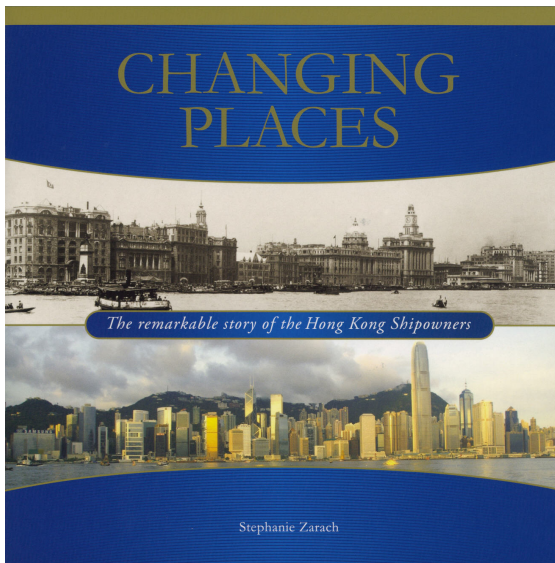


Changing Places--The remarkable story of the Hong Kong Shipowners Stephanie Zarach (2007) 252pp (Book review by Mr. Sam Ignarski)



This reviewer can recall how upon taking up an appointment in Hong Kong in the early 1990s it was necessary for the neophyte manager to learn the origins of the local shipowning scene, which at the time was poorly documented and the stuff of local knowledge and anecdote. Now those with a need to know need to do no more than turn to Stephanie Zarach's well researched and concise book written in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association.

The book is divided into a history of the many figures who moved their base of operations from Shanghai to Hong Kong during the turbulence of the war and civil war in China followed by a less chronological account of various themes underlying shipowning in Hong Kong in more or less modern times. The cultural melange of the Hong Kong scene is well portrayed: Cantonese locals, Shanghainese shipowner émigrés and their staffs, often rather traumatised by their experience of dislocation and the illogically long lived colonial administrators of a territory living on borrowed time. Between them these players produced one of the great success stories of globalisation.

Stephanie Zarach and the HKSOA are to be congratulated for producing a fascinating but highly readable history which documents a tangled story, much fortitude and style and any number of highs and lows which attended the rise of the HK shipowner. The production standard is high, not least the care and attention which has been lavished on the many illustrations by the HK publishers and printers.

As to the future, the book casts an eye or two on the post handover future of HK as a regional shipping centre. Shanghai and Singapore loom as rivals for this role and only time will tell whether the improvisational genius which characterises the Pearl of Asia will see it prevail over its rivals.

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