

Weightlifting Champions

THE familiar image of cargo being loaded onto a boat docked beside a quay is an enduring symbol of one of mankind's earliest and most successful forms of commerce. For thousands of years, trade between cities, countries and continents has helped communities all over the world grow and prosper. And in recent times, few places can match Hong Kong as a place that meets the ever-increasing logistical needs of importers, exporters, shippers and shipping lines.

Then... The earliest cranes were no more than the most rudimentary of levers – a combination of a bamboo pole and human muscle power. Huge quantities of goods were moved using this simple and effective method. Less than 100 years ago, scenes like this were part of everyday life at the Whampoa docks in Kowloon and other ports throughout Asia.

Now... Port operators have revolutionised the container shipping industry. Today, instead of cranes with slings loading ships with crates from wooden pallets, powerful ship-to-shore quay cranes can now lift two 20-foot containers at a time. Each crane can make on average 44 moves an hour, significantly reducing docking times. Hongkong International Terminals operates a total of 46 quay cranes, of which 37 have twin-lift capability at Kwai Tsing, one of the busiest ports in the world.

