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Colonial Governance and the Hong Kong Story

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Introduction

Decolonization and the return of sovereignty to China have spawned in Hong Kong a body of literature which is interesting and illuminating. Attempts have been made to tally the "credit card" of colonial rule, to explore the prospects of the local consciousness in withstanding alien ideological and political meaning systems, or to come to terms, at an intellectual or emotional level, with one's experience in Hong Kong. Politicians have also joined the fray, ranging from the universalistic overtones of Patten's benchmarks to the Confucian, paternalistic goading of Tung Chee Hwa. Confronted with this critical moment of history, most studies have placed Hong Kong in a discourse which hitherto has been alien to the accounts, scholarly or otherwise, of the society. Indeed, ever since the return to Chinese sovereignty was agreed in the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, we have seen more and more accounts, not just by the negotiators and the ideologues, but those from the "cultural strivings" of the local people, that have injected a global dimension to Hong Kong: historically, culturally and politically. Thus, Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty "resolves" for China the long historical issue of unequal treaties and imperialism; the concept of "One Country, Two Systems" has made Hong Kong some political "human laboratory" where the targeted audience is the Taiwanese leaders and people. Hong Kong's future integration into mainland China will have serious repercussions for the region and for Western commercial and political relations with China. Whether "Hong Kong Man" can withstand the onslaught of mainland

(*zhongyuan*) culture is, to some, also high on the agenda of Chineseness or Chinese identity in the 21st century. Hong Kong matters because much is at stake; Hong Kong matters because such discourses have placed Hong Kong and its people into a larger historical, cultural and political milieu.

In recounting the Hong Kong story, some of these studies have focused on the evolution of the Hong Kong culture, or its local consciousness and identity. Some take the perspective of post-coloniality and emphasize the culture of disappearance. Others have begun from personal memories and ruminations and tried to anchor them onto some cultural and literary landscape of the city. Sociologists have examined the "whence and whither" of the Hong Kong Man in the context of changes in the society. This paper will begin by reviewing some of these studies, and then proceed to examine the Hong Kong story from the vantage point of colonial governance. Broad features of British colonialism since the 1950s will be identified and discussed with reference to a framework of colonial goals and practices. The changes in the governance will then be linked up with changes in the society and its culture.

The Difficulties in Telling the Hong Kong Story

At this juncture of History with a capital H, views even of a less rhetorical nature are diverse and different in their prognosis for Hong Kong's future. There are those who may share Fitzpatrick's *durée longue* view of history:

> [I]n hindsight, we were wrong to think of Hong Kong as distinct and different from the land of which it is so inextricably a part.... For what, in the end, does our much vaunted distinction and difference consist of? A few fine hotels, a philharmonic orchestra and a branch of Planet Hollywood. This is enough to keep that awesome tide known as Chinese history at bay? (quoted from Wesley-Smith 1996:116)

Others will perhaps take a more cautiously optimistic view, seeing Hong Kong's autonomy as benefiting from the changing centre-region relations between China and Hong Kong (ibid.).

However, if one turns to the Hong Kong story as a matter of identity and cultural coherence, there is an interesting common thread in the accounts. Most post-colonial studies comment on the skewed, displaced and global character of the Hong Kong identity. Thus, for instance, it has been argued that the colonial experience is perhaps more pivotal than conventionally believed in providing Hong Kong with some sense of civic identity or continuity. The colonialism in the era of imperialism has given Hong Kong the Supreme Court building, the Flagstaff House, etc. But colonialism in the era of globalism has left Hong Kong people with no scruples when it comes to urban development: any tenuous sense of civic identity is discarded if it stands in the way of neo-Gothic high-rise building projects (Abbas 1997b:301). It has thus been a skewed, easily-compromised, sense of history.

Similarly, the fact that decolonization results not in self-rule but in "transfer of sovereignty" implies that the Hong Kong subjectivity faces dislocations in its attempt to forge something more definite than the "floating identity" of a city of transients. The nationalism generated by the Diaoyu Island incident in Hong Kong reflects, at one level, a nationalism which is not really anchored to Hong Kong's own history and politics; it is Chinese nationalism at one remove from mainland China. At another level, it represents, as Abbas puts it, a *frisson nouveau* which is, ironically, possible only under British colonial rule, and which harks back to the earlier Diaoyu movement in the early 1970s. The Hong Kong subjectivity, in this regard, seems to be always shifting back and forth between the larger, but amorphous and often alien, nationalism and its symbols, and the local, born out of movements and collective memories, "vicarious" nationalism. These displacements and dislocations have led some to declaim that Hong Kong as a subject often "threatens to get easily lost again" (Abbas 1997a:25). From this perspective, the Hong Kong post-colonial culture is less a pattern or entity (definite or just

coming into being); it is more a practice, a stand, a form, that one finds (or better, self-invent) in urban experiences (architecture, cinema, etc.) and perhaps in political struggles.

The above point about the Hong Kong subjectivity — its slippery and amorphous nature (that stories about Hong Kong always turned into somewhere else) — is echoed in some recent literary discourses. For those Chinese who were born in Hong Kong, and have had their growing up process, as it were, in tandem with the growth of the society, the Hong Kong story is difficult to tell. It is difficult because the story often cannot begin without the author having settled his/her qualms with Hong Kong. It is often a love-hate relationship. To some, Hong Kong is a "cultural desert." To others, Hong Kong offers diversity and difference which could hold a candle to Manhattan. To the literary critic Lo Wei-luen, neither account is near the mark. The expatriate comes to see what he expects to see, and he may see the exotic (the melting pot, or perhaps more aptly, the Scotland broth) and may leave behind much orientalist kitsch. The Chinese refugee intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s could see nothing but decadent commercialism and alienation in Hong Kong, and they castigated the society for its superficiality and its atrophied culture (Lo 1983). What can the locally born Lo add to these accounts, apart from saying that both leave much to be desired? To Lo, the Hong Kong story (*shenshi*) remains amorphous, just as her own emotional responses are split between pride and shame, between compassion and indifference. Lo gave a more visceral description of her feelings in this way:

> Taking the peak tram up the hill, we could not help sensing a special feeling. The tram began its journey, and its passengers have their backs against the seat. One has to turn one's head to look at the scenery down the hill. One feels a certain gravitational force as one sees the surrounding buildings sloping downwards. Unconsciously, we adjust our posture, trying to align our sight with the buildings. But all the while, we are still seeing things at that inclined angle. (Lo 1996:3-4; my translation)

There is a certain headiness to the perspectives on Hong Kong.

To the sociologist, the Hong Kong story is difficult to tell for somewhat different, but related, reasons. The story itself is a contested terrain: is the Hong Kong success story attributed to unbridled *laissez faire*, or is it positive non-interventionism or selective interventionism? And turning to more specific instances, the story is besotted with contradictions and puzzles: why a people known to be politically apathetic will take to the streets during the 1989 June 4 incident, apparently seized with political idealism? Why a people wont to vote with their feet would turn out in large numbers to support candidates of the Democratic Party, known for its "confrontational politics"? Why a people whose ties to mainland China have been severed for so long become the driving force in the nationalistic Diaoyu Islands movement?

To Lui Tai-lok (1997), telling the Hong Kong story becomes immanent and urgent with the ushering in of a new era and a new governance. To Lui, there may not be a true or final version of the Hong Kong story; but, in my view, telling the Hong Kong story is one way of providing a construct for the Hong Kong consciousness, its concerns and values, its hopes and frustrations. And I think that in the post-colonial period, such constructs inevitably carry political implications. Any discursive foray into the Hong Kong story thus becomes embroiled in "the politics of cultural differences," to use Helen Siu's phrase (Siu 1994). To return to Lui, the more interesting, and pressing, question for him is: why is it difficult to tell the story in the first place? His answer: the weakness and superficiality of the Hong Kong consciousness. The 1970s witnessed the coming together of "industrial time" and "family time": the diversifying into service and, later, financial industries created further room at the top, resulting in a greater degree of structural mobility; the baby boom generation of the 1960s had, meanwhile, taken advantage of the educational opportunities and was equipped to take advantage of the expanded and variegated opportunities. The result was an indigenous consciousness or collective conscience, characterized by what I, in another context, called "social ideology of openness and opportu-

nities." This Hong Kong consciousness thus has a strong economic or developmental basis and is closely connected to the mobility experience of the Hong Kong people in that period. It is characterized by a strong emphasis on freedom to make good, to improve one's economic position, and by an optimism placed on individual efforts and on their efficacy. It is a mentality that does not take lightly to political or economic encroachment (Wong forthcoming). Success has been a hard-won outcome: many have come a long way via the "long route," with their refugee background and insecure experience in a fiercely competitive environment leaving an important imprint on their mentality (Rosen 1973; Wong forthcoming). Many believe that their success is a result of hard work, ambition and risk, and thus they deserve the benefits.

However, this consciousness has its limits. Defensive of what they have won via the "long route," the Hong Kong people are particularly wary of uncertain economic and political prospects. Thus, in the face of the uncertainties of the return of sovereignty, many opted to emigrate, taking an individualistic way out, one of "buying insurance." In the face of political ideologies and rhetoric, the Hong Kong consciousness likewise has averted its gaze and minded its own, "business as usual," way. It is these characteristics which, according to Lui, account for the weakness of the local consciousness in positioning itself and, perhaps, even in giving an account of itself in the face of the critical moment in history. Moreover, the dislocations — and the concomitant disruptions of perceptions and expectations — brought about by the anti-Japanese war or the 1966-1967 riots had not linked the Hong Kong people to a larger, and longer, tradition and its associated symbols and goals. In the case of the former, the collective memories of the war have not really been an integral part of Hong Kong's developmental experience. As for the 1966 and 1967 riots, they have not engendered an anti-colonial rebellious streak in the local identity. Indeed, Hong Kong people came out of that period identifying more with the colonial government as the lesser, and necessary, "evil." There is thus a paucity of larger goals and symbols in the

makeup of the Hong Kong identity. To use Shils' language, there is no central value system in the Hong Kong consciousness. If there is any coherence to it, it might be called "cynical individualism" (Goldfarb 1991). This is the reason the Hong Kong story is difficult to tell. There is thus a pessimistic implication in Lui's argument: as a source for elaborating alternative representations of reality and models of society, the Hong Kong consciousness just does not measure up.

In a similar vein, Ng Chun-hung (1997) has broached the topic of local consciousness and its rise. Choosing as his vantage point the Hong Kong popular culture, Ng has tried to go beyond both the superficial concern with popular culture as mass entertainment and the often moralistic concern with moral decline. Ng has attempted to place popular culture in the larger context of local consciousness, delineating the historical and structural conditions of its formation. Unlike Lui, Ng identifies more diverse elements in the local consciousness. Apart from mobility norms (or the social ideology of openness and opportunity), there are also elements that are linked, however tenuously and however stereotyped by the mass media industry, to "traditional" Chinese mores and values. These elements form the "common sense," the "survival kit," the traditional wisdom that are often invoked — in my view — implicitly and unconsciously, by Barbara Ward's "conscious model" of "because we are Chinese" (Ward 1965). (See also the modal qualities of "naturalness" in Geertz's (1983) discussion of common sense as a cultural system.) These elements could be expressed as familistic sentiments, in an aversion to direct confrontation, or in some populist and xenophobic inclinations that lie behind the belief that anything or anybody which is not Chinese (and perhaps Hong Kong?) is inferior. There are many such elements, but they do not form a coherent whole. And popular cultural representations often further fragment them, giving them a "schizoid" appearance. Then, there are also elements that are *sui generis* Hong Kong: its success, its energy and vitality, its marketplace mentality, etc.

But, like Lui, Ng also regards the local consciousness as devoid of larger ideological and discursive elements. To the extent that local consciousness is reflected and shaped by popular cultural forms, the Hong Kong experience is not enamoured of any legacy, be it nationalist, colonial or cultural. Indeed, if I may elaborate on Ng's argument, the Hong Kong consciousness is averse to meta-narratives (the march of progress, the liberation of the working class) and narratives (Chinese nationalism, British colonialism). True to the spirit of "mocking cynicism" (Goldfarb 1991), the Hong Kong people regard the Tolstoy question ("what do we do and how shall we live") with much skepticism and not a little ridicule. Moreover, and again like Lui, Ng sees the development of this consciousness as largely outside the ambit of colonial governance. He does not see the colonial experience as having any influence on the origin and formation of the local consciousness. The stage is empty, with the major potential protagonists — traditional Chinese value systems and British colonialism — being conspicuously absent. What has evolved has then been the Hong Kong people's collective imageries and memories — distilled, fragmented, refracted and reinforced by the emergent TV/film/popular culture industries — which are iconized into TV serials and popular songs and have made imprints on the collective representations as so many diverse, and often contradictory, "moral" precepts, "know-how," "survival skills," and "ideological" inclinations. When confronted with the ideologically upscaled climate of 1997 (in particular, some variant of Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong), popular culture could be impacted to engender a distinct construct of the Hong Kong identity. Like Lui, Ng's account — and its pertinence in the "here and now" — only makes sense in the gravitational pull which is 1997. But unlike Lui, Ng is optimistic about the future of the local consciousness.

There is much to be said for in such sociological accounts. It should be clear that I agree with much of the arguments, at least their broad outline. Both Lui and Ng are aware that their studies could be "fictional" constructs of the Hong Kong experience, but, to refer to a sociological truism, if one defines a situation as real, it

is real in the consequences. Lui and Ng welcome other contenders to these constructions. Another noteworthy feature of these two accounts (and to a certain extent, Lo's literary reflections) is their attempt to provide the historical underside — in broad strokes, and mostly in the form of personal memories — to the Hong Kong consciousness. This is something that could not be said for the most systematic study of the ethos of the Hong Kong people. (See Wong's discussion of Lau and Kuan's *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese*; Wong 1996.)

Thus, if I were to take exception to these sociological endeavours in the present historical conjuncture, it is not because I doubt their immanence and their significance, or their historical orientation. Indeed, I would go further and argue that a history of the colonial impact and of China on the local consciousness is imperative for any construction of the Hong Kong story. What follows then is a preliminary attempt to scout the subjectivity terrain of the Hong Kong people in relation to the mode of colonial governance. In their constructions, Lui and Ng have, in different ways, slighted the significance of colonialism in the evolution of the mobility norms and the associated forms of life (Lui), and of the popular culture (Ng). I am not prepared to overthrow, prematurely, their arguments, and I may indeed arrive at the same destination. But there might be a few surprises on the way.

The Gravitational Pull and Colonial Governance

In the above, we saw that, whether it was from the journalist, the literary/cultural critic or the sociologist, we were witnessing an implosion of quests and narratives seeking an answer to the question: what is the Hong Kong story, and what is the Hong Kong identity? Everyone seemed to have become an expert, as the critical moment in history approached. Abbas likens this to the parachutist's vision: at 6,000 feet above ground level, the falling body does not notice the earth getting closer at all. However, at around 2,000 feet, "the body begins to experience things differ-

ently, perspectives change. The earth seems to be coming at it, not just getting closer, but opening up, as if the ground were splitting." For Hong Kong, 1997 has been analogous to such gravitational pull: in the past year or so, "the historical ground begins to open up, perspectives on things split and multiply" (Abbas 1997b:293). The diverse and multiple attempts by journalists and intellectuals to take stock, to construct the Hong Kong experience (Hong 1996; S.L. Wong 1997), and to provide discourses on the colonial governance and the distinct Hong Kong identity could only be understood in such a context.

Similarly, the gravitational pull also prodded the last colonial governor to reflect on colonial governance. Chris Patten was asked, in an interview shortly before he gave his last policy speech in October 1996, what Britain had done for Hong Kong. He replied:

> I think that Britain had provided a framework of liberal values which has enabled Chinese men and women to thrive and excel and to keep the benefits of their work and excellence. I think what Britain has done has been to — as it were — in textbook de Tocqueville fashion to provide the ingredients which others have been able to turn into this success story. I think Britain has provided — or helped to provide — the rule of law, a meritocratic civil service and a plural society. (Tambling 1997:369)

Perhaps as befitting the last governor (Tambling titled his interview essay, "The History Man: The Last Governor of Hong Kong"), this answer from Patten was a far cry from the policy speeches and government *Annual Reports* issued under his predecessors. For, in the latter, one finds more a down-to-earth appraisal or stock-taking, emphasizing the provision of services, infrastructural development, or the need for administrative expedience. Patten, however, had taken his reflections to a more discursive, even ideological, level. There were, as Tambling argued, universalistic overtones of history, of "elegiac sympathy" with Jan Morris' paean of empire-building ("fine balance of proportions and purposes," "standing as a model and an inspiration to its

mother China"), as Britain "departs from Hong Kong in as honourable and dignified way as possible." The legacy of Britain in Hong Kong runs "from the 'more mundane' ('investments and trade, personal connections between Hong Kong and Britain') to the 'less mundane' ('the English language') to the immeasurable ('a degree of respect, if not always affection towards Britain')" (ibid.:360). And it was the colonizer which had given Hong Kong its liberal values. As Tambling drew out the implication: "Hong Kong has been given an identity with which to identify itself" (ibid.:370).

This is colonialism reflecting on itself, on its "civilizing mission" in a "borrowed place, borrowed time." As one way to tell the Hong Kong story, it has too much Elgarian *nobilmente* to be self-congratulatory. But at the same time, as a "sociological" account, it obviously glosses over the nuances and changes in colonial governance (the "enabling framework"). Is there any truth to the notions of "synarchy," "benevolent paternalism," "benevolent authoritarianism" or "benign indirect rule"? What is the legacy of colonialism (immeasurable or otherwise) in the popular consciousness? It is obvious that we cannot settle all these issues here. What follows is thus a preliminary examination of the mode and style of governance, and the ways it impacts on the society and the local consciousness.

Colonial Governance: Parameters and Periods

There are several features of British colonialism in Hong Kong that set it apart from other colonies. At least for urban Hong Kong, since the very beginning, the transient nature of the society had been obvious. In post-modern parlance, Hong Kong was more a space of transit than a place for much of its earlier history. The Canton-Hong Kong-Macau nexus was a more important component in popular and commercial imageries than British Hong Kong. Thus for a long time (some would say up to the immediate post-war years), the colonial government was not confronted with

problems engendered by a settled population of "normalcy" proportions. With the leasing of the New Territories in 1898, the government had to deal with a more entrenched elite structure and indigenous population, with its customs and power relations. The land system was in effect transformed, often in the name of preserving traditional and customary practices (Chun 1987; 1990). But overall, unlike most colonies, there was no tribal or political differentiation and rivalries which required the colonial government to standardize, to neutralize or to arbitrate. There could be instances where the government could take advantage of rifts among the indigenous elite (see discussion of the Heung Yee Kuk incident in Chiu and Hung 1997) and achieve its state-making goals. But these instances tended to be far and between. For government or missionary goals, there were no or few racial and dialect group divisions that would invite intervention and standardization.

Secondly, the epithet "Hong Kong as a repository of China" suggests that, being close to a great standardizing civilization (or its variant in south China), the Hong Kong people are more homogenous in their cultural outlook, with values and orientations claiming, often unconsciously and in the form of cultural shorthand, long lineages and great pedigree. Colonial officers had their share in experiencing what Arthur Smith called, in the late 19th century, "Chinese characteristics": enigmatic, two-faced character, and a quiet confidence that they are superior to anything or anybody that is not Chinese. Lastly, the Canton-Hong Kong-Macau connection left a strong hybrid and commercial imprint on the society: from the very beginning, Hong Kong was full of compradors, risk-taking businessmen, adventurers and rakish characters (see Lethbridge 1969). This makeup was conducive to cultural borrowings. The Hong Kong people were adept in adjusting to and taking advantage of resources of different cultures. In this important sense, the Hong Kong people were what Hannerz called "cosmopolitans": their social relationships were less confined by territorial space, and their perspective entailed relationships to a plurality of cultures. As Hannerz put it,

cosmopolitanism is a stance towards diversity itself (Hannerz 1990:239). Whatever enabling elements British colonialism could offer, the Hong Kong people could quickly seize upon and use to their own benefits.

These are then some of the parameters, the overall context, of Hong Kong's (following Balandier) "colonial situation" (Balandier 1951). How did the government evolve its practices and policies within these parameters? In what ways, if any, did the mode and style of governance engage the society, and with what implications for the local consciousness? To answer these questions, we need to operate with a framework that sees colonialism as both a form of political rule (state-making, legitimacy-creating, etc.) and a developmental agent (infrastructural goals and societal transformation, as either by plan or by exigencies). Such a framework also needs to take into account both the self-professed goals and the actual practices. Given these considerations, I would suggest that there are three sets of goals and practices, which I would loosely call: state-building (and rebuilding), society- (or community-) making, and developmental goals. It is obvious that, in Hong Kong's colonial governance, all of them are intertwined, with some goals and practices perhaps given primacy in a specific period. Each has its own "microtime," its own speed and inertia. What follows is a broad sketch of these microtimes; tracing these microtimes is perhaps more fruitful than operating with the conventional periodization. Our aim is to see colonial governance in history and to understand how it impacted on the inter-related changes in the society and the Hong Kong experience. We will particularly pay attention to the actual practices.

The colonial government came back humbled after the Japanese occupation. There was an undermining of the British Mandarinate mentality; among other things, the 1913 Peak Residence Ordinance, restricting the occupancy of Chinese residents at the Peak, was repealed in 1946. The British had come back less confident in these post-occupation years, and they found themselves in a different world, a different international political environment (Tang 1994). As Lethbridge commented, their

performance if not their legitimacy was, as it were, put on probation (Lethbridge 1969). Here was a Chinese population that had been separated from its control during the Japanese interregnum, and there, over the footsteps, was an increasingly nationalistic China. Rapid rehabilitation and provision of gainful employment for the many who had fled to Hong Kong because of the turmoil in China lay at the heart of the then governance philosophy. Changes in the attitudes of the Administration and the exigencies (such as the 1953 Shek Kip Mei fire) imposed by the rapidly swelling population prompted measures that ranged from expansion of primary school places to political (eventually abortive) reforms. The 1950s was the decade of refugees, squatters, tenement buildings; and the incipient change, in the educational matters just as in other areas, from a hand-to-mouth mentality to a more forward-looking policy orientation, based on demographic estimates and rational projection, could be seen as developmental goals and practices that contributed also to state-/legitimacy-making.

At the same time, the victory of the Chinese communists in 1949 meant that Hong Kong was the last treaty port, the centre for what was left of the China trade, and one of the largest remaining British colonies. It was a society with great hopes and great fears; Governor Grantham likened the feeling to "living on the edge of a volcano" (Grantham 1965). But its great flux, its palpitating energy, did not fail to have an impact on the colonial officers. When a senior expatriate civil servant was asked, on the eve of his retirement, about what made him decide, in 1956, to apply for transfer from the Malayan Civil Service to Hong Kong, he said:

> When you saw Hong Kong, you realized it was the place of the future... you could see something happening, something building up, very strongly, something unstoppable. It was something new, something exciting, and I wanted to be part of it. (quoted from Hayes 1996:14)

To cope with the development, the civil service expanded rapidly: it had numbered just over 15,000 in 1948, and it grew to more than 73,000 in 1967, a five-fold increase.

Development also posed problems for other aspects of governance. First, for development purposes, the urban areas had to be put under greater control and better management. When James Hayes, a young cadet officer joining the Civil Service in 1956, was posted to the Resettlement Department in 1962, his directive stated the duties of the department as: "... to prevent any further land being occupied by squatters; to clear existing squatters from land required for development; and to plan, maintain and administer the buildings into which these squatters are cleared" (Hayes 1996:58). From Hayes' own recollections (constituting, in my view, governance at the ground level, so to say), the practical difficulties of providing sufficient housing stock for the mass influx of population in the 1950s and the early 1960s were interminable. It was estimated that the squatter population was increasing at the rate of 100,000 a year in the early 1960s. The pace of development was also remarkable: by the early 1960s, nearly half a million people were resettled in the public housing estates; by 1965, it was near 800,000.

The "problem of people" could be the *raison d'être* of the more forward-looking developmental goals and practices, but in the process, it also created problems for state-making and society-making. The clearance, the massive relocation and resiting of people and factories meant that the fabric of old communities (such as Sai Ying Pun) was torn asunder, while the public housing estates were hardly a habitat conducive to the rebuilding of a community. The social ambience was perhaps captured in this apt observation in Christopher New's novel, The Chinese Box: "Each one was a separate parcel of energy and aims, without any interest in the others, except as possible rivals." Hayes, comparing his earlier stint as District Officer, South, with his Resettlement period, said:

> I began to miss what I had left behind in the Southern District of the New Territories: not simply the strong sense of festivals, ceremonial openings... but also the

> close liaison and cooperation with government.... Our relationships with the estate populations was basically that of "minder;" and "minders," as I knew, have never been popular. Also, I... know that an apparently docile but stressed population could suddenly rise in fury. (Hayes 1996:73)

He closed with a question for himself, and for the Administration: "Was anyone aware of the danger...?" (ibid.). Law and order, public security, and a stressed population devoid of community identification and local leaders, were problems for state-making and society-making.

The "minders" syndrome pointed to something broader and more far-reaching. When Hayes arrived in Hong Kong in 1956, he found that there was much pre-war carry-over in the society. Hong Kong was still, in his view, very much a society of racial divisions and social cliques. The social circle of the expatriates was narrow and limited: "... few expatriates had more contact with ordinary Chinese beyond how much or little they got to know of their amahs' families... the lives... of those of our (Chinese) subordinates were mostly a closed book" (ibid.:9). Popular cultural representations at that time showed a similar "disembodied" character. In a study of the Cantonese and Mandarin films in the 1960s, Ian Jarvie observed that, while the latter was superficial Hollywood (some approach to the modern), the former was vaguely Chinese. But what both genres had in common was the fact that the reality of Hong Kong was often rendered irrelevant. The troubles and tragedies that visited upon residents of tenement buildings were of course dramatized in many Cantonese films (especially in the 1950s), and those realities of life did provide a basis on which plots developed, action explained, and so on. But there was little reference to housing officials, to police, or indeed to any suggestion that Hong Kong was a Crown Colony. Human drama unfolded as if in some suspended place and time, where "traditional" Chinese values, such as self-reliance, hardworking, "pulling oneself by one's bootstraps," etc., were touted and reaffirmed. These popular representations, in what they left out, just as much in what they seized upon, told us something about the Hong Kong people's allegiances and identity. Colonialism at that time had not provided an important symbolic integrative force; and the local people's values and orientations harked back to an "imaginary" China, an imaginary past, where things and relationships were more stable, and where they were not yet "contaminated" by colonialism or communism. The local consciousness was not yet feeding on local and modern resources. In one respect, colonial governance and cultural consciousness were leading separate lives.

But the relationship between state and society also underwent important changes during the development process; government and people were more engaged with each other, and often development provided the impetus, with positive implications for governance. When working in the Resettlement Department, Hayes was struck by the low rate of rent defaulting among the estate population. There was prompt settling of rent payments. He attributed this to the "generally cooperative and responsible attitude" of the residents. One could also interpret it as reflecting the residents' sense of precariousness: the journey from squatters to the public housing estate was an important part of the "long route" of security and mobility in a fiercely competitive society. One could not afford to lose public housing. Further, by paying rent to the landlord, the Government, and in utilizing its medical and educational resources, many in the population were in a sense conferring, albeit passively and unthinkingly, a legitimacy on the colonial government. Perhaps, infrastructure development, and the provision of employment and services to the public, had enabled the post-war government in the 1950s to regain some legitimacy; a legitimacy granted still largely on sufferance.

Development, or the need for development, also engendered more specific changes to colonialism, taken as a form of political rule. Outlying urban areas were incorporated, and land resumption was a prerequisite for building new towns in the rural areas. Increasingly, urban and rural interests became intertwined and came into conflict. Just as the land system and the indigenous

tenancy practices in the New Territories were transformed by the imposition of a legal and rational framework at the turn of the century (Huang 1982; Chun 1987; Chan 1996), so the rural society and its elites were incorporated and organized under the aegis of the colonial state in the 1950s. The reorganization of the Heung Yee Kuk in 1959 is a case in point: it was colonial *realpolitik* and not, as some would argue, "resuscitation" of traditional rural leadership, that lay behind the incident (Chiu and Hung 1997). From the incident ensued a mode of cooperation between the government and the rural leaders: from then on, the ruler and the governed saw eye to eye on many development issues.

This brings us to another point. *Realpolitik* and a concern (arising out of whatever reasons) with tradition among the colonized could co-exist. One could gather from Hayes' account that, in his years as expatriate officer, there were two styles of government. When he was with the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs and the District Office (in the 1950s and early 1960s), what he called the "political" departments, the keywords in his duties, and in his self-perceived needs, were "liaison," "mediation," "people-oriented," and services provision. This was government, to use his words, working *with* the people. From land resumption to squatter clearance, from New Town development to the accommodation to traditional customary practices, the key to success lay in mediation and dispute-solving. Caution and not drama was the watchword. When Hayes successfully obtained all the village land which was necessary for the building of the Shek Pik Reservoir in late 1959, he was commended by the District Commissioner, Kenneth Barnett, in these terms: "It was no small feat to acquire this land by negotiation, and I was particularly surprised and gratified to observe that you were able to arrange it without incident or adverse publicity for government." He went on: "To me, this indicates that, in spite of the hostile elements at work in the area, the Government is gaining or regaining the confidence of the people there, in that they were prepared to confine their efforts to argument and discussion with their District Officer rather than

seek outside support" (Hayes 1996:31). And Barnett was the District Commissioner during the Heung Yee Kuk incident.

This style of government was very much part of the paternalistic, indirect rule, orientations; the District Officer, especially if he happened to be a Sinophile, perceived himself as the traditional Chinese district magistrate; even the bailiff, the land demarcator and senior clerks bore resemblance to the traditional *yamen* staff. Hayes found the paternalistic orientations to be pervasive in the government and in the higher levels of the society; and the people, living a spartan life, actually "demanded" this style of governance, because of their "traditional education and cultural background" (ibid.:64). Reflecting on this early period of government, Hayes saw that: "For its part, the public seems to have accepted benevolent paternalism and the official emphasis on personal services without demur. Indeed it accorded very well with the people's wishes at that time" (ibid.:194).

Here a large body of comparative colonial studies has commented on a significant feature of colonial rule: the "construction," "idealiziation," even "fossilization," of tradition in the colonized society (Clammer 1972; Asad 1993; Chun 1990). Whether it was a matter of imposing political rule, or a matter of development exigencies, the imbalance of power in the colonial situation meant that the colonizer could selectively impose "traditional" models (of customary practices, of land tenancy, etc.) on the social structure of the colonized society, either for the purpose of state-making or for development, or both. The colonial civil servant could even more or less consciously take up the role of the *yamen* magistrate. What Hayes called "traditional education and cultural background" and the "need" for paternalistic rule is only a small part of this larger self-perceived, and often self-serving, colonial governance. More pertinent to our purpose here is the fact that such kind of governance — seen at the ground level of expatriate officers carrying out their duties — reinforced the notion of "Hong Kong as repository of China," and then conversely, "Hong Kong as the meeting place of the East and the West," "Hong Kong as offering insights on traditional China and Hong

Kong as super-modern," etc. These binaries — tradition and modernity, East and West — and their implications for our understanding of the needs and orientations of the Hong Kong people (the Hong Kong consciousness writ small) enter into what Clammer called "colonial mental apparatus," and they may not disappear with de-colonization (Clammer 1972). Indeed, they may actually be invoked for post-colonial rule. Here, we are touching on one aspect of the Hong Kong consciousness where colonial governance and its mental creations did matter. Such mental creations could be part of the "common sense" system of the Hong Kong consciousness.

Hayes also perceived another style in government work: "for" the people, rather than "with" the people. This style he found to be pervasive in the more bureaucratic departments. The emphasis lay more in information provision and in professional management. And of course, when it was not working properly, the public came up bureaucratic blank walls. For the colonial government was also a bureaucracy, accountable to other bureaucracies in Whitehall, in the Commonwealth or the United Nations. The "minders," mentioned earlier, working among the overcrowded housing population, were likely, and naturally, perceived as representing some cold, impersonal and alien rule: closed and not accountable to the public. Increasingly, as he was posted to different departments, Hayes found that this style of government was gaining the upperhand.

If we read Austin Coates' account of his office as District Officer from 1953-1955, we find an incident, which serves as an example of the intermingling of the people-oriented style and the bureaucratic style, and the real force of the latter. Skeptical of the wisdom of applying the Common Law and the usual court procedures to Chinese cases, Coates recalled a case where a rich and educated absentee landlord took the cultivator of the field to court. The cultivator was the "retainer" (which, in my view, means more often than not, long-term tenant protected by customary rights and *ganqing* with the landlord), and the son of one, of the landlord family, as with many other cases in the customary

land system in late traditional China. He had customary rights to the cultivation of the land, and he had not paid any rent to the family, which, being stationed in the city, had neglected the matter. With development and the prospect of lucrative sale of land to development companies, the landlord now wanted to evict the cultivator. Coates procrastinated in the scheduling of the hearings, and, when that became no longer possible and he had to grant the landlord the right to evict the cultivator, he came up with an ingenuous solution. The cultivator was backed by communist organizations in the New Territories (lending truth to Barnett's observation of "hostile elements"), and on the day of eviction Coates saw to it that there would be sufficient police force to confront the communist supporters and to keep law and order should the eviction provoked conflicts. But after creating this "Highnoon" situation, he dispatched his land officer to the site. The land officer was instructed to tell the landlord that the ugly incident would cause a big uproar, and there would be an international shindy between Communist China and Britain, and that the landlord had to bear the brunt of the consequences. Meanwhile, Coates arranged to have the vegetable stall permit of the cultivator's wife abrogated; the wife had been selling the vegetables from the field. In the end, the eviction did not happen. The landlord agreed to compensate the cultivator, and the latter agreed to give up the land voluntarily. This incident revealed a couple of things. Coates very much saw himself as a Mandarin. He wanted mediation to work, and, if that failed, he had another card up his sleeve. His victory, using what he called "bluffs and permits," revealed the two-sided nature of so-called "benevolent," indirect rule. Permits — implying legality and bureaucratic power — were the iron fist clad in the velvet glove of mediation and dispute-solving.

Rapid development — new domains and practices thrown up by developmental goals and practices — meant that there were myriads of ways government and people were engaged with each other. But without transparency in government, *and* with governance practices seen as bestowal of benefits, unbridled petty cor-

ruption and a climate of alienation prevailed. In a way, this was only to be expected. In a situation where little could be done without official referrals or recommendation, the instinct was to covet personal favours (often in the form of Hayes' "bearer memorandum"), and such things could always be expedited with a little money. With the expansion of developmental goals and practices in the 1960s, the government had become a major service/resource provider, and bureaucracy went hand in hand with corruption. It was only in the 1970s that state-making and society-making goals and practices were set in train to curb the practices.

When government "for the people" had become bureaucratic and even corrupt, it could not but be reflected in the popular representations of social conditions. Personal memories of the 1950s reveal quite a common sense of disaffection, even dislike, of the colonial government among the younger, more idealistic, generation (Lo 1996:62). These feelings were to coalesce with other elements and erupt during the riots in the 1960s. My point is that such feelings could only be understood in the light of a governance driven by developmental goals and practices and a style of government conducive to corruption.

But at the same time, the society had moved on. It has been documented that the earlier refugee men of letters in the 1950s often castigated Hong Kong for its atrophied culture and its commercialism. Theirs was a discourse of exile, a quest for the culture of origins (Ho 1995). But authors in the 1960s turned to specific themes and problems unique to Hong Kong. Liu I-she's novel, *The Imbiber* (1963), was at one level a scathing portrayal of a society enamoured of money-making and a people who not just tolerated, but indeed appreciated, a little craft in the successful. There already emerged literary icons of a city unashamedly materialistic and commercial. More significantly, a new generation of young people came on the scene. In 1965, half of the population was under the age of twenty-one. They could not recall a China at first hand. They were more than at one remove from the Chinese past, and perhaps even from the early refugee hardship. Lo's semi-autobiographical study of the literary weekly *The Chinese Student Weekly* (*Zhongguo xuesheng zhoubao*) reveals a young generation more under the influence of Western ideas and customs and of emergent diverse lifestyles. The discourse of exile in the 1950s was giving way to a search for the modern, and a search for the "authentic" China.

In the late 1960s, there emerged a tide of Cantonese "youth" movies. These movies had a great appeal to the factory girls, the clerks and the students. One film critic observed that a common thread in these films was the eventual triumph of the individual (in particular, the young heroine and her lover) over dire conditions (class differences in the star-crossed lovers, family hardship, oppressive factory regime, etc.). "Traditional" family values were still touted, but the emphasis was on the individual: the young factory girl could overcome class and family domination with wit and youthful vigour (Law 1996). But there also began a search for the "authentic" China. In Lu Qishi's short story entitled *The Gift*, the female protagonist went with her friends to look for a gift in Tsimshatsui. She was appalled and disgusted by those gaudy (Matthew Turner's "ersatz design": cheap, derivative, culturally diffused) Hong Kong-made souvenirs sold as authentic Chinese handicrafts to tourists. As the story unfolded, it transpired that she was longing for her boy friend who had returned to mainland China. She, however, lacked the courage to join him (Ho 1995). Unlike the "disembodied" subjectivity of the 1950s (the harking back to an imaginary China), the search for "authentic" China in the 1960s began from Hong Kong itself; unlike the early émigrés, the young generation did not, despite alienation and cultural disorientation, avert its eyes from the local conditions.

The search for the modern and for the "authentic" China in the 1960s thus was also a search for Hong Kong's own identity. In many ways, it was a search by the predominantly young population for some moorings in a society which was socially and ideologically at sea. Colonialism did not provide positive integrative symbols; if anything, it had heightened — via its development, achievements, corruption and bureaucracy — the ambivalence, the love-hate syndrome. One young writer put it this way:

> Those foreigners who pass through Hong Kong and stay for a longer while — I wouldn't believe they would not have developed a degree of disgust for the society.... As for myself, I think my own disgust has probably gone: I am worried that being inside me for so long, this feeling has become tired with itself, and has turned into a numb, gnawing and hidden feeling.... Were it possible, then let me hate this land more violently. If not, then let it reveal its beauty to me.... (Xiao 1997:60; my translation)

Disaffection and (the need for) commitment were intertwined and expressed in a kind of *angst* perhaps unique to youth.

The 1966 Kowloon riots could thus be seen in the context of a seething young population, full of expectations and confusions; a population, as Chaney and Podmore put it, caught between the new and old, the modernizing and the traditional, school and home, and aspirations which could not be contained by the economic rationality of the elite (Chaney and Podmore 1973). There was some truth to the characterization of the riots as "spontaneous and uncoordinated" in the official inquiry report. On the other hand, the search for an "authentic" Chinese identity was given a political dimension in the 1967 riot. This was the first politicization of cultural differences: the differences between the local, atrophied and "inauthentic" culture and the "authentic" (equally imaginary) revolutionary Chinese culture. The impact on the society, in particular on the younger generation, was three-fold. First, the conflicts pointed to Hong Kong as a distinct entity; local social issues and conditions were the focal point. Secondly, the riots left many equally disaffected with the communist ideology and the leftist elements in Hong Kong. Thirdly, there grew a deliberately non-ideological view of life among some young people. A piece entitled "The San Po Kong View of Life" (San Po Kong being the factory area where the 1967 riots began) could perhaps convey some of the underlying orientations. It was written by an editor of *The Chinese Student Weekly*, right after the beginning of the 1967 riots, and it reported the moving of the newspaper office to San Po Kong. The riots had moved to the city centre, and the writer was

astounded to find the routine, everyday life order, of the factory area restored so quickly. His observations led him to discover, as part of that order, a special life attitude among the young factory men and women. He overheard an exchange in the bus, and the phrase — as joke, as epigram — cropped up: "Money is earned for spending; the world is earned for watching" (Xiao 1997:50; my translation). This phrase summed up, in the writer's view, the attitude to work and to life among the young labourers. It was a down-to-earth, hardworking attitude, as those who understood hardship knew only too well that money had to be earned. Its orientation to the world and to life was part instrumental and part playful (money is for spending and the world is a spectacle), partaking both youthful hedonism and earthy forbearance in similar proportions. The writer believed that it was this life orientation that helped to restore order in San Po Kong. In it he found a sense of pride, and a source of hope. San Po Kong became a symbol of the collective energy and vitality of the society itself. He asked himself at the end: "Who has earned San Po Kong?" He answered: first and foremost, the young factory men and women; then, the owners of the cottage factories, and only lastly, the government which had maintained law and order.

I find in this article a documentary-cum-literary attempt to forge some collective symbols — in the midst of the 1967 riots — of the Hong Kong people; it was the people who experienced the toil and appropriated the achievements. On the one hand, we have observations of the industriousness and resilience of the workers and the factory owners; young men and women attending night schools and part-time studies was a common sight. On the other hand, we have literary allusions to the underlying subjectivity of the people, with their worldly orientations more often than not reflected only in epigrams, jokes and vernacular wisdom. There was a search for the Hong Kong identity and in that article, the writer thought he had found where it lay. The notion of a "People," the Hong Kong people, was formed in these cultural strivings, and came with it a non-discursive, or non-ideological, representation of its subjectivity. It was perhaps just work, money,

and the spectacle of men and manners, but it was also a fun-loving, optimistic spirit born out of hardship and insecurity; and it shied away from high-sounding, lofty ideals and utterances.

The society had thus, largely on its own — at further remove from China, imaginary or in the concrete form of bombs — evolved new and distinct collective representations. It had done so largely without regard to colonialism. The disaffections for colonialism (that numb and gnawing feeling) had not turned into violent hatred, and they had not escalated into an ideological and/or political critique of colonial rule.

The colonial government was also changing. In 1970, a political scientist wrote of the Hong Kong public in this way: they are willing subjects of a foreign government, but little more. To Hayes, the riots confirmed his earlier fear: there was the danger of community dislocation and public security. He said:

> Back in 1967, the popular support forthcoming at the time of the disturbances had, so to speak, "legitimized" the colonial government. Though promising enough for hopes of continuing stability and of developing a more up-to-date "government-people" relationship, the new phenomenon has to be viewed against the realities of the time.... Short of a major shift in public attitudes towards Hong Kong, there could not be any thought of it as home, nor any sense of a shared identity or public spirit among its residents. (Hayes 1996:278)

In 1968, just after the riots, the Hon. Mr Dhun Ruttonjee made a plea to the Governor in these terms:

> In Hong Kong last year, we found ourselves more of a community than ever before. The real people of Hong Kong wonderfully, even heroically, made it quite clear just where their loyalties lay; or perhaps, Sir, I would be more accurate to say where their loyalties did not lie.... We have, and have had for some time, a golden opportunity to bond together this wonderful community of ours... an opportunity to show the people of Hong Kong that it has a government which really cares for the man in the street... the single most important issue that faces us today... is a matter of leadership. (Wu 1973:348)[1]

Colonial legislators and officers saw that something needed to be done (to bond the people) as "things will never be the same again." In the aftermath of the riots, the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs was changed to Secretariat for Home Affairs; "colony" was gradually replaced by "territory"; a few years later, the Colonial Secretary was changed to Chief Secretary. That these "cosmetic" changes happened in this period may signify that there was an incipient seachange in colonial governance and its discourse.

More significant than those cosmetic changes, the government tried, in Hayes' account, to combine the increasingly bureaucratic "for the people" style of government with the "with the people" style. The City District Office (CDO) scheme beginning in 1969 was an attempt in this direction. It had liaison, mediation, dispute-solving high on its agenda; the aim was to engage and work with the people. But the sheer amount of work, and perhaps bureaucratization, soon overtook these aims, and the CDO, like its earlier kindred, the Public Enquiry Unit, became in the eyes of the public an information provider, a coordinator of civic campaigns, etc. (Hayes 1996:196). To the government, the scheme was to tackle the "problem of communication" (while the frantic infrastructure building in the 1950s was a response to the "problem of people"). However, many of the City District Officers were young Hong Kong Chinese, and they might have been seeing and experiencing something of the "San Po Kong" spirit in their bailiwick. In other words, steps were taken, perhaps unwittingly, to build up communities.

These society-making goals and practices came to a heady start in the era of the MacLehose leadership in the 1970s. In providing a new blueprint, a "new deal," for the society, the underlying assumption in the official discourse was that the people had become more expectant of their government. This came out clearly in MacLehose's major policy speech in 1972. The various civic campaigns together with the improvement in the facilities

and conditions of the public housing estates gradually galvanized the community's energies and, in turn, fostered a notion of civic identity, if not a sense of belonging. Developmental goals and practices were also moving apace. In 1971, the goal of compulsory primary education was achieved, and, by 1978, free education was extended to nine years. The cross-harbour tunnel was opened, and the mass transit railway system was drafted. The 10-year housing plan aimed to provide public housing for 1.8 million people. The official self-perceived goals came out clearly in the review/leader articles in the government annual reports of these years: "A Better Tomorrow" (1973), "The Community: a Growing Awareness" (1974), "A Social Commitment" (1975). In retrospect, the government, through its developmental and society-making goals and practices, did project an image of a committed, caring and efficient government. The "moral entrepreneur" spirit in which the ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) was set up in 1974 was perhaps the pinnacle of those efforts. For the first time, the colonial state was providing some direction for the society, as if it was saying that there were yardsticks other than gainful employment or a roof over one's head to assess its performance or legitimacy. The *ad hoc*, forced-by-exigencies, pragmatic, problem-solving style of governance was working towards higher, loftier benchmarks. There is no gainsaying that these changes were autonomously undertaken by the government; much was also a result of popular demands and mass movements. The Chinese as Official Language campaign was particularly a case in point. But the situation then was that things were a far cry from the times when "people" was the problem. In the official discourse, "people" now became an asset; it was the people, robust and resilient, who responded to challenges and rose above adversity. In this way, we can interpret the *sine qua non* of the 1970s, "Hong Kong Is My Home," as a result of the convergence of the official discourse and the "San Po Kong" spirit. This local consciousness was part-induced, and part-self-developed. Colonial governance in the 1970s, especially in terms of its developmental and society-making goals and practices, did have a bearing on the evolution of the distinct Hong Kong identity.

The identification with Hong Kong meant that the realities of the society itself had become the focus of many forms of cultural representations. The sordid side of a society caught in a "catch as catch can" mentality, in what Banfield called "amoral familism" ("maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise") was made the subject matter of many Cantonese movies. Prostitution, gambling, corruption, etc., in the society itself provided the plot devices for the cinema. Here is what Jarvie observed of the film "The Call Girls" (1972):

> The poor are forced into prostitution; the rich patronize it; the triads live off it; the beautiful and the lazy find it an easy way to turn a buck. Money is at the root of much evil; but so also are unforgiving moral codes and institutionalized hypocrisy. (Jarvie 1977:99)

The film drew its resources from Hong Kong and its experience alone; its allusions and references were contemporary and unashamedly modern. One could find other examples from poetry and literature (see Luo 1995).

The 1970s also saw the growth and "hegemony" of the TV culture. Whereas in the 1960s, prime TV time slots were filled with dubbed serials imported from the West, from the mid-1970s onwards, locally-made TV soap series dominated. It resulted in the standardization of mass culture, as the whole society was eagerly waiting for the next episode of the TV drama series, or talking about the Miss Hong Kong beauty pageant (Chan 1995:84). Chan pointed out that the soap series was characterized by what he called "palm print plots." The stories could be read like the prints on one's palm. The life line was usually about refugee dislocation and final reunification; the career line was the "from rags to riches" kind, with tycoons often retaining grassroots sentiments; the romance line was more complex, with one's lover often turning up as the daughter or son of one's enemy (ibid.:85). In these plots, refugee society was still a backdrop, but the other elements

— the upward mobility, the stock market, etc. — converged towards the formation of an indigenous, localized and self-sustaining subjectivity. TV mass culture signified a society that had come of age, a society that had not forgotten its refugee background, but had forged something new out of it.

The developmental and society-making goals and practices in the 1970s had in many ways transformed the society. It was towards the late 1970s that a new direction in the state-making goals and practices was embodied in regionalization of administration, in reforms in the New Territories administration and, finally, in the introduction of District Board elections. Hayes characterized the change as from benevolent authoritarianism to wider consultation and a concern with achieving consensus government (Hayes 1996:281).

But the larger changes in China were also catching up with the society. China's "open door policy" since 1979, and Hong Kong's industrial restructuring, resulted in the resiting of many industrial enterprises in the south China region. Economically, Hong Kong was increasingly integrated into China. Socially, the local, introverted consciousness was given a symbolic legal-political seal of approval: the "touch base" policy was put into effect in 1980, by which all illegal Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong would be immediately repatriated back to China. Culturally, Hong Kong's popular culture held its sway over an increasingly affluent and consumption-conscious China. With the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the gravitational pull of 1997 began. To some, the Joint Declaration "punctured the image of a caring consultative government. Hong Kong people had been excluded from talks which affected their entire future" (Jones 1997). But the introduction of direct elections to the Legislative Council, and the empowerment of the autonomy of Legislative Council (especially its power to compel government officials to give evidence under oath), also wrought important changes in the local consciousness. One important change was the emergence of the discourse of law. As Carol Jones argued,

> ... after the Joint Declaration, talk of law became more widespread than at any other time in the colony's history. It was stimulated by every meeting of the Joint Liaison Group, every discussion about the Basic Law Drafting Committee, the events in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, the enactment of a Bill of Rights in 1991, the trials of Chinese dissidents, reports of how lawless and dangerous a place China was.... (Jones 1997)

The culture of petitions and demonstrations in the 1980s involved, as Margaret Ng noted, "a process of mental and cultural reshuffling" among the Hong Kong people (quoted in Jones 1997). To the amorphous "San Po Kong" spirit, and to the larger "Hong Kong is our Home" syndrome, was added a more discursive narrative (discourse of law, of rights, etc.) and its associated criteria and benchmarks.

Here, we have more or less come full circle. Patten's "enabling framework" and sixteen benchmarks were the latest chapter in the elaboration of this discourse of governance. If the 1970s saw the convergence of local consciousness and government-induced community-building, then the last years of colonial rule witnessed the coming together of state-remaking (Patten's political reforms, the emphasis on rule of law, etc.) goals and local identity. The Hong Kong consciousness in the 1990s is an "over-determined" entity. In addition to its "common sense," its collective memories, there are also more systematic, discursive elements: rule of law, democratic rights, and some variant of Chinese nationalism.

Conclusion

Does this make the Hong Kong story easier to tell? Probably not. But then the Hong Kong consciousness is a contested terrain, with the powerful trying to impose narratives, and the powerless responding with mocking cynicism. In a way, Lui Tai-lok is right: the Hong Kong story is difficult to tell. But he could be right for the wrong reason. To Lui, the reason lies in the characteristics of the Hong Kong consciousness: its amoral individualism and, thus,

its inability to partake of larger concerns when opportunities offer themselves and when the conditions more or less dictate them. I take a more sympathetic view. It is true that amoral individualism (an argument to which Lui and I worked on in our collaboration) runs deep in the Hong Kong ethos. But there are also other elements. The conceptual binaries reinforced by colonial governance are an example. For instance, the idea that Hong Kong is the meeting place between East and West is very much an ingrained element in people's self-perceived identity and their image of the society. That the severance from mainland culture, from tradition, has largely deprived Hong Kong culture of stronger roots does not preclude the need to examine a wider spectrum of cultural representations. The dissemination of Chinese culture through *The Chinese Student Weekly* is perhaps a good place to start. But more importantly, if the above account of governance and culture amounts to anything, then it should sensitize us to, perhaps not the reality, but at least the possibility of a more self-reflective and discursive way of structuring the local consciousness. It may not be a discourse of politics (although some would say that the writing is on the wall), but the changes in the 1980s and 1990s do, I think, suggest a concern with larger issues, an articulation of hopes and ideals which are pertinent to government and people alike.

As for Ng Chun-hung, it should be clear now where my gripe lies. Colonial governance did matter to the evolution of the local consciousness. It could be the reason for disaffection; through its developmental goals and achievements, it could win legitimacy on sufferance; in its society-building efforts, it helped to foster civic identity and it helped to write the Hong Kong success story, a strong collective memory of the people. And lastly, in its final years, it introduced discursive elements into the local consciousness.

Perhaps there is no need to counter the argument that Hong Kong is a "cultural desert." But it is worth recalling these words by Hughes:

> Whenever some group of people have a bit of common life with a modicum of isolation from other people, a common corner in society, common problems and perhaps a couple of common enemies, there culture grows. (Hughes 1961:28; quoted from Hannerz 1992:62)

Hong Kong people have for a long time been in a "common corner." And it is one of the purposes of this paper to see what "government and people" have done to that corner.

Note

1. I am grateful to Carol Jones for drawing my attention to Wu's study.

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Colonial Governance and the Hong Kong Story

Abstract

This paper attempts to take stock of some of the discursive responses to the return of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Faced with this critical moment in history, these discourses have a common concern to place Hong Kong — its life and times, its "whence and whither" — in a larger cultural, historical and political milieu, whether these milieux are traversed in one's biographical ruminations, or in more scholarly treatises. As attempts to recount the Hong Kong story, these discourses have provided different constructs of the Hong Kong consciousness. This paper aims to contribute to this literature by focussing on the relations between colonial governance (as ideology and as mode of practice) and the evolution of the local society and the local consciousness. The post-war development of the goals and practices of the colonial government is sketched, and the impact of governance on the changing contours of the society and its collective representations is discussed. It is argued that the gamut of local attitudes only makes sense when it is placed in the ambit of colonial governance, and that any attempt to recount the Hong Kong story could ill afford to neglect recounting the colonial story.

殖民統治與香港故事

黃偉邦

（中文摘要）

在香港主權回歸中國的前後，香港社會出現了爲數不少有關香港經驗、香港故事的論述。一方面，這些論述肯定了香港作爲一個主體有其本身的特質、其故事有娓娓動聽的趣味。另一方面，這些論述在著眼點和結論方面的不一致性，也反映出香港的故事還是一個未完的故事。細說香港故事是一種本土意識的表現和發展，也是在一個大的文化、政治環境和傳統中，將香港定位和思索香港的未來。本文的立足點，在說明香港的本土意識，不可以也不可能脫離殖民統治模式或中國的影響來討論。文章嘗試理解殖民統治和本土意識的關係，以此來重新檢視戰後香港故事的脈絡。殖民統治對香港意識的影響是複雜的、是有其歷史性的。愈接近「九七」，殖民統治的意識的論述性愈強，其對民間社會的契合關係也愈形複雜。對一般學者將香港意識說成是犬儒個人主義、對意識形態性強的論述有抗拒，或將香港意識看成和殖民政治兩不相關的現象等觀點，本文都有一些保留。