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I. ORIGINS

I was born in Hong Kong on 25 October 1947. Hong Kong was then a British colony. So it remained until 30 June 1997. Then, by the handover on 1 July 1997, Hong Kong became Chinese again. But it retained its previous system and therefore lifestyle. This happened – and continues – under the “one country, two systems” principle. The principle is declared in the Preamble to Hong Kong’s post-handover constitution the Basic Law. It is secured by the detailed provisions contained in that constitution. And subject to one qualification which I will have to discuss elsewhere, that constitution is safeguarded by an independent judiciary. I realise that this is beginning to sound rather like a judgment or law book. But that is not at all what I intend – certainly not at this stage. At the moment, I am dealing with two journeys.

One was made by my forebears on my mother’s side. It was a sea voyage made by traders. They began in the Middle East, proceeded across the Indian Ocean, settled for a time on the western coast of India, then resumed their voyage; they went through the Strait of Malacca, entered the South China Sea and ended in Hong Kong. Whereupon my maternal great-great-grandfather stepped off the gangplank and set foot