

Who Controlled the Public Health? Municipality, Government Administration and Kai-Fong Committees in Early 20th Century Hong Kong

Shingo Kobori, *Kyoto University*

Historically, Hong Kong have suffered from a variety of infectious diseases many times. One of the fastest was bubonic plague from 1894 to 1923. Historians who studied public health problems in Hong Kong tried to reveal how Chinese communities reacted to administrative measures by the Government. However, recent studies of colonial history have been focusing on how colonists conflicted with each other and compared their imperial systems with others or how indigenous people tried to utilize the “modernity” to achieve their rights.

After the epidemic of bubonic plague in 1894, Hong Kong Government enhanced their power to control the public health. It burdened property owners the cost for the sanitary improvement especially providing open space in the rear of lower Chinese houses.

Although property owners required the “Municipality” in Sanitary Board and tried to put the Sanitary Administration under their own control to protect their economic interests and liberality, people who required the sanitary improvement denied the “Municipality” and claimed the government should have the responsibility both for improving the sanitary condition and for protecting the interest of all the people in Hong Kong. However, Chinese elites including both property owners and people supporting the Government Administration, cooperated with the Government to stop an “evil practice” of the dumping dead bodies in streets and formed Kai-Fong Committees.

RelicStories: Archaeological Heritage and the Reconstruction of Histories in Postcolonial Hong Kong

Cecilia L. Chu, *University of Hong Kong*

Lachlan Barber, *Hong Kong Baptist University*

This paper explores the narrative potentials of archaeological relics in the construction of competing cultural histories and territorial identities in postcolonial Hong Kong. It does so by tracing debates over the heritage value of several archaeological sites that were accidentally discovered in urban redevelopment projects in recent years. Since the transfer of its sovereignty from Britain to China in 1997, the Hong Kong SAR Government has devoted substantial resources towards conserving selective historical relics and heritage sites in the territory and reinterpreting them as symbols of its Chineseness, hearkening back to shared origins to argue for a common future of “Greater China.” Meanwhile, these very same sites have been interpreted by “localist” groups as cultural assets that underscore Hong Kong as a unique “historical-cultural place” that is connected to but may always lie outside the Chinese nation.

Part of an ongoing research project that connects discussions of cultural heritage in Hong Kong to unfolding geopolitics in the region, this paper considers two cases from different historical periods that have generated significant public interest. The first case is a set of ancient household wells dating from the Song and Yuan dynasties in Kowloon. The second is several foundation stones of colonial-era shophouses owned by a wealthy but socially marginalized Chinese woman in the Central business district. By examining the contested cultural claims and historical significance associated with each site, this paper illustrates that despite being distant material remains unconnected with the contemporary city, these unearthed relics emerge as powerful sources for narrating Hong Kong’s layered histories and for constructing divergent spatial imaginaries of territoriality and sovereignty in the present.

Historical Detour: Plunge into Artist Archive and Archival Art Practice of Contemporary Hong Kong

Vennes Cheng, *Chinese University of Hong Kong*

This research project proposes historical re-enactment by investigating the socio-political logics of and the mnemonic impulse within HA Bik-Chuen Archive. Ha (1925 – 2009) is the late artist of Hong Kong, he was known for his idiosyncratic art practice by using found and readymade objects to create. Ha's archive is an interesting site of heterogeneity with primary and modified constellations of visual materials. They encapsulate Ha's creativity and reveal social, political, and cultural facets during the city's important historical ruptures. Images or visual materials are charged with allegorical and anachronic dynamics; the staging, arranging, and rearranging of imagery channel reflections on the immediacy and expectation for the future.

Archive is a site with multi-temporality, insofar as a repository for historical materials of different periods of time. With mostly documents or text-base materials, historical or national archive is regarded as objective evidential entity for recording historical incidents chronologically, namely historiography. However, in the context of Hong Kong, a singular chronology – insofar as the colonial and postcolonial linear timeline - will only lead the study to conventionality. As the city has been undergone and currently still undergoing important historical ruptures, thus, a multiple and heterogeneous approach, be it spatial, temporal, or aesthetical proposition is exigency on the study of Hong Kong. Different from text-based historical documents, with mostly imagery collections, artist archive provides metaphorical space for constellational approach to study Hong Kong through its art and culture. Image constellation provides a wider and multiple spectrums for reflection on the past.

An American in Hong Kong: Mapping Intimacy in the Age of Exclusion

Nadine Attewell, *McMaster University*

In May 1925, a young American woman of mixed Chinese and white British descent named Sara Hing was barred entry to the United States after a two-year stay in Hong Kong. According to US immigration officials, Hing's recent marriage in Guangzhou to Hong Kong medical student Arthur Rumjahn, a Muslim man of "half Chinese and half East Indian blood," had expatriated her, a finding she challenged successfully in court. (The couple had been married according to Muslim protocols, which her lawyer claimed – probably erroneously – were not legally binding in China.) In this paper drawn from my current book project, I ask what the US immigration case files of Hing and her three sisters can tell us about the colonial, transborder, and transimperial infrastructures of (dis)connection that shaped early-twentieth-century Hong Kong as a site of encounter for people from around Asia and elsewhere. The Hings' transoceanic itineraries point to the need for scholarly frameworks that can account for Hong Kong's embedding in *multiple* geographies of mobility, belonging, and attachment: Sinophone, imperial, Muslim, transpacific, diasporic, and white settler. This is all the more important since the Hing women made active use of the differences between them to secure rights and other goods as subjects made vulnerable by their gender and race (in ways that sometimes proved injurious over the long term). In the paper, I argue that *Ex Parte Hing* changes – or should change – how we think about minority community history in Hong Kong. But I also emphasize the irreducible particularity of Sara Hing's choices and actions, which her immigration case file, in its violence and partiality, cannot fully explain. What kinds of analytical and narrative practices will allow us to do justice to this particularity while attending to what is significant about it?

Chinese Identities in Twentieth-Century Hong Kong

Matthew Foreman, *Northwestern University*

Studies of social and political conflict in colonial Hong Kong, while having highlighted the important interaction between the British colonial state and the colonized local Chinese population, have overlooked the extent to which interethnic contestations in Hong Kong were crucial in not just influencing colonial policy, but in shaping a distinctive “Hong Kong” identity. As such, the dominant scholarly focus has fallen on two tropes: escaping the British-colonizer/colonized-Chinese dyad, and the exclusive “social worlds” of specific ethnic communities. Applying Emma Teng and Engseng Ho’s “Inter-Asian” framework to the study of racial thought in Hong Kong, this paper bridges the gap between the two historiographical traditions by emphasizing Hong Kong identity as being constituted by a “web” of transregional interaction in a shared social space. Focusing on the debate in 1902 over the possible appointment of the Eurasian Robert Ho Tung as the Chinese representative on the Legislative Council, the paper analyses racial identity in Hong Kong as a product of its proximity to China, its status as a British colony, and its place as a regional and global hub. It argues that treaty-port identities should be framed in terms of a “web” of intersecting and contesting ideas. Examining diverse interpretations of Chinese representation and what it meant to be Chinese for different people allows us to interrogate the global influences on sociopolitical identity without falling into the British-Chinese binary. “Hongkong-ness” was and continues to be defined by contesting pluralities that cannot be reduced to signifiers like “Chinese” or “British.”

Entangled Empires: Reframing 1970s Hong Kong with the Vietnam War

Yiwen Liu, *Simon Fraser University*

Hong Kong 70s' has never attracted so much scholarly attention. As an important temporal anchor to imagine the city's past, present and future, the 1970s is commonly referenced as the beginning of Hong Kong's local awareness. While this framing of the 70s' rightfully highlights the local achievements, it risks romanticizing independence as isolation from other places and limiting decolonial possibilities to a choice between the British colonialism and Chinese authoritarianism. Following scholarship with an emphasis of transnational entanglement (Chi-kwan Mark, Laura Madokoro, Priscilla Roberts, and Odd Arne Westad), my paper maps Hong Kong 70s' back onto the long history of imperial wars in Asia. Specifically, this paper examines the local responses to the British accommodation for US military personnel on Rest and Recreation leave (the late 1960s) and Hong Kong's shifting attitudes towards the Vietnamese refugee crisis (mid-1970s and 1980s). Through showing that Hong Kong's local histories have always been part of the Vietnam War, I argue that Hong Kong has been a sufferer of and rebel against *entangled empires*—an intertwining system facilitated not only by British and Chinese major powers but also American imperialism and French colonialism. This paper reveals that not only these major powers compete with each other at the expense of local lives, such powers also feed on each other by sacrificing local experiences.

Transnational “Rice Serving with Television”: Hong Kong Cantonese Pop Culture and its Connection with Singapore and Malaysia

Ka Lee Wong, *University of Southern California*

The popular saying in Cantonese, “serving rice with television” was originated from the 1970s, which marks the beginning of the golden era in Hong Kong Cantonese television culture. This saying captures the extent of ordinary people’s attachment to the free television broadcast in their daily life before Hong Kong’s economy took off. Also, it rang true to Singaporean and Malaysian Sinophone audience, yet for more than just a class-specific reason: Hong Kong’s Cantonese television shows are sources of cultural and linguistic connections to their “Chinese” roots in ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse Singapore and Malaysia, where local “Chinese” popular media was less vibrant in the 1970s. This chapter interrogates how Hong Kong’s Cantonese popular culture becomes a part of Singaporean and Malaysian Sinophones’ everyday life in the 1970s. First, I explore the ways that its transnational media flow is facilitated by the infrastructure built by private corporations, chiefly Shaw Brothers, to connect the entertainment industries in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore since the 1920s. Then, I look into a critical moment in the late 1970s, when the dominance of Hong Kong Cantonese popular culture in Malaysia and Singapore was interrupted by the Singaporean’s government’s policy to ban all “Chinese dialects” including Cantonese in mass media. Rather than signaling an immediate end of the circulation of Hong Kong’s Cantonese popular culture in the Southeast Asian countries, I argue that Singaporean and Malaysian Sinophones’ reactions to the ban, which include not just affective oppositions against the ban but also bottom-up efforts to actually bypass it, map out a network of transnational community informed by a deep emotional attachment to Hong Kong’s Cantonese popular culture.

A Historical Perspective on the Process of Creating Hong Kong's Identity

Malgorzata Osinska, *Jagiellonian University*

Since 1997 researchers are observing a growing number of Hong Kong (HK) youths, who describe themselves as Hongkongese rather than Chinese (Shui-fong Lam, Ivy Lau, Chi-yue Chiu, Ying-yi Hong). The aim of this paper is to explore and understand the process of creating of the identity of HK people as a result of a complex historical processes in the relation to the city and to significant others, Great Britain and China. The theoretical framework of my research includes issues related to the concepts of humanistic approach to the city (U. Hannerz, A. Wallis, F. Znaniecki) in relation to the processes of identity creation (J. Turner, E. Ardener, B. Parekh, E. Leach). I conducted 29 qualitative interviews with opinion leaders from HK. Interviews were supplemented with city walks and drawings of HK maps (image of the city, K.Lynch). These methods allowed me to check the validity of a theoretical approach in which identity is presented as a process that has two dimensions: symbolic representation and meaningful actions of the citizens, therefore I was interested in exploring the city to look for symbolic places, buildings where people are willing to take meaningful actions. Findings confirmed that the identity of HK people is primarily the result of the process of dialogue that is happening not only among HK people but within the landscape and built environment of the city itself.

Sung Wong Toi as Symbol

Helena Wu, *University of Zurich*

As a rock, a site, a memorial tablet, Sung Wong Toi (Song Emperor's Terrace) was a popular chanting object among many émigré-literati who fled to Hong Kong from continental China during political turbulences. Since the late Qing dynasty, cultural visits, literary works and historical investigation had transformed the rock into a meaningful place by way of intersubjective experiences, collective memories and affective imagination. These events partaken by figures such as Chen Botao (1855-1930), Lai Chi-hsi (1856-1937), Kan Yau-men (1896-1978) and Jao Tsung-I (1917-2018) not only valorized and mediated the Terrace on different levels, but also reflected the frames employed to represent Hong Kong and situate their Hong Kong experiences with respect to historical, cultural and political projections that evolved with time.

With an eye to how the concept and the identity of yimin (remnants of the past) found expression in and with the Terrace, the study aims to interrogate the locality of Hong Kong and map out the preliminary formation of the local amidst the contesting powers triangulated in the local-colonial-national network. By examining the activities of selected 'admirers' of the Terrace and their cultural production and consumption (Song Tai qiu chang [1917]; Sung Wong Toi: A Commemorative Volume [1960]) as an outcome, the paper by unpacking the multiple positionings and interpretations of yimin in 20th-century Hong Kong explores the fabrics of local and national belonging (as well as their disconnections) and the entangled identities, worldviews and affinities as responses to the city's transforming social, political and cultural landscape.

American and British Communities in Hong Kong during the Civil War

Thomas Larkin, *University of Bristol*

In 1862, shortly after the outbreak of the American Civil War, U.S. Consul to Hong Kong Horace Congar reported to the U.S. Secretary of State that the British at Hong Kong, aiming to destroy American shipping, had been circulating rumours of Confederate Steamers operating in the Indian Ocean and the China sea. Throughout the Civil War the port's American community echoed Congar's concerns in local newspaper editorials and letters home, commenting not only on the potential for lost business, but the spitefulness of their British neighbours. Congar's letter represents one of a series of flashpoints that necessitate drawing the specific context of mid-nineteenth century Hong Kong into a broader discussion of transnational and local politics, racial and cultural ideas, and internecine rivalries. I explore how tensions among Hong Kong's British and American communities stemmed, in part, from the political relationships between their countries, and their countries' respective interests in China. In many respects, Hong Kong instilled a sense of solidarity in its white foreign community based on globally circulated ideas of race and culture, and a sense of commonality in their political and commercial goals. Its foreign residents remained tethered, however, to their home countries; domestic news about conflicts, rivalries, and political incidents had a way of filtering into the port, variously affecting social cohesion, local politics, and commerce. Hong Kong thus provides an apposite space to question both the power of colonial societies to assimilate diverse ideas and people, and the extent to which these societies shaped and was shaped by transnational contexts.

'The Excitement of the Moment': 1966 and the Coming of Age of Hong Kong's Political Awareness

Gemma O'Neill, *University of Bristol*

As a defining moment in Hong Kong's history, the 1966 'Star Ferry' riot has been overshadowed by the leftist disturbances that took place a year later. Earlier violent protests and riots, such as the 1956 Flag Riot, were, like 1967, also directly linked to the politics of mainland China, and arguably had little to do with life in Hong Kong itself. The events of 1966, and the speed of the Government response, for example in announcing a Commission of Inquiry into their causes, shows just how unprecedented such an event was in supposedly politically apathetic Hong Kong.

This paper will argue that the motivations and manifestations of the Star Ferry Riot places Hong Kong within the 'shorthand' of global 1968 political consciousness. A riot that ostensibly began as a protest against rising public transport costs ultimately incorporated grievances against police and government corruption, and colonialism more generally. Perhaps most importantly it came to represent the first time that participants appeared to reject the Communist/Kuomintang divide seen in previous flashpoints, and instead focused their demands on local politics, rights and values. This paper will explore the idea that an event, in this case the 1966 Star Ferry riot, and its aftermath, had a profound impact on the emergence of local political consciousness in Hong Kong.