

of the King's Theatre at the end of the evening performance, 'looking like a buffoon'. By the late 1930s, even female undergraduates were forced to participate in ragging activities, albeit of a much less humiliating kind. In 1940, first-year women were required to wear green bobby socks, but they were also expected to race against other neophytes by pushing hard-boiled eggs across the floor of the Women's Common Room with their noses. While most students took these ritual humiliations in their stride, others found them obnoxious, inhumane and juvenile: the articles which appeared in the *Union Magazine* clearly indicate just how offensive many freshmen found these ordeals. It was doubtless for this reason that successive vice-chancellors, wardens and professors tried to eradicate the practice.³⁰⁷ It has been suggested by Hans Yeung that the incidence and intensity of ragging declined in the late 1930s, but there is ample anecdotal evidence that it not only intensified, but became more of a burden on freshmen immediately before the Japanese occupation. In this sense, HKU was no different from the Indian universities or Singapore colleges, where similar initiation rituals were also very common at this time.³⁰⁸

Cases of over-exuberant ragging which breached the regulations on hostel discipline were dealt with by the Hostels Committee until Duncan Sloss decided to establish a separate Disciplinary Committee in 1938, to consider all future cases of undergraduate indiscipline. This change occurred after a particularly difficult case involving a fourth-year medical student.³⁰⁹ A reorganisation of the administrative arrangements for the halls was also implemented in 1938, when Professor Faid took on the role of 'chief warden' overseeing all three halls, with Lim Ek Quee, Koh Nye Poh and K. W. Salter acting as resident wardens of Lugard, Eliot and May halls. The new structure had the additional benefit of providing a resident medical officer (Dr Lim Ek Quee) to advise on the treatment of sick students.³¹⁰ It is not possible to determine whether student discipline improved as a result of these changes, but it is notable that younger Chinese lecturers were now being appointed as wardens in addition to the more senior expatriate staff. No amount of staff supervision was able to solve the essential problem challenging the principle of compulsory residence, which by the early 1940s was becoming entrenched at HKU: the headlong promotion of 'hall spirit' in Lugard's 'character factory' during the University's first thirty years had divided rather than unified the students.

Maintaining Compulsory Residence

The policy of compulsory residence became problematic for other reasons as the 1930s wore on. The enormous influx of students in the late 1930s led to a serious shortage of hostel spaces, but the problem became so acute in September 1940 that immediate action had to be taken. The Eliot Hall Annex was subdivided to provide seven additional rooms. In early 1941, the May Hall Annex was also converted to accommodate an extra fourteen students, but by this time it was clear that a new men's hostel was needed. During 1940–41, it had been possible to accommodate 372 men in the six halls, out of a total enrolment of 461, while only twenty-four of the 117 women were in residence.³¹¹ The fact that one-fifth of the male and four-fifths of the female undergraduates could not be accommodated in the hostels seriously threatened HKU's statutory residential requirements. The University's continuing financial

difficulties meant that the construction of new halls was out of the question, so a temporary hostel above May Hall which would accommodate an additional twenty-eight students was approved in October 1941. The site was being cleared by November, but construction work ceased when the Japanese attack began.³¹² The need for hostel accommodation for medical students undertaking residential clinical work at the Government Civil Hospital, identified in the mid-1920s, became even more urgent when Queen Mary Hospital opened, but it was not until 1940 that a flat was eventually made available at the hospital for six medical students.³¹³

Accommodation for women students was an even larger problem during the 1930s. Although St Stephen's Hall moved to larger quarters in 1930 to ease the over-crowding of the hostel, this was nothing more than a temporary solution to a rapidly growing problem. With the number of women students steadily rising in the early 1930s and St Stephen's full to 'bursting point', Hornell was keen to see a permanent women's hostel established, but he preferred a University-controlled hall rather than one which operated under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society.³¹⁴ Fund-raising activities for the construction of a permanent women's hostel had commenced in 1928, but the campaign enjoyed only limited success, with a mere \$36,100 of the required \$120,000 subscribed by early 1932. Hornell had been in negotiations with the fund-raising committee ever since 1929 for a suitable site on the campus; independent advice indicated that the hostel as planned was likely to cost at least \$170,000. Hornell initially suggested the area between 'Haldon' and Prospect Place in Bonham Road, but it was not sufficiently large enough for Miss Griffin's 'grandiose plans' and was turned down by the CMS. The committee asked for the Victoria Battery site at the highest point on the campus, but this was already reserved for staff housing. Hornell instead proposed using a section of Belcher's Fort on the north side of Pokfulam Road if the War Office could be induced to surrender it.³¹⁵ Negotiations from this point turned into a 'game of bluff' between Hornell and Colonel Skinner, the chairman of the appeal committee. A search was made of the University's main campus to try and find a suitable plot

of land. Hornell eventually suggested that the CMS should use its own St Stephen's House in Bonham Road or a site near the University playing fields in Pokfulam Road, but the committee now favoured another site adjacent to the University men's hostels and immediately above the Vice-Chancellor's Lodge. Hornell was outraged. He did not want a women's residence so close to his own home and argued that building it there would not only 'congest the lungs of the University' but also 'ruin the University estate from an aesthetic point of view'. The University was already surrounded on all sides by residential buildings: the last thing Hornell wanted was to have the remaining open spaces filled with more buildings.³¹⁶



FIGURE 8.18

St Stephen's Hall residents, c.1937. Attempts to raise funds for a women's hostel in the 1930s failed, leaving most female undergraduates without accommodation on campus. [SSGC]

The main issue for Hornell was the uncertain status of the proposed women's hostel. At a meeting with the building committee in March 1932, he implied that the CMS had been raising funds on false pretences. Rather than collecting money for a 'university' hostel, he asserted that they had in fact all along intended that the hostel would be a 'missionary' establishment. T. N. Chau thought that wealthy Chinese parents might be willing to send their daughters to a University hostel if compulsory residence was introduced for women, but he felt that most would strongly object to residence in a church-controlled hostel.³¹⁷ The CMS was forced to clarify its intentions; it was suggested that it might instead consider building on land between Lyttelton and Robinson Roads near St Stephen's Girls' College, but the project lost steam as economic conditions in Hong Kong worsened in the mid-1930s. St Stephen's Hall remained at Babington Path until 1941.

Staci Ford has suggested that Hornell's lack of resolve in providing living space for female students on campus betrays a lukewarm commitment to higher education for women. This is no doubt partially true, for Hornell was a confirmed old bachelor who seems to have been rather ill at ease in female company, but he had other reasons for moving cautiously on what he referred to as the 'girls' hostel'. There were many calls on the University's capital resources at the time. As long as a temporary solution was provided by the CMS and the number of women did not rise too quickly, there was no urgency to build a new hostel for them. Hornell's other major concern was the heavy CMS involvement in the project and the possibility that a Protestant hostel for women would lead to calls from the Catholic church for a similar concession. He was also a little resentful of the bossiness of the colony's socially prominent women, who took the matter of women's residence at HKU into their own hands rather than leaving it up to the University's male authorities. Hornell ultimately decided that residence for women could not be made compulsory while the only attached hostel available was conducted on 'a distinctly Christian basis'. This was clearly against the spirit of religious freedom enshrined in the University Ordinance.³¹⁸

By the late 1930s, the lack of residential places for women students had become a major problem, as St Stephen's could accommodate no more than about twenty students. Duncan Sloss was forced to broach the issue with Bishop Hall soon after taking up the vice-chancellorship, assuring him that his new scheme was not meant to supplant or replace the CMS hostel.³¹⁹ Sloss pursued two preliminary schemes for a new women's hostel to accommodate up to fifty students. The first involved sacrificing Hornell's beloved Vice-Chancellor's Lodge by partially demolishing it and constructing a large new wing to match the existing building at a cost of \$90,000. The alternative was to keep the Lodge as a School of Public Health or post-graduate centre and to construct a completely new three-storey building elsewhere on



FIGURE 8.19

Our Lady's Hall on Po Shan Road, established by the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres in 1939, did not solve the University's growing problem of accommodation for women students. Eileen Chang was one of the Hall's earliest residents. [HKUA]

the campus at a cost of \$105,000.³²⁰ Neither of these two plans were implemented, probably because a new science building was far more urgently needed and funds were desperately short for building projects. Another solution arose at the end of 1938, when Mother Xavier of the French Sisters of St Paul de Chartres offered to establish a Catholic residence to house forty women, on a site granted under similar conditions to those arranged for the Jesuits at Ricci Hall. The site suggested on the western boundary of the University proved too expensive to build on, so Mother Xavier purchased a large house on Poshan Road, which she proceeded to enlarge while applying for an adjacent area of crown land to serve as a recreation area for the residents. The completed hostel—called Our Lady's Hall—was slightly smaller than originally proposed, housing only twenty-five residents; it opened on 29 August 1939. Among its first residents was the future novelist Eileen Chang, who has left a charming description of hall life before the Japanese occupation.³²¹

The affiliated men's hostels—St John's, Morrison and Ricci—continued, like the women's halls, to be staffed by missionaries. Although they undoubtedly developed a rather different 'tone' compared with the three University halls, they were far from aloof. Sporting competitiveness and shared cultural activities at the University Union and elsewhere drew their residents into the mainstream of undergraduate life. Duncan Sloss attempted to incorporate them even further within the University's formal structure. Sloss was particularly concerned that the wardens of all the affiliated hostels should be more closely involved in the academic life of the University and not simply limit themselves to overseeing their respective residential facilities. Stanley Boxer, Warden of Morrison Hall, had already been teaching in the Engineering Faculty on a part-time basis for many years and was eventually appointed Registrar in 1940, and a number of the Jesuits residing at Ricci Hall held teaching posts from the late 1920s, but the other wardens had little involvement with teaching despite their graduate status. George She (Zimmern) of St John's Hall was encouraged by Bishop Hall to apply for a



FIGURE 8.20

Social life in the halls of residence: a dance party at Morrison Hall in the 1930s. [HKUA]

teaching post in history in 1939, but the University decided not to hire him. The Wardens of St Stephen's and Our Lady's Halls were never involved in the teaching activities of the University.³²²

St John's and Morrison Halls remained popular with students from Protestant feeder schools. Under the wardenships of Rev G. K. Carpenter (1932–38) and Rev George She (1939–41), St John's was always filled to its capacity of seventy residents, the majority of whom were studying medicine. A chapel was adapted from the old roll-call room in the mid-1930s and an ornamental Chinese garden was laid out by Professor Hsu Ti-shan. St John's was noted for its cultural activities, especially its thirty-piece orchestra, but it also had a number of committed Christian undergraduates, such as Luke Lim, who were heavily involved in relief and social service work in the late 1930s. While compulsory daily prayers ceased in the early 1930s, the hall continued to be one of the main centres of activity for the Christian Association. St John's Hall was so popular in the immediate pre-war years that Bishop Hall initiated a plan to acquire a new site and rebuild the hostel on a larger scale opposite the Pokfulam Road athletic ground. The planning for this move was well under way when the University closed at the end of 1941.³²³ Morrison Hall was also extended in 1928, with the new wing providing an additional eighteen rooms, a common room and a dining room. With Stanley Boxer as Warden, the hall was soon full of students, and numerous improvements were made to the recreation facilities. The new dining room proved to be particularly important as a venue for entertainments, allowing Morrison for the first time to host dances and other evening social events.³²⁴

Ricci Hall's first year was difficult for both student residents and the Jesuits in charge, but by 1934 the demand for places was sufficient to allow for the completion of the hall, thereby adding fourteen more rooms. The hostel had a full complement of fifty-four residents by 1941. Although its residents gained a reputation as sportsmen, especially in swimming, Ricci also boasted a library of 5,000 volumes and a number of high-achieving scholars. About half the residents were Catholics, allowing the Jesuits to build a thriving community spirit which mirrored much of what they were trying to achieve in their new secondary school, Wah Yan College. Thomas Ryan described the students at Ricci as 'almost ideal Catholic young men', who responded well to his calls to form a social service club in 1934. These students also seem to have attended Fr Gerard Casey's 'apologetics circle' regularly. The hall therefore appears to have been a very happy community under the wardenship of Fr Brian Kelly (1936–41). Daily Mass was popular, as was the Sodality of Our Lady and the St Vincent de Paul Society, which both took an interest in social problems, particularly the poor and orphans.³²⁵ One of the students from this period, Ratna Khutrakul, was closely involved in these activities and later became a Catholic priest when he returned to Thailand, eventually becoming a bishop in 1969.³²⁶

The strong competitive spirit of the halls was sustained in the 1930s through regular inter-hostel sporting events and other social activities, but this enthusiasm does not appear to have descended into destructiveness or violence, as elsewhere in British and dominion universities. There were certainly underlying stresses within the resident student body in these years, which often bubbled up to the surface in the form of satirical articles in the *Union Magazine* or the occasional excesses of ragging. There were also interracial difficulties

in some of the halls. A Chinese student wrote to the Registrar in 1940, asking to move to Eliot Hall because he was 'not on good terms with the Russians and the Indians' in Lugard Hall.³²⁷ While Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese students resided in each of the three University hostels, the residences had all developed their own characters and traditions by the late 1930s. May Hall was favoured by local Chinese, Eliot Hall by the majority of students from Singapore and Malaya, while Lugard Hall housed most of the Russian and Indian undergraduates and had a reputation for being more 'international'.³²⁸ These concentrations apparently led to some difficulties at times, but despite these problems, the 1930s were remarkable for the relative harmony in relations among the various groups of students and the several halls of residence. This may perhaps be attributed, at least partially, to the existence of external threats (the Japanese) throughout most of the decade, a situation which seemed to draw the undergraduates together in a patriotic bond which was able to overcome the usual stresses of undergraduate residential life.

Mobilising the Graduates

By the early 1930s, the graduates of the University numbered nearly 600, but their rights and privileges remained largely undefined in the Ordinance and Statutes, and there was no organisation within the institution which sought to draw them together as a group or represent their interests in the higher councils of the University. Graduates were of course considered to be members of the University and had a right to attend Congregations, but this was their only privilege according to the Statutes. The University did little to encourage alumni associations. Several attempts had nevertheless been made during the 1920s by ex-students themselves to form regional groupings which included both graduates and non-graduates. The first of these arose out of an earlier Shanghai Students' Club, formed at HKU in 1916–17 but which went out of existence in 1918 when its members returned to the Mainland after graduation. It was graduates from this group who formed in 1923 a HKU Returned Students' Union in Shanghai, whose membership rose to thirty-nine in 1927. Closer to Hong Kong, a Canton HKU Alumni Association was formed by 1925, but it drew criticism from William Hornell when it called for a recognition of British violence during the Shakee Incident that year. In 1929, T. S. James King formed the Nanking branch of the HKU Alumni Association, with Foo Ping Sheung (Fu Bingchang) as its President, but its activities were suspended in 1931 when membership dwindled to only five.³²⁹ Despite the undoubted local success of some alumni activities, such developments were piecemeal and totally unco-ordinated. Some senior staff members felt that more needed to be done to encourage 'a constant attachment to the University' among graduates, but it was not until 1931 that a body was formed to facilitate regular communication between the University and its graduates.³³⁰

The early successes at forming alumni associations on the Mainland alerted William Hornell to the potential for involving graduates more closely in the work of the University. In 1930, he was able to secure approval from Council for establishing an Association of Hong Kong University Graduates, which he hoped would assist in the future development of the University.³³¹ In Hornell's scheme, the Graduates' Association would play a role in

THE UNIVERSITY AT WAR, 1937–1945

No episode in the history of the University of Hong Kong was as harrowing or as inspiring as the Sino-Japanese conflict of the late 1930s and early 1940s. The war-time Vice-Chancellor, Duncan Sloss, felt that the war years provided the University with an opportunity to prove its mettle: 'With all its modest scope and exterior, the University has justified itself. If, as many of us contend, the chief function of a University is to produce sound men and good citizens, then our University can proudly claim to be justified by its fruits.'¹ Likewise, Sir Lindsay Ride considered the Second World War a severe trial through which the University emerged triumphant, with its place 'firmly established in the community'.² Comparisons of war to a 'coming of age' are not uncommon in the historiography of human conflict. War has been seen both as an initiation for young men and as a generative experience for nations 'forged in the furnace of war'. Lindsay Ride himself had observed the birth of a new national self-image among his fellow Australian soldiers during the First World War; he now witnessed the same process occurring among the students and graduates of HKU, as they dealt with the horrors of Japanese military aggression. Ride guided many HKU students into the ranks of the British, Indian or Chinese Nationalist armies. He and Gordon King also ensured that those who wanted to help China by completing their studies were provided with the opportunity to do so. While some authors have suggested that Hong Kong's 'Chinese gentry' were, at best, passive victims of the Japanese occupation and, at worst, collaborators, the example of HKU's students and graduates demonstrates an active desire to fight and, if necessary, to die for their country and home, Hong Kong.³ In this sense, the war-time role of HKU's young men and women helped lay the foundations of a modern Hong Kong identity, which remains in flux to the present day.

The Sino-Japanese War and Hong Kong

The conflict between Japan and China which led to the outbreak of hostilities in Hong Kong in December 1941 had been rumbling on for decades. Since the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 and the annexation of Formosa (Taiwan), it had been clear that Japan's sights were set on expansion into mainland China. In 1905, Japan for a time seized the Liaotung (Liaodong) Peninsula from Russia; by 1910, Korea had become a colony. Thousands of Chinese students attended Japanese universities in the last years of the Qing dynasty, bringing back revolutionary ideas which helped oust the Manchus in 1911. While HKU struggled to survive in the years following the First World War, Japan's success in securing the former German sphere of influence in Shantung (Shandong) at the Paris Peace Conference led to student protests throughout China during the May Fourth Movement in 1919. The Japanese strengthened their hold on Chinese economic resources during the 1920s and, on

18 September 1931, they launched their invasion of Manchuria by attacking the capital, Mukden (Shenyang). The Mukden Incident would be remembered as 'National Humiliation Day' in China, while the founding of the puppet state of Manchukuo under the former Manchu emperor, Puyi, in 1932 added insult to injury. These events had little visible impact on the students at HKU; the prohibition against political activity on campus masked any underlying anti-Japanese feelings which undergraduates may have harboured. Up until 1937, the major incidents of overt Japanese aggression all occurred in the northernmost parts of China. Despite some short-lived anti-Japanese protest in 1931, these actions had little immediate impact on Hong Kong and the Southeast Asian British territories from which most HKU students were drawn.

The Japanese attacks on Peking and Shanghai in July and August 1937 were, however, a different matter. Students in Hong Kong were suddenly awakened to the threat posed by Japan. They immediately reacted by organising patriotic associations to assist those who were affected by the fighting. As the cities of Nanking, Wuhan and Canton fell during the course of late 1937 and 1938, these aid activities intensified.⁴ By October 1938, the Japanese had occupied the area immediately to the north of the Hong Kong border. Over the next three years, low-intensity skirmishes became an increasingly common feature of life for Chinese there and in the Chinese territorial waters just outside the colony. It was not only HKU undergraduates who took an interest in the Japanese occupation of China; many staff members also became involved in both the relief efforts and military preparations which the colonial authorities started to put into place. Lindsay Ride was particularly vocal in his opinions about Japanese ambitions. He had been in Shanghai when the Japanese Third Fleet attacked the city on the morning of 13 August 1937, and had come away from the experience convinced that the freedom of the whole of Asia was at risk. Ride returned to Hong Kong and became a tireless advocate of resistance to the Japanese advances in China. He was a key figure in organising the Field Ambulance unit of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps in 1938 and 1939. While many in Hong Kong and Britain believed that the Japanese had no desire to attack British territories in Asia and the Pacific, Ride quickly concluded that Japan was an 'Asiatic octopus ... insinuating its sucking tentacles into the very heart of its defenceless neighbours'. He believed that Japan would indulge its hunger for land and resources wherever it could, and that 'the parasitic meal' it had embarked upon would not stop until Japan had crushed 'our empire, our ideals and our civilisation'. He insisted, 'Their records of rape and pillage can never be put into either writing or words, and recent letters from free China show that the notorious sacking of Nanking was no mere isolated example of the customs of the invaders'. Ride voiced these opinions freely both in Hong Kong and later in Australia during 1940.⁵

Undergraduates from HKU took an increasing interest in the Chinese situation from 1937, becoming active in organisations which were set up to aid China in her hour of need. This process had begun even before 1937, as students gradually became more aware of their social responsibilities and the potential for meaningful work in China. Lois Todd (MBBS 1933) returned to work in her father's hospital in Canton after graduation, eventually taking over from him in the late 1930s. Yue Man Kwong (MBBS 1923) returned during the 1930s to the Church Missionary Society's St Luke's Hospital at Hinghwa (Putien) in Fukien (Fujian).⁶

In 1936, Lam Kow Cheong (MBBS 1934) accepted the post of Medical Superintendent of the Po Yan (Universal Love) Hospital in Pakhoi (Behai) in southern Guangdong, a general hospital of the CMS located near its more famous leprosarium. He completely rearranged the nursing services at the hospital along modern lines, introducing certified nurses from Hong Kong and training probationary nurses from the local community.⁷ Another medical graduate, Ng Yew Seng (MBBS 1936), who had been Chairman of the HKU Christian Association in 1931, travelled to Kwangsi (Guangxi) province soon after graduation to join the CMS 'Way of Life' mission hospital in Kweilin (Guilin), where his 'energetic and progressive' methods helped to modernise the hospital. He returned to Hong Kong in early 1938 to join the Red Cross for work in one of the war zones.⁸ There must have been many other graduates caught up in the unfolding disaster on the Mainland during 1937-38. Zia I Ding, a 1922 medical graduate, was working for the Chinese Ministry of Health at a hospital in Tungshan on the Tientsin-Pukow (Tianjin-Pukou) Railway when his operating theatre was bombed during surgery. He was eventually evacuated to Hankow (Hankou) and then to Hong Kong where conditions were safer for himself and his family.⁹ Likewise, Ku Hsueh Chin (MBBS 1929) was working at the Nanking Central Hospital until just before the Japanese attack, and later became surgeon-in-charge of hospitals for severely wounded soldiers in Soochow (Suzhou) and Hankow.¹⁰ With the local newspapers full of stories about the situation in China during the later part of 1937, it was impossible for HKU undergraduates to remain unaware of the plight of their compatriots, while those students who had families living in China no doubt had first-hand experience of the difficulties they faced.

As soon as the University reopened in September 1937, the students formed a Chinese Medical Relief Association (HKUUCMRA) under the University Union. This group immediately gained strong support from a wide cross-section of undergraduates. Its objective was to provide medical aid to China by raising money among members of the Union, but it also promoted, with the permission of the Director of Education, G. R. Sayer, the formation of similar organisations in the colony's schools. A medical student, Lee Ching Iu, brought these school-based groups together to form a Hong Kong Students' Relief Association (HKSRA), which eventually had representatives from more than forty local schools.¹¹ With Sir William Hornell as Honorary President, the movement attracted considerable support from Chinese residents, and its fund-raising activities were well subscribed. Among the HKU undergraduates, a monthly contribution scheme was started, with more than \$1,000 being collected from one hostel in the first month. Women students used their free time to make bandages and warm clothing. These items were dispatched to Canton and the north. The Women Undergraduates' Club held a fun fair on 16 October at which nearly \$1,800 was raised.¹²

By May 1938, the Union's Chinese Medical Relief Association had raised the \$8,500 necessary to send an ambulance and two sets of surgical instruments to the interior of China, but its most important work was funding two doctors to work at a Red Cross hospital at Changsha. One of these was Hua Tse Jen (MBBS 1928). In January 1940, Philip Moore (MBBS 1938) and Cheng Kwok Kew (MBBS 1939) were dispatched to work with wounded soldiers and refugees under the Chinese National Red Cross. They were joined in January 1941 by G. M. Abraham (MBBS 1939) and Ho Hung Chiu (MBBS 1940). Each doctor was given a salary and a monthly grant of \$100 to assist with their work, but as Dr Cheng

discovered when he found himself the only qualified doctor attending to the 159th Division of the Chinese Army (a unit of 10,000 men), the money did not stretch far enough to fund all the work which needed to be done. Dr Ho's time in Kweiyang (Guiyang) was spent mainly in surgical work on soldiers, but he also did a great deal of public health work and was in charge of training nurses.¹³ Such work was widely supported by the public but was considered too political by the Colonial Office. In 1938, London prevented Geoffrey Northcote from becoming patron of a local fund-raising committee for the Chinese Red Cross, because Whitehall judged it inappropriate for Britain to support publicly any organisation with such strong military links.¹⁴

Two engineering graduates, Chang Tuck Wing and Harry L. Yeh (BScEng 1939), went to Anhwei/Chekiang (Anhui/Zhejiang) in July 1939 under the Chinese Industrial Co-operatives movement, to teach poor refugees skills which would enable them to earn a living in 'home industry'. By mid-1941, Yeh was promoted to head of the Lanchi depot, co-ordinating seventeen co-operatives. While sponsoring these medical and industrial activities was the main work of the HKUUCMRA, the remainder of the \$27,500 collected was allocated to other projects. The sum of \$2,500 was used to maintain two of the service corps of the HKSRA working to the north of Hong Kong in 1939 and 1940. In 1939, a further \$2,500 was used to repair the electrical and water services at the Shum Chun Refugee Camp (at Shenzhen, supervised by Koh Nye Poh) and fit out a new clinical laboratory. In addition, \$5,000 was donated to Dr Robert Lim's Medical Training School in Changsha and \$2,000 to the medical corps of the Fourth Route Army in Anhwei. In the middle of 1941, the Association appointed Catherine Lai (BA 1934) to canvass for donations in England and America.¹⁵ Despite these achievements, the Relief Association found it increasingly difficult to raise funds from HKU undergraduates once the initial enthusiasm had waned. Continuing calls to action which emphasised 'our country requires not only our monetary but also our personal sacrifice' lost their force; by 1940, the HKU effort was criticised as 'frightfully insignificant'. Many students were refusing to pay their \$3 per month subscription to the Relief Fund and anyone unlucky enough to be nominated as a collector soon found himself without friends.¹⁶

The work of the Union's Medical Relief Association seems to have met with general approval despite its relatively small scale, but Lee Ching Iu's Students' Relief Association ran into trouble by the end of 1939. Many schools ceased to be active participants in the HKSRA's activities during that year. Furthermore, rivalries between committee members erupted into public criticism of Lee and his supporters when financial difficulties arose. Reports in the local press suggested that Lee had failed to render a satisfactory account of his expenses at the World Students' Congress in the United States: he was accused of misappropriating funds and also blamed for the financial losses of a fund-raising concert in August 1939. While this storm eventually blew over, both Finnigan and Sloss were worried that the University's name had been damaged by the dispute. Sloss also felt that money and effort were being wasted in supporting the poorly organised student service corps. He therefore insisted that they be placed under the control of Dr Robert Lim and the Chinese Red Cross. As a result of this intervention, a new 'Hong Kong Students Unit' was formed under the Chinese Red Cross Medical Relief Corps, to which HKU contributed for the upkeep of three

doctors. Dr Lim spoke to the Arts Association in late 1940, appealing to the HKU students 'to help to reconstruct young China', a message reinforced by Agnes Smedley, who urged them 'to do more for their motherland'.¹⁷

It was not only HKU's undergraduates who were involved in wartime relief work. When Madame Sun Yat-sen (Soong Ching-ling) founded the China Defence League in Hong Kong in March 1938, members of the University staff became more involved in the war effort. Chan Kwan Po, from the Chinese Department, and Norman France, the University's Reader in History, became office-bearers of the Defence League, with France as Co-treasurer and Chan as Chinese Secretary.¹⁸ France, who had been born in the colony while his father was working with the Missions to Seamen, was an early example of a European who considered himself to be a 'Hong Kong stayer'. A Chinese colleague thought that he was 'unlike any other European' in the colony because 'he truly loved the Chinese', and his students had great affection for him.¹⁹ France and Chan assisted other prominent Hong Kong residents such as Hilda Selwyn-Clarke ('Red Hilda') and M. K. Lo in raising funds for use by the Chinese army, while Duncan Sloss joined the Bishop of Hong Kong, Ronald O. Hall, and Mrs Selwyn-Clarke on the committee of the Foreign Auxiliary to the National Red Cross Society of China, which had its headquarters at the Bishop's House. In the summer of 1941, Norman France took time off from his HKVDC duties to accompany Red Cross supplies from Hong Kong to the Chinese industrial co-operatives in the Paochi area of Szechwan (Sichuan). He was perhaps inspired to do so by Koh Nye Poh, who had earlier accompanied three engineering graduates who were going to work with the co-operatives in Kiangsi (Jiangxi) province.²⁰ Other staff became even more involved in the war effort. Dr Eva Ho Tung (MBBS 1927) resigned from her clinical assistantship at the Tsan Yuk Hospital in late 1938 so that she could work full-time for the Chinese Red Cross in China. After his appointment to the Chair of Pathology in late 1939, Professor R. C. Robertson continued to be closely involved in the work of the Chinese National Epidemic Prevention Bureau and the Yunnan Anti-Malaria Commission.²¹

Madame Sun encouraged other Hong Kong groups to support their Chinese compatriots: HKU students and graduates were also active within these patriotic associations. The most prominent of these was the Hong Kong Chinese Medical Association (HKCMA), which had its own Medical Relief Committee. This committee collected monthly donations from its members from January 1938. By the end of 1940, these contributions had exceeded \$7,600 per annum, most of which was given to the Red Cross Society of China. A further \$6,700 was donated in 1940 by a select group of doctors for the relief work of the Central Chinese Medical Association.²² The University and a number of its graduates also became involved in the work of the Sino-British Cultural Relations Association, when a local branch was established in Hong Kong in May 1939. By this time, Duncan Sloss had been appointed as a trustee of the British Boxer Indemnity Fund. This position brought him into close contact with leading Chinese figures such as Han Lih-wu and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek himself.²³

Another opportunity arose for the University to contribute to the war effort when the Vice-Chancellor met with members of the Chinese government in Chungking (Chongqing) in May 1939. Ministers urged Sloss to send engineering graduates to assist with urgent

reconstruction work in the interior: as soon as he returned to Hong Kong, he set about recruiting as many as possible. Sloss was assisted by the Registrar and Koh Nye Poh (BScEng 1930), appointed lecturer in 1937 to help the University in establishing contact with engineers in China. Sloss's scheme raised a great deal of interest among the 1939 engineering graduates, with seventeen initially volunteering.²⁴ Seven of these recruits ultimately went to China, but the legendarily inefficient Chinese bureaucracy assigned them to tasks which wasted their skills. Placed in training camps near Kunming, where they were 'idling and doing nothing' for weeks, they wrote back to HKU complaining that they wanted to do real work.²⁵ The Registrar had to intervene on their behalf with the Industrial and Mining Adjustment Administration of the Ministry of Economics. The problems were eventually resolved: the six graduates who remained in China took on jobs in hydro-electric and coal-fired power stations, a copper refinery and an iron and steel works. By the end of the year, they were all working 'energetically and cheerfully', promising the Registrar that they would try their best 'to work for our Country and the good name of the University'. Not only were they doing important patriotic work; they also realised that they had a 'golden opportunity ... to pick up practical knowledge' which thrust them into positions of considerable responsibility.²⁶ Four more engineering graduates applied for 'reconstruction' jobs with the Chinese government during 1940 and 1941.

After the fall of Canton in late 1938, tens of thousands of refugees escaped into Hong Kong from the Japanese advance. The government's Director of Medical Services, Dr P. S. Selwyn-Clarke, encouraged the formation of refugee camps in the New Territories. Selwyn-Clarke had recently been appointed to the HKU Council and was assisted in this refugee work by Fr Thomas Ryan, the influential Jesuit from Ricci Hall. Ryan was instrumental in organising the Hong Kong Refugee Committee (HKRC) and setting up its camp, which accommodated 5,000 refugees at Kam Tin. His volunteers included students from Wah Yan College and the University. As the activities of the HKRC expanded to cater for the ever-increasing volume of refugees, a number of specialist services were developed in addition to the several refugee camps which had been established by 1939. The University's contribution to these services became more formalised in early 1941, when members of the undergraduate Social Service Group began assisting the Hong Kong Refugee and Social Welfare Council by visiting its refugee centres in Kennedy Town and Wanchai. These centres cared for some of the 30,000 refugees who were forced to sleep in the streets of the city.²⁷

One unexpected result of the war in China was the arrival in Hong Kong of students and staff from Lingnan University towards the end of 1938. The Japanese had landed at Bias (Mirs) Bay on 12 October, and by the end of the next day, all the Lingnan students had dispersed either to their homes or to Hong Kong. HKU had hosted a summer school for Lingnan earlier in the year, and the American Provost at the Canton campus, Dr James M. Henry, was a friend of Duncan Sloss. The President of Lingnan, Dr Y. L. Lee, therefore made hasty arrangements with HKU to provide offices, classrooms, laboratories and library access for Lingnan's evacuated staff and students. For the next three years, students and staff of Lingnan University used the same facilities as HKU students and staff, with HKU occupying classrooms from 9.30 in the morning until the middle of the afternoon, and Lingnan from 2.30 p.m. until 9.30 at night.²⁸ Houses were rented on Caine Road for biology, physics and

pre-medical classes, while part of the Hydraulics Laboratory was used as Lingnan's chemistry laboratories. A large and valuable section of Lingnan's reference library was shipped down to HKU and stored in the Fung Ping Shan Library, while Lingnan's College of Agriculture eventually found suitable accommodation in the New Territories. Lingnan students were allowed to use the University Library in the afternoons in groups of no more than fifty, and the Union opened its tea-room and Jordan Memorial Library to the visitors. By the end of 1938, fourth-year medical students from Lingnan had joined the HKU medical students for clinical work at Queen Mary Hospital. This arrangement lasted until the end of 1940, when overcrowding led Lingnan to send its clinical students to a hospital in Kwangsi.²⁹ This close contact between HKU and Lingnan students was very stimulating; it also had the happy consequence that some HKU students would be able to continue their studies at the new Lingnan campus at Ling Tai Tsuen (near Kukong) in Free China, after the Japanese occupation in late 1941.

Lingnan students represented a fraction of the refugee influx into Hong Kong from 1937 until 1941. Many of the students admitted to degree programmes or external studies during this period were from Canton and Shanghai or other parts of China. Perhaps the best-known of these was the novelist Eileen Chang (Chang Ailing), from Shanghai. Numerous senior students from the best colleges in Shanghai were allowed to continue their studies as 'advanced students' at the University; many eventually graduated with HKU degrees. This meant that the University came closer than ever before to fulfilling its original aim of providing higher education to students from all across China. It also meant that both Hong Kong Chinese and overseas Chinese became more aware of the life-or-death struggle taking place in China. The University was on a 'wartime footing' by the end of 1938, long before the Japanese attack in late 1941.

Preparations for War

In addition to the relief work of staff and students, the University took steps to prepare for aggressive action by Japanese forces in the Hong Kong area. In late 1937, the Senate approved the formation of a Committee for First-Aid and Anti-Gas Training under the chairmanship of Professor Gerrard, a former naval officer. A group of sixty medical students had already completed a course of lectures on first aid and were ready for practical training in the use of gas masks. This group would form the nucleus of the University's Air Raid Precautions (ARP) team, helping to train other students. By April 1938, the first group of twenty-three students had completed their ARP certificate. Two hundred other undergraduates were attending the first-aid lectures, but practical training had to wait until more gas masks could be acquired. At the end of 1938, the whole student body was urged to attend a lecture in the Great Hall by Wing Commander Steele-Perkins, Hong Kong's Director of ARP. With invasion now a real threat, the Senate established a First Aid and Air Raid Precautions Committee, which recommended that first-aid and ARP training be made an obligatory component of the undergraduate programme. This was part of a colony-wide campaign which saw 12,000 people receive instruction during 1938 in a push to recruit up to 9,000 ARP wardens. Students were trained in first aid, decontamination and basic rescue work.

the position of the University 'might be summed up by saying that it existed but did not operate'. This legal decision allowed a plan to be devised for HKU medical students graduating from Chinese universities to be registered by the GMC.¹⁶⁸

The progress of negotiations between Chungking, the Colonial Office and the GMC was painfully slow, but Whitehall officials were determined to reconstitute in either China or London a HKU 'authority' with power to award medical degrees. They wanted to ensure that HKU students would not feel that the home government had lost interest in them, the hope being that after the war these new medical graduates would 'turn to Britain' rather than China and assist in the reconstruction of Hong Kong. The method ultimately adopted by the Colonial Office was one which had already been used successfully in the United Kingdom. An order-in-council would be secured from the Privy Council which would allow a small committee formed in London to exercise the examining and degree-awarding powers of the Senate. This idea was somewhat controversial within Whitehall, because it required Chinese medical courses to be recognised as the equivalent of British degree programmes—an unwelcome innovation in some quarters. The GMC was nevertheless happy to support this arrangement so long as they could be assured that the standards of the relevant Chinese university courses were commensurate with those of British medical colleges. Gordon King had been careful to place HKU students in the four best medical colleges in China, so he had little difficulty providing the required evidence. By the time he visited London in late 1944, the order-in-council had been drafted. Technical legal difficulties continued to hold the process up in Whitehall, but King was able to arrange for the University Seal to be sent to London in preparation for action. On 15 August 1945, he submitted a list of twenty recent graduates for the consideration of the proposed committee.¹⁶⁹

The decision to form in London an emergency degrees committee raised the question of whether this authoritative body could play a dual role in administering HKU's sterling funds as well. The proposal was attractive to both the Colonial Office and Arthur Morse at HSBC's head office, because throughout the first two years of the Japanese occupation Morse had been taking full responsibility for disbursing HKU funds where necessary without being able to gain the approval of the Council or Finance Committee. Morse had secretly received via Lindsay Ride and the BAAG various financial records which were central to his handling of the University's finances in London, but he continued to worry about his anomalous position as the University's banker and financial trustee. Morse felt strongly that 'one small body' in London ought to be appointed to discuss all elements of the University's future, so the Colonial Office started working towards a plan whereby academic, financial and planning powers would all be exercised by a single London emergency committee.¹⁷⁰ It soon became clear that the question of the University's future was a complex issue which



FIGURE 9.12

Dissection classes at Koloshan. The badly lit temporary buildings were furnished with whatever could be found to make instruction possible. [Ellen Tulip]

would require much wider deliberation than a small emergency committee could manage, so ultimately two emergency committees were formed under separate orders-in-council to deal with, respectively, financial and academic matters. The Pacific War ended before either of these two committees could be formed, however, so the HKU Emergency War Degrees Committee did not come into existence until early 1946. In the meantime, HKU medical students continued their studies in China, hoping that they would eventually be able to secure GMC recognition of their degrees.

These war-time students remained grateful to Gordon King for the rest of their lives. Many of their appreciative letters survive in the University's records. Every war-time graduate interviewed in the course of writing this book identified Professor King as the single most important person in the struggle for survival during their time in Free China. Chin Niat Siong joined the Chinese army after his medical training, telling King that 'I cannot help feeling grateful for all that you have done for us'; Harry Fang Sin-yang wrote to King on behalf of a group of students in Shanghai expressing their 'deepest gratitude' for the care and sympathy which King had given them throughout the difficult years, and his inspirational teaching at Koloshan; Khoo Kee Seang passed on his parents' best regards and thanks 'for all that you have done for us'; Leong Swee Sen expressed his 'long-due gratitude ... for giving me another chance to establish myself in life as a medical practitioner'.¹⁷¹ Leong's sentiments are typical of those who owed their professional training and future careers to King's dedicated efforts on their behalf.

Serving the Allied Cause

When refugee HKU students reached Free China, their first contact with the University-in-exile was often an interview with Lindsay Ride, who always gave them the option of continuing their studies under Gordon King or serving their country in some more active way. While the majority of students opted for study, a very large number volunteered for war work. Ride was in a perfect position to direct HKU students and graduates into appropriate war-time jobs: in early 1942, he had established the British Army Aid Group (BAAG) under MI9 to assist escapees and to provide intelligence for the British military authorities.¹⁷² Ride, his clerk Francis Lee and two other HKU lecturers had escaped from Sham Shui Po across the Kowloon hills on 9 January 1942. They had the good fortune to be intercepted near Sai Kung by members of the Hong Kong and Kowloon Independent Brigade of the East River Column, a Communist guerrilla group which had been operating throughout eastern Guangdong and the New Territories since 1938. The East River guerrillas were in the process of setting up two escape routes for Communist cadres, intellectuals and journalists who were trapped in Hong



FIGURE 9.13

Portrait of Lieutenant Colonel Lindsay T. Ride, BAAG, painted by a member of his unit at their headquarters in Kweilin (Guilin). [HKUA, Ride Collection]

Kong. Ride's party was able to use the eastern route via Sai Kung and Waichow to effect their escape. Ride was impressed with the discipline of the guerrillas and the work being done to help escapees. He immediately decided to try and establish a similar British escape network to help other prisoners fleeing Hong Kong. He later decided to work closely with the East River guerrillas once his own BAAG network was established.¹⁷³ This network was initially centred on Kukong in northern Guangdong, where Ride interviewed large numbers of HKU students and graduates in the first half of 1942. Later, Ride moved his headquarters to Kweilin, whither students were directed for an interview with him before they moved further into China.

It took Ride some time to secure formal approval for his organisation from both the British authorities at New Delhi and the Generalissimo in Chungking. He was assisted in the delicate task of negotiating with the Chinese government by a former HKU student, Chu Lai Chuen, who was at that time Adjutant-General in the Seventh War Zone headquarters. Once the BAAG was fully authorised in May 1942, Ride effectively took command of all British military escapees in southern China on behalf of MI9; from that time until the BAAG was disbanded in December 1945, he was responsible for British intelligence-gathering and counter-intelligence activities over a large area of southern China. Initially, however, his first priority was the 'big match', a raid on Hong Kong later code-named 'Chopsticks' which was intended to free thousands of prisoners of war. When this plan collapsed due to political wrangling in Chungking over the intended role of the 'red' guerrillas, Ride turned his full attention to intelligence-gathering, but the BAAG still managed to help 1,886 'escapers and evaders' up to May 1945.¹⁷⁴ The BAAG also assisted the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in East Asia and helped with recruiting for Force 136, an organisation which encouraged resistance movements in enemy-occupied territory and co-ordinated clandestine sabotage operations. Under Ride's command, the BAAG took on a multiplicity of intelligence-related and relief tasks, eventually expanding to include about 2,000 uniformed men and civilian staff. Perhaps its most important task was supplying field intelligence for the strategic warfare initiatives of General Claire Chennault's 14th Air Force in South China. In the later stages of the war, Ride was closely involved in planning the recapture of Hong Kong. His BAAG staff assisted in repatriation work and filled gaps in the military administration.¹⁷⁵

Many HKU students were among the first to join the BAAG, while numerous others worked as associates and runners over the next four years in one of the three branches of the unit. The first to join were Francis Lee and Paul Tsui Ka Cheung. Lee very quickly became one of Ride's most trusted lieutenants, being sent back to Hong Kong on reconnaissance in April 1942, where he was arrested by the Japanese and brutally beaten while in prison. Although condemned to death, he was eventually released and made his way back to Free China, where he continued to serve in the BAAG throughout the war, rising to the ranks of captain and adjutant by the



FIGURE 9.14

Osler Thomas on leave in London at the end of the war. [Audrey Thomas]

middle of 1945.¹⁷⁶ Paul Tsui played a leading role in preparing the Advanced Headquarters at Waichow, while Lau Teng Kee was sent back into Hong Kong to guide escapees through Japanese-occupied territory. Tsui spent most of the war in the interpretation section at BAAG headquarters in Kweilin; Lau eventually transferred to Force 136.¹⁷⁷ Another early HKU escapee, Raymond H. S. Lee (MBBS 1938), agreed to set up the BAAG field medical service at Waichow in early 1942. He later went to Samfou in western Guangdong, where he co-ordinated BAAG relief activities for starving refugees and subsequently worked as superintendent of the BAAG relief hospitals at Toishing and Yunping.¹⁷⁸ Osler Thomas also became a civilian medical officer for the BAAG after his escape from Hong Kong in July 1942. He spent most of his war-time service in forward areas under constant danger from the Japanese. In 1943, Thomas was sent back with Francis Lee to Hong Kong, where they established an observation post (Post Y) at High Island near Sai Kung. There, they collected intelligence and assisted with escape and evasion activities. Thomas was later commissioned into Force 136 in March 1944 and from May 1945 took charge of an isolated but strategically important BAAG post on the East River.¹⁷⁹

As more HKU students and graduates reached Free China from mid-1942, Ride was able to recruit some of the best of the University's men and women for intelligence work. A former HKU undergraduate, Phylis Nolasco da Silva (née Anderson), undertook the highly dangerous task of controlling BAAG agents and financing their work in the Kwangchow area from the middle of 1942 until the end of the war. Ride later described her service as 'an example of most commendable bravery, endurance and devotion to the Service'—she was awarded the King's Medal for Gallantry. Eddie Gosano took over the BAAG post at Macau in the spring of 1943 at Ride's request, working for the next two years under the code-name of 'Phoenix', always carrying with him a loaded pistol. In addition to normal escape and espionage work, he was instrumental in arranging for Leo d'Almada (Arts 1919–22) to travel to London to work with the Hong Kong Planning Committee in preparation for the post-war British administration of Hong Kong. Gosano was also one of the first medical men to arrive in Hong Kong after the war ended.¹⁸⁰ H. P. L. Ozorio (MBBS 1938) joined the 'special' headquarters staff in Kweilin before moving on to the RAMC; Douglas Hung (BA 1934) joined the intelligence section; Mary Suffiad (BA 1941) worked in the counter-espionage office; Benjamin Ho (Agent 66) worked in the field; and Pauline Chan (BA 1940) took a translator's job at headquarters.¹⁸¹ Other graduates who worked as a part of the BAAG in China and India included Wong Bun Cheuk (MBBS 1918), Yeoh Jendura (BA 1923) and Teng Pin Hui (MBBS 1938).¹⁸² Despite Elizabeth Ride's indefatigable research on the history of the BAAG, it is still not possible to identify all the HKU students and graduates who worked under Lindsay Ride during the war, but it is nevertheless certain that as a group they played a very important role in the 'sustained fight of stoical courage and endurance' against the Japanese.¹⁸³

HKU students and graduates were not recruited solely into the BAAG. Ride often recommended escapees to other units and some were recruited independently. Lim Bo Seng, a former arts student and charismatic Kuomintang activist, had been involved in intelligence work in Singapore before the war, so with the personal blessing of Chiang Kai-shek he established a group of mostly Straits Chinese (later part of Force 136) to work behind enemy lines

with the underground resistance army, the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA). Lim played a significant part in the leadership of this resistance movement but was eventually captured and tortured by the Japanese, dying of dysentery and privation in Batu Gajah prison in July 1944. In the post-war period, Lim Bo Seng was recognised in Singapore as a national war hero.¹⁸⁴ Other HKU students from Malaya were recruited by Lim or later found their way into SOE units. Lau Teng Kee transferred from the BAAG to Force 136 for work in his native Malaya, but was probably captured and executed by the Japanese in Sumatra during the ill-fated Operation Minerva in late 1942.¹⁸⁵ Seah Tin Toon (Engineering 1941) was more fortunate. Imprisoned at Sham Shui Po as a member of the HKVDC, he escaped and, in mid-1943, was recruited through the BAAG into Force 136. He was sent to Calcutta for training in espionage and intelligence operations and later to Poona for an assault course and to Madras for jungle training. He was finally deployed to Ceylon in May 1945 for parachute training, and in June was dropped into Malaya to train a battalion of the MPAJA. With the surrender of the Japanese, his unit moved into Kuala Lumpur to keep the peace until British authority was re-established.¹⁸⁶ William Ng Jit Thye (BScEng 1950) was recruited into Force 136 but too late to be deployed in the field, while Lam Chi Wei (MBBS 1931) and Yeoh Teik Ee (BA 1923) served on secret operations in Malaya.¹⁸⁷

Students from HKU found a ready demand for their services in the intelligence and interpreting sections of other British army units operating in China and India. Sam Gittins and Oswald Cheung were employed as cipher clerks in the British General Liaison Office, an important branch of the British intelligence network in China. Cheung eventually took on



FIGURE 9.15

Ho Weng To served in the 1st Bomber Squadron of the Chinese American Composite Wing, piloting B25s throughout 1944 and 1945. [Ho Weng To]

demanding organisational responsibilities, but continued to be a jack-of-all-trades, 'running agents, coding messages, managing disbursements ... keeping accounts', before being moved to Calcutta, where his unit worked on microdot technology.¹⁸⁸ The majority of HKU students who sought war-time work were deployed as interpreters due to their command of both English and Chinese; medical graduates were usually sent to field hospitals and other army facilities after completing their studies.¹⁸⁹ A number of graduates joined the Chinese Nationalist Army. Ma Char Zur (BA 1925) and Tang Chi Keung (BA 1937) were interpreters at the Seventh War Zone headquarters in Kukong, where Wong Ting Tsai (BScEng 1942) and Lau Tin Chak (BA 1935) were staff officers. After a short stint with British Naval Intelligence, Patrick Yu Shuk Siu (BA 1942) joined the Chinese army and became secretary to General Lee Yen Wor. His brother Yu Pak Chuen was a senior officer in the Chinese army and his other brother Yu Ping Tsung (BA 1942) became secretary to General Wong Chun Kau, head of Chinese air defences.¹⁹⁰

While the majority of HKU students and graduates who served in combat roles were in the army, a number also tried to join the airforce. Many of these applicants were rejected on medical grounds but several were eventually accepted into the Chinese American Composite Wing (CACW) of the 14th Air Force, a successor to the famed 'Flying Tigers'. Ho Weng Toh was one of the few fortunate enough to be sent to America for a 'miracle year' of flight training in Arizona during 1943, before returning to join bomber squadrons in Free China. Ho piloted B25s throughout 1944 and 1945, mainly on missions to destroy Japanese ground facilities in the occupied zone. Yeoh Seow Tiang (MBBS 1942) worked as a flight surgeon with the CACW's First Bomber Group in Kweilin, Chungking and western Sichuan. He won (and lost) a fortune playing poker during his three years with the US Air Force, often visiting Koloshan where he treated the HKU students to cigarettes and restaurant meals. Lam Sim Fook (MBBS 1953) joined the CACW as a navigator.¹⁹¹

Many other graduates worked in non-combat roles throughout the war, in China, Hong Kong or elsewhere in Asia. In Macau, four HKU medical graduates worked throughout the war to try and alleviate the suffering of thousands of refugees: H. P. L. Ozorio (MBBS 1938), G. A. V. Ribeiro (MBBS 1938), J. W. Barnes (MBBS 1931) and Eddie Gosano.¹⁹² A much larger number of HKU doctors stayed in Hong Kong to work under Dr Selwyn-Clarke, in an attempt to maintain medical services in the colony. Foremost among these graduates was Yeo Kok Cheang (MBBS 1926, MD 1931).¹⁹³ As well as carrying on with his public health work at the Bacteriological Institute, Yeo moved into May Hall with his family to keep an eye on the overseas students living there. He was imprisoned on spying charges in the crackdown of April 1943. He was just one of several University people who went through months of questioning, for a time sharing a cell with Rev George She (Zimmern), Warden of St John's Hall (1939–41).¹⁹⁴ Yeo and She were eventually released, but others were not so lucky. Selwyn-Clarke stayed in Stanley Prison until 1945, when he was transferred to Mau Tau Ching, while the bankers Sir Vandeleur Grayburn and D. C. Edmonston died in gaol. Lo Tung Fan (BA 1926), a brilliant lawyer who was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Police just before the war, was also accused of communicating with British secret agents: he underwent torture and was finally executed in April 1943. His last words were reported to be 'I have done my duty. I am willing to sacrifice my life for my country.'¹⁹⁵

Despite the numerous hardships and dangers, the war also opened up opportunities for HKU students. Their horizons were certainly widened by their travel through Free China and further afield. Lai Tim Cheong (BA 1942) joined the Chinese foreign service, finishing the war as a diplomat at the Chinese Embassy in London. Huang Hsing Tsung (BSc 1941) became secretary to Joseph Needham at the Sino-British Science Co-operation Office in 1943, and travelled across China collecting research material until he went to Oxford on a British Council scholarship for post-graduate studies.¹⁹⁶ Post-graduate studentships were awarded to several other graduates in 1943–44. At the end of the war, more graduates were dispatched to Britain for post-graduate training, including Leung Man Wah (BA 1940), Chung Heung Sung (BA 1941), Rayson Huang (BSc 1942), Patrick Yu Shuk Siu (BA 1942), Hui Kwan Lun (MBBS 1946), Cheung King Ho (MBBS 1946) and Yap Jin Yau (MBBS 1946). Some students such as Frances Wong found love in the midst of war and made personal decisions which would change their lives forever.¹⁹⁷ Other enterprising undergraduates made the most of war-time business opportunities. Stanley Ho, who had been so poor as an undergraduate that he was unable to buy a cup of coffee for a pretty classmate, fled to Macau with only the \$10 he had earned as an ARP warden. After initially finding work as a clerk with the tycoon Pedro José Lobo, he struck out on his own after 1944 and built up a flourishing business selling kerosene to visiting ships and the Macau Electric Lighting Company.¹⁹⁸ For most HKU undergraduates, however, the war was simply a great educational experience, an opportunity like no other for self-learning and self-sufficiency, themes which emerge very strongly in Eileen Chang's writings about her war-time experiences as a student in Hong Kong and in the numerous interviews conducted with war-time students.¹⁹⁹ Strong, life-long bonds were forged, providing an 'opportunity to appreciate and enjoy your friendship', as one student wrote to another in late 1944.²⁰⁰

The war also provided extraordinary opportunities for graduates to advance their careers. Foo Ping Sheung, already a leading figure in the Nationalist government in the late 1930s, rose even higher during the war to become Chinese Ambassador to the Soviet Union (1943–49), a role which put him near the very centre of world affairs. Li Shu Fan, after fleeing Hong Kong in 1943, joined T. V. Soong in Washington as part of the China Supply Commission and was later appointed as an adviser on the Chinese delegation to the United Nations conference in San Francisco in 1945.²⁰¹ Numerous HKU students and graduates grasped the unprecedented war-time opportunities offered to them to change the course of their lives.

The Ruins of War

With the majority of pre-war students having escaped to Free China by the end of 1942, very few were left in Hong Kong for the remainder of the occupation. Many graduates were nevertheless forced to stay on for as long as they could, being either unable or unwilling to leave their homes. Life was hard. The previously safe and well-maintained streets of the colony became increasingly dangerous during the Japanese occupation. The area around the University, in particular, gained notoriety when people went missing and rumours of cannibalism spread. One graduate was robbed at gunpoint in Pokfulam Road, as food and other daily necessities became more difficult to buy.²⁰² Although the population of Hong Kong

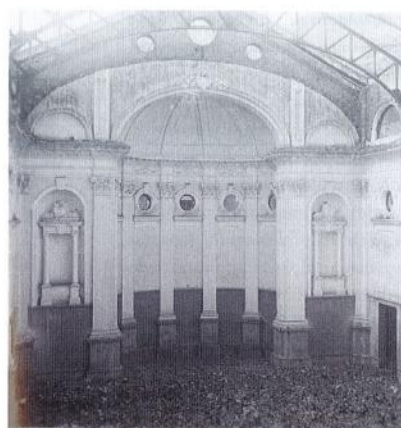


FIGURE 9.16

The Great Hall, roofless and littered with debris in November 1945, but remarkably the ornate plasterwork was still intact despite the ravages of war. [HKUA]

dropped from 1.5 million to around 600,000 in the final stages of the occupation, by the middle of 1944, there was a constant shortage of food. Galloping inflation left many on the verge of starvation. The bodies of those who died of starvation were left in the gutters in Wan Chai and Western. In 1944, Dr Phoon Sek Weng (MBBS 1921) was killed outside his home in Wan Chai during an American bombing raid.²⁰³

The University compound was not immune from the wanton destruction of the occupation period. Despite some looting by 'Chinese riff-raff' in March 1942 when Japanese soldiers began to leave their HKU billets, the military administration was more or less able to maintain the University campus as an out-of-bounds sanctuary until the end of 1944.²⁰⁴ The University was given a certain amount of protection as the collection point for an extraordinary project in which the Japanese attempted to consolidate all the valuable book collections in Hong Kong. Although the University Library was in a 'chaotic state' in February 1942 after the Japanese

had removed the most valuable volumes for dispatch to Japan, Chan Kwan Po and a staff of fifteen helpers set out to gather private collections from across the colony and form them into a single library, which was housed in the Fung Ping Shan Library, the Tang Chi Ngong Building and the Main Building. Working under the Japanese was an unpalatable task for a committed nationalist such as Chan, but he nevertheless felt it was his duty to supervise the work and do whatever he could to protect the University's libraries from further depredations. By August 1943, the consolidated library numbered 230,000 Chinese volumes and 130,000 in European languages, but the following year an infestation of termites damaged many books in the collection. A public library of 10,000 volumes selected from this stockpile of books was formed at the Helena May Institute in December 1944. Throughout the occupation Chan was able to keep the University reading rooms open, despite constant American bombing from the end of 1942, but in 1944 and 1945 there were numerous thefts of valuable books and manuscripts.²⁰⁵ He often despaired of the declining state of the University buildings and grounds. The superb collection of molluscs assembled by Geoffrey Herklotz for the University's Biology Museum was largely destroyed, along with almost everything else in the Biology Building. The Commerce Department was used for breeding chickens by late 1943 and looked more like a farm than an academic building. Surveying the 'melancholic scene' around the Fung Ping Shan Library, Chan Kwan Po found it difficult to believe that HKU was once the colony's highest institution of learning.²⁰⁶

Towards the end of the war enormous damage was inflicted by looters on the buildings and grounds. Trees were felled in large numbers from the end of 1944 to supply fuel for desperate local residents. By May 1945, the grounds and paths were being dug up because