

The Port in History

Outline

The port of Hong Kong has been an essential element in the success of the modern city, yet its history has often been overlooked. From the earliest days, navigators knew of the sheltered harbour and junks and other trading vessels brought the products of Asia, India and Arabia to Guangzhou through the waters of Hong Kong. Early maps pay little attention to the land, but are very careful to note waterside settlements. Hong Kong was well known as a source of fresh water for shipping and it has been suggested that the name of the SAR derives from this. In the 19th century the port went through rapid expansion, with shipping from all over the world crowding the harbour. Every type of vessel visited Hong Kong, along with some very colourful characters, including whalers, pirates, adventurers, explorers and traders. The American fleet that opened Japan assembled in Hong Kong and the founder of modern Italy, Garibaldi, was a China trader. In the first part of the 20th century, piracy and turmoil continued to be a key element of shipping in the region, but Hong Kong's port continued to expand. This illustrated talk will take a look at Hong Kong's often-overlooked maritime history.