China / Hong Kong Company Update

China Taiping Ins

Bloomberg: 966 HK EQUITY | Reuters: 0966.HK

Refer to important disclosures at the end of this report

DBS Group Research . Equity

20 Apr 2022

BUY

Last Traded Price (14 Apr 2022): HK\$9.64 (HSI: 21,518)
Price Target 12-mth: HK\$14.50 (50% upside) (Prev HK\$16.50)

Analyst

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What's New

- Increase in agent premium productivity a positive note
- Increased asset allocation to bond investment a testament toward a more prudent investment strategy
- Share price overhang due to former chairman's misconduct should gradually subside following management's clarification
- Factoring in FY21A, revise down FY22/23F earnings by 11%/9% and VNB assumption to -14%/+9% y-o-y. Trim TP to HK\$14.50 on lower multiple

Price Relative HK\$ Relative Index 27.1 22.1 17.1 12.1 Apr-18 Apr-19 Apr-20 Apr-21 Apr-22 China Taiping Ins (LHS) Relative HSI (RHS)

For	eca	sts	and	Val	luat	ion

FY Dec (HK\$ m)	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Net earned premiums	217,932	250,496	270,745	294,962
Net investment income	36,297	43,988	47,331	53,108
Net Profit	6,549	7,514	8,658	9,979
EPS (HK\$)	1.82	2.09	2.41	2.78
EPS (HK\$)	1.82	2.09	2.41	2.78
EPS Gth (%)	(27.3)	14.7	15.2	15.3
PE (X)	5.3	4.6	4.0	3.5
DPS (HK\$)	0.40	0.46	0.53	0.61
Net Div Yield (%)	4.1	4.8	5.5	6.3
BV Per Share (HK\$)	25.22	24.50	26.91	29.69
P/Book Value (X)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3
P/EV (X)	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
ROAE (%)	7.8	8.4	9.4	9.8
Earnings Rev (%):			(11)	(9)
Consensus EPS (HK\$)			2.46	2.69
Other Broker Recs:		B:17	S:1	H:3

Source of all data on this page: Company, DBS Bank (Hong Kong) Limited ("DBS HK"), Thomson Reuters

Overhang should gradually subside

Investment Thesis

VNB growth to reaccelerate in FY23F. China Taiping's VNB growth was +4% y-o-y in FY21, outperforming peers, mainly benefiting from the low base. While it may suffer less from the trimmed life agent headcount, we estimate its VNB to decline to -14% y-o-y in FY22F before recovering to +9% y-o-y in FY23F.

Improvement in agent premium productivity a positive note. The steady improvement in agent premium productivity has helped mitigate the impact on the VNB margin, resulting in a smaller decline in VNB growth in the agent channel compared to the company's peers. We expect the improvement in agent productivity to continue, driven by its agent channel reform effort.

Steady expansion in investment with recurring yield. Continuous improvements in asset allocation and the investment strategy to focus on more bond investment and high-dividend/value stocks will continue to expand recurring yield.

Valuation:

Our TP is based on a sum-of-the-parts (SOTP) valuation, where we apply a multiple of 0.2x (previously 0.3x) FY22F P/EV for China Taiping, 0.4x FY22F P/BV for CT P&C/reinsurance/other businesses, and a 15% conglomerate discount.

Where we differ:

We believe China Taiping is on the verge of turning structurally positive, given the new management's fresh strategic focus, recovery in China's bond yield, and pay-off from consistent critical illness/protection product focus. Trading at only a 0.2x FY22F P/EV, it remains the cheapest insurance company in China in terms of valuation.

Key Risks to Our View:

Intensified competition from peers, downward interest rate trend, declining bond yields, and a rise in A/H-share market volatility are some key risks.

At A Glance

Issued Capital (m shrs)	3,594
Mkt Cap (HKm/US\$m)	34,646 / 4,418
Major Shareholders (%)	
China Taiping Insurance Group Ltd.	61.0
Free Float (%)	39.0
3m Avg. Daily Val. (US\$m)	10.98
GICS Industry: Financials / Insurance	







WHAT'S NEW

Overhang should gradually subside

Improvement in agent premium productivity

Due to the relatively smaller agent force size compared to its peers, China Taiping has focused on three aspects in its agent channel reform effort since FY21: a) Helping life agents survive by focusing on new business premium productivity improvement, b) focusing on expanding highperformance agents' and managers' productivity and compensation, and c) empowering life agents with digital tools to simplify operation procedures and strengthen online-to-offline channels. As a result, China Taiping's agent headcount in FY21 was maintained at 385k, or +1% y-o-y, compared to a 35%-40% y-o-y decline experienced by its peers. New business premium (FYP) from the agent channel also grew by 22% y-o-y last year, whereas all its listed peers recorded a decline. On the other hand, new business premium per agent grew 29% y-o-y, in line with the trend from its peers.

Moving into FY22F, we believe a key aspect to watch is how the insurer can balance its growth and continuous improvement in agent premium productivity while moderately trimming its agent headcount. However, the product mix continues to shift focus toward the saving/annuity product, and we see further room for a mild contraction in the VNB margin. Overall, we estimate China Taiping's VNB growth to be -14% y-o-y in FY22F, but it should gradually stabilise and recover to +9% y-o-y in FY23F.

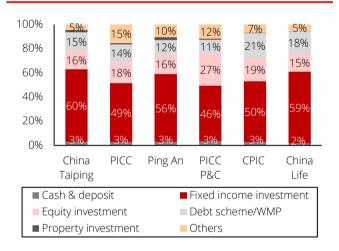
Continued shift toward prudent investment paying off

China Taiping has emphasised on adopting a prudent investment strategy since FY20, including to increase its asset allocation in long-duration bond and blue-chip/value stock investments and to lower its risk exposure toward non-standardised asset investment. The progress has thus far been satisfying, with bond investment in FY21 accounting for 60% of its asset allocation compared to 57% in FY20 (Fig 1). Its debt scheme/WMP investments also fell to 15% of its portfolio, compared to 18% in FY20. On the other hand, its net investment yield (recurring) has been steady at 4.07%, down 14bps, compared to its peers' average, which reduced by 21bps. Its total investment yield also landed steadily at 5.4%, down 4bps, compared to its peers' average of 68bps decline.

With the China-US 10-year bond yield spread recently entering negative territory and the expectation that the US interest rate upcycle will continue, we believe these will

provide downside support for China's bond yield, and see this as a positive sign for China's insurance sector in general. The DBS Economist team is also forecasting China's 10-year bond yield to reach 2.8%/3.0% by end-FY22/23. As 75% of China Taiping's investment assets are fixed income-related and highly correlate with bond yield movements, we believe these factors are positive for the insurer and should facilitate the further expansion of its net investment yield in the long term.

Fig 1: Listed lifer's investment asset allocation - FY21



Source: Company data, DBS HK

Share price overhang should gradually subside

China Taiping's share price has corrected by 20% since local media reported that its former Chairman, Wang Bin, misappropriated the insurers' investment fund, which resulted in a poor investment decision that may lead to billions of renminbi in investment losses for the insurer. The market was worried that the insurer may hide such losses in its balance sheet and not transparently disclose the information. However, China Taiping's management has clarified that they have long followed prudent investment principles and strictly abide by regulators' requirements. It added that its accountant has always provided an unqualified opinion in the audit reports, suggesting the legitimacy and accuracy of the company's financial reports. The insurer also replied to Hong Kong regulators' questions in a timely manner. China Taiping's independent auditor is KPMG.





Lower TP to HK\$14.50. Maintain BUY

We revise down China Taiping's FY22/23F earnings to 11%/9%, mainly to factor in the actual number for FY21, less investment income due to the recent gloomy equity market performance, and the temporary impact from the resurgence of the global pandemic in China. We further lower our FY22/23F VNB assumption to -14%/+9% y-o-y and trim our TP to HK\$14.50 (from HK\$16) on a lower multiple (now at 0.2x P/EV with previously at 0.3x). Overall, we maintain BUY on China Taiping.

Company Background

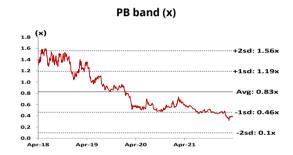
China Taiping Ins (China Taiping), the former overseas insurance arm of PICC and the only China life insurance company set up outside China, was established in July 2003. It was listed on HKEX in November 2003. Its insurance products include that of life (individual and group life insurance, health and accident insurance, and annuities) and P&C (motor vehicle, commercial property, cargo, and liability). In FY20, its total assets and equity reached HK\$1,169bn and HK\$117bn, respectively.

Historical PEV and PB band

Forward PEV band (x) 0.9 0.8 0.7 0.6 0.5 0.4 0.3 0.2 0.1 1sd: 0.2x

-2sd: 0x

Source: Bloomberg Finance L.P. DBS HK





Key Assumptions

2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
11.7	4.7	12.4	8.0	9.0
(24.8)	(1.1)	1.0	(2.0)	(2.0)
(5.5)	(34.0)	30.5	12.0	12.0
51.4	49.2	36.5	34.3	33.7
50.3	55.2	70.9	69.9	69.4
101.7	104.4	107.4	104.2	103.1
27.6	29.8	25.6	20.8	21.1
4.8	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.1
4.8	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.1
14.8	18.8	14.3	13.3	7.9
214.5	204.2	142.5	134.8	122.8
	11.7 (24.8) (5.5) 51.4 50.3 101.7 27.6 4.8 4.8	11.7 4.7 (24.8) (1.1) (5.5) (34.0) 51.4 49.2 50.3 55.2 101.7 104.4 27.6 29.8 4.8 4.4 4.8 4.4 14.8 18.8	11.7	11.7 4.7 12.4 8.0 (24.8) (1.1) 1.0 (2.0) (5.5) (34.0) 30.5 12.0 51.4 49.2 36.5 34.3 50.3 55.2 70.9 69.9 101.7 104.4 107.4 104.2 27.6 29.8 25.6 20.8 4.8 4.4 4.3 4.1 4.8 4.4 4.3 4.1 14.8 18.8 14.3 13.3

Source: Company, DBS HK

Income Statement (HK\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Gross written premiums	223,019	233,535	262,549	283,536	308,924
Net earned premium	208,768	217,932	250,496	270,745	294,962
Investment income	30,533	36,297	43,988	47,331	53,108
Other operating income	5,227	15,885	21,374	16,789	17,359
Total income	244,528	270,113	315,858	334,865	365,429
Benefits and claims	(112,979)	(132,417)	(158,738)	(167,726)	(183,798)
Underwriting and policy acquisition costs	(59,282)	(55,396)	(58,526)	(60,570)	(65,114)
Finance cost	(2,328)	(2,190)	(2,382)	(2,284)	(2,238)
Other expenses	(58,374)	(65,274)	(85,908)	(90,919)	(99,112)
Total expenses	(232,963)	(255,277)	(305,553)	(321,500)	(350,263)
Share of profit of associated and JVs	1,761	(1,571)	609	758	870
Profit before tax	13,326	13,265	10,914	14,123	16,037
Income tax expense	(783)	(2,808)	39	(1,913)	(2,400)
Minority interest	(3,534)	(3,908)	(3,439)	(3,552)	(3,657)
Preferred dividend	0	0	0	0	0
Net income attributable to shareholders	9,009	6,549	7,514	8,658	9,979

Source: Company, DBS HK



Balance Sheet(HK\$ m)

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Total Investment	706,738	932,354	1,099,337	1,201,035	1,393,519
Property, plant and equipment	20,126	23,023	32,945	36,542	41,663
Other assets	192,556	213,631	246,360	291,596	308,295
Total assets	919,420	1,169,008	1,378,642	1,529,174	1,743,477
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Net life reserves - traditional	534,557	706,785	887,817	939,703	1,033,930
Net life reserves - investment contracts	56,219	77,039	86,491	99,518	124,194
Other Liabilities	234,587	268,570	290,878	364,287	446,051
Total liabilities	825,363	1,052,395	1,265,186	1,403,508	1,604,175
Shareholder's equity	76,308	90,647	88,067	96,725	106,704
Minority interest	17,749	25,966	25,389	28,941	32,598
Total equity	94,057	116,613	113,456	125,666	139,302

Source: Company, DBS HK

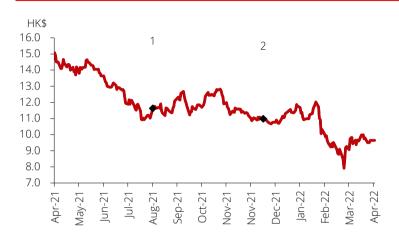
Key Financials & Ratios

FY Dec	2019A	2020A	2021A	2022F	2023F
Du Pont analysis (%)					
Net profit / premium income	4.3	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.4
Premium income / total asset	22.7	18.6	18.2	17.7	16.9
Total asset / total equity	10	10	12	12	13
Return on equity	12.7	7.8	8.4	9.4	9.8
Embedded value(HK\$ m)					
Book value	76,308	90,647	88,067	96,725	106,704
Adjusted items	33,229	43,007	75,920	56,985	67,526
Adjusted book value	109,536	133,654	163,986	153,710	174,230
Value-in-force	98,008	113,120	127,158	157,391	162,190
Adjustment (if any)	(47,379)	(56,501)	(73,575)	(64,563)	(70,502)
Group embedded value	160,166	190,274	217,569	246,538	265,918
Per share analysis(HK\$)					
EPS	2.51	1.82	2.09	2.41	2.78
BPS	21.23	25.22	24.50	26.91	29.69
DPS	0.30	0.40	0.46	0.53	0.61
EVPS	44.56	52.94	60.54	68.60	73.99
Capital Strength (%)					
Leverage ratio	10	10	12	12	13
Solvency ratio	214.5	204.2	142.5	134.8	122.8

Source: Company, DBS HK



Target Price & Ratings History



S.N	o. Date	Closing Price	12-mth Target Price	Rating
1:	9-Aug-21	HK\$11.02	HK\$18.00	Buy
2:	13-Dec-21	HK\$10.98	HK\$16.50	Buy

Source: DBS HK Analyst: Ken Shih Manyi Lu

Sam Lu



DBS HK recommendations are based on an Absolute Total Return* Rating system, defined as follows:

STRONG BUY (>20% total return over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

BUY (>15% total return over the next 12 months for small caps, >10% for large caps)

HOLD (-10% to +15% total return over the next 12 months for small caps, -10% to +10% for large caps)

FULLY VALUED (negative total return, i.e., > -10% over the next 12 months)

SELL (negative total return of > -20% over the next 3 months, with identifiable share price catalysts within this time frame)

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