



### Banknotes in early Hong Kong: 1866 Oriental Bank Corporation five-dollar note

Modern banking began in Hong Kong in 1845 with the opening of a branch of the Oriental Bank Corporation, which had its headquarters in India. The Oriental Bank was also the first bank in Hong Kong to issue banknotes from 1845, in denominations of \$5, \$25, \$50 and \$100.

At this time the government in Hong Kong accepted payments in banknotes — for taxes and fees — only from banks incorporated by Royal Charter or under the Colonial Regulations. Chartered banks were not allowed to issue banknotes of denominations of below \$5 without special government permission: the aim was to prevent banknotes from getting into the hands of poorer people, who would suffer more in the event of a bank collapse.

The Oriental Bank was granted a Royal Charter in 1851, and in 1857 its banknotes were declared acceptable for payment of government dues. The bank continued operation until 1884, when it collapsed. The picture shows the five-dollar note issued by the Oriental Bank Corporation in 1866. The note is hand-signed by senior executives of the bank.



Five dollar note of the Oriental Bank Corporation, 1866 (back)

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