

商人的故事

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1

Apart from “Chinese”, you cannot accurately express the complete identity of SHUI Ma using any of the terms “Chinese merchant”, “anti-guerrilla heroe”, “urban legend”, or “folk justice”. SHUI Ma has two offices in Mexico City, and he travels back and forth between these two points every day. He has a national flag displayed in his office, accompanied by five stainless steel calligraphy characters that read “serving the people” from top to bottom. One of his offices is located next to the famous Angel Monument, and he can enter directly through an elevator after being questioned by a Mexican security guard. To prevent eavesdropping, SHUI Ma has installed a thick frosted glass door. Inside, there are orderly distributed meeting halls, conference rooms, tea rooms, and office areas. There is a large printed photo of him shaking hands with Obama in the office, which is framed and hung on the wall. SHUI Ma has also had private meetings with the Clintons, and their photo is also prominently displayed. It is worth noting that among all the displayed celebrity photos, there is no photo of him with the Mexican President Nieto - SHUI Ma says he doesn't want to force such matters. Most of SHUI Ma's main business is concentrated in a market called Tepito in Mexico City. The “security team” he created from the beginning has taken root here, mainly responsible for the daily safety of Chinese merchants and maintaining the order of market transactions. Therefore, SHUI Ma has set up an office here as well. Usually, he comes around 10:30 in the morning, and he usually orders takeout for lunch. In the past six months, there have been more and more options for Chinese-style food in the market. SHUI Ma says that the “security team” is indispensable, and with a stable and prosperous market, more Chinese vendors will be attracted. Lately, SHUI Ma has been ordering braised flatfish, saying that he recently discovered this takeout place. He likes to eat fish, although the proportion of staple food in this set meal is slightly high, he has never given any feedback to the restaurant. SHUI Ma's eating state is continuous and orderly, without any pauses, just like when he talks.

Without a doubt, Tepito is a symbol of Mexico City. It is a well-known wholesale market for small goods and also a breeding ground for contraband products, with pirated audiovisual materials and counterfeit goods taking up the rest of the market share. Tepito is also seen as a hotbed for criminals, with corruption, kidnappings, robberies, thefts, and even massacres being prevalent here. Numerous notorious figures in Mexican criminal history have emerged from Tepito. Despite its infamous reputation, the Tepito market continues to thrive, even attracting curious individuals. On the Ask Mexico section of the Reddit website, there is a piece of advice about visiting Tepito. The text goes as follows: If you have a “tourist face,” a Spanish accent that clearly reveals you’re not from Mexico City, and you’re dressed in a noticeable way, are you coming to Tepis (the local name for Tepito) to buy cheap but decent quality counterfeit CK, Dior, or USB drives and fans? Or are you looking to spend 50 pesos (equivalent to 17 Chinese yuan) to buy a gram of cocaine? If you just want to have a look around, bring less money and don’t forget to hide some in your socks.

In Tepito, SHUI Ma dares to choose reverse growth. He keeps a refreshing buzz cut, a standard Asian face, and wears light-colored shirts with matching black suits all year round. At first glance, you can’t feel the roughness that people who sport a buzz cut and wear black suits usually carry, but it’s evident that he is prepared. SHUI Ma walks with a certain air, and even though he is wearing a layer of a suit, you can still feel his strong and sturdy nature, like a freshly watered cypress tree. SHUI Ma’s accent leans towards Jianghuai Mandarin, with short syllables and a fast pace. For example, he pronounces

“捐” as “借” and “不” as “罢” .

Before moving to Mexico, SHUI Ma heard that the country was very dangerous. When he arrived, he didn't recognize a single Spanish word. In early 2012, Tepito Market witnessed several violent robberies targeting Chinese people. Many people planned to leave, but SHUI Ma decided to close his shop and catch the robbers instead. Chinese people who are familiar with Tepito know that it is like a "little Yiwu", a mature and well-established wholesale market. Buyers come here willingly for transactions. "Even Honduran suppliers come directly to Tepito. They can get prices from primary wholesalers. Chinese people can do good business here." SHUI Ma confidently analyzes the driving force behind the Tepito market, as if he is a seasoned salesperson who has honed his speaking skills for many years. It's hard to imagine that he has single-handedly dealt with the Mexican police and criminals for countless nights. Prior to this, SHUI Ma had been doing small business in Tepito for several years, handling goods, unloading shipments, and running his own store. He claims that he has never been robbed himself, only hearing stories from others about store owners being threatened by robbers when closing up. However, these incidents didn't cause him excessive panic because he hadn't experienced them personally. SHUI Ma believes that his worries are unnecessary, as the Chinese Embassy and various community organizations are there, and he won't be the one in the spotlight.

2

In the early years when Tepito entered the market, there were incidents of Chinese people being robbed after closing their shops, prompting the embassy to issue an official statement advising Chinese nationals to “carry less cash after closing their shops, and if faced with robbery, prioritize personal safety. If it greatly affects their personal lives, they should promptly arrange to leave the country and return home.” At that time, most cases were considered theft, but later there were a series of premeditated crimes targeting wealth, which was likely caused by some Chinese people themselves - SHUI Ma said his analysis is based on this. Around 2012, a group of Wenzhou people from Yiwu and Chinese people from other places came to the market, eager to make a fortune. Some quickly accumulated wealth and changed their lives, while others became flashy with luxury cars and watches, neglecting cash management. This allowed the criminals to act even more recklessly, threatening and extorting everywhere. During the extreme times, a Chinese person was robbed four times within a month. The successful criminals lived carefree, while the Chinese merchants suffered silently, but ultimately no one spoke out and they had to bear the consequences themselves. At first, the robbers were testing the waters, but later they became more brutal because they realized that these Chinese merchants never fought back after being robbed. SHUI Ma understands this and says that if a Chinese person reports the case, the local police usually won't take action because “taking action indicates that the local security is poor, and the local judicial system will try all sorts of ways to make things difficult. Those who hope to find some hope through the law ultimately have no results.” As a result, many people closed their businesses or closed by 4 pm, filled with extreme fear. The Chinese merchants in Tepito seemed to be trapped in a helpless situation, “completely terrified, even some leaders of Chinese organizations have been robbed.” Someone went to ask SHUI Ma if he should leave, but this question made SHUI Ma contemplate whether or not to catch the robbers. Before making a decision, he needed to be certain of two things: first, he wasn't afraid of death, and second, there must be someone willing to testify in court. SHUI Ma knew that leading the victims to the courthouse to confront the criminals face-to-face would make most people hesitate. Only if he resolutely continued would someone rise up. Someone advised SHUI Ma to be more cautious, saying that there were several Mexicans looking for him. “At that time, I wore a suit every day, walking around the

center of Tepito. Do you know why? I wanted to concentrate all the danger on myself. The police knew there was someone like me, the security guards knew, even Mexican workers and vendors knew that there was a Chinese person catching robbers. I did this to tell those who dared not testify that I, SHUI Ma, would bear all the consequences. Some people say I was sent by the Chinese government to do this, but I don't really care. Why? Because since the founding of New China until today, for decades, no Chinese person has done such a thing in Central and South America."

In 1962, SHUI Ma was born in Wuzhen, Tongxiang, Jiaying City, Zhejiang Province. In that era, this typical Jiangnan water town had not yet embarked on the path of tertiary industry development. Wuzhen was a gathering place for historical figures, and SHUI Ma aimed to do something significant. Tongxiang was known for its silk industry, and Wuzhen was particularly famous for it. SHUI Ma worked as a factory manager in a silk cocoon factory, accumulating some connections. In the early 1990s, a friend involved in politics asked him to invest two million yuan in Yiwu to open fifty stores. However, SHUI Ma felt that there was not enough popularity and did not dare to take action. Nowadays, the value of a single store is 6.5 million yuan. After a few years, SHUI Ma became interested in a wool market in Tongxiang. He invested and made money, but he regarded it as “just a small amount of money.” Before this, a friend from the public security system advised him to invest in the leather market with a permanent stall, but SHUI Ma hesitated once again. Speaking of his current commercial investment in Tepito, SHUI Ma said that his unique insight into industry was not because he was smarter than others, but because he had experience and lessons. In the second half of 1997, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council made a decision to accelerate the construction of expressways. In that year, SHUI Ma had already switched to the high-tech industry and opened a food additive factory in Wuzhen, adjacent to the current Golden Waterfront Hotel. After successfully obtaining a special procurement order from the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, SHUI Ma’s factory started to increase its production of sodium gluconate as a concrete admixture for expressway construction. By 1998, SHUI Ma’s wife decided to quit her job as a TV announcer in Tongxiang and focus on raising their child. During the same period, Tongxiang once again underwent personnel adjustments. After several months of contact, SHUI Ma did not have a good relationship with the newly appointed municipal party secretary, which led him to angrily hand over his thriving high-tech industry to his cousin, who flew to the United States. SHUI Ma had been to the United States several times before. He had served as a chairman in a foreign-funded enterprise and flew there to sign contracts. After the investigation, he found it unprofitable and decided to resign and start his own business. SHUI Ma and his family temporarily resided in San Francisco, and this time in the United States, he mainly focused on learning

English. Later, his wife gave birth to a boy, and when he was three years old, SHUI Ma discovered that his child had retinoblastoma in his eyes, so he sent the child back to China. In 2008, when the child was ten years old, SHUI Ma brought him back to the United States from China to study in Los Angeles, while he himself prepared to go to Mexico. SHUI Ma's brother-in-law, who was his wife's uncle, had been doing business in Mexico for four years. SHUI Ma said that at that time, some Chinese merchants in Tepito market had been kidnapped and extorted, and his relative had made a lot of money, so he felt very uneasy and wanted to return to China. At that time, SHUI Ma was doing business in fresh cowhide in the state of Illinois, and his business was thriving. The cold weather was one of Illinois' characteristics, which was conducive to the storage and transportation of cowhide. SHUI Ma sold preserved whole cowhides to China, following this approach for five years until he planned to go to Mexico. In 2008, Mexico was in the midst of a large-scale anti-drug war, and the people's lives were filled with inexplicable hardships. For the Chinese businessmen who were focused on doing business in Mexico, what they needed most was "security." Tepito market was still prosperous, and they called me and asked me to come and take a look. Without hesitation, SHUI Ma took over his uncle's business.

4

SHUI Ma had lived in the United States for ten years and had never joined any organizations. After coming to Mexico, he also did not have such plans. “Most organizations have a shallow understanding of their functions,” SHUI Ma said. He believes that their “security team” has a long-term vision and is different from other organizations. He said that some businessmen suddenly appear in Beijing to attend high-level official meetings or become influential figures in their hometowns, but these are all done for personal interests. The “security team,” on the other hand, considers national interests. SHUI Ma said, “The embassy has no funding and no professionals to do this.” He sees himself as sharing the embassy’s burden and said, “What I do is also what the embassy does.” Some people do things out of interest, while others do it for personal gain. SHUI Ma emphasizes that he considers the bigger picture and sacrifices his own interests. He said, “No one would do these things without true love, love for this country, this nation, and its people.” His statements about great love are in response to the “security team’s dark and evil” discourse in the Mexican Chinese business community. SHUI Ma firmly believes that other organizations label and stigmatize them because they see the security team growing and doing things that others dare not do or cannot do. He said these comments also affected his relationship with the embassy. Later, at an embassy meeting, SHUI Ma responded to the unfair accusations he received by presenting the current work of the security team to various organizations, emphasizing the importance of “love.” “No love! No love! In this era, abnormal things have become normal. Doing this for so many years does make others doubt your intentions. In the past four years, our organization has never asked others for donations. I stopped doing business, and I took out over 800,000 yuan from my own pocket at the beginning. The rest was voluntarily contributed by our members. Do we need to pay for translation fees? Do we need to establish relationships with Mexicans? These are all things we silently contribute to the overseas Chinese community.” When recounting his speech at the organization meeting, SHUI Ma’s emotions were intense but lacked any sense of lament.

Tepito market has 5,000 Chinese merchants, and no one has ever asked the “safety group” to be supervised - it is self-evident that the social group of SHUI Ma is either black or white. Previously, some people suspected that the “safety

group” used the development of members to accumulate wealth, and members who refused to join were threatened with terror. However, SHUI Ma said, “This is what Mexicans are good at.” Tepito market is divided into two major areas: the northern district with clear gang divisions where Mexicans are in charge, and the southern district where no one cares and it grows wildly, with a mix of Mexican, Chinese, Korean, and other vendors. Due to the clear divisions in the northern district, the police have no authority to intervene. In principle, it is illegal occupation of public land. The color of the sunshade roof of each merchant represents different gang organizations and their jurisdiction, and each stall has to pay a management fee every day. SHUI Ma told me, “This is what you call the underworld! Don’t lump us in with everything else.” In the early days of the establishment of the “safety group,” SHUI Ma’s social group had set up a legal service center, which was equivalent to a law firm and provided paid services. Up to now, regarding the controversial part of it, it is that “the legal service center relies on the reputation of the ‘safety group’ to attract business.” SHUI Ma said he “can’t control it.” He believes that this is the real recognition from the masses, and now they are even worried that one day he will stop doing it. “I heard that he has a good relationship with the boss in Tepito, who is Mexican. Some people say he is part of the underworld, but from the perspective of the Chinese, I think this has its benefits.” - Lao Zhu, not simply accusing SHUI Ma of forming gangs and engaging in criminal activities, does not agree. He understands SHUI Ma and knows that compared to the local gangs, the “safety group” has a closer connection with the Mexican police. Lao Zhu holds a leadership position in another large social group and has been in the industry for decades. He said that in Mexico, it is not enough to just speak up for oneself, but it is also not enough to not have money. “My compadre and the high-ranking Mexican police are quite familiar. Later, when they made connections, I accompanied them to dinner.” Lao Zhu clearly feels that the current SHUI Ma is indeed arrogant, but if there is no mutual benefit, SHUI Ma is still a good person and quite cultured. Lao Zhu is from Guangdong and has been living in Mexico for 36 years. In his opinion, those beautiful years only exist in memories. Today’s Chinese community in Mexico is becoming more and more complex: “It’s getting more complicated...” Lao Zhu added, looking out the window, as if the warmth was melting like cream. Lao Zhu owns a mid-range buffet restaurant in Mexico City, serving Chinese

food. He said that before the establishment of the “safety group,” SHUI Ma often came to his restaurant to eat and chat. Later, they had some cooperation, and he found SHUI Ma to be “quite interesting” - one year, Lao Zhu took the lead and took SHUI Ma and a few others to visit BYD’s car factory in Shenzhen, “to see if there were any business opportunities.” When they returned to Mexico, the SHUI Ma group published an article on their website, but it didn’t mention Lao Zhu at all. Lao Zhu didn’t see it as burning bridges, he just thought SHUI Ma was “quite interesting.” “There’s another interesting thing,” Lao Zhu referred to the volunteer letter of the “safety group,” which is a written document about voluntarily joining the organization.

SHUI Ma has always said that the registration and donations of members of the “Safety Group” are all “voluntary”. In 2017, the goal of the “Safety Group” was to have 200 members, and one of the membership criteria was an annual fee of 5,000 pesos (about 1,700 RMB), which would be used for the installation and maintenance of the store’s monitoring system. The second criterion was that everyone had to fill out a volunteer form: “Fearless sacrifice, daring to give, even if it means giving one’s own life!!” Lao Zhu said this was like a revolution, speaking metaphorically. Lao Zhu clearly remembers an online signature activity, where SHUI Ma said that if anyone didn’t sign, they would be remembered - “but when you talk to him face-to-face, he is very polite, he is a Christian.” SHUI Ma calls the members “benefactors” and he keeps a clear record of the “benefactor” economy. “Just like the first case I did” - In early 2012, SHUI Ma was determined to catch robbers. But he understood that things had to be done according to the rules, and violence couldn’t be used to combat violence. “When we take guns, it is a challenge to Mexico’s justice system.” In order to catch the robbers, SHUI Ma had to cooperate with the Mexican police. He didn’t go to the police station near Tepito, “I think they would betray me.” There are two types of Mexican police: one is the criminal police for investigation, who wear plain clothes; the other is the SSA (Social Security Administration) patrol police. SHUI Ma said he used to be a policeman before becoming a factory manager; later, he wanted to make money, so he resigned - so he “knows very well how to deal with the police.” SHUI Ma asked a friend to introduce him to the police in another area. He said that Chinese people doing business in Tepito solved a large number of employment problems for Mexican labor. The market situation is not good now, and police assistance is needed. “I said I would give them money - I know they won’t help if I don’t give them money. They agreed to help me catch the robbers for 2,000 pesos per police officer.” So, SHUI Ma spent 64,000 pesos in a day, hiring 32 undercover police officers and a high-end car for monitoring robbers. On the first day, SHUI Ma arranged a batch of goods that would pass by the robbers’ hideouts, but no one robbed them. “I don’t know if the information was leaked or for some other reason.” On the second day, they still achieved nothing, but SHUI Ma spent another 64,000 pesos. Before implementing the arrest operation, SHUI Ma had already been observing and taking photos at the criminals’ hideouts for several days. However, the most crucial point was that

the police informed him: "If no one accuses them, we can only release them on the spot, and the consequences will be borne by you." SHUI Ma went to the embassy and asked for their help in mobilizing, "also to let them know what I'm doing". The embassy agreed to cooperate but advised SHUI Ma to be cautious, as catching robbers was praiseworthy and admirable, but also very dangerous, and emphasized that he would bear all the consequences personally. After the mobilization meeting, seventeen people were willing to cooperate and accuse the criminals. SHUI Ma recalled, "I always said that these seventeen people are my benefactors." On the third day, SHUI Ma left eight police officers behind and arrested two robbers that day. In the end, a total of six criminals were arrested and sentenced to twenty years in prison. "This is the most typical case of judicial tracking," SHUI Ma said. Every time a group member accompanied the victim to accuse, they had to go through 24 hours of confinement and interrogation, and they had to translate and act as witnesses. If it was a sudden case in the middle of the night, it was difficult for someone to arrive at the scene to accompany the victim to report the case and accuse, among other tedious procedures. SHUI Ma said he wasn't bragging, but to do judicial tracking, one first needed to understand society and the judicial structure, then it required patience, time, and money, and finally, there was "interaction" with the police.

In 2008, SHUI Ma took over his relative's business and started wholesale of small commodities. He discovered that at that time, the annual sales of each store could reach 50 million, while the annual rent for each store was only 150,000. SHUI Ma saw the development potential in this and used his experience and a large amount of money to quickly acquire 16 stores, immediately raising the rent and then renting them out to Chinese businessmen. "We Guangdong people all say he is smart," Lao Zhu is proud of SHUI Ma's success. Nowadays, SHUI Ma has firmly established himself in Tepito and owns his own commercial real estate. It is a four-story building with a red exterior wall, with the first and second floors planned as shops and the third and fourth floors as warehouses. This is SHUI Ma's first trial cooperation with Jewish merchants, and it was originally a parking lot. After 18 months, the building was already in use, and the construction speed was considered a miracle in Mexico. For a long time, SHUI Ma has only cooperated with Jewish real estate businessmen.

He does not trust Mexicans, saying that Mexicans always default on payments without exception. When cooperating with Jewish people, they will choose a third-party monitoring platform to evaluate and assess the true asset status and creditworthiness of both parties. Now, SHUI Ma's building is operating normally, which also means that the "security team" has obtained long-term and stable financial support. Collusion between robbers and shop workers is the most common robbery method in Tepito. The "security team" has created a blacklist, which is updated in real-time and available for Chinese merchants to check criminal records, making it easier to screen and hire Mexican employees. Nowadays, the Mexican police are more involved in the market security management in the southern area of Tepito, resulting in a sharp decrease in criminal robbery cases against Chinese merchants, while the number of similar cases against Korean merchants continues to rise. Mexico City is divided into 22 districts, each of which is further divided into multiple neighborhoods. The "security team" needs to report each case to the district where the incident occurred. SHUI Ma said that his several handshake photos, US driver's license, and green card were all to put pressure on "these low-level supervision agencies in Mexico" and prove his "relationship" with the United States. "One of his friends is a person in Obama's office. This person told Obama that someone in Mexico caught robbers and had outstanding achievements. After listening, Obama was very moved and wanted to meet him," Lao Zhu said that SHUI Ma told him all of this. The only certainty is that SHUI Ma is still a Chinese citizen.

6

In 2014, due to work reasons, I was sent to Mexico and came to this “distant place” in the eyes of many people to work and live there. Three years later, I sat in a hot pot restaurant in Beijing Farmer’s Market with my colleague, whom I used to “not get along with and wanted to hit each other”, and we pretended to be affectionate and chatted while drinking, exclaiming, “Cutting the lamb by hand is still more awesome” and “Siete Leguas tequila is really good to drink.” Just as we were about to take the last sip of our drinks and prepare to switch to beer, the smoke filled the ceiling, and the lingering sound of dialects formed a symphony of the market. The atmosphere was beautiful. I remembered my life for the past three years, always quiet, with lush green grass and not too many people or noise. “Oh, by the way, you know SHUI Ma, right? He asked me to say hello to you.” I asked my colleague. My colleague is more than twenty years older than me. He told us before that when he was young, he always worked in a confidential position; but judging from his drinking capacity, he probably didn’t play any major roles, at most he stayed in a certain department for a while. When he was in Mexico, there was a period of time when he and SHUI Ma always hung out together, drinking, fishing, and knocking on doors. Before returning to China, it seemed like they even had a meal together. “I know him. He’s a spy.” I remember when he said the second half of the sentence, he deliberately approached me, as if there were still things he wanted to tell me, or maybe he just wanted me to think that he had something to say. This was the last time I mentioned SHUI Ma to someone else. There was a distance, both far and near, between us. I knew he was still in Mexico, but this person was a distant place that I could never reach.

The emigrants are all fine able-bodied men, and as far as I am aware, are all, with the exception of about half-a-dozen, agricultural labourers. Of these few I allowed some to come on board, because they had some slight knowledge of English, which I thought might be useful in Jamaica, and there are probably two or three substitutes, who could not be detected at the last moment. One man has a knowledge of Bengalee, having been some years in India.

Owing to the captain's irresolution I could not depend upon the vessel until the 10th, when active measures were taken to procure emigrants. At first they came forward in considerable numbers, and I expected to have got them away within a fortnight, but a difficulty arose when I wished to pay their advances. Having no proper depot on shore, and no means of legal restraint, to prevent them from leaving the ship in harbour, they would certainly have run away on receiving the money. I therefore caused it to be intimated to them that the vessel would drop outside the harbour, and that their money would be paid to them on board. The contractors who had brought them, finding that if the ship moved out of harbour the men would be away from their influence, and that they would thus be prevented from purloining a portion of the advances, got up a cry of alarm that the ship was going to take them away as slaves without paying advances, and that there were quantities of manacles and fetters on board for their confinement. The consequence was, that in the excitement and confusion that followed, the greater number went away in the boats that had come alongside, carrying with them several articles of clothing and other articles that had been put on board for their use.

I determined, however, to persevere, and the vessel dropped outside sufficiently far to prevent unnecessary intercourse with the shore. The people remaining on board were paid, and a bumboat sent alongside well furnished with such articles as they were likely to require. For several days no emigrants came forward, but at length the favourable account given by the people on board, and the facilities given to those who could be depended on for coming on shore, counteracted the evil reports spread by the contractors, and men came to the office to make inquiries, and finally to offer themselves as emigrants. After this, matters went on smoothly, and the number required was completed without difficulty.

The greater number of the emigrants on board the Epsom may therefore be considered as voluntary emigrants; and this is the only instance in which the advances paid have been received by the emigrants themselves, and expended as they thought proper. Hitherto the crimps have always managed, by fair means or by foul, to appropriate the largest portion of the advance.

This first experiment of emigration from Hong Kong may therefore be considered as successful, but there is not yet sufficient experience to determine what supply of labour may be depended upon from the mainland; and I recommend, as stated in my letter of the 9th February, No. 8, para. 6, that in the case of vessels chartered in England, a clause be inserted, giving a discretionary power to the Agent to place the vessel for the purpose of receiving emigrants, if necessary, elsewhere than at Hong Kong.

Before the Epsom left I appointed twelve cooks, six headmen, and two barbers, who are entitled to \$2, \$3, and \$2 per month during the voyage, payable in Jamaica, if they conduct themselves to the satisfaction of the captain. To these men also an extra advance was made as earnest of the agreement.

The Epsom left on the forenoon of the 1st inst. [April 1854], under favourable auspices, and with a moderate breeze from the north. The people seemed perfectly content with the arrangements made, and as everything has been done for their comfort and safety, I trust they will arrive in safety and prove a benefit to the island. The vessel got under way amid the firing of crackers and the uproar of gongs and drums, in token of their satisfaction.

Extract from letter sent by Mr. [James] White [originally British Guiana emigration agent based in Calcutta], to S. Walcott, Esq., dated 7th April, 1854 & reporting the departure of Epsom from Hong Kong for Jamaica The Epsom reported finally to have left Hong Kong waters with 310 indentured labourers bound for Jamaica on 21 April 1854 but the delay is unaccountable. Three months later, on 30 July 1854, it reached Falmouth, Jamaica's bustling north-side port and only 267 disembarked for allocation to estates in Clarendon and to the Caymanas estates near Kingston; many had been hospitalized on the way.

The story of SHUI Ma's grandfather continues in the future iterations of A Story of a Merchant.

Thank you for reading