

CRIMINAL EVIDENCE IN HONG KONG. By ANDREW BRUCE AND GERARD MCCOY. [Singapore: Butterworths. 1987. xl + 288 pp. Hardcover: S\$70]

IN their preface, the authors state: "It is extraordinary to think, as Hong Kong enters the last ten years of its existence between 1841 and 1997 as a British colony or dependent territory, that in all that time no one has written a text book on the criminal law in Hong Kong or the law relating to procedure or evidence in criminal trials in Hong Kong." The book is an important addition to the legal jurisprudence of Hong Kong and will certainly provide interesting reading for those concerned with the law of evidence in Commonwealth jurisdictions.

The book takes a practical rather than theoretical approach being geared mainly to the practitioners of criminal law. This is clearly indicated by the format which is characterised by a considerable number of useful subheadings (which are numbered for easy reference) in each chapter. The practitioner will also find useful the liberal citation of cases decided in Hong Kong, the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth jurisdictions which show varying approaches to evidential problems. The usual topics of evidence are covered: forms and classifications of evidence; facts which need not be proved: burdens and standards of proof; the rule against hearsay and its exceptions; privileges; similar fact evidence; examination of witnesses; documentary evidence and corroboration. The book also covers those aspects of criminal procedure which are closely tied to the subject of

evidence such as the alibi defence and the discovery and disclosure of documents. The authors also devote a whole chapter to identification evidence which illustrates the forms of identification evidence available: voice prints; police sketches and tracker dogs are just some of the many types. Separate treatment is also given to evidence that may be considered for the purpose of sentencing, proceedings on appeal or on a retrial.

The authors are to be commended on their organization of the material and its succinct presentation of the rules and authorities. The book will be seen by many as the way to commence research on points of law which may be obscured in some of the larger or more theoretical texts. Students of evidence will find the practical aspects interesting but will have to resort to other works if they seek an analytical account of the subject. Indeed, the more theoretical topics such as burdens and standards of proof are given less attention (the chapter on this topic contains 10 pages) than the more practical areas such as the examination of witnesses and documentary evidence (47 and 36 pages respectively).

The price of the book is very reasonable considering its comprehensive coverage (a fact belied by its relative shortness: only 288 pages), and its clear format. Although the text concerns the law in Hong Kong, local readers will find its approach and the references to some of the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth cases useful.