-Chinese at c. 1,000, including children.³⁰ These figures are slightly lower than the known recorded figures, which are separated in the government returns into 'whites', who in 1857 were numbered at 1,411, and the 'coloured population', who were numbered at 75, 683, making a total of 77,094.³¹ The figures cannot have been precise, as so many Chinese were constantly moving between China and Hong Kong. The number of troops in the garrison would have been in addition to this. In a 'Memorandum shewing the number of deaths in the garrison of Hong Kong during the year 1857', on 31 March 1857 the average troops for the quarter were calculated at 711 'Europeans' and 274 'natives'.³² These troops are largely absent from letters and descriptions of the event, which is slightly surprising. Almost the only mention comes in a letter written on the day itself, 15 January 1857, by the missionary, Benjamin Hobson: 'We might all have been dead men. Almost every plan to destroy us and our soldiers has been hitherto mercifully frustrated.'³³

Consumers of European-style bread in Hong Kong were overwhelmingly non-Chinese, and so poisoning the bread, as opposed to the water, allowed the clear demarcation of potential victims along racial lines. Sir John Bowring did not state this explicitly in a letter to his son Edgar of 20 January 1857, instead using wealth as his demarcating factor: '[the people who ate the bread were] people of all nations – women and children – but principally among the opulent part of the population'.³⁴ Yet even if a few of the 300-500 people who ate the poisoned bread were wealthy Chinese (presumably compradors, like Alum, or merchants), it was predominantly the colonists who were the intended, and the real, victims.

There is scattered and piecemeal evidence about the number and ownership of bakeries in Hong Kong. However, it was a potentially profitable enterprise. Not only did the colonists and the troops require bread but navies required biscuit, in large quantities, to victual their ships, and many bakeries catered to all these demands. Cheong Alum was typical in this respect: in addition to supplying bread to the colonists, he was under contract to supply 'bread to the Government at Hong Kong for the use of Her Majesty's forces',³⁵ and he also supplied the Navy with biscuit, as he clarified in the statement he made in connection with the poisoning.³⁶ He owned two establishments in connection with his baking operations: a bakery and shop on Queen's Road near the Hung Shing Temple (seen here in a contemporary drawing sent from Hong Kong published in *The Illustrated London News* [Fig. 2]) and a flour warehouse slightly away from the centre, above Wanchai, in the area where St. Francis Street is now.³⁷ In the years between 1855 and 1857, at least six other bakers with sizeable bakeries are known to have operated in Hong Kong: Harrison De Silva,³⁸ George Duddell,³⁹ Louis Adolfe Dronsart,⁴⁰ Laong Ahoy (described as the 'commissariat baker' in the trial records),⁴¹ Dorabjee Nowrojee,⁴² and an unnamed Portuguese baker, who had supplanted Cheong Alum as Augustine Heard's supplier.⁴³ However, whatever the incidence of bread consumption by the Chinese in the colony, and whoever the owners of the businesses making bread, it was the Chinese who were most involved in the actual making and selling of bread in Hong Kong. At the end of 1856 there were twelve Chinese bakers' shops in Hong Kong, at the end of 1857 there were eleven, and at the

end of 1858 there were fifteen.⁴⁴ All the workers in Cheong Alum's bakery were Chinese, which would have been the norm.

As a result, both in terms of targeting the colonists and in terms of choosing a method of attack that gave hundreds of Chinese uninterrupted access to the proposed vector, putting poison in the bread was a strategically clever act, that succeeded in inducing panic. Cheong Alum himself allegedly said that he supplied 400 families with bread which, if true, constituted a significant majority of the colonists.⁴⁵ The fact that only 300-500 people became ill does not disprove this, as people ate their breakfasts at different times, and those who ate first, and became ill, caused others not to eat. The Hong Kong residents who breakfasted earliest and started vomiting earliest were 'Parsees and Moormen'; 'labouring under the effects of what appeared to be poison', the most obvious source was the bread, as their servants were fellow countrymen rather than Chinese.⁴⁶ Albert Weatherhead wrote that on the day of the poisoning 'sickness and terror reigned supreme over the whole community'.⁴⁷ Both Heard brothers tell separately of how news of this was spread around Hong Kong. Albert wrote: 'Suddenly their equanimity was disturbed by the abrupt entrance of the butler who ... [presented]... a huge placard, on which was inscribed in large letters – Caution! The bread is poisoned. Antidote, powerful mustard emetic and white of eggs. Harland, Surgeon-General.'⁴⁸ Augustine, writing about this in 1894, remembered his warning thus: 'It was about half-past 10 when my boy handed me ... a "circular" – a half sheet of paper, at the head of which was written in large characters 'The bread is poisoned. Take mustard in warm water; after vomiting freely, eat raw eggs', signed by Dr. Chaldecott, a leading physician of the colony. I recognised the hand'.⁴⁹ The fact that two different doctors sent almost identical messages presupposes that the colony's doctors must have met and worked out emergency measures once they had realised that the poison lay in the bread.

The poisoner must have been inexperienced with arsenic as the reason the poisoning failed to kill was that too much arsenic had been added (according to Augustine Heard the knife used to cut the bread came out shining),⁵⁰ and it acted as its own emetic. The bread despatched to England was analysed in Woolwich by Frederick Abel, later a famous chemist and war explosives expert, who was the chemist to the War Department from 1856.⁵¹ He had been sent four separate specimens to analyse: a piece of white toast, a loaf of white bread, and two loaves of dark coloured bread – each was found to contain arsenic, introduced in the form of arsenious acid, or the white arsenic of commerce. The quantity of arsenic differed in each type of bread. There was least in the toast, four ounces of which contained about two and a half grains, an amount which Abel commented 'has frequently been known to produce death when taken into the system'; the dark loaves had two and a half times as much as the toast, and the white loaves 6 times.⁵² Those who ate least bread – such as Lady Bowring – were most at risk, but even the amount in the toast appears to have been too much, and resulted in vomiting rather than death. After an interval, three deaths were attributed to the effects of imbibing the arsenic: Mr. S. Drinker and Captain Williams of the S.S. Lily in January 1858,⁵³ and Sir John Bowring's wife, Lady Bowring, whose death certificate of 27 September 1858 specified 'ulceration of the stomach – long standing atrophy – 4 months certified'.⁵⁴

The chemical analyses also showed that only the bread itself was poisoned. According to the testimony of Dr. Harland, analyses of the yeast, flour, pastry and scrapings from the table all

pointed to an absence of arsenic,⁵⁵ which therefore must have been added to the final mix just as it was about to be baked. Even so, one Chinese account of the poisoning clearly inclines towards the 'accidental' hypothesis. An old colleague of Cheong Alum wrote a biographical sketch of him in 1904, four years after Cheong Alum's death, that was subsequently included in the clan record of the Cheungs: 'Because he had too many workers, he had no time to check minute details. One day, through carelessness, a worker dropped some "odd things" into the flour. When the westerners bought and ate the bread, they all felt sick and fainted ... the British suspected that he was commanded by the Chinese government to poison the British, and prepared to prosecute him. However, because of his truth and honesty, he was soon released'.⁵⁶ A second reference is more ambiguous, but interestingly does not allude to prior knowledge of the poisoning, or to any named individual as perpetrator. A letter from Chan Tsz-tin to his brother Chan Kwei-tsih of January 1857, seized and published in English translation by Wade in the *Hongkong Government Gazette* in June 1857, stated 'I hear from some of the people ... who have come back from Victoria, that the English barbarians are in very great perplexity ... A flour bakery had poisoned several English devils, and had been closed; upwards of 40 people are imprisoned in consequence'.⁵⁷ Chan Kwei-tsih was the President or Chief of the Committee of Hostility in Xin'an, the district on the coast of which Hong Kong is situated, and the rather laconic reference appears to indicate that the Xin'an people took no part in the poisoning. Chan Tsz-tin had been specially charged with stopping the supplies entering Hong Kong, and this series of letters is particularly interesting for providing an alternative version of reality to that of the colonists.

Another important point is raised by an editorial in *The Hongkong Register*. Most if not all successful prosecutions of poisoning in England relied on evidence relating to purchase of the poison, as all sales of arsenic by apothecaries of even a single grain were regulated and recorded. All those English prosecutions mentioned in the trial were able to use this record. In the 1857 poisoning in Hong Kong, on the contrary, ten pounds of arsenic were used, and yet because it was so common, there was no chance of finding out who had purchased them and where.⁵⁸

In March 1857 there may have been a second plot that planned once again to kill the colonists by poisoning their bread. At the end of the nineteenth century, the registrar of the Supreme Court in Hong Kong, James Norton-Kyshe, reported that a Chinese baker employed by George Duddell, who had taken over Alum's slot as the principal baker in the colony, had been overheard telling his fellow workers that he had been offered \$2,000 to add a soporific to the biscuit dough.⁵⁹ It is unclear whether this was a rumour, the result of an over-active imagination, or had some basis in reality.

III

The second point relevant to the hypotheses is the credibility of the accusation that Cheong Alum had master-minded the mass poisoning. At the trial,⁶⁰ the Attorney General informed the court that there was no British criminal law that covered the deliberate attempt to annihilate a whole community by the 'secret crime' of mass poisoning. Precisely because it was a 'secret crime', demonstrable proof of association could not be laid before the jury, and consequently the prosecution case would have to depend heavily on circumstantial evidence. According to the Attorney General, the two primary men accused, Cheong Alum and his father,

were not only responsible for their own actions, but for the acts of their servants/employees who were their accomplices. The trial record provides an invaluable insight into how the racial and class fractures and personal connections that delineated Hong Kong society determined the ways in which the poisoning incident would be understood. At no point was the poisoning denied. Instead, the jury was asked to adjudicate between very different representations of Cheong Alum's character and his motivational state of mind. Both prosecution and defence could agree on the basic facts of Cheong Alum's life. He had come to Hong Kong from Macao when he was eighteen, and became chief comprador⁶¹ of Murrow, Stephenson and Co. before setting up his own trading company. It is claimed in a biographical note that he was behind the idea of running steamers between Hong Kong and Macao. His bakery and bread shop were the most important in Hong Kong, famous for using 'Western methods to produce the finest quality goods. Its products supplied all the water and land (residents) of Hong Kong'.⁶² Almost all the leading colonists who knew Cheong Alum or had had dealings with him vouched for his trustworthiness and colonial credentials. His place of origin was Xiangshan,⁶³ a part of Guangdong province bordering on Macao, and his identity was marked by this, so that his shop was apparently known as 'the Heung Shan Man's Bread Shop'.⁶⁴ Many colonists and Chinese who knew Cheong Alum adverted to his *gravitas* and bearing. The American doctor, William Maxwell Wood, who was a neighbour of Cheong Alum, in his published memoirs of 1859 referred to him as 'my honest friend, the gentlemanly grocer'.⁶⁵ James Legge, the missionary, fifteen years after the poisoning episode, recounted his experience of Cheong Alum whom he had encountered when Cheong Alum was a prisoner in the jail: 'he was a tall, imposing-looking man for a Chinese, and had been well-educated. On the Sundays, when I went to conduct a religious service with them, he quite took me under his patronage, had the books ready, and maintained perfect order among all who attended'.⁶⁶ Legge's choice of the phrase 'under his patronage' is telling here; Legge uses this to signal an abnormal reversal of roles.

The witnesses provided information about their relationships with Cheong Alum. Mr Drinker, of Thomas Hunt and Co had just agreed a large contract with Cheong Alum to provide 27,000 or 28,000 lbs of biscuit for the Russian Corvette. Because he also sold flour to Cheong Alum, he was a frequent visitor to the shop and bakery and was able to identify the roles and responsibilities of various defendants. Mr Bridges, Mr Le Mesurier and Mr Dundee confirmed that Cheong Alum had signed a large contract with the government for 100,000 lbs of biscuit. Mr Speeden, the U.S. government storekeeper, had contracted Cheong Alum on several occasions, most recently for 108,000 lbs of biscuit. George Duddell confirmed that he had sold the bakery to Cheong Alum and that his European foreman had taught the Chinese staff how to make the bread. Most recently, he had sold Cheong Alum two baking machines. Mr Edwards and James Stephenson provided an insight into their back-and-forth bartering with Cheong Alum over different contracts. Harrison T. De Silver had known Cheong Alum since 1849 and, like other traders, had entered into several large contracts for the delivery of bread. De Silver had also arranged for Cheong Alum's purchase of a state-of-the-art kneading machine from America.

Throughout, the prosecution insisted that Cheong Alum was one of two personifications. The 'real' Cheong Alum was a strategically important, deep-cover agent of the Chinese authorities, who had patiently awaited instructions on when and how to launch a

cowardly attack the colonists. He was a principal associate of a network of sleeper spies and saboteurs.⁶⁷ Cheong Alum's high-profile baking business was the perfect cover and site for planning and executing a mass poisoning. The jury was asked by the prosecution to deliberate on a secondary depiction, hastily drawn from the testimony of certain witnesses, of Cheong Alum as a desperate business man who had accrued many debts and who, as a consequence, was willing to carry out Chinese instructions in return for sizeable financial recompense. Both depictions condemned Cheong Alum as guilty as charged.

The defence standpoint was that the prosecution's case was factually inaccurate and speculative. The jury was asked to appraise the known facts and to steer clear of unsubstantiated rumour and innuendo. The defence used their witnesses to construct a profile of Cheong Alum as one of the most integrated, prosperous and well-respected Chinese businessmen in Hong Kong.⁶⁸ His loyalty and allegiance were not in doubt. It would have been suicidal for Cheong Alum to participate willingly in an absurdly amateurish poisoning plot that was doomed to failure. Cheong Alum was not the enemy within, although he himself had a number of enemies who wished to discredit him. He was the victim of a conspiracy, fomented either by the Chinese authorities who disapproved of his closeness to colonial interests, or by a commercial competitor who was jealous of his near monopoly over governmental and naval contracts,⁶⁹ or by an employee with a personal grudge. Notable in this respect was the disappearance of two of Cheong Alum's employees, who were never apprehended.⁷⁰ In the course of the defence testimony, there are references to the pressure being placed on Cheong Alum by various Chinese authorities to stop trading with the colonists, leave Hong Kong and return home, in order to prove his loyalty to his homeland; and this pressure was obviously causing Cheong Alum considerable difficulty. The fact that his shop had stayed open on the first day of the strike in November 1856 had marked him out too conspicuously as a partner of the colonists, with a stake in the fledgling Anglo-Chinese colony. The testimony provided by competitors, creditors, patrons and employees about Cheong Alum's businesses placed him at the centre of a network of entrepreneurial interactions between him, the colonists, the colonial authorities, and other Chinese business interests. On this reading of the trial, it was inconceivable that Cheong Alum would have poisoned his own bread.

This chaotic trial concluded with a sensational verdict of 'not guilty'. The post-mortem into the failure to convict, played out on the pages of the local newspapers, was rancorous in the extreme.⁷¹ Sir John Bowring and the criminal justice process were blamed for failing to protect the interests of the colonists, and signalling to the Chinese that they could conspire against the Europeans with impunity. Bowring's insistence on trial by jury had not only stopped Cheong Alum from being lynched as soon as he was apprehended – Albert Heard stated that 'the grave law-abiding British merchants were as eager for the blood of this villain as Texan Rangers could be to string up a horse thief'⁷² – but now had led to his acquittal. That the 'not guilty' decision fuelled the colonists' sense of insecurity is shown by memoranda immediately submitted to the Governor by representatives of the colonial community, demanding that Cheong Alum be expelled immediately from Hong Kong. A more temperate petition, emanating from the Chinese community, recommended his expulsion after he had sorted out his affairs to the satisfaction of his business associates.⁷³ The Attorney General set about drafting a criminal ordinance covering attempts to murder entire communities by poisoning, but what was in

effect a conspiracy law was rejected by the Colonial Office as being out of step with English legal tradition.⁷⁴

IV

A third issue is the question of the reception of the mass poisoning incident in England. Unsurprisingly, Sir John Bowring received support from fellow colonial governors. For example, Lord Canning, Governor General of India, wrote an emotional letter to Bowring on 20 February 1857: 'I cannot conclude without congratulating you upon your providential escape and that of your family from the fiendish attempt at wholesale murder which your last letter describes. I see it since reported that the monster who made it has been taken. I hope no laws will stand in the way of his being hung as high as Haman'.⁷⁵ Canning accepts without question that the poisoning took place, as he was living in a similarly volatile colonial environment. But reception of the poisoning took several forms, matching the divide between those who had lived through it, and had evidence of its reality, and those who had not, some of whom tried to deny that it had taken place. One form was material, peddled by 'survivors' of the poisoning: under their aegis, the poisoned bread became a vital piece of evidence and a prized artefact, and pieces of it began to take on a life of their own and to circulate around the world. For example, the Victorian entertainer Albert Smith visited Hong Kong, Canton and Macao for five and a half weeks in 1858 to collect material for his new Chinese show at the Egyptian Hall in London, 'Mont Blanc to China', which opened on 22 December that year, and ran for five months. The hall was decorated with Chinese curios and works of art, including the two wooden crosses Smith brought back from the execution ground at Canton;⁷⁶ a piece of the poisoned bread was also most probably on display. Smith was given 'a bit of the famous "poisoned bread"' by Dr. Kenny, 'the oldest English practitioner at Hong Kong', as well as other gifts of shoes for women whose feet had been bound, and carved bracelets, presents that Kenny must have considered representative of life in the colony and of Chinese culture.⁷⁷ Dr. Kenny was one of the five doctors in Hong Kong, led by Dr. Harland, who had originally analysed various pieces of the bread for poison in January 1857,⁷⁸ and he must have kept at least one piece of the bread as a memento of the incident. Another piece of the poisoned bread was kept in a glass-fronted cupboard in the office of the clerk of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, at least until 1933. Seventy-six years after the event it still preserved its shape and form on account of its arsenic content, functioning as an historic piece of evidence and acting as a reminder of how close the fledgling British colony came to annihilation.⁷⁹

A final, crucial aspect of the reception was that some people in England chose to deny that the poisoning incident had ever taken place. English attitudes to the Chinese are shown by their insistence on joking about Cheong Alum's name, which must have contributed to their predisposition to cast doubt on the reality of the attempted poisoning. Cheong Alum's name alone occasioned mirth bordering on disbelief in England, as the addition of alum to flour in the nineteenth century by both millers and bakers often meant that bread was adulterated twice over.⁸⁰ A baker named Cheong Alum would have been considered funny by itself, but a baker named Cheong Alum accused of adding poison to his own dough seemed too good to be true in England. One Colonial Office official underlined Cheong Alum's name in the anguished dispatch written by Bowring to William Labouchère on 15 January 1857 describing the poisoning, and wrote in the margin: 'Surely a mythical name'.⁸¹ Nor could *Punch* resist the pun, starting an

article on the poisoning in March 1857 with 'A Chinese baker, prophetically named ALLUM, poisoned the bread served out to foreigners at Hong-Kong'.⁸² The same issue contained the words: 'JOHN CHINAMAN, in poisoning bread for the purpose of serving an ejection on the Europeans, may be regarded by lawyers as having highly entitled himself to be described by the *soubriquet* of JOHN DOUGH'.⁸³

Humour notwithstanding, disinformation, misinformation and rumour played a large part in the re-telling of colonial life back at home, in part because of the distances involved and the time-lag between events in the colonies, and their appraisal in England. Poisonings were ideally suited to rumour-mongering, and rumours of what had happened in the 1857 poisoning circulated widely (and wildly) across the globe. For instance, news from Paris in February 1857 reported that the English residents and warehouses at Hong Kong had been burned (this was later corrected). And, according to *The Illustrated London News*, private letters from the 'Chinese Seas', received at Paris in March 1857, state that 'Alum had been tried before a Council of War legally constituted, and convicted of an attempt to poison the English chargé d'Affaires and his family. The man was condemned to death and shot, together with 3 of his accomplices'.⁸⁴ The same story was repeated, in an unpleasantly mocking fashion, in *Punch* on 28 March 1857, with much added sarcasm and would-be jokes, such as: 'A subscription has, therefore, been entered into to erect a fitting monument at Hong-Kong to the unfortunate ALLUM and his hopeless companions. A suitable inscription has been promised by a distinguished bishop in the very oiliest English'.⁸⁵

But outright denial takes disinformation or misinformation to another level, and signals that something important is happening. The first rumours that the Hong Kong poisoning was not being believed in England reached the colony quite early on. This denial did not emanate from civil servants at the Colonial Office, whose correspondence makes clear that they believed in the poisoning, but from MPs and journalists. Weatherhead adverted to English incredulity when he wrote: 'the celebrated poisoning affair ... a most diabolical attempt at the wholesale murder of an entire community, I doubt whether history can furnish a parallel instance. So unprecedented, and startling was the occurrence that much incredulity was manifested in this country [England] at the time as to the reality and it was supposed that at all events the case had been greatly exaggerated'.⁸⁶ However, in some cases incredulity and exaggeration hardened into outright denial, as attested by one of *The Times* correspondents: 'The news from England brought by the mail on the 10th [June 1857] was ... that some comfortable twaddle had found out that Alum's bread was not poisoned ... As to the Alum bread, there is some of it in England, and several loaves of it are here. If the individual who, at a safe distance, talks so skeptically upon this matter, will eat half a pound of this bread, it will terminate all discussion, and set the question at rest in a most satisfactory manner'.⁸⁷ Hansard reported a debate in the Commons of 20 July 1857 in which Lt.-Colonel Thomas Thompson denounced the whole episode as a lie: 'Was there a man who believed in the poisoning at Hong Kong? Call the whole College of Physicians, and ask whether they could poison 300 men with arsenic without any of them dying, the arsenic not being weighed out by grains and scruples, but put into bread of which they ate according to their appetites, some more, some less.' According to Thompson, the poisoning was just one of a line of falsehoods that started with the insistence that the British flag had been flying on the *Arrow*, used to justify the attack on Canton.⁸⁸ On 18 June

1857 *The China Mail* reported that questions had been asked in England about the poisoning episode. Some queried whether the bread had been poisoned at all, a second group positing that the flour was putrid rather than mixed with arsenic, and a third camp suggesting other obnoxious ingredients, such as roman cement, lime or chunam.⁸⁹

Perhaps in response to this, and with the aim of quelling speculation, a portion of the poisoned bread was sent to Professor Justus Liebig in Germany. Arsenic 'to the extent of 250 milligrammes was found in every 50 grammes – which is equal to from 38 or 39 grains in a loaf of 500 grammes – ... and the report of the physicians in China is fully corroborated'.⁹⁰ Governor Bowring wrote to his son Frederick in September 1857 that he had received a letter from J P S stating that 'the story of the poisoning is a lie of mine, which nobody believes'. Finally, Augustine Heard commented: 'I have seen it stated in print, with a view to removing this stain from the Chinese, that the poisoning affair was pure fiction evolved from a panic-stricken imagination, but there is no doubt whatsoever about the facts which were as I have stated.'⁹¹ There are many ways of downplaying or downgrading an incident that can be effective, but denial – although especially aggravating to those who have lived through the incident or had their lives affected by it – usually has the opposite effect. So it is worthwhile asking: why was the Hong Kong poisoning incident denied by certain influential people in England? We would suggest that the very denials were an important part of the attempt to discredit Sir John Bowring politically on account of what were seen as his reckless military actions in China. However, there is a big difference between denying that the poisoning happened at all, and questioning whether it was a deliberate criminal attempt to wipe out a whole community. It is easy to see how claims could be made in England that the poisoning had been exaggerated by Bowring and his supporters for political capital. What is more interesting is that some English commentators categorically stated that the poisoning never took place at all.

Interpretations have swarmed over the available 'facts' concerning the mass poisoning of January 1857 in Hong Kong. As far as most colonists were concerned, with Ye on the doorstep and a majority Chinese population all around them in Hong Kong, the poisoning was simultaneously an act of mass terrorism, a war crime and a criminal conspiracy, and they held Cheong Alum responsible for it. Alternative framings of the event, such as commercial sabotage or an accident, which would have been a luxury in times of war, surfaced only very occasionally. In England, however, half a world away from an unsanctioned war with China, sections of the political elite and some journalists preferred to deny the existence of the poisoning, labelling it an imagined or imaginary event, even though it had undoubtedly happened. Instead, they pinned the blame for whatever trouble there was on the governor, Sir John Bowring, whose wife, in a cruel twist of fate, was the only person who definitely died as a result of the poisoning. Cheong Alum, the alleged conspirator and mass murderer, in yet another twist, after a few years in Macau, lived the rest of his long life in Vietnam as a respected community leader and successful businessman, dying only in 1900.⁹² Equally ironic is what happened to the afterlife of how the event was understood. 1857 turned out to be a 'red year'⁹³ of unprecedented insurrections across the British empire,⁹³ but the geopolitical conflicts of 1857 simultaneously downgraded the affairs of smaller colonies, and relegated the mass poisoning to being a minor footnote of only local interest.

¹ Queen's Road is clearly marked on the street map of Victoria dated 1856 in Empson, *Mapping Hong Kong*.

² Cambridge MA, Harvard Business School, Special Collections, Baker Library, GQ-2-2, Augustine Heard, 'Old China and new' [dated 1894], p. 27: 'the bread ... accidentally arrived late at the barracks and the soldiers breakfasted with the bread of the day before'. On Augustine Heard's business career, see Lockwood, *Augustine Heard*.

³ London, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Colonial Office (hereafter CO) 133/14, Blue Book for Colony of Hongkong, 1857, p. 33: 'Remuneration to Dr. Harland for chemical analysis of poisoned bread from Esing bakery: £20.16.8'.

⁴ *The China Mail*, 18 June 1857, p. 98.

⁵ For a report of Abel's chemical analysis, see London, TNA, CO 129/66, fol. 285r-v.

⁶ On von Liebig, see Brock, *Justus von Liebig*, where, however, his analysis of the Hong Kong bread is not mentioned.

⁷ Cf. Munn, *Anglo-China*, pp. 250-3, and Wiener, *An Empire*, pp. 5-9.

⁸ There is a substantial literature on the Arrow War, for which see Wong, *Deadly Dreams*; Wong, *Anglo-Chinese Relations*; Wong, 'The "Arrow" Incident'; Costin, *Great Britain and China*; Bartle, 'Sir John Bowring'; Smith and Lumby, *The Second China War*.

⁹ On whom, see Wong, *Yeh Ming-ch'en*.

¹⁰ Eitel, *Europe in China*, p. 311.

¹¹ *The China Mail*, 27 November 1856.

¹² Gregory, *Dr. Thomas Boswall Watson*, p. 10.

¹³ Munn, *Anglo-China*, p. 277, and London, TNA, CO 133/14, Blue book for Colony of Hongkong, 1857, p. 134.

¹⁴ *The Overland Friend of China*, 21 January 1857.

¹⁵ Albert Farley Heard, 'Poisoning by wholesale: a reminiscence of China life', <http://ee.stanford.edu/~gray/poisoning.pdf> (accessed: 6 January 2010), p. 14.

¹⁶ Augustine Heard, 'Old China and new', pp. 25-6.

¹⁷ For a detailed account, see Munn, *Anglo-China*, pp. 264-72.

¹⁸ *The China Mail*, 16 and 30 October 1856.

¹⁹ *The China Mail*, 18 December 1856, p. 166, and 29 December 1856, p. 175.

²⁰ London, TNA, CO 129/59, fols. 204-5, 209-11, and CO 131/3, fols. 220-2.

²¹ Norton-Kyshe, *The History of the Laws and Courts*, I, p. 398.

²² London, TNA, CO 129/62, fol. 103r, letter from Bowring to Labouchère, 9 January 1857.

²³ John Bowring, *The China Mail*, 4 December 1856.

²⁴ Norton-Kyshe, *The History of the Laws and Courts*, I, pp. 410-12.

²⁵ Tsai, *Hong Kong in Chinese History*, p. 41.

²⁶ *The Overland Friend of China*, 15 January 1857, and Eitel, *Europe in China*, p. 310.

²⁷ Arsenic gripped the nineteenth-century British imagination. In addition to sensational murders, suicides and abortions, members of the public were at risk of exposure to accidental poisoning because arsenic was present in many household goods and products. In response to an 'epidemic' of arsenic murders, the Sale of Arsenic Regulation Act was passed in 1851, the first Act of Parliament to govern the sale of drugs. It placed restrictions on who could purchase arsenic and obliged retailers to maintain a witnessed record of all sales, including the quantity and its stated purpose. The act also required that the arsenic be coloured with soot or indigo unless it was to be

used for a purpose that would make such treatment inappropriate. Bartrip, ‘A “pennurth”’, Burney, *Poison*, Watson, ‘Medical and chemical’, and Whorton, *The Arsenic Century*.

²⁸ Hong Kong, Hong Kong University, Special Collections, Alfred Weatherhead, ‘Life in Hong Kong, 1856-1859’ [typescript of an unpublished lecture], p. 11.

²⁹ Manchester, John Rylands Library, Eng. MSS 1228, letter no. 175, Sir John Bowring to his son Edgar, 15 Feb 1857: ‘a Chinese population of 70,000 among whom hundreds of pirates and desperadoes’.

³⁰ Weatherhead, ‘Life in Hong Kong’, p. 11.

³¹ London, TNA, CO 133/14, Blue book for Colony of Hongkong, 1857, p. 134.

³² London, TNA, CO 133/14, Blue book for Colony of Hongkong, 1857, p. 156.

³³ London, Archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, The Council for World Mission, incorporating the London Missionary Society, South China, Correspondence, Incoming letters, Box 6, folder 1, Letter from Benjamin Hobson in Hong Kong to Rev. Dr. Tidman in London, 29 January 1857.

³⁴ Manchester, John Rylands Library, Eng. MSS 1228, letter no. 171.

³⁵ House of Commons, *Accounts and Papers*, I, session 6 February – 5 August 1873, *Parliamentary Papers*, XXXIX of House of Commons for 1873, p. 203.

³⁶ *British Parliamentary Papers (hereafter BPP)*, 24, p. 183.

³⁷ Wood, *Fankwei*, p. 480 and Hacker, *Wanchai*, pp. 38 and 68.

³⁸ *BPP*, 24, p. 183.

³⁹ On whom, see House of Commons, *Accounts and Papers*, I, session 6 February – 5 August 1873, *Parliamentary Papers*, XXXIX of House of Commons for 1873, pp. 203-10, and Vernon, *George Duddell*.

⁴⁰ Vernon, *George Duddell*, p. 7: Dronsart worked for the Union Bread Company, and was married to George Duddell’s sister, Sophia.

⁴¹ *BPP*, 24, p. 177.

⁴² White, *Turbans and Traders*, pp. 21-2. At some point in the 1850s, he had ‘gone into partnership’ with Duddell and Co.

⁴³ Cambridge MA, Harvard Business School, Special Collections, Baker Library, GQ-2, Augustine Heard, ‘The poisoning in Hongkong – an episode of life in China forty years ago’, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴ London, TNA, CO 133/13, Blue book for Colony of Hongkong, 1856, p. 209, CO 133/14, Blue book for Colony of Hongkong, 1857, p. 137, and CO 133/15, Blue book for Colony of Hongkong, 1858, p. 149.

⁴⁵ *BPP*, 24, p. 168.

⁴⁶ *Reynold’s Newspaper*, 22 March 1857, based on a contemporary report from Hong Kong.

⁴⁷ Weatherhead, ‘Life in Hong Kong’, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Albert Farley Heard, ‘Poisoning by wholesale’, p. 13.

⁴⁹ Augustine Heard, ‘The poisoning in Hongkong’, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Augustine Heard, ‘The poisoning in Hongkong’, p. 3.

⁵¹ On Abel’s later, distinguished career, see the entry by Robert Steele, rev. K. D. Watson, in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 1, pp. 62-3.

⁵² London, TNA, CO 129/66, fol. 285 r-v; the letter was published in *The China Mail* of 18 June 1857, p. 98.

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- ⁵³ *The China Mail*, 17 January 1858, and Eitel, *Europe in China*, p. 311.
- ⁵⁴ Clarke, *The Governor's Daughter*, pp. 86-7, and Eitel, *Europe in China*, p. 311.
- ⁵⁵ *BPP*, 24, p. 168.
- ⁵⁶ Choi, 'Cheung Ah-lum', p. 283.
- ⁵⁷ London, TNA, CO 129/65, fol. 407r, *The Hongkong Government Gazette* of 10 June 1857.
- ⁵⁸ *The Hongkong Register*, 10 February 1857.
- ⁵⁹ Norton-Kyshe, *The History of the Laws and Courts*, I, p. 428.
- ⁶⁰ The following analysis is based upon testimonies relating to Cheong Alum given during the trial: see *BPP*, 24, pp. 168-84.
- ⁶¹ For information on the role of compradors, see Hao, *The Comprador and Carroll, Edge of Empires*.
- ⁶² Choi, 'Cheung Ah-lum', p. 283.
- ⁶³ Choi, 'Cheung Ah-lum', p. 282, and Eitel, *Europe in China*, p. 312.
- ⁶⁴ House of Commons, *Accounts and Papers*, I, session 6 February – 5 August 1873, *Parliamentary Papers*, XXXIX of House of Commons for 1873, p. 203.
- ⁶⁵ Wood, *Fankwei*, p. 491.
- ⁶⁶ Legge, 'The colony of Hongkong', p. 171.
- ⁶⁷ Cheong Alum was also accused of master-minding the massacre onboard *The Thistle*. See a private letter from Hong Kong, dated 14 February 1857, published in the *Sunday Times* on 19 April 1857.
- ⁶⁸ Cheong Alum can be seen as a representative of an emerging Chinese business class, as discussed in Carroll, *Edge of Empires*, p. 13.
- ⁶⁹ Wood, *Fankwei*, p. 480 mentions an 'opposition bakery' very close to Cheong Alum's flour warehouse.
- ⁷⁰ *BPP*, 24, pp. 167 and 175.
- ⁷¹ See, e.g., *The Overland Friend of China*, 21 January, 30 January and 12 February, 1857.
- ⁷² Albert Farley Heard, 'Poisoning by wholesale', pp. 15-16.
- ⁷³ London, TNA, CO 129/62, fols. 237r-239r, 240r-241r, 242r-v, 243r-v, and *BPP*, 24, pp. 4-5.
- ⁷⁴ London, TNA, CO 129/62, fols. 248r-265r.
- ⁷⁵ London, University College, Manuscripts Library, MS Ogden 62 (1), letter no. 104. Haman's story appears in Esther, vii: 9. The phrase 'hung as high as Haman' refers to someone planning a murder who instead was killed himself, usually by the same method he had been planning or using the same murder weapon.
- ⁷⁶ Smith, *To China and Back*, Henry Lethbridge, 'Introduction', p. ix.
- ⁷⁷ Smith, *To China and Back*, p. 63.
- ⁷⁸ *The China Mail*, 18 June 1857, and *BPP*, 24, p. 167, where Dr. Harland states that he analysed specimens of bread that he had eaten himself, he had collected from the house of a Parsee, and he had been sent by Mr. Grand Pré, all of which contained arsenic.
- ⁷⁹ Jarrett, 'Old Hong Kong', p. 244. We are grateful to Chris Munn for this reference.
- ⁸⁰ Hassall, *Food*, pp. 343-4, 348-9.
- ⁸¹ London, TNA, CO 129/62, fol. 94v.
- ⁸² *Punch or the London Charivari*, 28 March 1857, p. 129.
- ⁸³ *Punch or the London Charivari*, 28 March 1857, p. 129.
- ⁸⁴ *The Illustrated London News*, 28 March 1857, p. 286.
- ⁸⁵ *Punch or the London Charivari*, 28 March 1857, p. 123.

⁸⁶ Weatherhead, 'Life in Hong Kong', p. 25.

⁸⁷ Cooke, *China*, p. 55.

⁸⁸ Hansard, House of Commons Debates, vol. 147, c. 66, 20 July 1857.

⁸⁹ *The China Mail*, 18 June 1857, p. 98.

⁹⁰ *Caledonian Mercury*, 7 May 1857. See also a column in the *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* of the same date, reporting on a letter from Munich in the *Augsburg Gazette*, stating that Liebig had done the analysis and had found arsenic.

⁹¹ Augustine Heard, 'Old China and new', p. 29.

⁹² Choi, 'Cheung Ah-lum', p. 282.

⁹³ Herbert, *War*, p. 2.

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