

CHAPTER 04

**BEGINNINGS
OF AN
INDUSTRIAL CITY**

Chuk Yuen Bus Terminus in Wong Tai Sin in the mid-1970s.

Rapid growth of the industrial sector

Hong Kong's trade activities recovered after the war and, by, 1947, economic activity was even stronger than before the conflict. The Korean War broke out in 1950 and the UN, supported by the US, imposed an embargo on China, dealing a heavy blow to Hong Kong's transit trade. An influx of Mainland Chinese provided cheap labour for Hong Kong. More importantly, manufacturers, including textile factories from Shanghai and Jiangsu, as well as Zhejiang, brought with them technology and money. They originally purchased machinery from the US, UK and other western countries. In light of the dire situation in Mainland China, some entrepreneurs decided to have their textile machinery shipped to Hong Kong instead and set up factories here. For instance, Nanyang Cotton Mill (



Kowloon City in 1950. Kowloon City Bus Terminus is in the centre of the photo, offering routes to Sai Kung and Clear Water Bay. Route 1 carried passengers to Tsim Sha Tsui Ferry Pier.

The junction of Sham Shui Po's Un Chau Street and Tai Po Road. Vehicles needed to use this road to access the New Territories.





Around 1955, 2 brand new Daimler A double-deck buses at Tsim Sha Tsui Ferry Pier terminus. Made in the UK, the bus model was equipped with 56 seats and allowed another 17 passengers to stand. The seats and floors were made of wood. The Daimler A was retired in 1983.



The section of Nathan Road near Yau Ma Tei's Pitt Street around 1955. On the right is a Route 9 bus.



An aerial view of Tsim Sha Tsui Ferry Pier and Kowloon Wharf. Photo taken in 1962.



A bus on Route 16A passing through Shanghai Street near the junction of Nanking Street around 1960. The route ran between Jordan Road Ferry Bus Terminus and Tsuen Wan West.



A bus on Route 12 passing through Reclamation Street around 1965.

In 1949, the population density in urban areas was extremely high, about 50,000 people per square kilometre – a figure which changed little right into the 1970s. In 1949, people lived in three- to four-storey buildings, while 20 or so years later, many residential buildings already had 10 or more storeys. In short, Hong Kong faced a tremendous population problem after the war – a population which stood at around 1.55 million in 1946 rose to 2.02 million in 1951. This figure became 2.61 million in 1956 and 3.17 million in 1961.

The population of Hong Kong doubled in just 15 years, an increase greater than any city can easily sustain. A large number of these people lived in Kowloon, posing a huge challenge to public services. Thus, half of the 1961 population, or 1.6 million, lived in Kowloon (including New Kowloon). The number of residents living on Hong Kong Island was 1.03 million. The population of Kowloon surged again to 2.08 million in 1966 while that of Hong Kong Island dropped to 940,000. In 1971, the population of Kowloon reached 2.32 million while that of Hong Kong Island further dropped to less than 830,000.

Problems caused by dramatic population growth

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Most of the workforce resided in old districts such as Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok, Tai Kok Tsui and Sham Shui Po. After a fire broke out in the Shek Kip Mei squatter area in 1953, the Resettlement Department and Hong Kong Housing Authority built many public housing estates and resettlement blocks. They were located in Shek Kip Mei, Tai Hang Tung, Lei Cheng Uk, So Uk, Wang Tau Hom, etc. Starting from the 1960s, more estates were built in Tseun Wan, Tai Wo Hau, Jordan Valley, Kwun Tong, Tsz Wan Shan, Choi Hung, Ngau Tau Kok, Sau Mau Ping, Yau Tong, Ho Man Tin, Hung Hom, Ma Tau Wai, Pak Tin, Cheung Sha Wan, Kwai Chung, Lam Tin, etc. Many of these were built on a relatively large scale and housed tens of thousands of residents. Large resettlement areas such as Tsz Wan Shan, Sau Mau Ping and Wong Tai Sin housed more than 100,000 people. This number is actually the population of a mid-sized city in many countries. Within just 10 years, farmland, hill slopes and squatter areas were turned into communities with high population densities. The challenge to carry out urban planning and arrange public transport was daunting.



Ngau Chi Wan Bus Terminus in 1963.



Lo Fu Ngam (now Lok Fu) under development in 1962. Lo Fu Ngam Bus Terminus is on the left.