

"My father was from a village in the Kyber. In those days, up in small mountain villages, the tribal people were muslim. People like him enlisted in the British Army and posted around the world to places under British rule. It was a couple of years before World War II. His battalion saw action in Burma and other places before he ended up in Hong Kong, then under Japanese occupation, but he never talked about it. His rank would be something like Sepoy, meaning foot-soldier, My old man was never High-ranking.

"After the war, most soldiers were discharged and joined the police, prisons or worked as watchmen. Another group was stationed on the border with China. I recall there was a tragic incident when there was an exchange of fire and a couple Pakistani soldiers were killed.

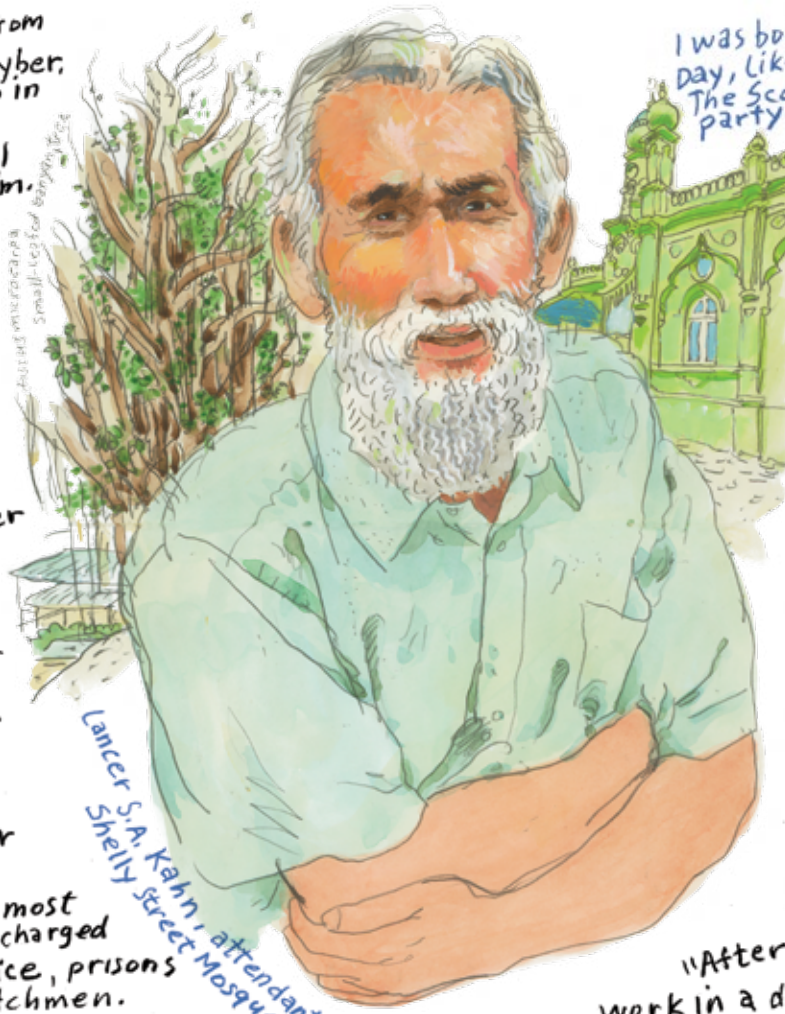
"My father joined a security firm and worked in a bank. Most Pakistani soldiers didn't go to school. The majority of enlisted men picked up most of their education in the military.

I was born in 1951 on St. Andrews Day, like Winston Churchill. The Scots here have a big party.

In Hong Kong we have a system for schools. One caters to the majority of people, another for students from other parts of the world. I went to primary school at Ellis Kadoori School for Indians. He set up the first school where Hindi and Urdu were taught. The majority of Muslims went there. He was an Indian Parsi who was awarded a Knighthood and then was called Sir Ellis Kadoorie.

"Other schools catered to Europeans, like the KGS (King George V), where students were taught in English. In secondary school we picked up English, Chinese and some French

"After high school, I went to work in a department store in the accounts office. At the end of the month the ledger was worked out vertically. When the numbers worked out it was OK. If they didn't balance, even by one digit, oh my God, you had to find the missing number. It was a boring desk job."



Lancer S.A. Kahn, attendant, Shelly Street Mosque



The British Crown Colony of Hong Kong was always about the coin.

Spanish, Mexican and other silver dollars plus the Indian rupee and Chinese Cash were proclaimed legal tender.

Hong Kong,
March 1842



Cash is the Chinese word for the round bronze coins with the square holes.

A quote from an article by the British writer P.G. Wodehouse for the Hong Kong Bank Group Magazine in 1975, shortly before his death.

"My father, after many years in Hong Kong, had retired on a pension, and he was paid it in rupees, and - I don't know how it is now - the rupee was always jumping up and down and throwing fits, so that expenditure had to be regulated in the light of what mood it happened to be in at the moment. I was supposed to go to Oxford, but just as scholarship time was approaching the rupee tripped over something and fell flat on its face and my father felt that a son at the University was more than the privy purse could handle. So I became an employee of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank."

Henry Steiner - Cross Cultural designer

"I had no interest in China, nor any idea where Hong Kong was when I arrived in '61. It was 1930's quaint. There were rickshaws on the streets. Policemen in shorts using hand signals from traffic stands with pagoda roofs.

"It was pioneering, and that's what I liked about working in Hong Kong. After hotels and tourism, the big banks and international finance houses came along. That was the beginning of 18 years of designing for HSBC, culminating in their red and white hexagon corporate identity. It led to designing some bank notes for them, and then several series for Standard Chartered, which I continue to do. I also worked for the great British (but mostly Scottish) hong, or trading companies: Jardines - the model for James Clavell's 'Noble House' - and its great rival, Swire, among others.

"When the British arrived in 1841, the hills were covered with scrub. They planted the expanses of exotic trees from all over the Empire that we enjoy here now."



However, all empires come to an end, though this was the first time Britain departed a colony without giving it independence. The Brits took a lot, but they left more. The only thing they should have taken with them was driving on the left side of the road.

"China keeps a close eye on Hong Kong. Beijing fears Hong Kong might want to be separate or independent, which is highly unlikely. Post-handover China has behaved with some restraint. Among several military installations there is a sizeable People's Liberation Army garrison on the south side of Hong Kong island but we never see any of them in the streets."