Chinese Culture in the Hong Kong Curriculum: Heritage and Colonialism

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In their introduction to *Education and the Colonial Experience,* Gail P. Kelly and Philip Altbach point out that, while "what those who ran [colonial] schools wish to have them accomplish . . . was to assist in the consolidation of foreign rule,"[1] there were yet many different faces, strategies, and consequences to colonial education. The relationship between the culture of the colonizer and that of the colonized has not been everywhere a simple one of imposition and submission. If, in many societies, the indigenous culture withered under colonial rule, in others, native tradition or certain strands of it might thrive or revive under colonial sponsorship or stimulation.

This article shows how British administrators and Chinese educators in Hong Kong have selectively used Chinese cultural heritage in the curriculum. While it honors the cultural heritage and transmits the sense of Chinese identity, the curriculum also fosters the sense of being at the periphery of both the Chinese and the Western worlds—which, no doubt, assists the consolidation of outside rule.

Chinese Culture and Curriculum

In traditional China, culture was an unself-conscious experience. Traditional schooling had no subject, "Chinese culture," but, rather, those cultural components that the literati considered the most important constituted the entire curriculum.

In terms of book learning, there were four branches that represented the largest literary collection of the preindustrial world: the Confucian canon, the histories, the noncanonical thinkers, and belles lettres. Traditional literati memorized the most important texts of each branch, practiced the *qin* zither, *weiqi* chess, calligraphy, and painting, and mastered writing conventional forms of prose and poetry. Life in a family- or clan-centered agricultural society, organized according to the principles of the Confucian

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[1] Gail P. Kelly and Philip Altbach, *Education and the Colonial Experience,* 2d rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1984), p. 1.

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thinkers and lessons from the Histories, revolving around the imperial court and the court-appointed officialdom of gentry and literati, set the context for learning.[2]

Education in the traditional *sishu* school began with two years of literacy training, proceeded to the memorization of prescribed texts from the Confucian canon, and culminated in long years of drill to perfect the "eight-legged" essay style required for the imperial examinations that led to the coveted status of degree holder and government official. Little else was imparted in traditional schools. By the nineteenth century, a sizable proportion of all males (and some females, too) had the opportunity to receive the first two to three years of a *sishu* education.[3]

When education undertook full-scale modernization in response to Western encroachments by installing, in the first decade of the twentieth century, a modern school system imported from Japan, the place of Chinese culture in the prescribed curriculum became problematic.[4] Previously suffused throughout the curriculum, it suddenly became the odd piece out among a dozen alien subjects. Policymakers during the last decade of the empire and the first decades of the republic made self-conscious and often psychologically defensive efforts to give Chinese culture a place of honor to compensate for its reduced scope.[5] Chinese culture subjects were to impart not only knowledge but also to cultivate a sense of national identity to salvage whatever possible of the literati elite culture, and to maintain traditional morality. This was a tall order, often self-contradictory, under the recurrent motto: "Chinese learning for the essence; Western learning for practical application."[6]

Chinese culture was divided into two new subjects at the secondary level: national literature (Chinese language and literature) and national history (Chinese history). The latter was often a part of the broader subject of history, but treated distinctly from history of foreign nations.[7] Texts from the Confucian canon was a third subject, although it did not survive in the official curriculum, and it was the cause of intense controversy

[2] Chen Dongyuan, *Zhongguo jiaoyu shi* (A history of Chinese education) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1937), pp. 416–22.

[3] Bernard Luk, "The Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China," *Orientations* (March 1982), pp. 20–29; Evelyn Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), chap. 2.

[4] Sally Borthwick, *Education and Social Change in China: The Beginnings of the Modern Era* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), chap. 4.

[5] Zhang Zhidong, Zhang Boxi, and Rong Qing, *Xuewu gangyao* (Outline of education policy) (1904), reprinted in *Zhongguo jinshide jiaoyu fazhan (1800–1949)* (Development of education in modern China [1800–1949]), ed. Lu Hongji (Hong Kong: Wide Angle Press, 1983), pp. 123–41. This memorial to the throne formed the basis of the modern school system of China.

[6] Zhang Zhidong, *Chuan xue bian* (Exhortation to learning), in *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao* (Sources of modern Chinese history), no. 475, ed. Shen Yunlong (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, [1960s]).

[7] Pang Langhua, "Cong bijiao jiaoyu jiaodu kan zhanhou Xianggang zhongxue Zhongguo lishike de zhuangbian" (A comparative education study of the secondary school Chinese history curriculum in Hong Kong) (M.A. Ed. thesis, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1987), chap. 6.

among intellectuals and educators during the Early Republican era.[8] Those texts were integrated in national literature, which combined language, literature, philosophy, and moral education.[9]

The modern school curriculum required a selection of materials from traditional learning for the syllabi of these subjects. However, Chinese culture was so broad and complex that material could be found to support opinion on any side of an issue. Selection inevitably implies predilection, and almost every exercise during the early decades of the century led to acrimonious debates, some of which have continued to this day in various Chinese-speaking communities.[10] The debates involved the principles for selection (and the ideological assumptions behind them) as well as specific literary or philosophical texts or specific historical aspects or episodes in the official syllabi and approved textbooks. Various Chinese culture curricula were developed to suit the perceived needs of the times and of those in power. Meanwhile, rapid political and social change, even before World War II, but all the more thereafter, rendered much of traditional Chinese learning increasingly decontextualized from the daily reality experienced by students and teachers.

While a full-scale social history of the Chinese culture subjects throughout the Chinese-speaking world remains to be written, this article examines the development of these subjects in one major Chinese-speaking community, Hong Kong, under conditions of colonialism and migration.

"A Barren Island with Hardly a House upon It"

When the Chinese emperor ceded Hong Kong Island to the British crown in 1842, at the end of the Opium War, it was inhabited by a few thousand farmers and fisherfolk in a number of small villages. The British acquired the island not for its human or material resources, which were very poor, but for its strategic location and magnificent harbor. They wanted a secure base for their trade with China, to be closely linked to, rather than severed from, that vast country. It was declared a free port, and there were few restrictions to the free flow of goods, people, and ideas.[11]

[8] Mao Lirui and Shen Guanqun, *Zhongguo jiaoyu tongshi* (A general history of Chinese education) (Jinan: Shangdong Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1988), 5:126–28.

[9] Wen Wanming, "Xianggang zhongxue Zhongwenke kecheng zhuanbian" (The Chinese language curriculum in Hong Kong secondary education) (M.A. Ed. thesis, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1987), chaps. 1–3.

[10] Ibid., chap. 3; Chen Zhizheng, "Xianggang Zhongwen jiaoxue de fazhang ji xiancun de zhuyao wenti" (Chinese language education in Hong Kong: Developments and main current problems) *Jiaoyu xuebao* 15, no. 2 (December 1987): 52–59.

[11] Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), chaps. 7–9; G. B. Endacott, *A History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1964), chap. 3.

From the beginning, Hong Kong was a Chinese as well as a British colony. The British colony was backed up by the might of the British empire. It held military, political, and economic power over the territory, to organize things as far as possible to suit its needs, but its population remained small. The Chinese colonists coming to Hong Kong from the neighboring counties of south China, on the other hand, were outcasts from the Chinese empire. Their community had no military or political power, but it soon acquired overwhelming demographic weight, and very considerable commercial clout as well, with its many social, economic, and cultural links vital to the trade of Hong Kong as a whole. Both colonies shared a common aspiration with respect to economic gain and a transient attitude with regard to the territory of Hong Kong—home, to which one would return enriched, was elsewhere.[12]

From the year of cession to the beginning of the twentieth century, Hong Kong's population (the Island plus the later accretions of Kowloon and the New Territories) grew from a few thousand to some three hundred thousand. The increase consisted largely of migrants from the villages and towns of Guangdong Province of south China. Thousands on thousands of peasants, artisans, merchants, and a small number of literati converged on the new emporium to escape poverty, civil war, or bureaucratic corruption in their home districts and to seek advancement opportunities.[13] The undoubted tenure of the territory by the Chinese empire prior to the British encroachment and the relative homogeneity of language and culture of the population with its Chinese hinterland have often obscured the fact that Hong Kong had been a frontier region. It had not participated to any large degree in the Great Tradition of China and had hardly any significant relic or monument of the literati culture. The new city was a society of immigrants who had their social, economic, cultural, and religious roots still firmly implanted in their home districts, not in Hong Kong. It was not a Chinese city with its own citizens and its own civic institutions and traditions that was ceded to Britain; rather, it was a city built by Chinese colonists under British sponsorship. In this sense, it was not unlike the overseas Chinese communities of Southeast Asia. But the proximity of the home districts made travel and communications relatively easy and, hence, made the population more mobile, with closer social and economic ties, greater cultural continuity with home districts, and less sense of belonging to Hong Kong. These ties and continuities developed symbiotically with Hong Kong's entrepôt trade and made it doubly the

[12] Endacott, chap. 8; Carl T. Smith, *Chinese Christians: Elites, Middlemen, and the Church in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1985), "Introduction," and chap. 3.
[13] Smith, chap. 3.

periphery, vis-à-vis the two centers of Britain and China. This was the case for education as well as for economic and political development.[14]

Education in Nineteenth-Century Hong Kong

The vast majority of the inhabitants of nineteenth-century Hong Kong were neither born locally nor did they intend to die or be buried there. Many were, in fact, men whose families stayed in the home districts, and only a minority had children in Hong Kong. A large proportion of these children probably never went to school, although exact figures are hard to obtain. Many who did go to school in Hong Kong had part of their education there and another part in China, depending on family circumstances and where their own careers were headed.[15] In education, as in most other aspects of life, there were many connections and constant flux between the new city and its China hinterland.

Most of the children who went to school in Hong Kong attended the *sishu* for a few short years to acquire the rudiments of literacy (and sometimes also numeracy), following a centuries-old curriculum of basic education that was largely uniform throughout China.[16] Neither school nor curriculum had much, if anything, to do with the colonial situation, and both were entirely independent of the British and their culture. On completion of the course, most sought employment; a few were sent to school in Guangzhou, the provincial capital ninety miles up the Pearl River, or in other large towns of Guangdong to acquire literati culture and prepare for the imperial examinations. A few also went to British colonial secondary schools, operated by the government or by missionaries in Hong Kong, to learn English.

British educational policies in Hong Kong aimed at supplying the manpower needs of the China trade and at serving the broader interests of Sino-British economic and diplomatic relations.[17] The schools sought to produce a bilingual, bicultural elite to function as middlemen between the British traders in Hong Kong and the merchants and mandarins of China. Therefore, great emphasis was placed on students' learning Chinese as well as English in order to maintain linguistic and cultural continuity with their Chinese milieu. They were required to have a strong grounding in traditional Chinese studies before they were admitted to the colonial

[14] Ibid., chaps. 2, 6; E. G. Pryor, *Housing in Hong Kong,* 2d ed. (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 3–15.

[15] Ng-Lun Ngai-ha, *Interactions of East and West: Development of Public Education in Early Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1984), chap. 1; T. C. Cheng, "The Education of Overseas Chinese: A Comparative Study of Hong Kong, Singapore, and the East Indies" (M.A. thesis, University of London, Institute of Education, 1949), pt. 2, sec. 1.

[16] Wang Chiluo, *Xianggang Zhongwen jiaoyu fazhan shi* (A history of Chinese education in Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Po Wen Publishing Co., 1983), chap. 3, sec. 1.

[17] Ng-Lun, chaps. 3–4; Smith, chap. 3.

schools. Once admitted, they were expected to further their knowledge of the Confucian texts and refine their Chinese literary skills through Chinese lessons that formed part of the curriculum. Many of the students, in fact, continued to attend *sishu* after school hours to supplement their Chinese lessons in the Western schools.[18] In any case, they were not allowed to forget their own language and culture while learning English and acquiring knowledge in Western subjects. "Deracinated" Chinese would be of no use to the entrepôt trade. Alternatively, education entirely in Chinese or in Chinese studies would not lead to a bilingual elite and was not considered by the colonial authorities.

In spite of their Chinese lessons, the graduates of the colonial schools were not literati; they simply did not have time to devote to those areas of Chinese high culture, such as the eight-legged examination essay and social verse making, that the literati pursued with single-minded dedication. Hence, colonial-school graduates were not regarded by the literati in China as peers. Their strengths were knowledge of English and of the modern, Western subjects. They had to seek their careers outside the literati-gentry officialdom, and they formed a new class in commerce, technology, journalism, and diplomacy, and as interpreters between two languages and two cultures, either in China or in Hong Kong.[19] If an English education was vocational education in nineteenth-century Hong Kong, so could it be said that Chinese studies in the government and missionary schools had a pragmatic, more than a symbolic, value.[20] This was so not because of the specific content of the Chinese studies offered by the schools but because of their overall structure and output. As far as is known, colonial authorities did not tamper with the contents of the Chinese lessons but left them to the discretion of Chinese masters. But Chinese culture, from its status as the be-all and end-all of education for the literati in the traditional curriculum, had, in the colonial schools of Hong Kong, become one of the subjects to train aspirants to emergent professions.

One of the outlets for students of the Hong Kong colonial schools was to study further in the few new Chinese government schools in China.[21] In 1860, after having been twice defeated by Britain, the Chinese imperial government embarked on a Self-Strengthening Movement, to learn to play the diplomatic game by Western rules and to acquire Western technology for defense and transport. Projects of piecemeal modernization required personnel that the old literati education could not be expected

[18] Ng-Lun, chap. 5, sec. 2; Wang, chap. 5, sec. 1.

[19] Compare Paul Cohen, "Epilogue," in his *From Tradition to Modernity: Wang T'ao in Late Ch'ing China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[20] Compare Smith, chap. 7.

[21] For the history of these schools, see Knight Biggerstaff, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961).

to produce, and the Chinese imperial and provincial governments set up a small number of special schools of foreign languages, science, and technology to supply the manpower needs. Since very few literati or scions of gentry or official families were prepared to attend these schools and sidetrack themselves from more prestigious and gainful careers through the imperial examinations, these special schools had to recruit their students from among educated young men not intended for official careers, and many of these were graduates or senior students of the colonial schools of Hong Kong.[22] Such recruitment was watched with equanimity by the Hong Kong colonial government. When, on occasion, British merchant members of the Hong Kong Legislative Council objected to the use of local tax money to educate young men who would not then make commensurate contributions to the community, the reply of the colonial administration was that the modernization of China would help Sino-British trade and relations. If Hong Kong–educated men should become leaders in that modernization movement and, insofar as their schooling in Hong Kong had disposed them to be sympathetic to the British vis-à-vis the other foreign powers in China, that would only bring long-term advantage to British trade and to the British in Hong Kong. Many of the important figures in China's modernization efforts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centures had, in fact, benefited from schooling in Hong Kong. Some became revolutionaries and some, monarchists in their political orientation. But whether or not they, as a group, were in any way sympathetic to British interests remains an open question.[23]

And so, in education as in commerce, Hong Kong was to serve as the entrepôt for Sino-British intercourse, and producing a bilingual, bicultural elite to operate in the Hong Kong-China continuum remained the aim of the colonial curriculum in which Chinese culture had acquired a vocational aspect.

The culmination of this educational policy was the founding of Hong Kong University in 1911, through the joint efforts of the local multiracial elite, the British imperial government, and the Chinese provincial government of Guangdong across the border. The new university would enable Chinese students from China, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia to acquire a British higher education without having to travel to Britain. It sought to counter the influence of the education large numbers of Chinese students were receiving in Japan and of American missionaries who were opening several colleges in China itself.[24] Britain, which had the largest commerial interests among all the foreign powers in China, could not

[22] Ng-Lun, pp. 85–89.

[23] Ng-Lun, chap. 5, sec. 2; cf. Lennox Mills, *British Rule in Eastern Asia* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1942; reprint, New York: n.p., 1970).

[24] Ng-Lun, chap. 7.

afford to fall behind on the educational front. Chinese studies were not included in the university's curriculum because it was to be a replica of a British civic university. The students were expected, however, to have attained high standards of both Chinese and English before they were admitted, and the graduates would become the cream of the bilingual, bicultural elite in China, Hong Kong, and the British colonies of Southeast Asia.[25]

Upheaval in China and Education in Early Twentieth-Century Hong Kong

The year that saw the foundation of Hong Kong University also witnessed the outbreak of the Republican Revolution in China. The nationalistic fervor that accompanied the revolution gave rise to student agitation throughout the Chinese-speaking world. Hong Kong, which had been one of the major bases of the revolutionaries before their success on the Mainland and was also the city where a number of the revolution's leaders had been educated, had its share of agitation against foreign domination.[26] Student demonstrations led to the enactment by the Hong Kong Legislative Council of the Education Ordinance of 1913, the first legislation anywhere in the British Empire to require school registration.[27] It was aimed at curbing political activities in schools and was the first act of the colonial government systematically to have impinged on the previously uncounted *sishu* in the territory. It had no noticeable effect on the curriculum of these schools, which remained as autonomous as before. And while the ordinance sought to limit the repercussions in Hong Kong schools of political change in China, it was only partly successful. It did not, in other ways, sever or reduce the cultural or educational continuities between Hong Kong and China. In fact, during the decades before World War II, owing to improved transport and mass media and to the expansion of schooling in both places, the free interflow of teachers, students, books, and ideas across the border increased and the cultural and educational connections further strengthened. Hong Kong was as firmly as ever a periphery to two centers.[28]

As social and political conditions deteriorated in China during the 1910s and 1920s, it was neither the first time nor the last that Hong Kong served as the safe haven for the full spectrum of Chinese opinion.[29] When,

[25] Ibid., chap. 8.

[26] Endacott (n. 11 above), chap. 23; Ng-Lun (n. 15 above), chap. 8, sec. 2.

[27] Ng-Lun, chap. 6.

[28] Wang (n. 16 above), chap. 5, secs. 1–2; Bernard Luk, "Lu Tzu-chun and Ch'en Jung-kun: Two Exemplary Figures in the *Ssu-shu* Education of Pre-war Urban Hong Kong," in *From Village to City: Studies in the Traditional Roots of Hong Kong Society*, ed. David Faure, Alan Birch, and James Hayes (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University, Centre of Asian Studies, 1984), pp. 119–28.

[29] Hsu (n. 11 above), chaps. 21–22; cf. Jonathan Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* (New York: Viking, 1982), chap. 5; and Charlotte Furth, ed., *The Limits of Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 22–53.

on the Mainland, conservative literati were ridiculed and jeered in speech and in print by radical students, and labor leaders were imprisoned or publicly beheaded by warlords, many people of all classes and all hues of belief moved to Hong Kong where there was more stability and greater latitude for expression. These included some prominent literati as well as members of China's new intelligentsia, educated in the modern schools of China to succeed to and replace the old literati. Some individuals from both groups became educators in Hong Kong.[30]

Meanwhile, several different modes of education coexisted in Hong Kong without much discord—from a small number of British colonial government or missionary secondary schools to another small number of modern Chinese schools, set up more or less according to the scheme proclaimed by the Chinese government, to almost innumerable *sishu*, some with a partially modernized curriculum, some completely unreformed.[31] Many students continued to have their educational career partly in Hong Kong, and partly in China. The colonial policy of education for the entrepôt trade remained basically unchanged.

By the mid-1920s, however, that policy required some revision, and colonial authorities now made an attempt to pick and choose among different strands of Chinese culture for the curriculum. In 1925, anti-imperialist demonstrations by industrial workers and students in Shanghai, which had resulted in a massacre by British police there, soon triggered widespread protests in all major Chinese cities and culminated in a boycott and general strike in Hong Kong and Guangzhou against the British. These activities lasted more than a year and brought trade to a standstill.[32] While the strike eventually came to an end owing to the dissension and preoccupation with military affairs of the two Chinese revolutionary parties headquartered in Guangzhou (the Nationalists and the Communists), the British in Hong Kong felt greatly threatened and adopted a cultural policy that deeply affected the Chinese culture component of the curriculum.

The proponent of this initiative was Sir Cecil Clementi, a longtime administrator in Hong Kong and a scholar of Chinese folk songs, who was appointed governor of Hong Kong to deal with the crisis.[33] Clementi gave a tea party at Government House in 1927 and invited all the most senior literati then in Hong Kong, men who had held imperial examination degrees and court ranks under the now-defunct Chinese empire, who

[30] Wang, chap. 5, secs. 3–4; Cheng (n. 15 above), pt. 4, sec. 1.

[31] Wang, chap. 5; Lu Hongji, "1930-niandai Xianggang jiaoyu gaikuang" (An overview of Hong Kong education in the 1930s) in *Overseas Chinese in Asia between the Two World Wars*, ed. N. H. Ng-Lun and C. Y. Chang (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, Overseas Chinese Archives, 1989), chap. 13.

[32] Hsu, pp. 626–28; Endacott, chap. 24; Spence, chap. 7.

[33] Norman Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule, 1921–1941* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 15–20.

were alienated by the Republican Revolution and, even more, by the increasing radicalization of the new Chinese intelligentsia of the May Fourth Movement (who clamored for "Science and Democracy," "Social Revolution," and an "End to Confucianism and Feudalism"). He welcomed these dignitaries with a speech in Cantonese, extolling traditional Chinese learning and morality, emphasizing how important it was that the Chinese should treasure their ancestors' learning and live up to the ancestral moral code, rather than follow any fad from abroad. He invited them to join him in projects to interpret traditional scholarship for the younger generation so that they would know what to follow and to propagate Chinese morality and scholarship throughout the world so as to remove all barriers to understanding and friendship between foreigners and Chinese. To consolidate this common ground between the Chinese literati and the British colonial administration, Clementi promised Hong Kong government support for a Chinese Department to be established at Hong Kong University; he promised, moreover, to found a new government secondary school, whose teaching would be in Chinese, alongside the existing government and missionary schools in which classes were taught in English. This school would include a normal section to train teachers of Chinese for other schools.[34]

When these new institutions were eventually set up, the senior literati were appointed to positions of honor, profit, and influence within them as directors, teachers, or librarians. In such capacities, the literati, and their followers exerted considerable influence on the Chinese culture subjects in Hong Kong schools throughout the pre–World War II era. Although the extent of their influence is hard to estimate, they certainly did provide a counterweight to the modern-educated Chinese intelligentsia.[35] The literati cherished the view of Chinese culture as a traditionally orthodox Confucianism that emphasized hierarchy and subservience to patriarchal authority, while the intelligentsia ranged from the liberal to the Communist but shared a common nationalistic approach to things Chinese. By patronizing the literati, Clementi sought to uphold, for the Chinese people of Hong Kong and elsewhere, an approach to China and Chinese culture that would be socially credible and viable and, at the same time, provide a political alternative to the nationalistic appeal of the modern intelligentsia, the protestors, and the revolutionary parties supporting the general strike. Thus, he tried to balance Chinese cultural tradition against contemporary Chinese nationalism.

Chinese culture in the Hong Kong curriculum thus acquired a new political significance, in addition to its earlier status-symbolic and vocational-

[34] Lu Hongji, "Zhangqian Xianggang shiqu sishu jiaoyu de yi huan" (The *Sishu* in urban Hong Kong before World War II), *Jiaoyu xuebao*, 10, no. 2 (December 1982): 1–6.

[35] Ibid.; cf. Wang, chap. 6.

pragmatic values. Hong Kong, of course, was not unique in this; cultural tradition has its political uses in all modern school systems, such uses varying in direction according to the political orientation of the powers controlling the schools. In this case, appeal was made to the cultural tradition of the native people to help safeguard foreign rule against the growth of nationalistic feelings among the younger generation.[36] This was not unlike the claim to Confucian emperorship by the Manchu conquerors of China in the seventeenth century that was accepted by most of the literati; Clementi, keen student of Chinese history that he was, might have taken a lesson there.[37] But the persuasiveness of such a cultural strategy depends on many factors, among which are the availability of reputable native scholars to cooperate and the success of the foreign rulers to create social, economic, and political conditions perceived by the people to be more acceptable than those under preceeding or neighboring native rulers.[38] Given the unstable conditions in China and ideological challenges and counterchallenges that left many people dizzy, it was not difficult for Clementi and the literati to gain a certain degree of persuasiveness.

Clementi's cultural politics were not meant to isolate Hong Kong from China. Separation would have been undesireable for a city almost totally dependent on the entrepôt trade. Nor was it meant to make the Hong Kong Chinese anything other than Chinese but to propose an idea of Chineseness that emphasized cultural heritage over statehood and citizenship. This *was*, in fact, the traditional Chinese idea of Chineseness, but, since the end of the nineteenth century, it had been losing ground rapidly to more nationalistic ideas, and by the late 1920s, it had almost become an anachronism.[39]

Clementi's policy to set up a bastion of cultural conservatism amid political and intellectual upheavals was not meant to stop the free flow of teachers, students, and textbooks, and the conservative literati never did dominate completely the teaching of Chinese culture in Hong Kong schools. Nevertheless, modern intellectuals from China who visited Hong Kong during the 1920s and 1930s often criticized it for its "colonial atmosphere," its "cultural backwardness," and its "conservatism" and labeled it a "cultural desert."[40] As anti-Western feelings subsided somewhat in

[36] Compare Altbach and Kelly (n. 1 above), pt. 1.

[37] J. K. Fairbank, E. Reischauer, and A. Craig, *East Asia: The Modern Transformation* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1973), pp. 222–38.

[38] Frederick Wakeman, "High Ch'ing," in *Modern East Asia: Essays in Interpretation*, ed. J. B. Crowley (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1970), pp. 1–27.

[39] See Mary Wright, "Introduction," in *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1957).

[40] Lu Weilian, *Xianggang de youyu* (The melancholy of Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Wide Angle Press, 1985). This is a comprehensive collection of writings by northern intellectuals about Hong Kong during the decades before World War II; also see Choi Po-king, "Cultural identity and Colonial Rule: The Hong Kong/China Connection" (paper presented at the International Conference on Cultural Tradition and Contemporary Education, Chinese University of Hong Kong, October 1988).

China under the Nationalist government at Nanjing and political tensions eased between Hong Kong and China, an increasing number of schools were able to operate with branches on both sides of the border and registered with both governments. In Hong Kong, such schools followed the curriculum prescribed by the Nanjing government, used textbooks published in China, mostly at Shanghai, and presented their senior middle graduates for university entrance examinations in China. They engaged teachers trained either in China or in Hong Kong. The colonial government and missionary schools also generally used the Nanjing syllabi and the Shanghai textbooks for the Chinese culture subjects, although they probably followed them less closely. For other subjects, they used textbooks from England or from Shanghai. They also employed teachers educated either in Hong Kong or in China. Hong Kong never developed an autochthonous school system before World War II and remained very much a periphery to its dual centers.[41]

Emergence of a Hong Kong School System

Fengniao fuxing! Han-Ying shengping! (Phoenix risen from ashes! Peace to Chinese and British!) proclaimed the Hong Kong postage stamp celebrating the Allied victory over the Japanese at the end of World War II and the British reoccupation of Hong Kong. But peace was not to return yet to China. The civil war between the Nationalist government and the Communist revolutionaries raged on for 4 more years before the latter's victory and the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in October 1949. The civil war and revolution brought an endless stream of refugees into Hong Kong. By the early 1950s, the population was estimated at two-and-a-half million, compared to some three-quarters of a million before the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937. All of Hong Kong's resources were strained to the breaking point, and out of the stresses and strains emerged new institutions very different from those of the prewar colonial seaport.[42]

The new inhabitants, too, settled down in time to form a society very different from the one before World War II. But when they came in the late 1940s and the 1950s, they were a motley and demoralized lot. There were peasants, artisans, and merchants of the nearby Guangdong counties, but also industrial workers and capitalists from Shanghai and ex-soldiers and intellectuals from all parts of China in large numbers. In common with the nineteenth-century migrants, most of them had no roots in Hong Kong. Unlike their predecessors, however, many of these refugees often had no roots in home districts to which they could easily return, the

[41] Cheng (n. 15 above), pt. 4, sec. 1, period 6; Lu, "1930-niandai" (n. 31 above).
[42] Endacott (n. 11 above), chaps. 25–27.

communities there having been devastated by war or radically transformed by revolution. The population of this society of refugees was to be physically less transitory than the Chinese colony of the nineteenth century. But psychologically, most inhabitants were not reconciled to considering Hong Kong their permanent home.[43]

In terms of economic development, too, the connection between Hong Kong and its Chinese hinterland was greatly reduced. With the Korean War, the United Nations embargo against trade with the Chinese Mainland, and the People's Republic's adoption of policies to delink itself from much of the trade with the capitalist world, the century-old entrepôt trade of Hong Kong was abruptly and largely brought to an end, and Hong Kong had to develop an export-oriented industrial economy in order to survive. By the early 1960s, Hong Kong looked to China as the supplier of food, water, and certain raw materials but no longer as the partner in a two-way transit trade on which everything depended.[44]

Politically, the Cold War and the rising tide of anticolonialism raised the guard of the British administration in Hong Kong against the Communist government of China. Hong Kong became a link in the Western policy of "containment of Communism," and a "window of democracy" on the "Bamboo Curtain." But anti-Communist sentiments were by no means limited to the British colonialists. While there were certainly many pro-Communists in Hong Kong, there were also many who had fled the Communist government, either because they had been on the other side fighting against its establishment or because they suffered from its policies and purges. There were others who had been loyal to either the Nationalists or the Communists but over the years had become completely disillusioned with both parties. There were also many who had been caught between these two Leninist parties of China and had come to abhor or be alienated from all Chinese politics. The last time Chinese partisan passions clashed and erupted into large-scale violence in Hong Kong was in the Kowloon riots of 1956.[45]

The educated persons among these groups were a far cry from the literati who also sought refuge in Hong Kong after the Republican Revolution. They had been educated in modern Chinese schools during the Early Republican or Nationalist eras, and their general approach to China and things Chinese was a nationalistic rather than a culturalistic one. They were against all colonialism and foreign domination on Chinese

[43] I. C. Jarvie, ed., *Hong Kong: A Society in Transition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), esp. the chapters by Judith Agassi, L. F. Goodstadt, and E. Kvan. Much useful information on Hong Kong society during this period can be found in *Cantonese Melodrama: 1950–1969, Catalogue of the Tenth Hong Kong International Film Festival* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1986).

[44] A. J. Youngson, *Hong Kong: Economic Growth and Policy* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1982), chap. 1.

[45] Jarvie, ed., chap. 14.

soil. They had been deeply imbued with a sense of collective shame about the Opium War and the cession of Hong Kong to Britain, which symbolized to them the end of the glorious history of China and the beginning of the period of national shame (*guochi*) and of everything that was bad about the modern history of China. Many of them had participated in the passionate outbursts against British and all foreign imperialism and had fought in the War of Resistance against the Japanese invasion of China (1937–45).

At the same time, they had been painfully and bitterly disappointed by recent developments in the Chinese state and nation, in the corruption and incompetence of the old regime, as well as in the establishment and policies of a regime that they peceived to be destructive of the social fabric and all that was valuable in the cultural tradition of China. They now came to believe that they had little choice, either for themselves or for what remnant of Chinese culture they carried and cherished, other than to swallow their national pride and seek the protection of the British flag against the Chinese government. In this, they were following in the footsteps of generations of Chinese patriotic dissidents and revolutionaries who found sanctuary in the foreign concessions of Shanghai, Tianjin, or Beijing from the government agents of imperial or republican China.[46] In Hong Kong, they found a colonial government that congenially left them alone, and they sought to avoid all political confrontations and partisan strife, to devote themselves to the welfare of their families, and to carry on their intellectual, commercial, or industrial callings.[47] What emerged, then, among these refugees and their children was a sense of Chinese identity that was more cultural than political, although the cultural identity was more broadly conceived than the Confucian orthodoxy of Clementi's literati. Theirs was an identification with the China of history, more than with the Chinese state or regime headquartered on either side of the Taiwan Straits. At the same time, they did not identify with Hong Kong, which they saw as a colonial, alien territory, a desert landscape devoid of the cultural relics and activities that they had cherished in their earlier years in the northern cities of Shanghai and Beijing, or in Guangzhou.

While the social, economic, and politcal connections with the Chinese hinterland were thus greatly reduced and the population more stabilized, it became possible for Hong Kong to evolve its own school system. By the early 1970s, a unique system with a combination of features derived

[46] Spence (n. 29 above), pp. 47, 215, 228, 275.

[47] Cai Baoqiong, "You congshu dao zizhu—zhanhou Xianggang bentu wenhua de dansheng yu chengzhang" (From dependence to autonomy—the birth and growth of an indigenous culture in postwar Hong Kong) (paper presented at the International Conference on the Ethnic Chinese Abroad since World War II, Xiamen, April 1989).

from the British and the Chinese educational systems had emerged.[48] Even earlier, this system, rooted in the local society that was no longer tied in every way to the China hinterland, could retain its own students throughout their school years, rather than have many of them transfer in and out all the time; it could train, certify, and employ its own teachers; it could set its standards and conduct a full set of examinations; and it could make up its syllabi and publish its own textbooks. The first syllabi and textbooks adopted were, significantly, for the Chinese culture subjects in secondary schools.

The Report of the Chinese Studies Committee, 1953

Before World War II, textbooks used in Hong Kong secondary education, especially those for the Chinese culture subjects, were imported from China. Since education in Hong Kong was contiguous with that in China, the dependency was not perceived as a problem, and the nationwide educational publishers, such as the Commercial Press of Shanghai, had major branches in Hong Kong, selling the same lists as in cities inside China.[49]

During the late 1940s, this was still the case. The textbooks then had been written according to the syllabi promulgated by the Nationalist government in 1941 from the wartime capital of Chongqing. Since the Chinese nation was fighting for its survival against the Japanese invasion at that time, the Chinese literature and Chinese history textbooks were highly patriotic and emotive.[50] Those books continued in use through the civil war years, both in China and in Hong Kong.

After the People's Republic was proclaimed, the formerly private educational presses were taken over by the Chinese State. The contents of the textbooks they published inevitably took a leftward turn and became unacceptable to colonial authorities in Hong Kong as Communist propaganda. At the same time, branches of these educational presses, which followed the Nationalists into exile in Taiwan, also began to publish new materials in the early 1950s. These, however, were frowned on in Hong Kong for their ultranationalism and virulent anticommunism.[51] But if the textbooks from both sides of the Taiwan Straits were not considered suitable for Hong Kong schools, what would take their place? As the stock of the old textbooks available locally began to run out, the problem became acute.[52] Thus, in 1952, the Education Department of the Hong Kong government appointed a Committee on Chinese Studies to review the

[48] An important recent study on this period is the unpublished Ph.D. dissertation by A. E. Sweeting, "Educational Policy-making in Hong Kong, 1945–54" (Hong Kong University, 1989).
[49] *Shangwu Yinshu Guang Jiushi nian* (Beijing, 1987), pp. 629–35.
[50] Pang (n. 7 above), chap. 6.
[51] Sweeting, chap. 8.
[52] Ibid., pp. 734 ff.

entire question of Chinese language, literature, and history in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools.[53]

This committee of ten members was chaired by the ranking Chinese officer of the Education Department, with another Chinese school inspector serving as secretary. The membership was entirely Chinese, except for one Irish Jesuit priest who had been a professor of English at a Protestant university in Guangzhou. The Chinese members included scholars, educators, and merchants. Most of them had been educated at Hong Kong University or at Christian universities in China; some had academic, though apparently not political, connections with the Nationalists. Several members identified themselves as Christians, and at least one as a Confucian. Some of the members also had served with the Chinese or Allied forces during the War of Resistance against Japan. While there was undoubtedly a good dosage of Chinese partriotism in the Committee's make up, it was a "safe" committee, one unlikely to sanction "Communist propaganda."[54]

The committee deliberated for more than a year and presented a lengthy and comprehensive report in November 1953.[55] This report was liberal in its pedagogic approaches to the teaching of language, literature, and history, advocating student-centered and active methods. At the same time, it strongly urged a culturalistic emphasis on Chinese studies to counteract the nationalistic and revolutionary fervor in the Chinese culture textbooks from China. In discussing the aims of Chinese studies in local schools, it named two specific aims: (*a*) to develop the pupils' power of expression in their mother tongue and (*b*) to lead the pupils to understand and to cultivate their appreciation of Chinese thought, literature, and traditions.[56] There was no mention of cultivating a sense of national identity or patriotism as one would have expected in a national curricular document. The committee, further, developed its ideas about aims and concluded:

> Because of the geographical position and the unique nature of Hong Kong, the Committee feels that Chinese Studies lessons in local schools should, in addition to carrying out the aims enumerated [above], also contribute something towards . . . the interpretation of China to the West and the West to China.
>
> In the past, Chinese studies in China tended to aim at producing ignorant and bigoted Chinese nationalists. This is not educationally sound and should be strongly discouraged in Hong Kong. Here, after having attained proficiency in their own language, literature, and history, Chinese pupils should be guided another step further to utilize this as a basis for making comparative studies of Eastern and Western thought and language. It is only through such studies that

[53] Ibid., pp. 742–45.

[54] Biographical data on the individual members of the committee are found in the "Who's Who" sections of the *Xianggang nianjian* (Hong Kong: Wah Kiu Yat Po, 1953–58), published annually.

[55] "Report of the Chinese Studies Committee" (Education Department, Hong Kong Government, 1953, mimeographed).

[56] Ibid., sec. 86.

> Hong Kong children can become modern Chinese, conscious of their own culture and at the same time having a liberal, balanced and international outlook.[57]

The committee went on to discuss the "present-day needs of education in Hong Kong" and identified moral education as one of the major needs. Citing the lack of binding convictions, the confusion, bewilderment, and discord over a large part of Europe and Asia and the idea that, mentally and spiritually, most persons then were displaced, it went on to stress, "To the modern Chinese, the problem is even more realistic, for many of them have lost respect for most of the long-established Chinese virtues, but have not been able to assimilate the best of the Western virtues. There is indeed a vital need to have all the sound and healthy elements in the fabric of Chinese social life and culture to be revived."[58] The report then considered the pedagogical principles governing the contents and teaching methods of the Chinese culture subjects. While advocating, among other things, the use of extensive outside reading in the teaching of Chinese Literature, it cautioned that "without proper guidance in this matter, pupils will easily be led astray by the books which they readily find in the local bookstores and many of which contain subversive propaganda and undesirable doctrines. It will be a great help to the schools if supplementary reading lists can be prepared and issued by the Education Department."[59] In considering Chinese history textbooks, the committee sought to emphasize international goodwill rather than hatred:

> In the Manchu Dynasty, the Chinese people, being under a foreign regime, were not patriotic. Also, due to lack of political training and enthusiasm, they were like "a mass of loose sand." Since the founding of the Republic, the Chinese politicians have striven hard to unite the nation by appealing to the people's patriotism, narrow nationalism and racialism. One handy shortcut to this end is to stir up hatred for foreign countries, and History textbooks have been looked upon as a very convenient tool to serve this purpose. This explains why History textbooks published in China usually contain anti-foreign allusions, comments, and propaganda, and are, therefore, not quite suitable for use in Hong Kong. There is indeed an urgent need to produce History textbooks with an unbiased and local outlook which will aim to promote international goodwill and understanding rather than hatred and misunderstanding, and it is recommended that the authorities take active action to stimulate the writing of such textbooks.
>
> Objectivity in treatment, is, of course, to be strictly observed, especially in connection with such topics as the Boxer Uprising and the so-called Opium War.[60]

Concluding its discussions on the curriculum and textbooks for Chinese history, the committee reiterated, "Before the Manchu Dynasty, China's

[57] Ibid., secs. 95–96.
[58] Ibid., sec. 103.
[59] Ibid., sec. 133.
[60] Ibid., sec. 141.

weakness was arrogance. Since the end of that Dynasty, she had, however, suffered from an inferiority complex, and tended to imitate other peoples, forgetting her own good points and virtues. Therefore, one purpose of teaching Chinese History to Chinese children would be to get rid of this complex by reviving what is good in Chinese culture, thereby instilling fresh confidence into, and restoring the self-respect of, her people. This, however, must not be identified with the promotion of vanity and anti-foreignism which is to be strongly deprecated."[61] In this way, the committee walked the tightrope between pride in the glories and accomplishments of China past and dissociation from the revolutionary fervor of China present. That tightrope was the serenity of Chinese culture.

The report of the Committee on Chinese Studies has formed the basis of the Chinese culture subjects in the Hong Kong secondary curriculum since the mid-1950s, and it demonstrates considerable continuity with the cultural policy of Governor Clementi some 25 years before. Some of the committee members had, in fact, studied under the literati associated with Clementi. But the ideas contained in the report were far more modern and liberal than the obscurantism of the loyalists to the last emperor. It was not the anachronistic traditional culturalism of the early twentieth century but a formula, however unusual in the latter half of the twentieth century, for Chinese culture and British colonialism to survive together in the shadow of Communist threat.

Such a formula could not have been put into practice had it gone largely against the grain of the thousands of local or refugee teachers and scholars who, after all, had to be relied on to write the textbooks, set the examinations, staff the schools, and train the teachers of the very rapidly expanding educational system. Yet in spite of grumblings about colonial education, syllabi and textbooks were produced more or less following the principles of the unpublished report and generally were adhered to by the refugee and local teachers and scholars, men and women who had become weary and alienated from the partisan strife and policies in China but were not prepared to give up their identity as Chinese. The culturalism of the report was probably not too far from their needs.[62]

The refugee scholars and teachers had their cultural and social roots in their home districts and provinces in China, not in Hong Kong, however, and although they could not return to China and had to settle in the territory, most of them could not identify with the Hong Kong landscape and had little interest in local history. So despite what the committee had to say about relating history teaching to the pupils' environment, that "local History should be included at appropriate stages and occasions,

[61] Ibid., sec. 152.
[62] Wang (n. 16 above), chap. 7.

and, whenever possible brought into organic relation with the whole process of man's history,"[63] the textbooks produced had almost nothing to do with Hong Kong. So, too, the scholars selected for the textbooks of Chinese literature in such passages as the following from a prose poem of the fourth century A.D.: "Beautiful though this land is, it is not my land: How can I stay even a little longer? . . . I open my lapel to the north winds."[64] Thus generations of Hong Kong Chinese pupils grew up, learning from the Chinese culture subjects to identify themselves as Chinese but relating that Chineseness to neither contemporary China nor the local Hong Kong landscape. It was a Chinese identity in the abstract, a patriotism of the émigré, probably held all the more absolutely because it was not connected to tangible reality. And in this way, Hong Kong's schoolchildren grew up with a conception of Hong Kong society that was very much at the periphery of its dual centers of China and Britain, at a time when that society itself was emerging as the capital of the Chinese diaspora and a major center of the Chinese-speaking world.

Nor is it inconvenient for colonialists, of whatever coloration, that this remain so.

[63] "Report of the Chinese Studies Committee," sec. 144.

[64] Bernard Luk, "Schooling and Modernization in Hong Kong: Some Curricular Issues" (paper presented at the Symposium on Cultural Heritage and Modernization, Goethe-Institut, Hong Kong, September 1987).