

# CITY OF JUNKS



Woman selling vegetables is helped by her son as they move along one of the water streets in the Yaumati typhoon shelter at Hong Kong.

This is a city of rotting junks that sail no more. This is Yaumati, where thousands live, make love, eat, get sick, are born and die on brackish water behind the long concrete breakwater that curves out into Hong Kong harbor as protection against the typhoons which whip the China coast.

Many of its inhabitants spend, at most, only a few hours of life ashore. When they die, their funerals will be on water. Only burial will be in the earth of China. For, no matter what or where he lived, a Chinese must eventually be returned to his native soil.

Yaumati exists on no regular maps. No one knows for certain how many boats or how many people inhabit it. There is a constant flux of junks and sampans but Yaumati itself never seems to change except to become more crowded and more dismal.

The impoverished aristocracy of Yaumati are those on the large junks. Once they were wealthy and respected. But trade in the China Sea has dwindled to a fraction of its pre-Communist days. Piracy by both Communists and Nationalists make what is left uncertain and unprofitable. There are a hundred junks for every one that can find a job unloading tramp steamers anchored in Hong Kong harbor.

Few of the big junks leave Yaumati these days. Their once proud purple sails hang in tatters. Their decks warp and twist. Their ropes rot and their anchor chains rust. Their men and women exist on pennies worth of scraps and whatever fish they can haul in from the waters that lap at their junks.



Hundreds of sampans and junks, stretching as far as the eye can see, make up the water city of Yaumati.



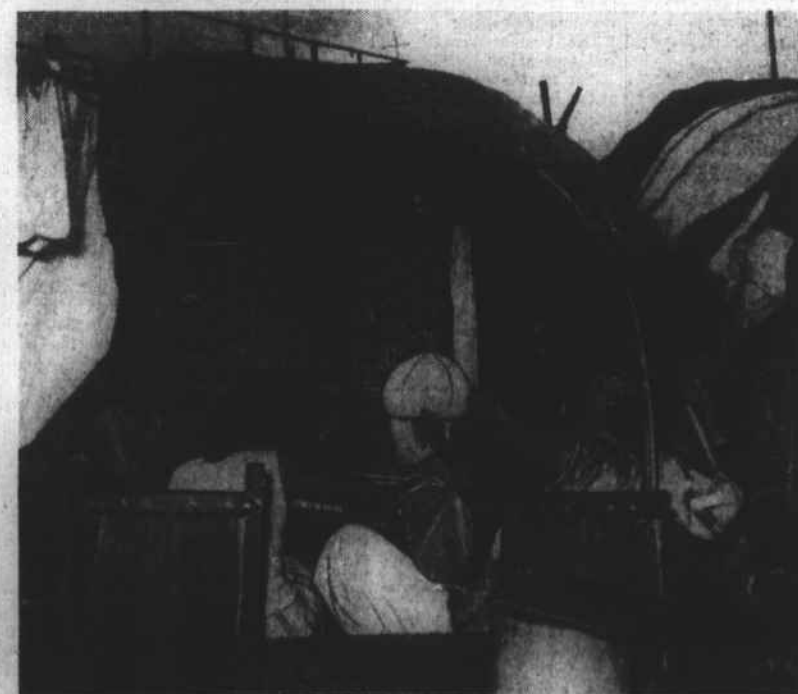
Yaumati boatman and son take their small sampan out into Hong Kong harbor for try at fishing.



Operator of a floating restaurant moves his boat down one of the water streets in the Yaumati shelter. The high sterns of the larger junks can be seen in the background.



Floating houses in Yaumati typhoon shelter, tied together, offer very little room for maneuvering, let alone comfort. A bobbing sampan, only 15 feet long may be home for a family of five or six. As many as 50 may exist on the large junks.



Girls get together in barely furnished sampan to play afternoon game of mah-jong. Camera-shy miss hides face with fan.

This Week's PICTURE SHOW by AP Staff Photographer George Sweers

