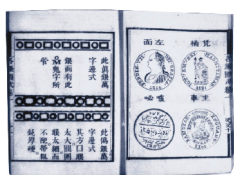


**Coins in early Hong Kong:  
the Mexican silver dollar**

During the nineteenth century, people in Hong Kong relied on a variety of coins (whether legal tender or not) for their daily business. One of the most common high-value coins was the silver dollar, minted in various parts of the world, but standardised to a diameter of 38mm and a weight of 27 grams, of 90% silver purity.

Mexican “eagle” dollars were among the most widely circulated silver dollars in nineteenth-century Hong Kong and China. To verify their authenticity, silver dollars were assayed to test the quality and purity of the metal in the coin. “Chops” were stamped on the coins by “shroffs” (or money-handlers) to confirm the genuineness of coins. These chops took the form of symbols, trademarks or Chinese characters. On the coin illustrated, a number of marks have been stamped on the coin. The most visible of these are shown on the enlargements above. Numerous handbooks were available to guide the shroffs in their work.



Shroffs' handbook from the nineteenth century

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