

**Post-Imperialism: The Postage Stamps and Postal History  
of Hong Kong, 1842-1997**

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**Post-Imperialism: The Postage Stamps and Postal History of Hong  
Kong, 1842-1997**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the intricate relationship between postage stamps and the British representation of Hong Kong on a domestic and international level between 1840 and 1997. It examines a variety of underutilised sources through an interdisciplinary methodology influenced by scholars of visual culture, British imperialism, nationalism, and Hong Kong. Through a close reading of published accounts and postal stationery, key imagery and narratives are highlighted and scrutinised. A chronological comparison between the written accounts of visitors between 1840 and 1940, and the postage stamps produced after 1945 emphasises how key themes and icons were used across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to represent the British Colony across time. Details and narratives prominent in early newspapers provide a contextual basis to analyse the state-sanctioned postal stationery up until the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. In approaching this topic, this thesis will examine how Hong Kong was represented in early published accounts and postage stamps; study to what extent local and global social and political changes influenced philatelic designs; and analyse how changes in Post Office policy affected the visualisation of Hong Kong on its postal stationery. Ultimately, this work identifies how British officials represented Hong Kong on a domestic and international level using the seemingly banal medium of postage stamps.

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## **Introduction: Hong Kong, Newspapers, and Stamps**

Almost immediately after Britain formally took possession of Hong Kong in 1841, a mail route was established to connect the colony to London and the Treaty Ports on China's eastern coast. The system was inefficient, unreliable, and neither the Hong Kong Administration nor the British government wished to pay to maintain such a service. Yet by the 1997 handover, the Hong Kong Post Office was an established, important, and integrated institution for the colony's government and population. Crucially, it remained a British institution up until the handover. The Post Office enabled the transportation of information about Hong Kong to be spread throughout the world. Initially, accounts produced by British visitors, and published in newspapers, provided the public with an image of the new colonial possession. After 1945, when Britain regained control of Hong Kong from Japanese forces, the Post Office played a more central role in visualising the territory. Postage stamps were designed and moderated by the British Administration; they dispensed an image of Hong Kong to a domestic and international audience.

The aim of this thesis is to highlight the ways in which Hong Kong was represented between 1842 and 1997, through British publications and the British Administration's postage stamps. In addition to this, this study will highlight how key changes in the Post Office impacted on these depictions (particularly in the postage stamp chapters). The emphasis of the overall argument is to highlight how Hong Kong was communicated to the outside world by Britain. The themes prevalent in accounts published in newspapers became foundational subjects for state-sanctioned postage stamps. Depictions of Hong Kong often reflected contemporary stereotypes; they also mirrored societal and political changes. This thesis begins in 1842 because it addresses British perceptions, but Hong Kong has a rich past extending well beyond the presence of imperial forces. This study draws attention to themes of colonial encounters, international linkages, exoticism, tradition and progress, and representation. A variety of secondary literature will provide a methodological framework from which to approach the subject of the British portrayal of Hong Kong through both written and visual sources. Overall, this thesis will examine and contextualise a multitude of textual

and visual messages produced and moderated by British citizens and officials which sold an image of Hong Kong domestically and internationally.

This thesis is divided into two sections. The first chapter examines the period between 1840 and 1945 through a close examination of accounts of East Asia published in British newspapers and periodicals. The second section comprises the remaining four chapters. These chapters identify how postal stationery can be used to chart the social and cultural changes which occurred in Hong Kong between 1945 and 1997. Furthermore, they highlight how Hong Kong was presented to a domestic and international audience by the British Administration through the Hong Kong Post Office. The vast majority of Hong Kong's postage stamps were produced after 1945. However, in order to fully showcase the British representation of Hong Kong, it is essential to analyse the hundred-year period beforehand. Thus, the decision to include a contextualising chapter examining the visualisation of Hong Kong by British actors through an alternative source was taken. Published accounts and letters provide a rich, textual example of how East Asia was presented by, and to, the British. By utilising this material and combining it with a close reading of Hong Kong's postage stamps, this thesis provides a thorough analysis of the representation of Hong Kong by Britain between 1842 and 1997.

The ultimate aim of this thesis is to answer three key research questions. First, how was Hong Kong represented in published accounts, and what role do these sources play in the wider visualisation of Hong Kong after 1945? Secondly, with particular regards to postal stationery, to what extent did social and political changes, in both Hong Kong and on a global level, influence the representation of Hong Kong? Finally, how did developments in Post Office policy affect the philatelic portrayal of the colony? In answering these questions, this thesis will highlight the ways in which Britain visualised Hong Kong to a domestic and global audience.

### **Published Accounts**

The first chapter of this thesis will analyse accounts of Hong Kong published in newspapers. It serves to provide a contextual underpinning for the following chapters' analysis of postage stamps and highlight how Hong Kong was represented in British

minds. Accounts and letters were published in newspapers. They originated from a number of sources: personal letters, articles produced by foreign correspondents sent to report on China, and diary extracts. Importantly, these accounts were selected through keyword searches in various online databases and archives identified in the bibliography. With this research method came a number of difficulties - first, selecting keywords. Not only were terms such as 'China' and 'Hong Kong' used, but also different variations of place names such as 'Hongkong' or 'Hong-kong'. Often 'Canton' was used as a substitute for the whole of China, particularly in the early nineteenth century when British forces were concentrated in this area. Additionally, the ambitious time period covered in this thesis raises issues when studying newspaper accounts. Clearly the specific keywords selected bring to light a limited amount of the accounts of China and Hong Kong published between 1840 and 1940. Moreover, unless discovered in archives, non-digitised newspapers were less likely to be studied. Also, as the Canton example highlights, the contemporary experience and presence of British imperialists influenced how China was interpreted. Likewise, key events shaped how frequently East Asia was discussed and represented. As this thesis will indicate, the Opium Wars played a significant role in providing content relating to China and Hong Kong as well as influencing their depiction in newspapers.

Other variables should be considered when interpreting accounts in newspapers. Whilst publications have been selected from around the world, including newspapers from China and Hong Kong alongside regional publications throughout Britain, national variations play an important part in the analysis of newspaper articles. Circulation figures and audiences varied significantly between publications. The *Daily Mail*, the first mass-circulated daily newspaper, would have had a larger readership than the localised *Caledonian Mercury*, for example. Similarly, articles published in the *Hong Kong Standard* would have been less accessible to British readers than residents of Hong Kong. Regardless, it is important to note that Britain's Empire was a 'prominent feature of the papers of towns and cities everywhere'.<sup>1</sup> Gender too plays an important role in reading published accounts. Across newspapers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, male writers were far more likely to be published than female

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<sup>1</sup> John M. MacKenzie, 'General Editor's Introduction', in Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India, c. 1880-1922* (Manchester University Press, 2003).

journalists. Similarly, male figures were more likely to receive coverage. For Hong Kong and China, this certainly remained true - whilst a few examples of women's accounts and experiences were printed, the vast majority of articles were written by and about men. Interactions, experiences, and interpretations were also shaped by gender identities. Certain situations were more accessible to men rather than women and vice versa. An account of a meeting between the wives of prestigious Chinese and British merchants, for example, could only be written by a female author as males were not allowed to be present at the gathering.<sup>2</sup> Overall, whilst men and women largely operated in the same spaces, it was the accounts of male writers which were overwhelmingly published in newspapers.

The overall consumption of this literature is also difficult to quantify. Literacy levels, which were linked to class, would have played an important role. However, as Jon Klancher has highlighted, nineteenth century periodicals 'deliberately smudged social differences' between their readerships; there was no clear distinction between social status and consumption patterns.<sup>3</sup> As literacy levels increased across Britain, price became the more common barrier to access; lower classes were often priced out of accessing particular literature.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, such literature was often consumed in public spaces (libraries and reading rooms); Patricia Anderson states that there were roughly five readers for every publication bought.<sup>5</sup> Reception levels are certainly important, but for this thesis they have little impact on the overall argument. The chief concern of this study is to identify how Hong Kong was visualised, rather than to whom.

Information about foreign lands was certainly popular in newspapers and it played a significant role in how these places were conceptualised in the minds of the British. Benedict Anderson's celebrated *Imagined Communities* explores in great depth the relationship between the written word and the perception, and connecting, of

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<sup>2</sup> 'Visit of Mandarin Ladies to European', *The Stirling Observer* (Stirling, Scotland), 12 May 1851, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Jon Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison, 1987), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Connors and MacDonald note that certain magazines who wished to be read amongst the elite deliberately charged higher prices; additionally, radical political literature was often sold at a high price to ensure that such information was not made accessible to the working class. For more information, see: Linda E. Connors and Mary Lu MacDonald, *National Identity in Great Britain and British North America, 1815-1851: The Role of Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013), pp. 25-27.

<sup>5</sup> Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790-1860* (Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 3.



communities.<sup>6</sup> John MacKenzie's *Propaganda and Empire* plays an equally important role in highlighting this link, but with a particular focus given to colonial expansion.<sup>7</sup> Chandrika Kaul also draws this comparison. She highlights the British press' fascination with the British Empire as well as its role in shaping attitudes towards colonial policy.<sup>8</sup> Letters and articles were particularly important in selling new territories to the British public. John Darwin notes that local businesses and governments used personal letters to advertise the qualities of recently established colonies in a bid to encourage people to journey abroad.<sup>9</sup> Julie Barst has argued that the letters sent by Caroline Chisholm, an English emigration reformer in Australia, played an essential role in encouraging immigration to the colony. In addition to encouraging emigration, Barst has observed how Chisholm's letters helped create an image of Australia in the minds of the British public. Barst places a significant emphasis on the role postal networks played in this process.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Claire Wintle's analysis of British interaction with the Andaman and Nicobar Islands examines how these territories were represented in the British press. Wintle argues that text and images published in periodicals were instrumental in creating stereotypes about these places and their populations – depictions of nude 'natives', for example, became a popular topic for British photographers.<sup>11</sup> Postcards, too, often depicted the local population naked, usually contrasted against clothed Westerners. In exploring the rise of pornographic material available through the postal system and the subsequent attempts to censor this material by the state, Lisa Sigel highlights the ways in which postcards featuring images of naked 'natives' remained uncensored. This was predominantly because state officials felt they showed the subjects in their 'natural' environment; these postcards were rarely detained because they were seen as informational tools.<sup>12</sup> The acceptance of these images in an age of growing censorship highlights how cultural stereotypes were widely accepted.

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<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester University Press, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> Kaul, *Reporting the Raj*.

<sup>9</sup> John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (Penguin UK, 2012), Chapter 4.

<sup>10</sup> Julie M. Barst, 'Pushing the Envelope: Caroline Chisholm, Colonial Australia, and the Transformative Power of Postal Networks', *Prose Studies*, 33, 3 (2011), pp. 200-216.

<sup>11</sup> This argument is made predominantly in the third chapter of her book: Claire Wintle, 'Wider Spheres of Influence: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands in Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *Colonial Collecting and Display: Encounters with Material Culture from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (Berghahn Books, 2013), pp. 113-154; see particularly p. 124.

<sup>12</sup> Lisa Z. Sigel, 'Filth in the Wrong People's Hands: Postcards and the Expansion of Pornography in Britain and the Atlantic World, 1880-1914', *Journal of Social History*, 33, 4 (Summer, 2000), p. 861.

Published accounts of Hong Kong and China were of considerable interest to the British public - there was certainly an appetite for information relating to East Asia. Elizabeth Chang argues in her *Britain's Chinese Eye* that a knowledge of, and intrigue in, China was 'amplified [...] by increased circulation and reproduction' of accounts; China soon became the 'familiar exotic' for the British public.<sup>13</sup> Robert Bickers makes references to the multitude of works dedicated to China and Hong Kong in his *Britain in China*.<sup>14</sup> Prior to the Opium War, which led to the cession of Hong Kong to Britain, there was a large interest in China and its goods; however, the conflict certainly increased the British public's exposure to news and information about this land. In 1842, the year Britain gained Hong Kong, Nathan Dunn's American exhibition of Chinese goods moved from Philadelphia and opened at St George's Place in London; it proved to be a successful attraction to the public.<sup>15</sup> Alongside looking at such artefacts, the public also had a healthy appetite for consuming Chinese material goods. As Sarah Cheang notes, department stores which sold foreign wares, and also housed indigenous peoples transported over in exhibitions, served as a 'meeting place' for the metropolis and the colony.<sup>16</sup> Burford's panorama was successful chiefly because Hong Kong was 'a spot which [had] become an object of so much public attention'.<sup>17</sup> The Second Opium War proved to be another catalyst for public intrigue in China. *The Lady's Newspaper* noted in 1862 that 'the "New Chinese War," as it is called, will invest any scenery, or any sketch of the people, of the Flowery Land with interest at the present moment'.<sup>18</sup> Whilst this fascination ebbed and flowed, the exotic pull of the 'East' persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1923 the Postmaster General in Hong Kong reported that he often received mail from British citizens asking for information on Hong Kong. One such request came from a teacher who wanted a copy of a newspaper for his students; the Postmaster duly sent a recent

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<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Hope Chang, *Britain's Chinese Eye: Literature, Empire, and Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> See in particular Chapter 2 which gives an overview of various stories and articles describing the local population, land, and cultures new visitors could expect to encounter: Robert Bickers, 'China in Britain, and In the British Imagination', *Britain in China*, pp. 22-66.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine Pagani, 'Chinese Material Culture and British Perceptions of China in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (eds), *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and Museum* (Routledge, 1997), p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Cheang, 'Selling China: Class, Gender and Orientalism at the Department Store', *Journal of Design History*, 20, 1 (2007), p. 2. See also Claire Wintle on department stores using living exhibitions to sell goods and the difficulties which resulted: *Colonial Collecting and Display*, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> 'Mr. Burford has finished a panorama of Hong Kong, which is now exhibited in his gallery in Leicester-square', *John Bull* (London, England), 30 March 1844, p. 203 (hereafter 'Mr. Burford').

<sup>18</sup> 'Chinese Fortune-Teller, Hong Kong', *The Lady's Newspaper* (London, England), 16 August 1862, p. 97 (hereafter 'Chinese Fortune-Teller').

edition with a note attached stating 'this side up'.<sup>19</sup> As China's political influence shifted, many commentators began to note that China would play an ever-increasing role in global politics; one journalist noted that East Asia was 'where the next great chapter of the world's history will manifestly be written'.<sup>20</sup> China and Hong Kong proved to be popular subjects in British newspapers; consequently, letters, stories, and images were in high demand.

The consumption of literature focussing on China and Hong Kong led to the circulation of a number of key icons and stereotypes. Chapter one serves to highlight these representations and identify how Hong Kong was presented to the British public across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First, the terrain fascinated new visitors and mountains became a key feature in early accounts. The harbour also attracted a lot of attention; the Chinese ships too, particularly junks and sampans, became icons in their own right. However, as the first chapter will indicate, whilst there were many positive depictions of China, it was also cast in a negative light; importantly though, it was always viewed as exotic.<sup>21</sup> Take, for example, descriptions of Hong Kong's impact on the senses: it was a vibrant and colourful place, but the noises, smells, and temperature were often horrendous and occasionally deadly. Visitors were also highly critical of the local population – they were viewed as violent, untrustworthy, and anti-foreign. Culture, too, was an important theme in published accounts, yet discussions of this fell into two categories: women and food. Chinese women became synonymous with culture; footbinding in particular created an atmosphere in which the discussion of Chinese women was, ultimately, a discussion about cultural practices.<sup>22</sup> Women were viewed, like food, as exotic and mysterious, yet they were also depicted as examples of cultural backwardness. This was a theme throughout a number of articles and letters; China was viewed as a stagnating empire whereas Britain was seen as a progressive force in Hong Kong. Examples of positive changes witnessed by locals were numerous and the new colony was regularly seen as an example of how Britain could

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<sup>19</sup> 'Letter to "Dear Emperor"', *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition* (London, England), 28 September 1923, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> G. Ward Price, 'Sun, Fun, and No Income Tax', *Daily Mail* (London, England), 14 February 1933, p. 5 (hereafter Price, 'Sun').

<sup>21</sup> In light of this, it seems odd that Edward Said's *Orientalism* overlooks China. However, a number of scholars have since examined East Asia in the context of Said's work. Whilst numerous articles could be referenced here, one of the more recent studies to examine China in the context of Said's principles was produced by Ji Fengyuan. See: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage Books, 1979); Ji Fengyuan, 'The West and China: Discourses, Agendas and Change', *Critical Discourse Studies*, 14, 4 (2017), pp. 325-340.

<sup>22</sup> Jinhua Emma Teng, 'The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman' in the Western Academy: A Critical Review', *Signs*, 22, 1 (1996), pp. 115–151; Angela Zito, 'Secularizing the Pain of Footbinding in China: Missionary and Medical Stagings of the Universal Body', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 75, 1 (2007), pp. 1–24.

'elevate' China.<sup>23</sup> However, comparisons between Chinese and Western people showcased Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan space; it was an area of many nationalities and cultures. Ultimately, the key themes which provided an image of Hong Kong to the British public showcased the territory as an exotic space which owed a lot to the presence of Britain.

Representations circulated throughout the British press were clearly important in solidifying ideas about East Asia in the minds of the British public. The consumption of particular goods was influenced by visitors' experiences and journalists' articles. Katrina Hill argues that British military personnel looted items from China based on prevailing notions of exoticism found in newspapers and magazine.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, local Chinese merchants used foreign stereotypes circulated in British newspapers to their own advantage. As Catherine Pagani notes, the 'Chinese produced what the Western market demanded'. She gives the example of the famous 'Blue Willow' pattern on ceramics, which was widely reported on in Britain. Whilst it was a popular item purchased from Chinese manufacturers, the design actually originated from British designer Thomas Minton and was created in 1780; ultimately it was claimed by local Chinese producers and became a lucrative business.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, stereotypes and iconography began to seep into written popular culture. Fictional travel stories and adventure novels, for example, drew on the personal experiences of letter writers and perpetuated myths about foreign lands.<sup>26</sup> With specific regard to Hong Kong, the appearance of themes and icons mentioned above began to crop up in various forms of popular culture.<sup>27</sup> These stories, as with many 'factual' journalistic pieces, were often rather sensationalist; their entertainment value meant they were often read by travellers before they left Britain. As Robert Bickers notes, this material was usually

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism 1900-1949* (Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 29.

<sup>24</sup> Alongside looting, Hill also notes that soldiers purchased goods from vendors in accordance with what they knew to be popular in Britain. Local artwork, for example, was generally overlooked except for pictures by the popular Canton-based Western artist George Chinnery (and Lam Qua, who was influenced by Chinnery's work). For more information, see: Katrina Hill, 'Collecting on Campaign: British Soldiers in China During the Opium Wars', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 25, 2 (2013), pp. 236-7.

<sup>25</sup> Pagani, 'Chinese Material Culture and British Perceptions of China', p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Claire Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display: Encounters with Material Culture from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (Berghahn, 2013), pp. 139-147; Chapter two is particularly useful from Nancy Micklewright, *A Victorian Traveler in the Middle East: The Photography and Travel Writing of Annie Lady Brassey* (Routledge, 2017), pp. 20-47.

<sup>27</sup> As mentioned previously, Bickers highlights the abundance, and popularity, of this material; however, there are also other articles which have analysed the key themes in popular culture and British literature. See: Bickers, *Britain in China*, pp. 22-66; Ersu Ding, 'Appropriation of the "Other": Contrasting Notions of China in British Literature', *Neohelicon*, XXXII, 2 (2005), pp. 313-325; Ailise Bulfin, 'Guy Boothby and the "Yellow Peril": Representations of Chinese Immigrants in British Imperial Spaces in the Late-Nineteenth Century', *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies*, 20, 1 (2015), pp. 24-40; Urmila Seshagiri, 'Modernity's (Yellow) Perils: Dr. Fu-Manchu and English Race Paranoia', *Cultural Critique*, 62 (2006), pp. 162-194; Raymond W. Rast, 'The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown, 1882-1917', *Pacific Historical Review*, 76, 1 (2007), pp. 29-60.

chosen over the more academic texts and ultimately served to reaffirm cultural and social stereotypes.<sup>28</sup> Importantly, whilst accounts of China attested to being truthful and 'real', western visitors viewed and reported China through a subjective lens influenced by numerous other stories.<sup>29</sup> Raymond Rast has explored the politics of tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown during the beginning of the twentieth century. Established negative stereotypes led to the simulation of distressing and depraved situations organised by white tourist guides; Chinese occupants would take part in such events to encourage more visitors to the area. Furthermore, local merchants used stereotypes to sell an 'authentic' image of China; this experience was simply a mirrored version of what sightseers wanted and expected to discover.<sup>30</sup>

Ultimately, accounts of Hong Kong and China published in British newspapers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries played a key role in representing Hong Kong, China, and the Chinese population in the minds of the British public. Chapters two to five focus on the postage stamps of Hong Kong which were largely produced between 1945 and 1997. Thus, the role of the first chapter is a contextual one. It serves to highlight not only that Hong Kong and China were objects of fascination in British minds, but also to showcase how East Asia was represented to wider audiences. Without a firm understanding of the representation of this geographical region in British minds during the origins of Hong Kong's colonial occupation (mainly the nineteenth century), this thesis would be ill-equipped to thoroughly examine how Hong Kong was represented by Britain through its postal stationery. This thesis will highlight how accounts published in newspapers provide that essential contextual foundation.

## **Postage Stamps**

### *Design Process*

Postage stamps are examples of state-sanctioned representations of the colony produced by the Post Office to depict the territory in a specific way – in this way, they are different to newspaper publications. A brief analysis of the postage stamp design

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<sup>28</sup> Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Nicholas Clifford's work on travel writing in China provides a good analysis of this, see: Nicholas Clifford, *"A Truthful Impression of the Country": British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (University of Michigan Press, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Raymond W. Rast, 'The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown, 1882-1917', *Pacific Historical Review*, 76, 1 (2007), pp. 29–60.

process will highlight the ways in which stamps should be read as state documents.<sup>31</sup> Hong Kong's first stamp was released for sale in 1862, and officials in London had the overall say on how it would look and be printed. During the nineteenth century officials in London ultimately oversaw new stationery designs which were approved in conjunction with the Crown Agency. The Crown Agency was an autonomous organisation with close ties to the British Government; it was ultimately responsible for managing projects in colonial possessions (these ranged from printing postage stamps to overseeing infrastructural developments).<sup>32</sup> Particularly after 1945, the Governor of Hong Kong became more involved in stamp design; they were responsible for approving proposals and submissions. A major shift occurred in 1965; more autonomy was given to Britain's colonial possessions in the creation process. Originally officials in London produced definitive and commemorative stamps for Britain's overseas territories; generally, ubiquitous designs were sent out for each possession and the only differentiating factor was the territory's name. However, as demand for commemoratives increased, a decision was made by the British Government to enable local administrations to design and produce more special issues specific to the territory. Consequently, Hong Kong began to produce more iconography specific to the territory from this date.

Under the new process introduced in 1965, Hong Kong's British Administration had a greater say in the colony's postage stamp design. A request would be made by the Government in Hong Kong to the Secretary of State for a particular design; accompanying this request was a description of the imagery used and an explanation as to why the topic was worth marking philatelically. An order was then submitted to the Crown Agents who located a designer, produced drafts, and created the relevant accompanying literature. These were then sent to Hong Kong for approval and the Crown Agents would then make any adjustments raised by the local government. After

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<sup>31</sup> No attempt has been made to outline the production process for Hong Kong postage stamps, but this is hardly surprising considering the lack of studies in this particular area. However, there are a few examples of academic texts exploring the process of designing stamps in other nations. What can be clearly seen across these studies is the close connection between postage stamps and the state; stamps were closely moderated and controlled by officials. A brief overview of Israeli stamp production can be found in: Yehiel Limor and David Mekelberg, 'The Smallest Ideological and Political Battlefield: Depicting Borders on Postage Stamps - The Case of Israel', *Nations and Nationalism*, 23, 4 (2017), pp. 910-911. Similarly, references to Central and South American stamp design procedure can be found in Jack Child's first chapter: Jack Child, 'Semiotics, Popular Culture, Politics, and Stamps', *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 13-41. For the Soviet Union see: Alison Rowley, 'Miniature Propaganda: Self-Definition and Soviet Postage Stamps, 1917-41', *Slavonica*, 8, 2 (2002), pp. 135-6. For Ireland: David Scott, 'Political Messages', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* (1990-1991), pp. 193-4.

<sup>32</sup> A useful analysis of the relationship between the Crown Agency and the British Government can be found in: David Sunderland, *Managing the British Empire: The Crown Agents, 1833-1914* (The Boydell Press, 2004).

these amendments were made, the Secretary of State would review the designs before the final drafts were sent for approval by the British Head of State. Subject to any modifications resulting from submission to the Head of State, the stamps were then printed and distributed to Hong Kong through the Crown Agents.<sup>33</sup> These changes ensured that the Hong Kong Post Office and local government were involved in the decision-making process; they submitted design proposals and ideas for topics, and later gave feedback and suggested adjustments to drafts.

In 1973, the process changed further. A Stamp Committee was introduced to relinquish the Governor from having to approve each stage of the design process. The Committee comprised the Postmaster General (who chaired the group) and the President of the Hong Kong Philatelic Society. Other members were selected from the Home Affairs office, the local University, the Government Information Services, the Colonial Secretary's office, and from the unofficial members of the Executive Council. The Stamp Committee initially served to oversee the bureaucratic processes of stamp design, but over the years they became more involved in publishing calls for submissions, judging competitions, and suggesting changes to designs. Additionally, more agents became involved in the process as a result of this change. As the third chapter shall highlight, the local population, different government departments, London officials, the Executive Council, the Secretary of State, and the Crown Agents all played an important part in creating stamps for Hong Kong.

Designs and designers were chosen through a multitude of avenues. Competitions for designs commemorating a topic set by either London officials, the Hong Kong Administration, the Crown Agents, the Stamp Committee, or the Postmaster General were the most popular means of acquiring proposals. However, local interest groups and societies often approached the Post Office with suggestions for suitable commemorative topics. The 'Lincoln Society of Philately', for example, sent a submission in 1964 for the centenary of Abraham Lincoln's death.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the Crown Agents approached the Postmaster General in 1968 to request the

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<sup>33</sup> Details of these changes were provided by the Secretary of State in a 1965 circular; see: HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, 'Postage and Revenue Stamps', 14 September 1965.

<sup>34</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, 'Lincoln Society of Philately to PMG', 24 August 1964.

commemoration of the Hong Kong British Red Cross.<sup>35</sup> Across postal services this was a lengthy and arduous process; Gary Osmond highlights this in his study of the Duke Kahanamoku commemorative issued by Hawaii in 2002.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the changes in 1965 led to an increase in the local population being involved in the creation process. With less responsibility given to the Crown Agents, competitions attracted proposals from local designers; projects were not purely given to contractors used by the Crown Agents. As local designers impressed the Executive Council and Postmaster General, they began to circumvent the Crown Agency entirely and look specifically for local artists.<sup>37</sup> Thus, by the early 1970s, Hong Kong was producing postage stamps with more of a focus on its own features; local artists were also far more involved in the process. Importantly, though, this organisation always worked within the parameters set by Britain. In Hong Kong itself, whilst the local population was included far more in the design process, the British Administration ultimately moderated any output.

### *Using Stamps*

Why study postage stamps? Stamps are part of what Michael Billig would refer to as the 'banal'; they reinforce ideals on a subliminal level.<sup>38</sup> Yet they seem to travel under the radar of many scholars despite the fact that they contain a myriad of symbols, icons, and messages. As Carlos Stoetzer notes:

The stamp itself is ideal propaganda. It goes from hand to hand and town to town; it reaches the farthest corners and provinces of a country and even the farthest countries of the world. It is a symbol of the nation from which the stamp is mailed, a vivid expression of that country's culture and civilization and its ideas and ideals. By the use of symbols, slogans, pictures, even loaded words, it conveys its message far and wide.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, 'Crown Agents to Postmaster General', 04 July 1968.

<sup>36</sup> Gary Osmond, 'Modest Monuments?: Postage Stamps, Duke Kahanamoku and Hierarchies of Social Memory', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 43, 3 (December, 2008), pp. 313-329.

<sup>37</sup> Considering the popularity of the locally designed Tung Wah centenary stamp in 1970, the Executive Council suggested that, rather than using the Crown Agents as it had in the previous year, it would instead look for local artists; see: HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, 'Memorandum for Executive Council Special Postage Stamps for the Lunar New Year 1971', 18 August 1970.

<sup>38</sup> Billig's work has been important in the planning of this thesis, particularly in the early proposal stages. His argument that subliminal messages reinforce national sentiments domestically and internationally is particularly important. For more information, see: Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (Sage Publications Ltd., 1995).

<sup>39</sup> O. Carlos Stoetzer, *Postage Stamps as Propaganda* (Washington, 1953), p. 1.



Despite this, postal stationery still remains an understudied source of information. Three key academics underpin this thesis' analysis of postage stamps; they form the methodology for analysing the iconography of Hong Kong's philatelic material. Donald Reid, in his 1984 essay highlighting the importance of stamps for historians, contends that stamps should be considered conveyors of information in the same way written documentation is approached by scholars. He framed his research around a communications theory question: 'who/says what/in what channel/to whom/with what effect?' To this he adds 'by what means of what symbols?'<sup>40</sup> David Scott built on this work a decade later; his particular contribution to this field was the introduction of a semiotic framework. He first applied this methodology in a review of twentieth century Irish postage stamps; his key concern was to discover 'not what we are looking at, but why? - and at whose instigation?'<sup>41</sup> Scott built on this approach and focussed his analysis around Charles Sanders Peirce's 'Trichotomy of Signs' in two later studies.<sup>42</sup> These three 'signs' are indexes, icons, and symbols. An index is implicit; an umbrella, for example, would be an index for rain. An icon can either be purely aesthetic, or it can be a messenger; the presence of Queen Elizabeth II's portrait could be read as a stylistic addition to a design, or as a reference to the British state. Finally, a symbol is typically a sign used in place of something else; the '£' symbol, for example, indicates pound sterling. Building on Scott's methodology, Jack Child provides this thesis with the final core text. Child's work is significant because he uses Peirce's 'signs' to study postage stamps as examples of social and political change across South America. Through the decoding of stamps, Child showcases the ways in which postage stamps can be used.<sup>43</sup>

These three scholars underpin this thesis' methodological approach to stamp analysis. Reid's argument showcases how postage stamps can be used as historical sources; he highlights how they reveal narratives dictated by governments on behalf of populations. Scott places great emphasis on the importance of subliminal messages

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<sup>40</sup> Donald M. Reid, 'The Symbolism of Postage Stamps: A Source for the Historian', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19, 2 (April, 1984), p. 224.

<sup>41</sup> Scott, 'Political Messages', p. 195.

<sup>42</sup> Initially Scott used this in an article which focussed on French postage stamps; he later expanded this argument in his book studying different European approaches to stamp design, see: David Scott, 'National Icons: The Semiotics of the French Stamp', *French Cultural Studies*, 3 (October, 1992), pp. 215-234; David Scott, *European Stamp Design: A Semiotic Approach to Designing Messages* (Academy Editions, 1995).

<sup>43</sup> Jack Child, *Miniature Messages*.

contained in stamp designs; his adoption of Pierce's toolkit provides a strong example of how to decode philatelic symbolism. Finally, Child brings both of these scholars' work together; he identifies, through semiotic analysis, that stamps can be used to track political and social changes. For Hong Kong, this is important. Not only did the British government dictate the messages on Hong Kong's postal stationery, but this message changed. In using Reid, Scott, and Child, this thesis will successfully analyse these narratives.

The work of Reid, Scott, and Child have influenced further studies into the messages contained within postal stationery; in turn, these have also influenced this thesis' approach to stamp analysis. Dennis Altman's book *Paper Ambassadors* is important; whilst perhaps less 'academic' than other articles mentioned in this study, he highlights the national and global significance of postage stamps to the state.<sup>44</sup> Stanley Brunn is another notable figure in this field; he has produced several papers on the role stamps play in signifying political change.<sup>45</sup> Brunn argues that postage stamps act as 'windows' of the state which 'illustrate how it wishes to be seen by its own citizens and those beyond its boundaries'.<sup>46</sup> This observation is essential to this study. Postage stamps do not necessarily indicate what a country is, has, or does; instead, they highlight what the government wants the domestic and international audience to *believe* the country is, has, and does. This illusion is often counterfactual and instead serves to promote a national rhetoric. Stamps featuring maps are good examples of this. Yehiel Limor and David Mekelberg have analysed the depiction of Israel's borders, particularly regarding Jerusalem, on postal stationery and how this compared with the government's position on Israeli territorial disputes.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Bruce Davies has observed the pivotal role philatelic material often played in land disputes; he gives the examples of the Falkland Islands, Antarctic claims, clashes in South America, and Ireland.<sup>48</sup> To further highlight the ways in which stamps have played an important role in political narratives, Pauliina Raento has analysed the relationship between stamps and Finnish geopolitics; postal

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<sup>44</sup> Dennis Altman, *Paper Ambassadors* (Sydney, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> These two papers highlight the symbolism on postage stamps from newly independent states and states which have undergone political change, see: Stanley D. Brunn, 'Stamps as Iconography: Celebrating the Independence of new European and Central Asian States', *GeoJournal*, 52 (2000), pp. 315-323; Stanley D. Brunn, 'Stamps as Messengers of Political Transition', *The Geographical Review*, 101 (2011), pp. 19-36.

<sup>46</sup> Brunn, 'Stamps as Iconography', p. 315.

<sup>47</sup> Limor and Mekelberg, 'The Smallest Ideological and Political Battlefield', pp. 902-928.

<sup>48</sup> Bruce Davis, 'Maps on Postage Stamps as Propaganda', *The Cartographic Journal*, 22, 2 (1985), pp. 125-130.

stationery was used to highlight Finland's national history, political ties, economic potential, cultural affiliations, military capacity, and international appeal.<sup>49</sup> In Raento's work with Brunn, they further highlight how Finnish national narratives were contrived by state actors through the medium of stamps.<sup>50</sup> As conveyors of state messages, postage stamps have also been touted by scholars as educational tools. Thomas Di Napoli argued that students interested in the German Democratic Republic should use stamps in their research. Writing in the 1980s when information about East Germany was scarce, Di Napoli found that postal stationery provided a rare insight into the 'country's values'.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Joseph Kirman and Chris Jackson have identified the benefits of using stamps as educational resources in schools; they provide the foundations for learning about new countries and spark interests in young learners.<sup>52</sup>

The key issue with many of these studies is that they focus on postage stamps produced by governments who belong to the nations they are philatelically representing (the Finnish Government, for example, commemorating Finland). This, of course, is not the case with Hong Kong. The British Administration produced postal stationery on behalf of the entire, predominantly Chinese, population. Whilst the same power dynamics remain in place (a national 'elite' producing a manufactured image of the state and its population to a domestic and overseas community), it is important to address the complexities involved in producing postal material for a foreign territory. Phil Deans provides the best example of this relationship in his study of Taiwanese postage stamps. Ultimately, he argues that Taiwan's stamps served to further the aims of the Kuomintang government, particularly with regards to the various political and territorial disputes concerning the newly established People's Republic of China. More importantly however, particularly for this thesis, Deans highlights the role postage stamps played in regime legitimisation. In order to remain in power and ensure their authority, stamps showcased the various benefits and development projects delivered under the Republic of China government for the Taiwanese people since 1949; thus,

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<sup>49</sup> Pauliina Raento, 'Communicating Geopolitics through Postage Stamps: The Case of Finland', *Geopolitics*, 11, 4 (2006), pp. 601-629.

<sup>50</sup> Pauliina Raento and Stanley D. Brunn, 'Visualizing Finland: Postage Stamps as Political Messengers', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human geography*, 87, 2, Special Issue: Power Over Time-Space: The Inaugural Nordic Geographers Meeting (2005), pp. 145-163.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Di Napoli, 'Postage Stamps and the Teaching of GDR Culture and Civilization', *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*, 13, 2 (Autumn, 1980), p. 195.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph M. Kirman and Chris Jackson, 'The Use of Postage Stamps to Teach Social Studies Topics', *The Social Studies*, 91, 4 (2000), pp. 187-190.

emphasis was given to the essential role played by the new regime in bringing about positive change for the territory. In this context, stamps were used less to create a national narrative, and more to promote the presence of the 'foreign' political elite.<sup>53</sup> This is an important observation for this thesis. With regards to Hong Kong, 'progress' was an important topic on postage stamps (and, as previously mentioned, in newspapers); yet this was closely linked to the presence of the British Administration. Whilst stamps were produced by 'native' governments to celebrate progress and achievements, these typically were not used to legitimise authority (the exception possibly being new regimes in volatile countries); this tactic was relatively unique to the philatelic designs of 'foreign' governments.

Other scholars have addressed the ways in which external governments created postal stationery for their foreign possessions; these, too, reveal a narrative created by the state. Portuguese stamps produced on behalf of its colonial possessions, for example, served to celebrate Portugal's positive impact on its territories; they served to promote the 'dominant discourses of a particular nationalism'.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, the individual colonial possessions were often conflated; the empire became ubiquitous.<sup>55</sup> A similar observation can be made about the Soviet Union. The studies of William Moskoff, Jonathan Grant, and Alison Rowley highlight the ways in which Moscow strictly manufactured and moderated postage stamps for every nation in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet postal stationery in particular appears throughout chapter four). These scholars suggest stamps played an important role as Cold War propaganda.<sup>56</sup> Regarding the British Empire, Keith Jeffrey has explored the symbolism on its colonial postage stamps. He argues that images of Britain's possessions often reflected the 'political and aesthetic judgements at home'; much like newspapers, the iconography of postage stamps served to reinforce common stereotypes.<sup>57</sup> It is also worth mentioning Kristi Evans' work here. Rather than addressing how 'foreign'

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<sup>53</sup> Phil Deans, 'Isolation, Identity and Taiwanese Stamps as Vehicles for regime Legitimation', *East Asia*, 22, 2 (Summer, 2005), pp. 8-30.

<sup>54</sup> Igor Cusack, 'Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology: The Postage Stamps of Portugal and its Empire', *Nations and Nationalism*, 11, 4 (2005), p. 591.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 604.

<sup>56</sup> William Moskoff, 'Soviet Postal Material and State Propaganda, 1928-1945', presented at *The Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium* (Smithsonian National Postal Museum, 30 September to 01 October 2010), pp. 6-7; Jonathan Grant, 'The Socialist Construction of Philately in the Early Soviet Era', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37, 3 (July, 1995), pp. 476-496; Rowley, 'Miniature Propaganda', p. 138.

<sup>57</sup> Keith Jeffery, 'Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post: Stamps, the Monarchy and the British Empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34, 1 (2006), p. 45.

governments produced stamps reflecting the dominant contemporary narrative, she highlights how stamps could be used to combat such rhetoric. She gives the example of Poland's underground 'Solidarity' movement which designed stamps to combat the Soviet account of Polish history; particular emphasis is given to the Katyn massacre.<sup>58</sup> Evans' study is important because it underlines the importance of stamps in creating and contesting national narratives; equally, it highlights how stamps enabled dominant forces to produce a distorted image of their foreign possessions. Overall, these studies emphasise the dynamics involved in studying postage stamps produced by 'imperial' forces. Stamps often served to legitimise a regime's authority, they created a historical narrative which aligned with the dominant contemporary rhetoric, they conflated entire empires, and they reinforced stereotypes. Using these arguments, this thesis will highlight Hong Kong's postage stamps reveal not only how the British Administration viewed its colonial possession, but also how it wanted their relationship to be perceived.

The issue of interpreting stamps is complicated. Phil Deans calls the entire process of categorisation 'heuristic'. He notes the particular difficulties involved when analysing politically contentious geopolitical areas such as Taiwan – Deans ultimately decided which stamps could be considered 'Taiwanese', and which were, instead, about 'China'.<sup>59</sup> Raento and Brunn also reflect on the issues surrounding categorisation. The key difficulty they faced was with identifying dominant themes; could one stamp be placed in multiple categories? They give the example of a 1971 stamp featuring a bus, which was initially placed in their 'transportation and communications' set. However, because the background of the stamp showcased a Finnish Lake Region landscape, it was granted a secondary placement in the 'Nature' field.<sup>60</sup> For this thesis, categorisation is challenging; certain stamps could be read in multiple ways (particular wildlife can be read as both a national symbol and an example of indigenous nature). In part, this led to the decision to split the chapters chronologically. As shall be explained shortly, the iconography of Hong Kong's postage stamps reflected shifts in contemporary politics and society; thus, key themes neatly emerged in different

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<sup>58</sup> Kristi S. Evans, 'The Argument of Images: Historical Representation in Solidarity Underground Postage, 1981-87', *American Ethnologist*, 19, 4, Imagining Identities: Nation, Culture, and the Past (November, 1992), pp. 749-767.

<sup>59</sup> Deans, 'Isolation, Identity and Taiwanese Stamps', p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> Raento and Brunn, 'Visualizing Finland', p. 148.

decades. This was nevertheless a subjective decision; the categorisation within each decade was ultimately defined by the author. However, it is important to note that the subjective interpretation of these visual sources should not be treated differently to the analysis of narratives and messages contained in more traditional historical sources (predominantly text-based materials such as government records and literature).

Reception is another issue when reading postage stamps: who were these sources created for? It is important to note that there are two types of postage stamps produced by states: definitives and commemoratives. Definitives are produced to signpost the prepayment mail transmission; they usually have a simple design which can be produced en masse and which rarely needs to be changed (except for price alterations). Commemoratives are created to celebrate aspects of a territory; these may focus on people, places, events, achievements, artwork, and such. This can cause issues when trying to identify audiences. Jacques Leclerc notes that certain stamps, mainly commemoratives, were produced with the collectors' market primarily in mind; thus, postal services were less concerned with marking the prepayment of mail and more focussed on earning revenue from these consumers.<sup>61</sup> Cusack, too, notes that Portuguese stamps, particularly colonial issues, were created with philatelists in mind.<sup>62</sup> Jack Child notes that many South American governments realised the financial potential of the philatelic market; in turn, many stamps were produced for the collectors' book rather than for the transmission of mail.<sup>63</sup> Thus, this thesis will highlight the significant contribution the philatelic market made to considerations regarding Hong Kong stamp design; they were a key factor in the decision-making process. However, regardless of whether postage stamps were created for philatelists' eyes only, they still provide a fascinating insight into prominent narratives. Reception is impossible to gauge; yet it is not the objective of this thesis to identify the audience and impact of these stamps. Whether created for the collector's book or to transport a parcel, Hong Kong's postage stamps were produced by the British Administration to project an image of the colony on a local and international level.

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<sup>61</sup> Jacques Leclerc and Nora Scott, 'The Political Iconology of the Indonesian Postage Stamp (1950-1970)', *Indonesia*, 57, Archipel (April, 1993), p. 15.

<sup>62</sup> Cusack, 'Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology', p. 591.

<sup>63</sup> Child, *Miniature Messages*, pp. 47-49.

Finally, Hong Kong's postal stationery was chosen for this study because, just as postage stamps in general are an understudied resource, Hong Kong itself is a largely overlooked territory in historical studies. There are key notable exceptions, including, but not restricted to, the work of John Carroll,<sup>64</sup> Robert Bickers,<sup>65</sup> Chi-Kwan Mark,<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Sinn,<sup>67</sup> and Mark Hampton.<sup>68</sup> However, as Hampton states in his recent book, despite Hong Kong being 'the subject of increasingly sophisticated scholarship [...] this scholarship [...] is scarcely noticed by historians of Britain and the British Empire'.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, Carroll notes that 'scholars of British colonialism generally [concentrate] on Africa and India'.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, this study will build on the limited historiography of Hong Kong by using an equally under-examined source material to explore the territory's place in the field of British imperial history.

Specific to philatelic studies, barely any studies have been carried out for Hong Kong. One academic Cantonese text exists which has addressed the territory's philatelic past. Henry Choi's *Hong Kong History in Stamps* is a useful text for this study, but it does not occupy the academic gap that this thesis shall fill. Choi's work focusses on describing the features of each postage stamp; information on the people, places, organisations, events, and themes which occupy the stamps' canvas is provided. This work does not, however, look at these stamps as examples of the British Administration's representation of Hong Kong through a constructed narrative; instead they are used as a means of discussing aspects of Hong Kong's past. Symbolism is not contextualised, narratives are not deconstructed, themes are left unexplored, and the issue of imperialism is rarely broached.<sup>71</sup>

It is also worth briefly mentioning two other works on Hong Kong's Post Office. Edward Proud's *The Postal History of Hong Kong 1841-1997* contains multiple primary sources

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<sup>64</sup> John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); John Carroll, *Edge of Empires: Chinese Elites and British Colonials in Hong Kong* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>65</sup> Robert Bickers has produced a number of texts which studies the relationship between China and the West; two key texts include: Bickers, *Britain in China*; Robert Bickers, *Out of China: How the Chinese Ended the Era of Western Domination* (Penguin UK, 2017).

<sup>66</sup> Chi-Kwan Mark, *The Everyday Cold War: Britain and China, 1950-1972* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Sinn, *Power and Charity: A Chinese Merchant Elite in Colonial Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2003).

<sup>68</sup> Mark Hampton, *Hong Kong and British Culture, 1945-97* (Manchester University Press, 2017).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>70</sup> Carroll, *Edge of Empires*, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> These are not oversights of the author; it was not the objective of this book to explore these avenues. Instead Choi sets out to discuss elements of Hong Kong's history which postage stamps feature. See: Henry Choi, *Hong Kong History in Stamps* (Chung Hwa Book Co, 2013).

and provides an overview of the development of Hong Kong's Post Office.<sup>72</sup> Francis Webb also highlights the history of Hong Kong's postal system, and extends his study to include the Chinese Treaty Ports and Japan.<sup>73</sup> Both of these writers are philatelists. Generally speaking, and certainly for these two works, research carried out by philatelists tends to focus on technicalities.<sup>74</sup> Whilst they provide useful information regarding the history of postal networks, generally they do not place their arguments in an analytical context; they do not, for example, utilise academic methodological frameworks. Additionally, whilst Webb's work has been useful in building up a picture of the early formation of the Post Office, Proud's work is problematic. Key events, people, and places are often incorrectly referred to; similarly, primary material is entirely unreferenced. Thus, it becomes difficult to use Proud as a credible source in this argument. This is not to say that philatelic work should be excluded from bibliographies of stamp studies; their papers contain a myriad of useful notes and details. However, for the purpose of this thesis, it shall suffice to say that previous studies of Hong Kong's Post Office and postage stamps have not covered the themes this analysis shall explore. In building on these scholars' work, this research will deliver a full analysis of how Hong Kong was represented by the British Administration on its postal stationery.

### *Chapters Two to Five*

This thesis will study the postage stamps of Hong Kong between 1945 and 1997 across four chapters. The first stamp chapter will analyse the period between 1945 and 1969; the second will address the seventies; the third studies the eighties; and the final chapter analyses the stamps between 1990 and the handover in 1997. As will be proven, the chronological division of this thesis strengthens the argument that postage stamps reflected societal and political change. The situation in 1950s Hong Kong was markedly different to the early nineties; the postage stamps of Hong Kong reflect this. Furthermore, particular themes clearly emerge in each decade; stamps became more unique to Hong Kong, they began to sell the unique features of the colony, and

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<sup>72</sup> Edward Proud, *The Postal History of Hong Kong 1841-1997* (2004).

<sup>73</sup> Francis W. Webb, *The Philatelic and Postal History of Hong Kong and the Treaty Ports of China and Japan* (The Royal Philatelic Society of London, 1961).

<sup>74</sup> Jack Child's introduction notes that his study should not be considered 'philatelic research' which he describes as focussing on 'idiosyncrasies, irregularities, and errors'; see: Child, *Miniature Messages*, p. 10.



eventually they were used to promote a nostalgic version of Hong Kong's imperial history.

The first postage stamp chapter outlines key political changes which happened between 1945 and 1969; it identifies how these developments can be read on postage stamps. Immediately after Britain regained control of Hong Kong, the new Military Administration relied heavily on non-European workers. It soon became clear that Hong Kong could not return to a colonial administration; the Chinese workforce demanded a greater level of inclusivity in the functioning of the territory. This led to the '1946 outlook', essentially Britain's recognition that Hong Kong would have to see major democratic reform if it were to remain an imperial possession. Philatelically this was recognised by a 1946 'Victory' postage stamp; the iconography stressed that post-war Hong Kong would be built on Chinese and British cooperation and inclusivity. However, change in China and the growing implications of Cold War politics led to Britain abandoning this stance. The postage stamps of Hong Kong reflected this; focus was given to either British achievements or impersonal reproductions of issues were distributed throughout Britain's overseas territories. Additionally, the Cantonese language was entirely removed from designs. Shifting migration patterns and refugee humanitarianism thrust Hong Kong into the global limelight; its stamps reflected this and greater emphasis was given to international cooperation and charity. However, the social changes which Hong Kong underwent in the fifties and sixties, combined with events in China during the sixties, created a confrontational atmosphere in the colony; this ultimately led to the formation of a local 'Hong Konger' identity. The introduction of the 1965 postal policy changes, which enabled British colonies to produce postal material specific to the territory, coincided with the civil unrest. Thus, by the late sixties Hong Kong's postage stamps marked a major shift in the colony's political and social environment; the unique aspects of Hong Kong began to be celebrated philatelically. Furthermore, stamp designs began to incorporate far more 'Chinese' themes; the Cantonese language also returned. Ultimately, this chapter analyses the key political and social changes which happened during Britain's first twenty-five years in post-war Hong Kong. The postage stamps of this period provide a 'window' – to use Brunn's terminology – into the British Administration's vision of Hong Kong; it went from a colonial afterthought to a celebrated territory.

The following chapter charts the emergence of a greater focus on Hong Kong as a unique space in the seventies; the postal stationery of this period clearly reveals how the British Administration began to sell the territory as an individual entity. Initially, expositions and festivals were used to celebrate a stereotypical view of the colony. Whilst local Hong Kong Chinese designers were used in the creation of exhibitions and postage stamps, they were ultimately orchestrated by the British Administration. The 1971 Hong Kong Festival, for example, featured symbols created by British officials; these icons were supposed to represent the Hong Kong community, but they failed to resonate with the local designers brought in to produce postal stationery marking the event. Notions of 'tradition' were introduced to give authenticity to the manufactured festivals celebrating Hong Kong's culture and history. Yet 'tradition' was also seen as a useful way to promote tourism; it was often included in postage stamp designs to sell Hong Kong to potential visitors. Thus, the international consumer became a key consideration in the stamp design process. Whilst philatelists heavily influenced postal imagery, there were a number of other important agents involved in the process; this is highlighted in the examination of Hong Kong's Lunar New Year stamp set which ran between 1967 and 1978. Other themes were used to promote Hong Kong as an individual space and an attractive destination for tourists and philatelists alike. Wildlife became an increasingly popular topic throughout the seventies and, as well as being aesthetically appealing to collectors, these images also served to promote a sense of local identity. Changes in the Post Office were also important. Alongside the introduction of the 1973 Stamp Committee, a crackdown on governmental corruption led to a more proactive investigation into illicit mails traveling within the postal system. Similarly, political change in China after the death of Chairman Mao facilitated an increase in postal cooperation between the mainland and Hong Kong. Overall, this chapter tracks the emergence of Hong Kong as a unique space. Postage stamps produced by officials in the Post Office mirrored the efforts made by the government to sell an idea of Hong Kong to the local population and the wider international market.

The penultimate chapter explores the role of time and space on Hong Kong's postage stamps in the wake of the decision to transfer authority of the territory to China in the early eighties. As confusion and instability began to filter into Hong Kong life, the

postage stamps of the colony promoted an image of security and consistency. Thus, this chapter should be read as a key example of the ways in which postal stationery was produced in line with a particular constructed narrative; they do not provide an accurate reflection of contemporary society. In manufacturing a notion of security, the Post Office created stamps which focussed on Hong Kong's past; heritage was a key topic. Historical scenes and antique maps provided examples of change in the colony both geographically and across time. The theme of progress, a major topic in the first chapter examining published accounts, is dominant. The New Territories were analogous with 'tradition'; they were chosen to represent early China. Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, however, were used as symbols of modernity; they became indexical references to contemporary society. Furthermore, the notion of 'progression' was closely linked to the presence of Britain; infrastructural projects, technological achievements, and major developments accomplished during British governance were celebrated. Yet plans for future developments were also commemorated on stamps – these highlighted Britain's commitment to advancing the colony despite oncoming changes. Overall, Hong Kong's timeline was defined by Britain. The myth of Hong Kong's history beginning in the 1840s, as highlighted by John Carroll, can clearly be read on the postage stamps created in the eighties.<sup>75</sup> The depiction of Hong Kong's past on stamps coincided with the rise of stamp collecting in educational institutions. Schools ran philately clubs and the Post Office used this as an opportunity to promote stamp collecting amongst the younger Hong Kong generation. Magazine and newspaper articles explored the stories of Hong Kong which could be read on stamps; interviews with designers also began to be published. The popularity of postage stamps provided the British Administration with a convenient means of spreading the illusion of security. By selling a particular British-centred image of the colony's past, Hong Kong was visualised as a success story which owed its progress to the presence of imperial Britain. The stamps of this decade reveal how the British Administration projected the myth that Hong Kong could only be defined by British rule.

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<sup>75</sup> John Carroll notes that the history of Hong Kong was often shown to have begun with its cession to Britain in 1841; prior to that it was depicted as a desolate island with sparse fishing communities. This myth was not only perpetuated by the British, but also the Chinese who viewed it as an opportunity to highlight their involvement in developing the colony. This idea shall be expanded on in the first chapter. See: John M. Carroll, 'Colonial Hong Kong as a Cultural-Historical Place', *Modern Asian Studies*, 40, 2 (2006), pp. 532-5.

Bookmarked by the events of Tiananmen in 1989, and the 1997 handover, the final chapter of this thesis explores the ways in which Hong Kong was sold as a unique but internationally connected space on its postage stamps. As the handover loomed and the population of Hong Kong realised they would not be granted democratic representation, the British Administration released philatelic designs which served to visualise the colony as an independent, individual territory. Interaction with the international community was a key theme; such designs served to highlight the impact overseas influences had had on Hong Kong. More important, however, were the stamps which celebrated Hong Kong's impact on the global stage; key events and people were commemorated in a bid to showcase the importance of the colony. In tandem with this, the Post Office released designs advertising the unique features of the territory. Local wildlife, culture, terrains, buildings, and landmarks combined to sell Hong Kong as a fascinating and worthwhile destination to its own population, but also the global audience. As the 1997 deadline approached, the Post Office began to release nostalgic celebrations of its achievements. However, whilst re-released issues, 'classic' series, and commemorations of the postal service can be read as a self-congratulatory message, in reality they were a shrewd method for boosting sales in the lucrative philatelic industry before the handover. They also played an allegorical role; they were used as a stand-in for the British Administration. As Britain could not be seen to outwardly celebrate its colonial legacy, it used the Post Office as a means of commemorating 150 years of British rule. The Post Office was an indexical figure for British imperialism. Ultimately, this chapter highlights how the British Administration used postage stamps to sell Hong Kong as a unique and individual territory before China gained control, whilst also raising philatelic sales revenue, and celebrating British colonialism over the previous 150 years.

## **Conclusion**

The four chapters which analyse postage stamps build on the initial chapter's examination of early accounts depicting Hong Kong. Both sources provide an overview of the territory. Newspapers, however, cannot be considered 'state sanctioned'; unlike stamps, they are examples of popular opinions. By blending these sources, something which has not been attempted by previous scholars, this thesis will highlight the ways in which prominent themes in early representations of Hong Kong later played a key

role in official national rhetoric; observations in newspaper articles became images on stamps. Methodologically speaking, as this introduction has highlighted, newspaper pieces will generally be read through a textual analysis, whereas postage stamps will rely on semiotics-based visual culture studies. Combining these two approaches enables this thesis to explore both sources fully. Alongside representation, the common denominator throughout this thesis is the distribution of information. Not only did the Post Office facilitate the sending of mail, it also created and circulated postage stamps. Hong Kong has always been imagined in British minds; this thesis will highlight the key themes, icons, and symbols found in newspaper accounts and postage stamps which visualised this colonial possession between 1841 and 1997.

## **Chapter One: Representing Hong Kong Through Published Accounts, 1840-1945**

As Britain laid claim to Hong Kong in the 1840s, the British public were keen to understand more about their new colonial possession. Many accounts from Western travellers, merchants, and correspondents were published in British newspapers; the wide dissemination of this information informed the public at 'home'. The language used and images referred to in these accounts ultimately influenced how the territory was perceived. Hong Kong was seen as an exotic location, but set against a backdrop of conflict, it was often visualised as dangerous. Descriptions of the colony's landscape often focussed on its mountainous terrain and the harbour; these soon became important features. Further traits of Hong Kong began to emerge, most notably the local sampans and junks, vibrant colours, the considerable heat, and bustling crowds. Published accounts also addressed the Chinese population; yet whilst positive stories certainly existed, the local inhabitants were typically depicted negatively. Key stereotypes which persisted centred on their untrustworthy, sneaky character. They were also viewed as violent; pirates and assassins became increasingly common in descriptions. The culture of Hong Kong also fascinated the British public. Women in particular became the focus of a lot of Western attention – footbinding created an atmosphere in which Chinese women were seen as analogous to the barbarism of Chinese culture. Food also fascinated visitors, yet whilst it was depicted as abundant and exotic, the different animals used in cooking were often met with revulsion. Additionally, comparisons were made between pre-British and post-British Hong Kong; progression became an important topic. Strong leadership, advanced technology, and ambition led to rapid change in the colony under the British Administration; conversely, China was depicted as a stagnant civilization which required Western assistance. However, Hong Kong was always viewed as a cosmopolitan environment; it was a meeting space for different ethnicities and nationalities. Postage stamps were introduced in 1860 and they quickly captured the imagination of the public; collectors soon began to emerge and local stationery was in high demand. Stamps began to showcase themes and icons which had emerged in accounts written throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the early accounts established how Hong Kong would be represented.

It is important to acknowledge that many of the prominent icons and narratives discussed in this chapter were used to describe the Chinese population en masse - both in Hong Kong and on the mainland. Equally, as mentioned in the introduction, Canton was the initial British outpost in East Asia and throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries British conceptions of the entire geographical region were formed from interactions between the British and local populations exclusively within this province. Many of the sailing vessels, clothing, sounds, crowds, smells, and cultural practices experienced in Hong Kong had previously been discussed in accounts of Canton. Similarly, missionary activities and British offensives along China's eastern coast gave rise to the notion that the Chinese were a barbarous people. However, differences between the mainland and Hong Kong, as shall be highlighted, were observed by visitors. Additionally, many writers spoke of Hong Kong as a truly original place. Thus, despite icons and ideas originating in Canton and mainland China, they gradually became synonymous with a unique and exotic Hong Kong.

Ultimately, this chapter shall address three key research questions. First, in what way can accounts published in newspapers be viewed as representative tools with regards to Hong Kong and China? Second, what key themes and symbols emerged over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Finally, what narratives can be read from these accounts? In answering these questions, this chapter shall highlight that letters, diary entries, and foreign correspondent pieces published by the British press provided a specific image of Hong Kong. Prevalent concepts, symbols, and attitudes persisted throughout numerous accounts which were published in British newspapers. These references gradually found their way into popular culture, and would later influence postage stamp design in Hong Kong until the 1997 handover.

### **A Place of Duality**

This chapter will highlight that Hong Kong was presented as a place of duality. Steven Conn observes that China was seen 'through two sets of lenses'. On the one hand, its citizens were 'backward, primitive, and unprogressive'. However, on the other, China was a vast, ancient civilisation with an immense recorded history, 'dazzling' art and literature, a complex language, and had invented three of the most important

technologies: the printing press, gunpowder, and the compass. Thus, China was seen as different to other non-Western societies.<sup>1</sup> Sarah Cheang echoes this notion. She notes that the word 'exotic' was often used to describe non-Western culture and material goods; it became synonymous with the term 'primitive'. However, for China the complex and intricate products it exported, combined with its rich history, meant that 'exotic' was read within the paradigm of duality: 'sophisticated and degenerate'.<sup>2</sup> Letters and accounts also pushed this notion of duality and highlighted that China challenged the narrative of non-Western societies. Missionaries noted that China was home to 'heathen idolaters', but also a place of 'great accomplishments'; it could not be simply placed within concepts of Western hierarchies.<sup>3</sup> Within British literature, China was also presented as a vast, exotic place which contained numerous dangers.<sup>4</sup> Most importantly, this narrative shifted over time. As Catherine Pagani states, prior to the initial Opium War, the Chinese were seen in a positive, curious light. However, after conflict they were viewed with suspicion and negativity; nevertheless, despite this shift China was always seen as exotic and interesting.<sup>5</sup> As shall be highlighted, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, China and Hong Kong were viewed from both positive and negative perspectives, yet its exoticness never ceased to be a source of great intrigue.

## The Place

One of the more positive exotic aspects of Hong Kong reported in numerous accounts was its landscape. It was described in a letter published by *Liverpool Mercury etc.* as a 'great other-world city'.<sup>6</sup> Another noted in 1858 that '[n]othing that I can write [...] can give you the least idea of this wonderful place'.<sup>7</sup> Jane Degenhardt argues that, like China's material goods, the country itself was marvelled at by the English mainly because they could 'barely locate' it.<sup>8</sup> This notion of a place difficult to describe, or even imagine, became a prominent theme; its vastness and impenetrability was often

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Conn, 'Where Is the East? Asian Objects in American Museums, from Nathan Dunn to Charles Freer', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 35, 2/3 (Summer - Autumn, 2000), p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Cheang, 'Selling China', p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Yue, 'Missionaries (Mis-)Representing China: Orientalism, Religion, and the Conceptualization of Victorian Cultural Identity', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 37 (2009), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> This article gives a very useful overview of numerous accounts of China and charts the shifting narrative over time, see: Ersu Ding, 'Appropriation of the "Other": Contrasting Notions of China in British Literature', *Neohelicon*, XXXII, 2 (2005), pp. 313-325.

<sup>5</sup> Pagani, 'Chinese Material Culture and British Perceptions of China', p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> 'Through a Celestial City', *Liverpool Mercury etc.* (Liverpool, England), 11 May 1893 (hereafter 'Through a Celestial City').

<sup>7</sup> 'China by Albert Smith', *The Morning Post* (London, England), 20 October 1858, p. 3 (hereafter 'China by Albert Smith').

<sup>8</sup> Jane Hwang Degenhardt, 'Cracking the Mysteries of 'China': China(Ware) in the Early Modern Imagination', *Studies in Philology*, 110, 1 (2013), p. 159.



cited.<sup>9</sup> In early paintings of the colony, focus was given to exotic landscapes, beautiful and interesting fauna and flora, and architecture.<sup>10</sup> Reviews of Burford's early panorama celebrated this new British possession over the craftsmanship itself. The 'most picturesque scene ever witnessed' one critic wrote.<sup>11</sup> Another remarked on the 'wide expanse of scenery, as unlike as possible to anything with which European eyes are familiar'.<sup>12</sup> Hong Kong and China were viewed as exotic lands which could barely be perceived in the minds of Westerners.

The need to quantify Hong Kong in terms of European reference points was a strong theme in published accounts describing the new British possession. 'There is an odd resemblance to the rock of Gibraltar', wrote Commander C. Robinson, 'but the scene is incomparably finer'.<sup>13</sup> A similar comparison was made years later by a *Daily Mail* journalist: '[c]ross Gibraltar with Naples and you get a fair idea of Hong-kong'. They also noted that it contained 'scenery exactly like the Balkans'.<sup>14</sup> In an account of the colony written in 1872, the author stated that Hong Kong 'remind[ed] one of Rio Janeiro, only it is smaller and there is very little verdure'.<sup>15</sup> Another letter argued that the topology of the territory 'resembl[ed] the bold, rugged mountain scenery of the western highlands of Scotland'.<sup>16</sup> This comparison to Scotland was reiterated in an article about Kowloon forty years later.<sup>17</sup> For writer W. Lawson, the colony seemed out of place along the Chinese shoreline; to him, it 'would have seemed more at home on the Japanese coast'.<sup>18</sup> Hong Kong was visualised through references to popular locations which would have been recognisable to British readers. Its similarity to multiple different locations added to the illusion of its complexity; Hong Kong was difficult to imagine.

Hong Kong's terrain was clearly an important part of descriptions; its mountains became a significant icon. Upon viewing the colony for the first time a visitor in 1844

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<sup>9</sup> Conn, 'Where Is the East?', p. 161.

<sup>10</sup> Pagani, 'Chinese Material Culture and British Perceptions of China', p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> 'The Exhibitions', *The Court Magazine and Monthly Critic* (London, England), 01 April 1844, p. 75 (hereafter 'The Exhibitions').

<sup>12</sup> 'Mr. Burford', p. 203.

<sup>13</sup> Commander C. N. Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', *Young England: An Illustrated Magazine for the Recreation and Instruction* (London, England), p. 64 (hereafter Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong').

<sup>14</sup> Price, 'Sun', p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> 'The Voyage of the Grand Duke Alexis', *The Standard* (London, England), 26 December 1872, p. 6 (hereafter 'The Voyage').

<sup>16</sup> 'Affairs in China', *Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham, England), 20 October 1858 (hereafter 'Affairs in China').

<sup>17</sup> 'Hong Kong Extension', *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* (Bristol, England), 31 October 1898.

<sup>18</sup> W. R. Lawson, 'Our Chinese Colony', *Daily Mail* (London, England), 02 September 1897, p. 4 (hereafter Lawson, 'Our Chinese Colony').

wrote of being taken aback by the '[i]mmense blocks of stone' and 'perfectly mountainous' terrain.<sup>19</sup> Lawson was also moved by the '[b]old fantastic peaks' which greeted new arrivals.<sup>20</sup> Another commentator wrote that Hong Kong contained 'mountainous scenery unrivalled in beauty in the south of China, and sea views worthy of the brush of our greatest artists'.<sup>21</sup> Artists were certainly drawn to the rocky terrain of Hong Kong; an exhibition of landscapes featured a painting focussing on the '[v]olcanic mountains ris[ing] to the sky'.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, in literature stories often drew attention to these features; Arthur Mills' *Intrigue Island*, for example, mentioned the striking 'green-clad peak [...] against a background of topaze-blue sky'. Clearly these descriptions had begun to filter through to artistic and fictional impressions of Hong Kong. Yet Julia Kuehn suggests that the multiple references to China's mountains were often allusions to its vast and unconquerable landscape.<sup>23</sup> This can be read in the accounts of several writers who stress the magnitude of these features. Commander Robinson, for example, described the 'bold, grey rocks and lofty mountains, their summits lost in mist'.<sup>24</sup> In Burford's early panorama this enormity was showcased by the 'lofty mountains [...] [of] immense height from the water's edge'.<sup>25</sup> The description of such huge topological features left a distinct impression on visitors and audiences alike and they appear in numerous letters and stories. Importantly, the hugeness of the mountains began to feature in fictional texts and artwork; they gradually became a key symbol of Hong Kong.

Another important icon of Hong Kong was its harbour. Bickers notes that bunds and waterfronts in China 'remained symbolic of the Western space created and maintained among Chinese chaos'.<sup>26</sup> They were also popular reference points. The Shanghai bund, for example, has been frequently alluded to by Westerners throughout history.<sup>27</sup> With specific regards to Hong Kong, Stephen Davies notes that the harbour had always been

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<sup>19</sup> 'Hong Kong, China', *The Manchester Times and Gazette* (Manchester, England), 24 February 1844 (hereafter 'Hong Kong, China')

<sup>20</sup> Lawson, 'Our Chinese Colony', p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> 'The Hong Kong Hinterland', *The Graphic* (London, England), 17 December 1898 (hereafter 'The Hong Kong Hinterland', *The Graphic*).

<sup>22</sup> 'The Exhibitions', p. 75.

<sup>23</sup> Julia Kuehn, 'The Victorians and China: Travel with Ships, Ideologies and Literature', *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies*, 20, 1 (2015), p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

<sup>25</sup> 'Mr. Burford', p. 203.

<sup>26</sup> Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 141.

<sup>27</sup> Jeremy E. Taylor, 'The Bund: Littoral Space of Empire in the Treaty Ports of East Asia', *Social History*, 27, 2 (May, 2002), p. 125.

known as 'a stunning maritime amphitheatre'.<sup>28</sup> Commander Robinson's letters to British newspapers declared the harbour a 'novel and striking spectacle'. Other accounts described it as 'magnificent'<sup>29</sup> and 'splendid'.<sup>30</sup> Such was its notoriety that serials made it, as with the mountains, an early point of reference.<sup>31</sup> As newspapers increasingly accompanied articles with images, panoramic scenes of Victoria Harbour were used as stock visuals to represent Hong Kong.<sup>32</sup> This is most likely because the Harbour and the neighbouring city of Victoria had become synonymous with Western aspects of Hong Kong. An illustration featured in *The Graphic* in 1888 presented both locations as being the hub of European partying.<sup>33</sup> Such was the focus on Victoria and the Harbour that one reporter noted in 1924 that 'most tourists suppose [this area] to be "Hong Kong"'.<sup>34</sup> Victoria Harbour became an early icon of Hong Kong and, as shall be analysed further in chapter four, it gradually took on a more indexical role for the colony in its entirety. Alongside mountains, Victoria Harbour was certainly an important symbol.

Another important icon of Hong Kong was its local boats: the sampan and the junk. Most accounts published in newspapers made reference to these crafts and a great deal of fascination was given to the house-boat 'sampan'.<sup>35</sup> The sheer volume of these ships was stressed in multiple accounts. The harbour was said to be 'swarming with the little sailing junks' and contained 'swarms of *sampans* [native boats]'.<sup>36</sup> Albert Smith's account opens with a mention of being 'surrounded' by local ships;<sup>37</sup> '[t]here are a great many junks' noted another.<sup>38</sup> *The Star* published a letter which described 'hundreds of sea-going junks' floating alongside 'many thousand boats [used] for the most part [as] human habitations'.<sup>39</sup> Commander Robinson's tale mentions the

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Davies, 'Terminal Dilemma: Hong Kong's Waterfront, 1841-1891', *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies*, 20, 1 (2015), p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> 'Letter From China', *Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury* (Leicester, England), 13 October 1900, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> 'Chit-Chat About Hong Kong', *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times* (Hull, England), 04 April 1879 (hereafter 'Chit-Chat About Hong Kong')

<sup>31</sup> R. Mounteney Jephson, 'With the Colours', *Every Boy's Annual* (London, England), p. 525 (hereafter Jephson, 'With the Colours'); Arthur Mills, 'Intrigue Island', *Daily Mail* (Hull, England), 21 March 1932, p. 7; 'Her Likeness'.

<sup>32</sup> 'Hong-Kong', *The Times* (London, England), 24 May 1926, p.xiii; J. T. Braga, 'Hong Kong, Kowloon and the Leased Territory-I', *The Financial Times* (London, England), 27 June 1932, p.29; 'The Hong Kong Hinterland', *The Graphic*.

<sup>33</sup> 'An Open-Air Ball at the Peak, Hong Kong', *The Graphic* (London, England), 29 December 1888.

<sup>34</sup> 'Chinese Street At Wembley', *The Times* (London, England), 12 May 1924, p. 9 (hereafter 'Chinese Street At Wembley')

<sup>35</sup> Whilst many references could be noted here, these two letters provide a general example of the fascination with Hong Kong's sea-faring families: 'Letters From the Far East'; 'Chit-Chat About Hong Kong'.

<sup>36</sup> (Emphasis and square brackets in original) Price, 'Sun'.

<sup>37</sup> 'China by Albert Smith'.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Voyage'.

<sup>39</sup> 'The Transformation of a Bare Rock', *The Star* (Saint Peter Port, England), 10 April 1890 (hereafter 'The Transformation of a Bare Rock').

'hundreds of junks, row-boats, sampans, and other curious native craft'. He also defines them in greater detail for his readers, describing them as an 'oddly-shaped, picturesque, and fanciful specimen of naval architecture' with 'the appearance of a gigantic shoe'. He then proceeded to recount the local tale of how the ships took on such a unique look.<sup>40</sup> The ships quickly began to feature in literature and paintings of Hong Kong, cementing their place as icons.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, during the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, the mock Hong Kong 'street' featured sampans and a junk.<sup>42</sup> In fact, the junk became such an important symbol of Hong Kong, as shall be highlighted in the coming postage stamp chapters, that artist Cai Guo-Qiang used one to commemorate the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Marco Polo's return to Venice in 1995.<sup>43</sup> Local ships such as the sampan and the junk became iconographical representations of Hong Kong alongside mountains and the harbour. Through written accounts published in newspapers, these features became important aspects of the new colony in British eyes.

Hong Kong was also presented as a phenomenal sensory experience. 'Crowds! Colour! Heat! Real Chinese native life!' wrote F. Imandt, who was struck by the vivacious atmosphere in Hong Kong. The 'air is redolent of the sweet perfume of joss sticks' she noted. Additionally, despite noise from the crowds, she could hear 'birds in cages [...] twittering and singing'. She was particularly taken aback by the colours, noting the 'crimson, yellow, green, blue flash' and 'scarlet and gold' filling the streets.<sup>44</sup>

Commander Robinson was equally struck by the colours of Hong Kong. The 'variegated hues and shades,' he wrote, 'giving the scene the semblance of a vast kaleidoscope'.<sup>45</sup> However, whilst some commentators viewed Hong Kong's streets in a positive light, others viewed them as unpleasant and suffocating. The streets of the colony were portrayed as claustrophobic; the hustle and bustle of the community was testing. 'I don't believe there is a street in Bristol, or in London either, except during a commotion that is as crowded with people as some of the streets of Hong Kong are

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<sup>40</sup> To briefly summarise the recounted myth of a Chinese Emperor, unhappy with the designs of a nautical technician he throwing his shoe and requested future ships should instead look more like his footwear, see: Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

<sup>41</sup> Jephson, 'With the Colours'; 'The Hong Kong Hinterland', *The Graphic*; 'The Exhibitions', p. 75.

<sup>42</sup> 'Chinese Street At Wembley', p. 9; 'Picture Gallery', *The Times* (London, England), 30 September 1924, p. xx.

<sup>43</sup> Aihwa Ong, "'What Marco Polo Forgot': Contemporary Chinese Art Reconfigures the Global", *Current Anthropology*, 53, 4 (2012), p. 471.

<sup>44</sup> F. Marie Imandt, 'A Town of Crowds, Colour and Heat', *Daily Mail* (London, England), 30 April 1929, p. 19 (hereafter Imandt, 'A Town of Crowds, Colour and Heat').

<sup>45</sup> Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

crowded with Chinese', noted one visitor; there were 'thousands of them' in the street.<sup>46</sup> One writer was taken aback by the 'motley crowd'. Crowds, according to Douglas Kerr, had always played an important role in the representation of 'the East'.<sup>47</sup> For another contemporary visitor, Hong Kong's crowded streets were bustling with unexpected activity; they were struck by inhabitants 'cutting up their pigs and their fish'.<sup>48</sup> This affected another visitor who complained of the 'overpowering odour, which almost sickens us' as they walked through the busy urban areas.<sup>49</sup>

Alongside the hustle and bustle, the noise of Hong Kong was frequently described in a negative context. The *Liverpool Mercury etc.* quoted a letter which complained of the 'incongruous medley of uncouth, jerky sounds, uttered in different keys' in the street. '[B]eating cymbals,' could be heard emanating from a funeral procession alongside 'blowing reed instruments which sound[ed] like small bagpipes'.<sup>50</sup> The various Chinese instruments were often criticised for being 'heathen emitters of unmusical sounds'.<sup>51</sup> At the Queen's Jubilee festival in 1888, one letter described the 'the bangs of the gongs, the clash of the cymbals and castanets, the groans, shrieks, wheezes, whistles, yells, moans, grunts, and roars', adding that the 'awful row [...] [was] better [to] be imagined than listened to'.<sup>52</sup> Another described the experience of hearing local musicians as 'an olla podrida of marrow-bones and cleavers, banjoes and bones, bagpipe-clarionets, &c., interlarded with convulsive bursts of vocal melody from a celestial beauty, to whom a peacock with quinsy would be preferable'.<sup>53</sup> The theatre, in particular, was criticised for its musical ensemble. Robinson described it as 'discordant'.<sup>54</sup> For another, it produced 'the most barbarous music imaginable'.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, Hong Kong was depicted as a close and deafening environment.

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<sup>46</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>47</sup> In particular see the fourth chapter of Kerr's book: Douglass Kerr, 'Outnumbering: Western Individuals and Eastern Crowds', *Eastern Figures: Orient and Empire in British Writing* (Hong Kong University Press, 2008), pp. 53-78.

<sup>48</sup> 'The China Mail', *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh, Scotland), 25 April 1858 (hereafter 'The China Mail').

<sup>49</sup> 'Through a Celestial City'.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> 'A Visit to a Chinese Theatre', *The Era* (London, England), 09 April 1887.

<sup>52</sup> 'Jubilee Carnival at Hong Kong', *The Ipswich Journal* (Ipswich, England), 18 January 1888 (hereafter 'Jubilee Carnival at Hong Kong').

<sup>53</sup> 'Another Day in Hong-Kong', *The Standard* (London, England), 03 December 1857, p. 6 (hereafter 'Another Day in Hong-Kong').

<sup>54</sup> Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

<sup>55</sup> 'The Voyage'.

It was the climate, however, that received the worst press. '[T]he Thermometer in summer,' noted one tourist, was 'at 85 and 90, or even higher'.<sup>56</sup> Others described it as 'intensely hot',<sup>57</sup> 'enervating',<sup>58</sup> 'excessive',<sup>59</sup> and 'trying'.<sup>60</sup> Some went further and warned potential newcomers of the 'deadly' heat of the sun; 'for Hong Kong itself and the climate,' they wrote, 'I have ever had a most intolerable dislike'.<sup>61</sup> Others wrote about the dangers of the heat in Hong Kong and how the colony affected the foreign community. 'Good looks, and I am told good temper, fade here' a traveller wrote to their readers at home in 1857.<sup>62</sup> Hong Kong certainly began to get a reputation for testing the British community. In Jephson's *With the Colours* serial, he referred to the British troops stationed in the colony as being 'rather white about the gills'; 'the regular Hong-Kong complexion', he added.<sup>63</sup> Other weather conditions caused concerns for the British. 'The last typhoon at Hong Kong destroyed about 10,000 lives', wrote one inhabitant in 1879.<sup>64</sup> Others noted the multiple typhoons which hit the island, and one featured in a newspaper serial.<sup>65</sup> One letter stated that 'the average duration of life for a European [in Hong Kong was] seven years'. 'Adieu! Hong Kong,' they signed off, 'unwholesome islands of sweet waters, may I never see thee more'.<sup>66</sup> Others also noted that they could only live in Hong Kong for a brief period; 'I am glad that our residence here will not be permanent' wrote a young woman in 1896 who had relocated to the colony.<sup>67</sup> Overall, Hong Kong was seen as an exotic location. Its sensory experience was sometimes viewed as phenomenal and awesome, yet the experiences of Europeans in China, particularly with regard to noise and heat, could also be difficult and even deadly. Importantly, published accounts honed in on the sensory aspects of Hong Kong; it was represented as a noisy, busy, beautiful, hot, and unique place.

## The People

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<sup>56</sup> 'Hong Kong', *North Wales Chronicle* (Bangor, Wales), 08 September 1846.

<sup>57</sup> 'Life in China', *Age and Argus* (London, England), 25 May 1843, p. 3 (hereafter 'Life in China').

<sup>58</sup> 'The Transformation of a Bare Rock'.

<sup>59</sup> 'The Voyage'.

<sup>60</sup> 'Affairs in China'.

<sup>61</sup> 'China', *The Morning Post* (London, England), 30/11/1858, p.5 (hereafter 'China', *The Morning Post*).

<sup>62</sup> 'Another Day in Hong-Kong'.

<sup>63</sup> Jephson, 'With the Colours'.

<sup>64</sup> 'Chit-Chat About Hong Kong'.

<sup>65</sup> 'Her Likeness'.

<sup>66</sup> 'China', *The Morning Post*.

<sup>67</sup> 'Devonians in Hong Kong', *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser* (Exeter, England), 25 April 1896 (hereafter 'Devonians in Hong Kong').

Published accounts also contained descriptions of the local population. An early description of the Chinese was published in *The Standard* in 1857, but by then a stereotype had clearly formed. '[T]he shaven head, the flat colourless face, the eye (a Chinese eye is a Chinese eye, and has no comparison), the vacant expression' were all noted; yet as the writer noted, these were established 'outward and visible signs' of the indigenous community.<sup>68</sup> Commander Robinson referenced the 'yellow complexion, the almond-shaped eyes, the high-cheek bones, and snub nose of the Celestial' in his description of the local population.<sup>69</sup> As with the previous account, the use of the word 'the' over, say, 'a' implies that these were commonly acknowledged physical features. Yet this is hardly surprising; as stated in an 1880 letter, 'I suppose there are very few persons in England who have not seen pictures of a Chinaman'.<sup>70</sup> Other characteristics became common stereotypes. They were described as being an 'effeminate-looking race' with a 'baby-looking face'.<sup>71</sup> Others remarked on the 'smooth-faced' locals with 'long white dresses'.<sup>72</sup> Repeated references to their slim, long stature and their eyes soon found their way into popular fiction. Perhaps the most notable example is the Dr. Fu-Manchu series, the protagonist of which was described as 'tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan, a close-shaven skull, and long, magnetic eyes of the true cat-green'.<sup>73</sup> Descriptions found in personal accounts could be found in popular fiction.

One particular characteristic of the local population's appearance became particularly notorious: hair. 'Such masses of pigtails!' remarked one writer at the 1888 Jubilee celebrations.<sup>74</sup> Albert Smith noted that, upon arrival, he was 'surrounded by [...] pigtails'.<sup>75</sup> 'They all have jet black hair,' wrote one visitor, 'and all men and boys have their heads shaved, except a round patch on the poll, where the hair is allowed to grow to an unlimited length, and is plaited into a tail, or, as the Chinaman calls it, his "queue"'.<sup>76</sup> The long 'queue' was referenced in numerous other published accounts.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> 'Another Day in Hong-Kong'.

<sup>69</sup> Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

<sup>70</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> 'The Voyage'.

<sup>73</sup> Sax Rohmer, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu*, quoted in Urmila Seshagiri, 'Modernity's (Yellow) Perils: Dr. Fu-Manchu and English Race Paranoia', *Cultural Critique*, 62 (2006), p. 165.

<sup>74</sup> 'Jubilee Carnival at Hong Kong'.

<sup>75</sup> 'China by Albert Smith'.

<sup>76</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>77</sup> 'Through a Celestial City'; 'The Voyage'.

In popular literature, too, this hairstyle became an important point of note.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, illustrations in newspapers began focussing on the queues of the local Hong Kong Chinese.<sup>79</sup> 'Pig-tails' became so closely associated with the appearance of Chinese citizens that this hairstyle was showcased throughout the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. This was certainly surprising, as Bickers observes, considering that the 'queue' had been abolished after the revolution thirteen years previously.<sup>80</sup> Other physical stereotypes persisted throughout the nineteenth and long into the twentieth century.<sup>81</sup> However, without doubt one of the most notorious features of the Chinese populations' appearance within the Western world was their hair. Even after the 'pig-tail' was abolished, it persisted as a stereotype.

Alongside appearances, the characteristics of the Chinese came under scrutiny; as with previous descriptions of Hong Kong and China, some were positive and others were negative. A few visitors expressed warmth for the local population during and after the Opium Wars and the Boxer Rebellion between 1899 and 1901. In the early days of the British in Hong Kong, one letter praised the local colonial population based upon their experience in Canton. 'I believe that the Chinese, in the canton province particularly, where they have had much intercourse with foreigners, are generally deceitful, and not to be depended upon', they wrote. In Hong Kong, however, they found the 'inhabitants not only perfectly harmless, but particularly civil and kind'.<sup>82</sup> A few years later a letter released in the Edinburgh *Caledonian Mercury* stated that, between the local population and the foreign community, '[n]either in word nor gesture is there any symptom of hostility or even of dislike'.<sup>83</sup> In the twentieth century a similar narrative existed for some writers. A source of personal delight for one visitor at the Wembley Exhibition in 1924 were the Chinese workers who were praised for 'their adaptability, their capacity to work, their indifference to danger, and, above all, their indefensible good humour'.<sup>84</sup> In promoting Hong Kong as a winter retirement and holiday option,

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<sup>78</sup> Jephson, 'With the Colours'.

<sup>79</sup> 'Hong Kong Races, 1876-A Sketch in the Crowd', *The Graphic* (London, England), 29/07/1876; 'The Hong Kong Races', *The Graphic* (London, England), 01 June 1889.

<sup>80</sup> Bickers, *Britain in China*, p.51.

<sup>81</sup> Long fingernails were a particular observation made about the 'Mandarins' which gradually entered popular fiction, see: 'Letters From the Far East'; Jephson, 'With the Colours'.

<sup>82</sup> 'Hong Kong, China'.

<sup>83</sup> 'The China Mail'.

<sup>84</sup> 'Chinese Street At Wembley', p. 9.



the *Daily Mail* declared the colony to be 'the safest place in the Far East'.<sup>85</sup> Thus, the Hong Kong population were seen by some as trustworthy, hard-working, and better than their mainland counterparts.

The majority of visitors, however, represented the local population in a negative context; particularly after the events of the initial Opium War. Bickers argues that the significant amount of books, theatre shows, and films which depicted the Chinese usually presented them as wicked and dangerous; '[f]actual reporting and popular culture's fictions identified difference, taught distance and encouraged distrust'.<sup>86</sup> This was certainly linked to the limited spread of Christianity throughout China which was viewed by many contemporaries as a sign that the local population were inherently cruel.<sup>87</sup> The prominence of the 'Yellow Peril' during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries also played an important part here. The rise of Imperial Japan and the growing number of Chinese immigrants settling (both voluntarily and involuntarily) in America, Canada, Mexico, Russia, South America, and Europe (to name but a few areas) led to a fear of East Asia. The global prominence of this anxiety is remarkable; Erika Lee describes it as 'transnational anti-Asian racism'.<sup>88</sup> Lewis Siegelbaum has analysed the complex issue of Chinese citizens in Russia; whilst (usually forced) 'yellow labour' was fundamental to various construction projects, the Chinese were sanctioned, attacked, and deported over growing fears of rising migration levels.<sup>89</sup> In Australia, the increase in Chinese migrant workers was perceived as a 'grave threat' to the development of 'white' civilisation in Australia; Chinese citizens were met with racial abuse and often portrayed as villainous criminals.<sup>90</sup> America's fears of the rising Chinese immigration figures led to the implementation of various exclusion laws

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<sup>85</sup> Price, 'Sun', p. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Bickers, *Britain in China*, p.23. It is also worth noting Antony Taylor's work here. He asserts that the portrayal of villainous East Asian figures in popular culture, most notably Fu-Manchu, was closely tied to international relations between the West and China; as China's global influence increased, East Asian characters became more threatening. See: Antony Taylor, "'And I am the God of Destruction!": Fu Manchu and the Construction of Asiatic Evil in the Novels of Arthur Sarsfield Ward' in Tom Crook, Rebecca Gill and Bertrand Taithe (eds), *Evil, Barbarism and Empire: Britain and Abroad, c.1850-c.2000* (Palgrave, 2011), pp. 73-95.

<sup>87</sup> Christopher Frayling's work on the Yellow Peril investigates the relationship between the unsuccessful Christian missions in China and the perception that the local population's rejection of these values was due to the propensity for cruelty. Frayling also argues that the Chinese were characterised as instinctively feudal; consequently, they were seen as unable to assimilate into democratic societies. See: Christopher Frayling, *The Yellow Peril: Dr. Fu Manchu & the Rise of Chinaphobia* (Thames & Hudson, 2014).

<sup>88</sup> Erika Lee, 'The "Yellow Peril" and Asian Exclusion in the Americas', *Pacific Historical Review*, 76, 4 (November 2007), p. 538.

<sup>89</sup> Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "'Yellow Peril': Chinese Migrants in the Russian Far East and the Russian Reaction", *Modern Asian Studies*, 12, 2 (1978), pp. 307-330.

<sup>90</sup> Ailise Bulfin, 'Guy Boothby and the "Yellow Peril": Representations of Chinese Immigrants in British Imperial Spaces in the Late-Nineteenth Century', *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies*, 20, 1 (2015), pp. 24-40.

between the 1890s and the Second World War.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, as in Australia, racial stereotyping influenced perceptions of the local Chinese-American community who were frequently viewed as aggressive and criminal.<sup>92</sup> In Britain the 'Yellow Peril' was part of a wider 'race paranoia' stemming from a fear of China's 'emergent geopolitical ambitions' and the steady decline of British imperial prestige.<sup>93</sup> Popular culture also played an important role in fanning the flames of fear. As Viktor Dyatlov states, '[t]hese sentiments were amplified and shaped by a well-developed mass culture'.<sup>94</sup> Overall, in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, China and its population were viewed in a considerably negative light.

The British public's negative perception of the Chinese was certainly fuelled by accounts circulated by British newspapers; the local population was frequently depicted adversely. Published in a Bristol newspaper, one letter described the indigenous community as 'a bilious-looking people'.<sup>95</sup> Another, published in a Manchester tabloid, detailed the auctioning of a young woman for marriage; it highlighted a deep disgust for 'the heathen Chinese'.<sup>96</sup> 'The people of China are savages' declared one writer in their aptly named article 'A Criticism of China and the Chinese'.<sup>97</sup> Another letter referred to the 'inhospitable Celestials'; 'their faces,' they wrote, 'look sinister, villainous, unvaried'.<sup>98</sup> The captured Chinese Commissioner Ye Mingchen (who had been instrumental in the second Opium War) was the topic of a lengthy letter from a *Times* correspondent in China. 'No habit of looking at Yeh deadens the feeling of repulsion which the expression of his huge face inspires', he wrote. He had a face of 'dull, heavy, stolid, impassible cruelty' and eyes 'glared with terror and with fury'; there was a 'shrewdness and quick cunning' about him.<sup>99</sup> '[T]he Chinese are for nothing but war,' a letter in *The Bradford Observer* read, '[t]he spirit of

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<sup>91</sup> Sucheng Chan (ed.), *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882–1943* (Temple University Press, 1994).

<sup>92</sup> Rast, 'The Cultural Politics of Tourism in San Francisco's Chinatown'.

<sup>93</sup> Seshagiri, 'Modernity's (Yellow) Perils', p. 170.

<sup>94</sup> Viktor Dyatlov, 'Chinese Migrants and Anti-Chinese Sentiments in Russian Society', in Franck Billé, Grégory Delaplace, Caroline Humphrey (eds), *Frontier Encounters: Knowledge and Practice at the Russian, Chinese and Mongolian Border* (Open Book Publishers, 2012), p. 74.

<sup>95</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>96</sup> 'How Chinamen Obtain Their Spouses', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (Manchester, England), 12 November 1881, p. 2 (hereafter 'How Chinamen Obtain Their Spouses').

<sup>97</sup> 'A Criticism of China and the Chinese', *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* (Aberdeen, Scotland), 01 October 1895 (hereafter 'A Criticism of China and the Chinese').

<sup>98</sup> 'Through a Celestial City'.

<sup>99</sup> 'Portrait of Yeh', *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times* (Hull, England), 14 May 1858.

hatred to foreigners which prevails in this province is most bitter.<sup>100</sup> The stereotype that the Chinese were a violent people was often contrasted with the positive efforts of British forces. *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* published a letter which compared 'the truthfulness, fidelity, and heroism of our countryman' against the 'utmost ingenuity, cruelty, and trickery' of the Chinese.<sup>101</sup> 'If a crowd of Chinamen attacked one English-man,' another letter read, 'and he overpowered or got the best of one of their number, the whole of the others would turn their backs and run away'.<sup>102</sup> In a report on a fire which tore through the colony, whilst the foreign community tackled the blaze, 'the natives rendered no assistance in extinguishing the fire'.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, upon the outbreak of plague in Hong Kong, as 'British troops did invaluable work [...] [t]he natives oppose[d] them everywhere'.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the Chinese were often presented as a dangerous and untrustworthy population; the British, however, were seen as heroic, brave, and supportive.

Another popular stereotype centred on the Chinese being devious and sneaky. The local population were projected as being weak; 'instead of being brave and courageous,' one letter stated, 'they are inclined to be timid and cowardly'.<sup>105</sup> Another commentator noted that despite their bravado, if a fight ensued, the Chinese would 'escape by the back door as soon as you [got] too near'.<sup>106</sup> Consequently, the Chinese were presented as shadowy figures that operated behind closed doors rather than out in the open; a sense of deception was often noted in accounts. One visitor was struck by the 'duplicity and perjury' committed by the local population.<sup>107</sup> Commander Robinson commented on the tactics of thieves who, rather than openly attack their victims, disguised themselves as shipping passengers to raid transportation vessels.<sup>108</sup> 'The Chinese have the name for being great thieves', another letter stated.<sup>109</sup> One letter, which tracked the writer's travels through China, noted the 'evil-looking faces' of the priests. 'They are the scum of society,' he wrote, 'many of them being escaped

<sup>100</sup> 'The Expedition To China', *The Bradford Observer* (Bradford, England), 19 March 1857, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> 'The English in China', *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* (Sheffield, England), 19 January 1861 (hereafter 'The English in China', *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*).

<sup>102</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>103</sup> 'Chit-Chat About Hong Kong'.

<sup>104</sup> 'Our Illustrations', *The Graphic* (London, England), 04/08/1894.

<sup>105</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>106</sup> 'The China Mail', *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh, Scotland), 25/04/1858.

<sup>107</sup> 'The English in China', *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*.

<sup>108</sup> Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

<sup>109</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

criminals, who pollute the temple with their presence in order to evade the law'.<sup>110</sup> Thus, not even their religion was sacred (another visitor stated 'I don't think they care much about their religion; they go into their temples to get cool, or sit down or go to sleep').<sup>111</sup> Through disguises and duplicity, the Chinese were represented as suspicious.

Duplicity was also written into financial transactions between foreign and local communities. For one woman, her market experience left her untrusting of Hong Kong merchants. 'The dealers look grave and 'innocent,' she wrote, 'but are awful humbugs, asking twenty times as much as they mean to take'.<sup>112</sup> Early observations about the Chinese in Hong Kong highlighted similar interactions; Europeans were often exploited. A Chinese water taxi was found to be charging a sum of money to English visitors which they 'would not make [...] in a fortnight amongst [their] countrymen'.<sup>113</sup> One of the most notorious examples of exploitation came through fortune tellers. An article published in 1890 covered a court case involving an elderly woman and a local fortune teller. The woman visited the service to rid her of an illness, but she was told to return with more money for more advanced treatments on multiple occasions; through trickery and deception they stole thirty-four dollars from her.<sup>114</sup> Whilst this practice received a fair amount of interest in Britain (illustrations and accounts were popular),<sup>115</sup> it was ultimately considered to be 'heterodox'.<sup>116</sup> Consequently, the Chinese were presented as being deceptive and cowardly; they took advantage of Westerners and could not be trusted.

Alongside their cowardly and duplicitous stereotypes, the Chinese were also depicted as dangerous; one of the more popular representations of the Chinese public was as pirates. 'Pirates swarm all about the islands' wrote one visitor in a letter published in *The Manchester Times and Gazette* in 1844.<sup>117</sup> In fact, Hong Kong was described as having a rich history in pirating; the 'narrow creeks' of the colony made it a perfect

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<sup>110</sup> 'Through a Celestial City'.

<sup>111</sup> 'China by Albert Smith'.

<sup>112</sup> 'Devonians in Hong Kong'.

<sup>113</sup> 'Hong Kong, China'.

<sup>114</sup> 'Fortune Telling in China', *The Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Standard* (Bury Saint Edmunds, England), 02 September 1890, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> 'Chinese Fortune-Teller'.

<sup>116</sup> 'The China Mail'.

<sup>117</sup> 'Hong Kong, China'.

hideout.<sup>118</sup> Thus gradually, the population, which had a vast number of Chinese who lived on house-boats, became viewed as potential bandits. One letter raised concerns over the 'piratical character of the population'.<sup>119</sup> This became an increasingly popular topic which was raised frequently. Numerous reports described daring piratical raids, and accounts written by survivors of ships boarded by Chinese pirates or overrun by a mutinous Chinese crew were popular.<sup>120</sup> This narrative eventually became cemented in popular fiction. Ailise Bulfin provides a brief overview of various stories published which centred on the concept of traitorous and bloodthirsty Chinese sailors.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, Jephson's story of a naval officer in Hong Kong saw the protagonist take a ride in a sampan; the Chinese crew, however, soon turned violent and captured the officer.<sup>122</sup> As with many representations of Hong Kong which persisted through the years, eventually the notion that the Chinese were piratical in nature filtered through to popular fiction.

The Opium Wars certainly set a combative scene between the Chinese and the West; many writers expressed a fear of the local population's murderous tendencies. This unease peaked during the early years of the Second Opium War. 'The mandarins have issued [...] the most blood-thirsty edicts against the English,' reported one British local; large monetary rewards were being supposedly offered to Chinese citizens if they murdered foreigners or destroyed their property.<sup>123</sup> Linked to anecdotes about pirates operating along China's eastern coast, these rumours quickly spread. Sir John Bowring wrote that '[l]arge premiums have been offered by the mandarins to any who shall set fire to our houses, kidnap or murder us'; he added that victims' heads were displayed along Canton's walls.<sup>124</sup> Those walking around Victoria were increasingly vulnerable to attack; 'pecuniary rewards are publicly offered by the Chinese mandarins - fifty dollars for a foreigner's head if killed and 100 dollars if taken alive' wrote one Briton.<sup>125</sup> The duplicitous narrative was also included in these tales. Posing as potential workers 'Chinese braves in the pay of the mandarins [hired] themselves to foreigners for

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<sup>118</sup> Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

<sup>119</sup> 'Affairs in China'.

<sup>120</sup> 'Chit-Chat About Hong Kong'; 'The English in China', *The Stirling Observer* (Stirling, Scotland), 02 April 1857, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> Bulfin, 'Guy Boothby and the "Yellow Peril"', pp. 30-36.

<sup>122</sup> Jephson, 'With the Colours'.

<sup>123</sup> 'The War In China', *The Newcastle Courant etc* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England), 06 March 1857 (hereafter 'The War In China').

<sup>124</sup> 'Sir John Bowring on the Chinese Barbarities', *The Leeds Intelligencer and Yorkshire General Advertiser* (Leeds, England), 18/04/1857, p. 12 (hereafter 'Sir John Bowring on the Chinese Barbarities').

<sup>125</sup> 'Affairs in China'.

obtaining the opportunity of an attack during the night'. Thus, the British were left 'suspecting our servants'.<sup>126</sup> This gave rise to the impression that European inhabitants were 'surrounded by the scoundrels'; they hid in plain sight waiting for the right moment to carry out their tasked 'assassination'.<sup>127</sup> This rhetoric continued well into the late nineteenth century. By 1874, the British press still spread news that the 'Chinese Government chose to incite the native population against' British forces; Western locals feared 'riots' or a 'general massacre'.<sup>128</sup> A similar fear was expressed in 1895; stories of British citizens being 'murdered in cold blood' were rife. The 'utmost brutality' of the local Chinese was worrying; 'white men in China were to be exterminated', exclaimed the writer.<sup>129</sup> Leading on from concerns over pirates, and entwined with experiences of deceptive Chinese citizens, the local population were regularly feared for being hired assassins.

The sneaky, murderous character of the local Chinese was bolstered when rumours of poisonings began spreading. Once again, the means of killing foreigners was depicted as devious and shadowy rather than openly aggressive. Bickers notes that the connection made between Chinese citizens and poison was 'pervasive in fiction'.<sup>130</sup> Urmila Seshagiri observes that in the Fu-Manchu series, the use of poison was a common theme.<sup>131</sup> So pervasive was this notion that, as Fa-Ti Fan identifies, British naturalists often blamed the unsuccessful germination of local seeds on Chinese merchants poisoning them.<sup>132</sup> Thus, when an incident of actual poisoning occurred in Hong Kong, it was widely reported throughout the media and described in great detail. In 1857, a local baker for the largest bakery in the colony mixed ten pounds of arsenic with the bread mix; the consumption of this led to 'several hundred persons' becoming ill.<sup>133</sup> A letter published in *The Newcastle Courant etc.* detailed the events graphically; those who had consumed the bread were 'seized with violent retchings [sic] and other symptoms'.<sup>134</sup> The ramifications were huge and an already tender relationship

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> 'The English In China', *The Times* (London, England), 03 March 1857, p. 5.

<sup>128</sup> 'The Disquieting Rumours from China', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (Manchester, England), 22 May 1874, p. 7.

<sup>129</sup> 'A Criticism of China and the Chinese'.

<sup>130</sup> Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 58.

<sup>131</sup> Seshagiri, 'Modernity's (Yellow) Perils', pp. 164-5.

<sup>132</sup> Fa-Ti Fan, 'Victorian Naturalists in China: Science and Informal Empire', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 36, 1 (2003), p. 21.

<sup>133</sup> 'Sir John Bowring on the Chinese Barbarities'.

<sup>134</sup> 'The War In China'.

between the Europeans and Chinese citizens (despite the bread affecting both parties) was worsened. One letter spoke of the writer's fears that 'legal difficulties will prevent conviction'; in the meanwhile, they made their 'cook, a Chinaman, taste everything in [their] presence before [they] part[ook] of it'.<sup>135</sup> Kate Lowe and Eugene McLaughlin have analysed the bread poisoning incident in its historical context. They argue that, ultimately, growth in colonial tensions led to the Western population (in Hong Kong and at 'home') immediately considering it an act of terrorism rather than commercial sabotage or an accident.<sup>136</sup> Regardless of the incident, poisoning was a key representation of British life in China. Whilst the population were sometimes depicted in a positive light, they were mostly described negatively. Thieving, assassination, and poisoning were part of a rhetoric which persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and found its way into popular culture.

### **The Culture**

Exotic cultural practices and traditions were also popular topics in published accounts. As Chinese women were initially hidden from foreigners, they became a topic of intrigue. Footbinding in particular became a source of interest and concern. Pagani notes that, by 1851, newspapers began to focus on the more sensationalist elements of China, and footbinding became a popular topic because of its peculiarity.<sup>137</sup> One letter in 1880 made note of Chinese women's 'very little feet', 'the cause of which', the author stated, 'I suppose everybody knows'.<sup>138</sup> Typically this practice was viewed from a negative perspective and it became entwined with the narrative of China as a culturally and socially backwards place. Angela Zito has argued that for missionaries and reformers in China the binding of women's feet began to 'stand for the sad plight of Chinese culture itself'. Moreso, Zito states that Chinese bodies were viewed as 'not virgin territory, fenced in by Chinese culture, waiting to be liberated'; European bodies, however, were viewed as 'natural' and any religious or cultural practices were not viewed in the same light as footbinding.<sup>139</sup> Jinhua Emma Teng contends that the interest in footbinding was not restricted to the nineteenth century; academics

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<sup>135</sup> 'The English In China', *The Times* (London, England), 03 March 1857, p. 5.

<sup>136</sup> Kate Lowe and Eugene McLaughlin, "'Caution! The Bread is Poisoned!": The Hong Kong Mass Poisoning of January 1857', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43, 2 (2015), p. 194.

<sup>137</sup> Pagani, 'Chinese Material Culture', p. 38.

<sup>138</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>139</sup> Angela Zito, 'Secularizing the Pain of Footbinding in China: Missionary and Medical Stagings of the Universal Body', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 75, 1 (2007), pp. 3-5.

focused on it long into the twentieth century. She, too, notes that it was historically used to represent 'China's perceived cultural backwardness'. By creating an image of subordinate Chinese women, the 'imperialist agenda' was justified. 'Footbinding, in particular,' she notes, 'was denounced as a symbol of Chinese barbarity and an indication of the urgency of missionary intervention'.<sup>140</sup>

The accounts published in British newspapers fuelled this negative rhetoric.

Commander Robinson wrote about his encounter with Chinese women in Hong Kong. They were 'hobbling along, their waddling, uneasy gait caused by the cramped and distorted condition of their feet'.<sup>141</sup> Another letter reiterated this observation, stating that their 'little feet are a great impediment to their walking, and they struggle along in a very crippled fashion'.<sup>142</sup> Outside of footbinding, women were used as examples of further cultural depravity through discussions of relationships. Polygamy was a popular topic for British commentators. The 'effects of the custom of polygamy among the Chinese' were numerous; most notably, the 'lack of marriageable girls' led to single daughters being 'sold at a very high price'.<sup>143</sup> One of these auctions was attended by a British writer who was shocked at the events which unfolded. The 'melancholy aspect of the celestial girl,' he exclaimed, 'was deplorable to the last degree'.<sup>144</sup>

The representation of women was often allegorical. As previously highlighted, women were often used as examples of local culture. As Zito argues, there was a great tendency to substitute 'sex difference/women's difference for cultural difference' in discussions about China; critics often 'reduced these women to their bodies'.<sup>145</sup>

Similarly, Teng has suggested that the focus on women in contemporary observations and later academic analysis often depicted the women as 'victims'.<sup>146</sup> Comparisons can certainly be made to the British attitude towards suttee and thuggee in India.<sup>147</sup> James Flath notes that females were used in images to suggest change and progress. A painting featuring a modern train passing through a traditional Chinese village was

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<sup>140</sup> Jinhua Emma Teng, 'The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman' in the Western Academy: A Critical Review', *Signs*, 22, 1 (1996), p. 121.

<sup>141</sup> Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

<sup>142</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>143</sup> 'The Evils of Polygamy', *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (London, England), 20 January 1894, p. 7.

<sup>144</sup> 'How Chinamen Obtain Their Spouses'.

<sup>145</sup> Zito, 'Secularizing the Pain of Footbinding in China', pp. 2-3.

<sup>146</sup> Teng, 'The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman'', p. 124.

<sup>147</sup> Teng includes footbinding in what she calls the 'triad of women's suffering'; this included African genital mutilation and Indian suttee. See: *Ibid.*, p. 124.



used to highlight development in China. However, it was not the train which was the ultimate focus. Instead, a woman was pictured wandering the streets unaccompanied; she was not required to be in the company of a man outside of her home. Her presence symbolised cultural progression which was supported by the inclusion of modern Western technology.<sup>148</sup>

The mysticism around women led to them being popular topics in letters and articles. A meeting between British and Chinese women was widely covered in 1851; *The Stirling Observer* managed to gain insight into the meeting via private letters provided through 'the kindness of a friend'. This was seen as an 'opening up of intercourse between the ladies of western countries and those of the 'flowery land''. Amongst a number of topics the letter focussed on polygamy, appearance, and 'the first wife's little feet'.<sup>149</sup> This was a meeting of British and Chinese high society; as Teng observes, attention was usually given to women of the Chinese elite rather than the lower classes.<sup>150</sup> When attention was given to women of a non-elite status, they were usually depicted in reference to motherhood.<sup>151</sup> In a feature article entitled 'The Ladies' Tour Round the World', the writer detailed a visit to a wealthy local Chinese household and a meeting with the wives inside. The majority of the letter focussed on the appearance of the women. Comparisons were made between wealthy and lower class women, but these were with regards to clothing. 'Women of the poorer classes wear cotton and a thick material that has the appearance of oilskin'; this contrasted with the 'white cotton or silk' and 'masses of crusted gold' worn by the more affluent women. The rest of the article focussed solely on the lifestyles of these wealthy wives; great attention was given to their beauty routines, hair care, and the application of make-up.<sup>152</sup> Overall women were interesting topics in the British press chiefly because encounters were limited. Additionally, these meetings were often orchestrated by European and Chinese men; the wives' relationships were built on their husbands' connections. Ultimately, whether footbinding or make-up, women were analysed on a superficial basis; their exotic appearance was most interesting to the British readership. Whether

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<sup>148</sup> James A. Flath, 'The Chinese Railroad View: Transportation Themes in Popular Print, 1873-1915', *Cultural Critique*, 58 (2004), pp. 178-9.

<sup>149</sup> 'Visit of Mandarin Ladies to European', *The Stirling Observer* (Stirling, Scotland), 12 May 1851, p. 3.

<sup>150</sup> Teng, 'The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman'', pp. 121-2.

<sup>151</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'; 'The Voyage'.

<sup>152</sup> 'The Ladies' Tour Round the World', *The Dundee Courier & Argus* (Dundee, Scotland), 30 August 1894, p. 2.

viewed in a positive or negative light, women embodied the cultural practices and mystic exoticism of China.

The cuisine of China was another cultural subject which received a lot of attention in published accounts. The practice of eating a lot of small dishes, rather than one large meal, left a 'deep impression' on British soldiers in China.<sup>153</sup> This method of dining captivated visitors. 'It is quite amusing to see them at their meals', wrote one observer; 'six to twelve half-naked Chinamen sitting in a circle round a table or board, in the centre of which would be several bowls of food, a large one containing rice, others with fish, vegetable, small pieces of pork, frogs, and such like'.<sup>154</sup> Another account of an extravagant banquet noted that the meal lasted for four hours; dozens of dishes were served and various exotic delicacies were detailed.<sup>155</sup> Birds' nest soup in particular became a popular topic which was referenced in numerous accounts.<sup>156</sup> Chinese food was also a popular attraction during the 1924 Wembley Exhibition. 'Have you ever tasted shrimp-sauced pork, roast rice-birds, or Koon Yick's flower fish?' wrote a critic of Hong Kong's simulated street; 'what about water-lily roots and water-chestnuts, oyster oil sauce, longevity noodles, fish-soup and pumelo peel, fati carambola, or fried shrimps?'<sup>157</sup> The penchant for such exotic tastes became so synonymous with the Chinese that it was even rumoured that the popular Pekingese dog should be fed sharks' fin soup.<sup>158</sup> Chinese food undoubtedly captivated the British public.

As with everything Chinese, whilst steeped in exoticism, food was also viewed negatively. Ailise Bulfin highlights the use of cuisine in selling an undesirable image of China; the cooking of dogs, cats, and rats was used to shock the Australian population.<sup>159</sup> Accounts often reiterated the use of these animals in Chinese cooking. 'John Chinaman has decidedly odd taste in feeding', wrote Commander Robinson; '[h]ere are dogs' flesh and cats' flesh, [...] skinned rats hanging by their tails, [...] and a

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<sup>153</sup> Hill, 'Collecting on Campaign', p. 239.

<sup>154</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>155</sup> 'Keyring's Visit To Hong-Kong', *The Standard* (London, England), 27 January 1846, p. 7.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*; 'The Voyage'.

<sup>157</sup> 'Chinese Street At Wembley', p. 9.

<sup>158</sup> Sarah Cheang, 'Women, Pets, and Imperialism: The British Pekingese Dog and Nostalgia for Old China', *Journal of British Studies*, 45, 2 (2006), p. 371.

<sup>159</sup> Bulfin, 'Guy Boothby and the "Yellow Peril"', pp. 24-40.

host of other most untempting-looking morsels, raw, cooked, or half cooked'.<sup>160</sup> 'My eye is caught by what looks like a pile of kippered herrings,' noted F. Imandt, 'I am told they are rats'.<sup>161</sup> Another letter noted the '[d]ishes of dog, cat, and rat' which could be bought alongside 'dirty, mud covered eggs [...] [which] have been buried for months, or even years'.<sup>162</sup> Another showed alarm at seeing a dish containing 'baked puppies'.<sup>163</sup> For Albert Smith, he described Chinese food as 'filth' which consisted 'for the most part of rats, bats, snails, bad eggs, and hideous fish, dried in the most frightful attitudes'.<sup>164</sup> Consequently, food fascinated British visitors in China; it was both frightful and unique.

### **The Presence of Britain**

A prominent rhetoric regarding China was that it was a traditional, antiquated nation. Bickers, in analysing factual information and popular fiction about China, has argued that there persisted an 'exoticisation of the past' with regards to East Asia.<sup>165</sup> China was often portrayed as being eternally old. Teng states that '*traditional China* refers less to a historical period than a condition, one that implies continuity and stasis'; for her, China was viewed as if it were at an 'eternal standstill'.<sup>166</sup> Material culture often reflected this. Despite a renewed commercial interest in China after the Opium Wars, 'its traditional products were now perceived as evidence of Chinese stagnation'.<sup>167</sup> For Pagani, the constant focus on old Chinese products meant China was often seen as a nation which had not progressed for centuries.<sup>168</sup> Discussions over the categorisation of Chinese art had a similar effect. China's 'otherness [was] seen as a distance in time, not space'; critics and audiences often viewed China as having 'a glorious past, a decayed and exhausted present and no future'.<sup>169</sup> Yet this fascination with China as a perpetually traditional space often boosted its appeal. The American consumption of East Asian goods was popular chiefly because 'Oriental objects resided quite specifically in the evocation of an aristocratic yet simpler past, a time characterized by

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<sup>160</sup> Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

<sup>161</sup> Imandt, 'A Town of Crowds, Colour and Heat', p. 19.

<sup>162</sup> 'Through a Celestial City'.

<sup>163</sup> 'Life in China'.

<sup>164</sup> 'China by Albert Smith'.

<sup>165</sup> Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 32.

<sup>166</sup> (Emphasis in original) Teng, 'The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman'', p. 134.

<sup>167</sup> Hill, 'Collecting on Campaign', p. 228.

<sup>168</sup> Pagani, 'Chinese Material Culture and British Perceptions of China', pp. 38-9.

<sup>169</sup> Craig Clunas, 'China in Britain: The Imperial Collections' in Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (eds) *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and Museum* (Routledge, 1997), p. 47.

effortless aesthetic cultivation rather than industrial, capitalist striving'.<sup>170</sup> Samaine Lockwood has analysed the demand for Chinese porcelain in New England; its appeal was based on the fact it 'hearkened back to the colonial era, when life was supposedly simpler'.<sup>171</sup> Yet Sarah Cheang argues that this fascination with a traditional China could be seen as a way of imperial Powers, mainly Britain, avoiding a difficult topic. The consumption of products 'predating the Opium Wars allowed Britain to celebrate its 'innocent' relationship with China without reference to the atrocities committed in the nineteenth century'.<sup>172</sup> Ultimately, China was trapped in its own rich history.

Whilst China was viewed as a traditional entity, Britain was depicted as an advanced society; thus, Hong Kong was seen as a space which Britain could progress. Bickers notes that Hong Kong and the Treaty Ports provided Britain with an opportunity to bring China up to the 'level' of the West.<sup>173</sup> John Carroll notes that a persistent myth about Hong Kong was that its history began with colonisation in the early nineteenth century. Interestingly, this myth, whilst perpetuated by Europeans, was also spread by Chinese locals who saw this as an opportunity to lay claim to the colony's success story; they were there before the arrival of the British, and worked alongside the imperialists to create a strong, prosperous space.<sup>174</sup> This narrative clearly existed in newspaper pieces. Hong Kong was seen as a place which was rapidly developing thanks to British involvement. The contribution of the local Chinese, however, was not mentioned. A letter in 1843 observed the 'rapidity with which the newest of our colonial possessions advances'.<sup>175</sup> Another commented that the settlement at Hong Kong was 'springing up as if by magic'.<sup>176</sup> Shortly afterwards, a writer declared that the colony was developing 'at a miraculous pace; houses and streets spreading in all directions'.<sup>177</sup> This was attributed to British investment – 'the money laid out on building is enormous, and the houses and stores are most magnificent', reported one observer.<sup>178</sup> Marking the noticeable change in Hong Kong, one letter stated that Chinese builders had previously created poorly constructed houses, yet now that

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<sup>170</sup> Thomas W. Kim, 'Being Modern: The Circulation of Oriental Objects', *American Quarterly*, 58 (June 2006), p. 383.

<sup>171</sup> Lockwood, J. Samaine, 'Shopping for the Nation: Women's China Collecting in Late-Nineteenth-Century New England', *The New England Quarterly*, 81, 1 (2008), p. 71.

<sup>172</sup> Cheang, 'Selling China', p. 12.

<sup>173</sup> Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 29.

<sup>174</sup> John M Carroll, 'Colonial Hong Kong as a Cultural-Historical Place', *Modern Asian Studies*, 40, 2 (2006), pp. 532-5.

<sup>175</sup> 'Advance, Hong Kong!', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* (London, England), 19/03/1843.

<sup>176</sup> 'Life in China'.

<sup>177</sup> 'The English in China', *The Times* (London, England), 07 June 1845, p. 6.

<sup>178</sup> 'Hong Kong', *North Wales Chronicle* (Bangor, Wales), 08 September 1846.

British architects had arrived 'houses [were] built in a more substantial manner'.<sup>179</sup> Towards the end of the nineteenth century, accounts recounted the significant developments which Britons had witnessed since 1840. *The Star* published a letter in 1890 which remarked that if a pre-1840s resident of Hong Kong returned to the territory they would be unable 'to identify with the Hong Kong of to-day. [...] For now [they] would see a city of closely built houses stretching for some four miles along the island shore'. They pondered whether 'any other spot on the earth is more likely to excite, or much more fully justifies, pride in the name of [an] Englishman'.<sup>180</sup> Addressing change in the colony, a letter in 1923 noted the 'extra-ordinary' change which had occurred in Hong Kong – 'there are residents living at Hong Kong at the present time who vividly recall the arid waste land at Kowloon where not even a single brick building existed'.<sup>181</sup> Hong Kong was a British success story; it had seen development and change thanks to colonisation.

British rule was also seen as a beneficial addition to Chinese society. J. Braga, published in *The Financial Times*, praised the colony's 'beneficent Government' in enabling the territory to develop.<sup>182</sup> The Chinese were '[s]o well governed' by the British that it allegedly drastically improved relations; the Administration made the British in China 'so popular' and 'difficult to exclude'.<sup>183</sup> Even Chinese achievements began to be attributed to the foundations laid by good British governance. 'How British policy has succeeded in dealing with the Chinese is well illustrated in Hong Kong and the Straits Settlements,' noted one letter, 'where the Chinese are among the chief factors in the commercial prosperity of both colonies'.<sup>184</sup> Comparisons were soon drawn between British occupied China and the mainland. 'Chinese [...] pour into this Crown Colony [...] whenever trouble starts in the Chinese hinterland', wrote G. Ward in 1933; Hong Kong had 'all the romance of China without its risk'.<sup>185</sup> Thus, Britain was not only sold as a more modern, advanced power than China, its governing technique was seen to facilitate change and attract Chinese citizens.

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<sup>179</sup> 'Hong Kong, China'.

<sup>180</sup> 'The Transformation of a Bare Rock'.

<sup>181</sup> J. T. Braga, 'Hong Kong, Kowloon and the Leased Territory-I', *The Financial Times* (London, England), 27 June 1932, p. 29.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> Lawson, 'Our Chinese Colony', p. 4.

<sup>184</sup> 'The Hong Kong Hinterland', *The Graphic*.

<sup>185</sup> Price, 'Sun', p. 5.

Hong Kong was certainly sold as a British triumph, but it was also viewed as a diverse space made up of various demographics. In a letter tracking the voyage of Grand Duke Alexis, it noted the 'heterogeneous population of Hong-Kong'.<sup>186</sup> Commander Robinson was also quick to observe a mixture of 'all nationalities and flags' on display in the colony.<sup>187</sup> A note published in *The Graphic*, which detailed a day at Hong Kong's famous racetrack, made reference to the 'mixed nature of the crowd'; they wrote of how 'Sikh policemen, six feet high and over, English soldiers and sailors, Chinese women with their children lashed on their backs, all mingle together'.<sup>188</sup> Another visitor remarked on Hong Kong's diverse population which had meshed due to the British Empire: '[t]here are European, Indian, and Chinese Police, all of course under the direction of the British government'.<sup>189</sup> Whilst Hong Kong's diverse demographic shall be discussed further in later chapters, it shall suffice to state that this territory was certainly a transnational space. British imperialism led to the transportation of numerous nationalities across the globe; with specific regard to Hong Kong, people from South Asia were often used in police and security positions in Hong Kong throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>190</sup> The diverse population of the territory found itself in popular fiction. Arthur Mils' *The Yellow Dragon*, for example, was based on the heterogeneous structure of Hong Kong's society.<sup>191</sup> The mixture of nationalities led to Hong Kong being viewed as a unique place, acting as a hybrid space for 'East' and 'West'. As Carroll states, 1930s guidebooks stressed that whilst the colony was a 'Chinese city', it was 'nevertheless unlike any other Chinese city'.<sup>192</sup> Hong Kong was depicted as a varied and diverse space.

This notion of hybridity can be seen throughout depictions of the colony's geography. Burford's panorama created an early sense of Hong Kong's mixed society. The painting showcased 'a barren coast, covered with an odd mixture of Chinese and English buildings'.<sup>193</sup> Another critic wrote that the image highlighted how English and European dwellings had 'sprung up rapidly' on the mountains, whilst the 'Chinese-town

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<sup>186</sup> 'The Voyage'.

<sup>187</sup> Robinson, 'A Day's Sight-Seeing in Hong-Kong', p. 64.

<sup>188</sup> 'The Hong Kong Races', *The Graphic* (London, England), 01 June 1889.

<sup>189</sup> 'Letters From the Far East'.

<sup>190</sup> Anita M. Weiss, 'South Asian Muslims in Hong Kong: Creation of a "Local Boy" Identity', *Modern Asian Studies*, 25, 3 (July 1991), pp. 417-453.

<sup>191</sup> 'New Novels', *Daily Mail* (London, England), 10 April 1924, p. 12.

<sup>192</sup> Carroll, 'Colonial Hong Kong as a Cultural-Historical Place', p. 528.

<sup>193</sup> 'Mr. Burford', p. 203.

[was] on the other side'.<sup>194</sup> A later letter made reference to Victoria Peak exclusively housing European settlers; the Chinese were depicted as predominantly living in houseboats.<sup>195</sup> The notion that Hong Kong had a mixed – albeit separated – Anglo-Chinese society was a popular one. *The Star* published a letter which described the colony as 'teaming with a busy population, in the centre of the town chiefly European, but towards the west and east almost exclusively Chinese'.<sup>196</sup> Another visitor wrote that '[f]ew, if any, Chinamen live within the British lines'; Hong Kong was 'British from the shore line straight away to the top of the Peak'. 'China town begins,' they stated, 'where the English town leaves off'.<sup>197</sup> The architecture of Hong Kong was also worthy of note. In the 'European quarter' there could be found 'a fine town hall, stately banks, and other large buildings of stone'; the Chinese constructions were very different, comprised of 'a pattern peculiar to China'.<sup>198</sup> This blend of architecture was prevalent in popular culture. *With The Colours*, for example, remarked on the various buildings in Hong Kong; 'some quite European in appearance, others thoroughly Chinese'.<sup>199</sup> Architectural influences were also found outside of China and Europe; in the late nineteenth century Hong Kong's diverse colonial architecture created a rift between the Colonial Office and the local government. Unlike other British colonies which took their architectural inspiration primarily from the metropole, many of Hong Kong's buildings were inspired by regional imperial designs found in other British colonies such as India, Singapore, and Australia.<sup>200</sup> Thus, Hong Kong was interpreted as a physically heterogeneous space by visitors, government officials, and in popular culture; it was the product of both Chinese and European influences and designs.

### **Postage Stamps**

Alongside published accounts, a new means of representing the colony developed over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: postage stamps. As Chris West states, postage stamps were initially rolled out in Britain to challenge the lengthy administrative process and high financial costs involved in sending mail.<sup>201</sup> However, it

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<sup>194</sup> 'The Exhibitions', p. 75.

<sup>195</sup> 'Chit-Chat About Hong Kong'.

<sup>196</sup> 'The Transformation of a Bare Rock'.

<sup>197</sup> Lawson, 'Our Chinese Colony', p. 4.

<sup>198</sup> 'The Transformation of a Bare Rock'.

<sup>199</sup> Jephson, 'With the Colours'.

<sup>200</sup> G. A. Bremner, 'Stones of Empire: Monuments, Memorials, and Manifest Authority', in G. A. Bremner (ed.), *Architecture and Urbanism in the British Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 101.

<sup>201</sup> Chris West, *First Class: A History of Britain in 36 Postage Stamps* (Random House, 2012), p. 5.

did not take long before postal stationery was used to convey iconographic messages. To accompany the first postage stamp, William Mulready produced an envelope adorned with imperial symbolism. 'From a rocky island with a lounging British lion', Donald Reid notes, 'Britannia dispatches four winged messengers'; India, China, the Middle East, and the Caribbean were all represented to celebrate Britain's 'vast imperial network'.<sup>202</sup> Keith Jeffery has explored the use of British regalia on early colonial postage stamps; they were used to create an image of Britain and its possessions.<sup>203</sup> Thus, from an early stage, postal stationery was seen not only as a means of improving efficiency, but also as an opportunity to sell a narrative.

The postage stamps of Hong Kong were an early triumph. Introduced in 1862, and made compulsory by 1864, Governor Hercules Robinson had to increase initial stocks as demand was so high.<sup>204</sup> What can be considered Hong Kong's first commemorative stamp was released in 1891; it celebrated the colony's fiftieth anniversary. The two cent definitive stamp was overprinted with:

1841  
Hong Kong  
Jubilee  
1891

So popular were these stamps that an initial limit of twenty-five per person was quickly reduced to twenty as queues rapidly grew. As collectors became increasingly desperate to acquire these issues, things began to turn violent. Two Portuguese customers were crushed to death, a Dutch sailor was stabbed, and many others were injured in the 'unruly scenes'.<sup>205</sup> In total fifty thousand sets were purchased, 'chiefly by Stamp Collectors'.<sup>206</sup> This was a new, and unforeseen, byproduct of stamp production. Hong Kong's Postmaster General Alfred Lister made note in his 1880 Annual Report of the 'mania for Stamp-collecting'. The Post Office was struggling to meet the demands of such 'votaries of the great science of Philately'. Whilst the Post Office aimed 'to get

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<sup>202</sup> Donald M. Reid, 'The Symbolism of Postage Stamps: A Source for the Historian', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19, 2 (April, 1984), p. 227.

<sup>203</sup> Keith Jeffery, 'Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post: Stamps, the Monarchy and the British Empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34, 1 (March 2006), pp. 45-70.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>205</sup> O. W. Newport, 'Death in the Post Office', *Daily Telegraph* (London), 14 April 1961.

<sup>206</sup> 'The Postmaster General's Report for 1891', *The Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 14 May 1892, p. 438.



rid of all odds and ends, temporary or obsolete issues, and such like, as quickly as possible', philatelists wanted to acquire them.<sup>207</sup> Four years later Lister referenced the countless letters he received from collectors around the world 'begging' for stamps from foreign countries such as Korea, Tibet, and China.<sup>208</sup> A similar service became popular amongst collectors who wished to acquire foreign stamps. Philatelists, or a 'Chum', would advertise their addresses in specialist magazines so that other collectors could make contact, and receive a stamped envelope in response affixed with a national stamp.<sup>209</sup>

Hong Kong stamps were popular amongst British collectors. As initially Hong Kong stamps could only be used to pay for conveyance between the local Treaty Ports, they were inaccessible to collectors at 'home'. By 1863 the colony's stamps were 'long expected and desired in England'.<sup>210</sup> Demand was so high that thousands of fakes were circulated to collectors.<sup>211</sup> This fascination soon meant that stamps were produced with accompanying literature; newspapers and magazines discussed the iconography of designs and discussed them as educational tools. Hong Kong stamps were seen to provide '[f]ragments of Imperial history'.<sup>212</sup> For another publication, the stamp acted as a catalyst for further discussion of the colony. 'Although it bears the portrait of Queen Victoria, Hong Kong is hardly a British colony; it comes more properly under the designation of a trading station', it stated. It then reiterated a common stereotype; '[i]t is one of a group of islands called by the Spaniards "Ladrones" (thieves), from the notorious habits of the natives'.<sup>213</sup> Importantly, it was not just the iconography of Hong Kong's stamps (which, whilst still semiotically interesting, were ubiquitous reprints of British monarchs) which were viewed as educational, the stamps themselves triggered an interest in the issuing nation.

For sixty years after the first Hong Kong stamp was introduced, the designs focussed on the British Royal Family; in 1941, however, a set of stamps were produced specific

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<sup>207</sup> (Emphasis in original) 'The Postmaster General's Report for 1880', *The Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 30 April 1881, p. 304.

<sup>208</sup> 'The Postmaster General's Report for 1884', 01 January 1885, p. 2.

<sup>209</sup> 'On Stamp-Collecting and Other Hobbies', *Chums* (London, England), 11 December 1895, p. 246.

<sup>210</sup> 'Postage Stamps', *Every Boy's Magazine* (London, England), 01 July 1863, pg. 426 (hereafter 'Postage Stamps', *Every Boy's Magazine*).

<sup>211</sup> 'Letters to the Editor', *The Ipswich Journal* (Ipswich, England), 24 November 1883.

<sup>212</sup> 'History In Stamps', *The Times* (London, England), 30 September 1924, pg. xx.

<sup>213</sup> 'Postage Stamps', *Every Boy's Magazine*, pg. 426

to the colony. Importantly, the six stamps which formed the 'Centenary of British Occupation' set (SG163-168) were perfect encapsulations of the key symbols present in the many letters and articles about Hong Kong written over the previous hundred years. The 2c. stamp depicted Hong Kong's narrow, crowded streets which had been a topic of discussion for numerous visitors. Traders lined the roadside as scores of pedestrians disappeared off as far as the eye could see. Hong Kong's notorious mountainous terrain was equally popular and featured in the 4c., 5c., 15c., 25c., and HK\$1 issues. Victoria Harbour, another icon prevalent in accounts, was celebrated on the 15c. stamp; it also provided the backdrop for the 4c. depiction of the *Empress of Japan* liner and the HK\$1 image of the *Falcon* clipper and flying boat. The Junk, too, featured on the 4c. alongside the Royal Mail Ship; the symbol of Hong Kong's waterways was juxtaposed against this colossal British vessel. This image was one of progress, another key theme in letters and articles. The notion of 'progress' can be read across the set. The 5c. stamp celebrated the local university and the Hong Kong Bank featured on the 25c. issue. These institutions were introduced by Britain and provided educational and economic prosperity to the colony. Finally, the HK\$1 stamp depicted the *Falcon*, a clipper used in China to transport opium, alongside a flying boat. The message here was that British trade had persisted in Chinese waters since the beginning of Hong Kong as a colony, and it would continue to do so with more technologically advanced transportation. Thus, the first set of postage stamps which depicted Hong Kong conveyed symbols and concepts which could be found in early accounts of Hong Kong.

Yet there would be a delay in creating further philatelic iconography for Hong Kong; Japan invaded and occupied the colony between December 1941 and August 1945. During this period of time Hong Kong did not produce its own postal stationery, and instead Japanese stamps were used. The De La Rue works, a philatelic printer for Hong Kong based in London, sustained heavy bomb damage in 1940; designs for the 1941 Hong Kong definitives were saved by emergency services and the stamps were printed and perforated by two other printing companies.<sup>214</sup> These issues were not released to the public until the return of the British in 1945. Whilst stamps during this period

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<sup>214</sup> Stanley Gibbons *Commonwealth Stamp Catalogue: Hong Kong*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (London and Ringwood: Stanley Gibbons Ltd., 2013), p. 7.

provided little representation of Hong Kong, they acted as evidence of the colony's new governing power. British stamps would not be used under Japanese control; instead stationery was shipped over to facilitate the conveyance of mail. Symbolism was clearly important; the British monarchy could not be affixed to mail sent from Japanese Hong Kong. Thus, the invasion and occupation by Japan marked a shift in the colony's history; this change was not simply political, it was also iconographical.

### **Conclusion**

When the British returned to Hong Kong in 1945, postage stamps provided the Post Office with a new means of representing the territory. However, the themes and symbols which had emerged over the years through letters and articles played an important role in what was featured on stamps. These accounts focussed on the exotic location of Hong Kong whilst also warning potential visitors about its climate and crowds. Travellers were also told to be cautious around the local population; they were villainous cowards who could not be trusted. The narrative that Hong Kong was simultaneously a place of exotic fascination and danger became increasingly popular. Fictional stories featuring China and its population drew on these accounts and bolstered this particular image of East Asia. The British in China were seen as civilisers; the rapid urban and economic development of Hong Kong provided evidence of the disparity between China and the West. Despite this, Hong Kong was celebrated for its multiculturalism. Part of its charm and mysticism lay in the fact it was, from an early stage, viewed as having a complex society. The 1941 stamp set drew on many of these notions and symbols; the harbour, mountains, junks, and British progress were all key topics.

As the following four chapters will show, postage stamps charted numerous changes in Hong Kong; they were used to represent the colony to the world, and relied on various different symbols and images. As with the 1941 set, these stamps relied on information found in accounts which had been transported through the Post Office. Whilst accounts still played an important part in shaping an image of Hong Kong in the twentieth century, the Post Office finally had a means of representing the colony for itself. This thesis shall now focus on the postage stamps, and postal system, of Hong Kong after 1945. As shall be highlighted, whilst some themes (such as the negative

portrayal of the Chinese population) did not feature on Hong Kong's postage stamps, postal stationery frequently drew upon key concepts and symbols which appeared in the countless accounts published in newspapers during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. These accounts lay the foundation for how Hong Kong would be perceived and visualised in the coming decades.

## Chapter Two: Hong Kong in the Post-War Years, 1945 to 1970

Building on the first chapter's analysis of symbolism in British accounts of Hong Kong and the introduction of philatelic material, this chapter will address how these themes can be tracked on the colony's post-war postage stamps. Most importantly, though, this chapter will highlight that the stamps of this period clearly chart the shifting social changes in Hong Kong which occurred between 1945 and the end of the sixties. Set against a wider backdrop of decolonisation, this chapter provides a foundation for the following chapters to explore how Hong Kong developed in the post-war world.

Interestingly, key decolonisation texts generally focus their attention on colonies which transition into independent nations; European enclaves such as Hong Kong are given less consideration.<sup>1</sup> John Darwin has argued that Hong Kong does not fit into the standard decolonisation narrative, primarily because it never achieved independence.<sup>2</sup> Importantly though, as this chapter will highlight, key changes in Hong Kong on an administrative and social level led to the colony developing its own identity; the period between 1945 and 1970 laid the foundations for key developments in the colony's timeline until the 1997 handover.

After the return of British forces to Hong Kong in 1945, the weakened Military Administration relied heavily on non-European assistance to defend and manage the territory. In a wider environment of decolonisation, British rule in Hong Kong was fragile, and soon the local government began mapping out political reforms. This attitude, one of greater representation for the non-British population, was captured on a postage stamp commemorating the end of conflict in Hong Kong. Yet this call for reform was soon quashed by events on the global stage, most notably in China, and soon the British Administration began to distance itself from earlier commitments. In

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst Hong Kong appears in the majority of these studies, its imperial history faces less scrutiny than colonial possessions in South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa: Mark Philip Bradley, 'Decolonisation, the Global South and Cold War, 1919-1962', in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Wested (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Origins*, 3 Volumes (Cambridge University Press, 2011), Volume 1, pp. 464-485; Peter J. Cain and Antony Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction 1914-1990* (Longman, 1993); Muriel E. Chamberlain, *Decolonization: The Fall of the European Empires* (Wiley, 1999); John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Macmillan, 1987); Roger Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); Prasenjit Duara (ed.), *Decolonisation: Perspectives From Then and Now* (Routledge, 2003); Matthew Jones, 'A Decision Delayed: Britain's Withdrawal from South-East Asia Reconsidered 1961-1968', *English Historical Review*, 117, 472 (June, 2002), pp. 569-595. It is worth noting that Raymond Betts' work on decolonisation does draw attention to a wide range of global colonial possessions, including Hong Kong: Raymond Betts, *Decolonization* (Routledge, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> John Darwin, 'Hong Kong in British Decolonisation', in Judith M. Brown and Rosemary Foot (eds.), *Hong Kong's Transitions, 1824-1997* (Macmillan, 1997), pp. 16-32.

turn, the Post Office's designs began to feature more symbols of Britishness at the expense of non-British iconography. Meanwhile, traditional migration patterns between Hong Kong and the mainland altered during the civil war and the subsequent Great Leap Forward; immigrants began to settle in the colony, rather than relocate temporarily for work. In response to this, the Hong Kong government was forced to address its weak social services policy and expand its provisions for the growing squatting community in the colony. Furthermore, in the context of wider global politics, mainly the developing Cold War, Hong Kong's migrant issue became a political propaganda tool which attracted interest from America, Taiwan, and China. In philatelic terms, designs at this point in time focussed on international and humanitarian themes, and the colony itself was glossed over. Instead, global campaigns and institutions were celebrated. Importantly, though, postage stamps were recognised as important tools of representation. The cocktail of increased immigration, poor social services for large numbers of the Chinese population, and the coming-of-age of the first generation of Hong Kong-born citizens led to rioting in the mid-sixties. Whilst they were eventually suppressed by government forces, the British Administration began rolling out reforms in response to the protests. Another side effect of the riots was the development of a local identity; it became more apparent than ever that Hong Kong was neither Chinese nor British, but something else. Linked to this new sense of identity were the 1965 postal policy changes which enabled the colony's officials to become more involved in the stamp design process; international philatelists also began to call for more locally-inspired stamp designs. Thus, by the late-sixties, the postage stamps of Hong Kong began to celebrate Chinese customs and symbolism unique to the colony. Overall, the changing social dynamic and Sino-British relationship in the territory was captured on Hong Kong's philatelic material.

In analysing these key developments, this chapter will address three key questions. First, what can postage stamps reveal about the political situation in post-war Hong Kong? Secondly, to what extent did events on an international level influence the colony's philatelic designs? Finally, as a local identity began to emerge in the wake of the 1967 riots, how was this captured on postal stationery? Ultimately, this chapter will track the changes made in Hong Kong between 1945 and 1969, and highlight the key influences in the emergence of a Hong Kong identity.

### **The Return of Britain and the '1946 Outlook'**

British Rear Admiral Cecil Harcourt sailed to Hong Kong and accepted the Japanese surrender in September 1945. He placed Hong Kong in a state of Military Administration and oversaw the management of the provisional government. The aftermath of four years of Japanese occupation left Hong Kong with a landscape of unexploded mines, rotting vegetation, an infestation of rats, numerous potholes, barbed wire, and damaged derelict buildings; thus, initial action focussed on repairing Hong Kong's infrastructural and economic situation. Over the next few months Harcourt cleared a number of docks, restored the electricity and gas supply, and ensured shops were open and stocked. In a bid to hike up employment figures, the Military Administration established a fishery and agricultural co-operative which encouraged many Chinese workers into these traditional trades. Post-war Hong Kong was not at the stage of returning to its former status as an international trading port; however, with employment growing, Hong Kong's population rose from 600,000 in 1945 to over one million a year later.<sup>3</sup> Alongside these changes, the Military Administration's revival of Hong Kong was, according to Philip Snow, 'rounded off with a dapper resumption of Britishness'.<sup>4</sup> English place names reappeared on signposts, tea shops were reopened, looted and damaged statues of lions were restored, and the old colonial currency was reintroduced.

The reincarnation of Britishness in Hong Kong, however, was merely superficial. Upon Harcourt's arrival large groups of guerrilla Japanese soldiers still roamed the New Territories unopposed, whilst local gangs looted and rioted throughout the region. British military presence was weak; Harcourt had a total strength of two thousand men at his disposal. Whilst an initial decree released in September 1945 asserted that the British would use force to bring order to the colony, in reality the Administration struck up deals with an array of 'local partners'.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the complete lack of administrative staff disabled the Civil Service entirely. Whilst European employees were pulled from the recently liberated Stanley camp, their dire need for recuperation rendered them entirely ineffective. Consequently, the British turned to Chinese,

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<sup>3</sup> Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, (I.B Tauris, 2007), p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China and the Japanese Occupation* (Yale University Press, 2003), p. 264.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

Indian, Eurasian, and Portuguese citizens to bolster the Civil Service and key departments (predominantly the fire brigade, revenue facilities, and the Imports and Exports Department).<sup>6</sup> Thus, the Military Administration began to rely heavily on the performance and presence of the non-European population; this was in stark contrast to the pre-war years.

The Administration's reliance on the local population made it difficult for Britain to avoid the subject of democratic reform - particularly within the wider discussions of the decolonisation of European empires. Specifically for Hong Kong, opposition to the return of British rule began to surface. Whilst the local Chinese Hong Kong population did not reject the return of its imperial rulers in the same manner as Vietnam and Indonesia did the French and Dutch, resistance was certainly vocal. Philip Snow notes that newspapers reported anger directed towards the British for focussing on the mistreatment of Europeans in the internment camps; little mention was given to the thousands of Chinese who had starved or died outside the camps. Snow also highlights that the British further upset the Chinese, Eurasian, and Portuguese members of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps when they offered full repatriation and financial benefits to former European troops only. Additionally, as Snow showcases, compensation claims for looted goods by local business owners were ignored, whilst the Administration awarded British ex-merchants considerable sums of money.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, whilst the British framed themselves as liberators, this rhetoric was tenuous at best amongst the Chinese community. Post-war celebrations in Hong Kong saw a vast majority of Chinese flags flown in comparison to Union Jacks. Importantly, the Hong Kong Chinese celebrated mainland China's victory over Japan; Britain was not viewed as Hong Kong's savior.<sup>8</sup> British officials began to recognise this, and strategies were devised to tackle the 'Asia for the Asians' rhetoric which had fermented under Japanese occupation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it became clear to the British Administration that if it were to survive, it would need to rule out a return to the pre-war state of affairs. There

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<sup>6</sup> Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, p. 268.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 287-8.

<sup>8</sup> Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 142.

<sup>9</sup> Ting-Hong Wong, 'The Unintended Hegemonic Effects of a Limited Concession: Institutional Incorporation of Chinese Schools in Post-War Hong Kong', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 33, 4 (2012), p. 592.



would have to be a more progressive attitude towards the non-European demographic. This became known as the '1946 outlook'.<sup>10</sup>

This new 'outlook' led to the drafting of major political reforms under the new Governor. Mark Young, who had governed Hong Kong before the Japanese occupation, returned to the colony to establish a Civil Administration in 1946. Noticing the clear shift in non-European involvement, he called for change. The 'Young Plan' proposed the introduction of a thirty seat democratically elected Municipal Council with half Chinese and half non-Chinese members; twenty seats were reserved for direct elections, the remaining ten were to be filled by nominations from Hong Kong organisations. Young's reasoning for introducing these changes was simple; he wanted to make 'Chinese sojourners into citizens of British Hong Kong' through popular political participation.<sup>11</sup> The introduction of popular participation, Wm. Roger Louis argued, would make the Chinese in Hong Kong 'collaborators in the imperial system'.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, these changes served to radically overhaul the current system, which failed to incorporate the Chinese population. In doing this, Britain would be able to maintain control of Hong Kong.

Yet Young's return was not a coincidence; it was a symbol of British authority. As Steve Tsang states, the return of Young rendered the Japanese invasion a 'rude interruption'.<sup>13</sup> By placing Young into the post-war British Administration, it highlighted to the local population and wider world that the presence of Japanese forces was a brief disturbance in the colony's history; Hong Kong was, and would be, a British possession. Yet the relationship between European and non-European populations in post-war Hong Kong highlighted the need for change. Whilst historical continuity was important, in reality the political situation in the territory needed an overhaul. As Young himself observed, 'the only way to keep the colony British was to make the local inhabitants want to do so'.<sup>14</sup> This complex dynamic was captured philatelically.

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<sup>10</sup> Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>12</sup> Wm. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization* (I. B. Tauris, 2006) p. 355.

<sup>13</sup> Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 141.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Young quoted in Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 144.

The first stamp to be issued by Hong Kong's Post Office after the Japanese occupation was released on 29th August 1946; it was entitled 'Victory' (SG169-170). Whilst most British territory stamps showcased an image of the Houses of Parliament, Hong Kong's stamp was different. It had been personally designed by the Hong Kong Postmaster General upon his release from a Japanese internment camp. It featured an image of a Phoenix at the base of the stamp, the word 'Resurgo', and two dates: 1941 and 1945. Both of these years were surrounded by flames; they signified destruction. The message was clear: despite this period of oppression, Hong Kong had risen from the ashes. As with Young's return, the previous four years were simply a blip in the territory's timeline. The stamp further reflected the contemporary political landscape, by including both Chinese and English symbolism and text. Interestingly, as Henry Choi observes, the presence of a message written in Cantonese prevented it from being a design eligible for release in Britain's other overseas territories; the language made it unique.<sup>15</sup> 'Hong Kong' was written in both Cantonese and English. The Cantonese translation was housed inside the shields of two lions; the message here being that the Chinese were protected by Britain. The English text was placed at the top of the stamp, dominating the design. More importantly though, there were two columns on each side of the stamp which featured a message written in Cantonese – there was not an English translation provided. This was a rare example of a philatelic message created solely for the Chinese community; there had never before been a message unintelligible and thus inaccessible to the (non-Cantonese speaking) British in previous Hong Kong stamp design. The text read: 'the resurrection of the phoenix is the symbol of general peace for Chinese and British'. Originally, however, the designers used the phrase 'Great peace', yet this had to be changed as it had specific connotations to Imperial Japan.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, this stamp reflected Hong Kong's contemporary situation. Hong Kong housed both British and Chinese citizens, and the philatelic symbols celebrated this duality. Additionally, whilst the Cantonese translation for 'Hong Kong' was contained within British iconography, the message written specifically for Cantonese speakers was placed in two columns used to support the stamp's structure.

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<sup>15</sup> Henry Choi, *Hong Kong History in Stamps* (Chung Hwa Book Co, 2013), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Designers felt that the term 'Great peace' was used by Japanese forces to describe 'their own native tribe of people'. The author does not go into any more detail, but the most likely link is to the historical Japanese epic *The Chronicle of Great Peace* which charts various conflicts between regional leaders in the fourteenth century as they battled for overall authority. For more information, see: 'Designs in a P.O.W. Camp', *China Mail*, 17 July 1965.

Thus, the Chinese were not only being spoken to directly, they were also showcased as integral to the composition of post-war Hong Kong.

This postage stamp had another implication. Whilst it certainly reflected the contemporary attitude of opening the floor to non-European involvement, it set a benchmark for the post-war representation of the Hong Kong community. As has already been mentioned, the Military Administration relied on a number of Indian, Eurasian, and Portuguese workers to function in post-war Hong Kong. However, the 'Victory' stamp, which served as a means of unifying the European and non-European communities in a post-war Hong Kong, completely disregarded these minority communities. Ignored were, for example, the migrants from India and Pakistan. South Asian populations had routinely circulated throughout Britain's (and other powers') imperial possessions to fill security and administrative positions; in Hong Kong they also occupied various places in the Post Office.<sup>17</sup> South Asian communities, as Anita Weiss notes, did not identify on national terms, but instead unified around the common language of English. However, the reliance on the English language distanced these communities from the non-English speaking Hong Kong Chinese; thus, they became fringe groups overlooked by the British Administration.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, the notion of a single Chinese community was equally troublesome. As Allen Chun has argued, despite numerous demographics, China and its population had always been routinely homogenised throughout history.<sup>19</sup> Whilst the 'Victory' stamp showed Hong Kong to be a multicultural space, it was defined as English and Chinese; attention was not given to other non-British communities. This set the precedent for the coming decades; even one-off commemoratives were not produced to celebrate Hong Kong's various demographics until the late eighties. Whilst various minority communities had been integral to the redevelopment of post-war Hong Kong, they were totally overlooked in postage stamp designs. Ultimately, the territory was presented as a space which housed Chinese and British populations; this became the

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<sup>17</sup> Barbara-Sue White, *Turbans and Traders: Hong Kong's Indian Communities* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Anita M. Weiss, 'South Asian Muslims in Hong Kong: Creation of a "Local Boy" Identity', *Modern Asian Studies*, 25, 3 (July, 1991), p. 418.

<sup>19</sup> He argues that this is based on 'a homogenous notion of culture that is essentially modern, if not national, in origin' (p. 113), see: Allen Chun, 'Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity', *Boundary 2*, 23, 2 (1996), pp. 111-138.

accepted representation of Hong Kong given by the British Administration to its global audience.

### **Change in China and a Return to British Symbolism**

Political change in China impacted on Hong Kong; this would ultimately affect the content of the colony's postal material. The culmination of the civil war in China led to the Kuomintang forces fleeing to Taiwan; the Communist victors established the People's Republic of China in 1949. Whilst political changes in China would have repercussions for Hong Kong in the coming decades, its immediate impact came in the form of people. The conflict brought large numbers of refugees across the border from China into Hong Kong. This new Hong Kong Chinese population 'had no interest in challenging the political order ... [because] their very reason for coming to this British outpost was that it appeared to offer stability and the rule of law'.<sup>20</sup> This political apathy in Hong Kong persisted until the mid-sixties. Commercial ventures were seen as the major focal point of the Hong Kong population as the Chinese civil war progressed.<sup>21</sup> Thus, almost immediately after the '1946 outlook' had begun to develop, it became increasingly apparent to British officials that democratic reform may not necessarily be required. Governor Young's replacement, Sir Alexander Grantham, was a key figure in this shifting narrative. His position on political reform differed from his predecessor. For Grantham, the Chinese population had grown in Hong Kong because of the legal and economic protection provided by the British; they were not concerned with electing representatives to the Municipal Council.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, increasing volatility on the part of the new Chinese government led to a wider distrust of the Chinese in Hong Kong. The predominantly Chinese police force, for example, was seen as a potential breeding ground for Communist sympathisers. It was for this reason that only a third of the force was allowed to be armed.<sup>23</sup> Thus, by the late forties, the British Administration viewed the Chinese population as either politically apathetic or potential revolutionaries; the '1946 outlook' and Young's reforms were put on hold.

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<sup>20</sup> Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, p. 314.

<sup>21</sup> For Hong Kong's political apathy, see: Ambrose Yeo-chi King, 'Administrative Absorption of Politics in Hong Kong: Emphasis on the Grass Roots Level', *Asian Survey*, 15, 5 (May, 1975), pp. 422-439.

<sup>22</sup> Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 148.

<sup>23</sup> Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, p. 316.

Britain's shifting position on the inclusion of the Chinese population in Hong Kong was captured on its postage stamps. In contrast to the 1946 Victory stamp, new editions omitted any prominent Chinese symbolism. For example, two stamps were issued to commemorate the silver wedding anniversary of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (SG171-172) in 1948. In the following year, a quadruple set celebrating seventy five years of the Universal Postal Union was released for sale (SG173-176). These designs were produced for the entirety of Britain's overseas territories and the only modicum of individuality was provided by the different place names on each edition; colonial governments had no input into the design of the commemorative stamps. The symbolism of the Postal Union's stamps was also overtly European; this was not a celebration of a global communications system. One stamp housed a picture of the Greek mythological messenger god, Hermes, and another celebrated the Union's French-designed bronze statue situated outside its Swiss headquarters. Another stamp featured the British-made jet-powered Vickers Viking airplane alongside a large steamship. As David Scott notes, both planes and messenger gods with the ability to fly (such as Iris, Mercury, and Hermes) were common images on postage stamps because of the recent introduction of airmail.<sup>24</sup> The prominence of these symbols in stamp designs during the mid-twentieth century was an allusion to technological progression. By featuring them on its colonial postal stationery, Britain was highlighting the ways in which it had 'progressed' its overseas territories' communication links. The theme so prominent in early Hong Kong accounts had begun to seep into state officials' stamp design.

The sole commemorative issue of the 1950s celebrated the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (SG177). The popularity of the royal family on colonial postal stationery highlighted that, as Keith Jeffery notes, 'the British royal family were a central and iconic component of the imperial world system'.<sup>25</sup> However, this would be the last time the Queen was depicted wearing a crown on postage stamps until a decade later. Jeffery suggests this was heavily linked to the 'demystification of monarchy' and the 'increasingly diminished status' of the royal family in the aftermath of Second World

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<sup>24</sup> David Scott, 'National Icons: The Semiotics of the French Stamp', *French Cultural Studies*, 3, 215 (October, 1992), p. 221.

<sup>25</sup> Keith Jeffery, 'Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post: Stamps, the Monarchy and the British Empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34, 1 (2006), p. 62.

War.<sup>26</sup> This specifically applies to the post-war decolonisation period in which the royal family carried negative connotations of imperialism and empire; in Great Britain the monarchy was seen as a symbol of domestic harmony which promoted positive characteristics to the public.<sup>27</sup> Once again, a ubiquitous design was distributed across Britain's possessions without a morsel of individual customisation beyond a place name. Igor Cusack notes that Portugal's decision to create identical stamps for each of its colonies was a result of concerns over decolonisation; the 'similar stamp designs' created the illusion that each colony was less an exploited overseas territory and more an extension of Portugal.<sup>28</sup> Whilst it is unsurprising that Britain would tailor-make each postage stamp to suit each individual territory, particularly considering the financial costs and the time such a venture would take, it is important to note the complete lack of Cantonese text. The translation of 'Hong Kong', whilst present on the 1954 definitive stamps and the 1946 'Victory' commemorative, was not present on the Queen's coronation issue; the stamp's origins could only be located by a reader of English. Thus, not only was this stamp a celebration of a British institution, it was created primarily for a British (and English-speaking) audience.

The next commemorative stamp came in 1961, and celebrated Hong Kong University's fiftieth anniversary (SG192). Established in 1911, the University was open to both Chinese and non-Chinese male citizens, yet it was not until 1921 that female students were accepted. Over fifty years, the number of courses provided and students attending steadily grew, and the institution became an important part of Hong Kong's educational system. However, as Peter Cunich argues, the University was 'part of a much larger imperial project aimed not just at subduing the indigenous culture, but at replacing it entirely with something more "modern" and Western'.<sup>29</sup> As Mark Hampton states, 'Hong Kong University was thoroughly British'.<sup>30</sup> Henry Choi argues that the establishment of the University signalled a shift in Britain's focus on military and economic investment in China to one of cultural change.<sup>31</sup> At its core, the institution

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<sup>26</sup> Jeffery, 'Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post', p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> Philip Williamson, 'The Monarchy and Public Values, 1900-1953', in Andrzej Olechnowicz (ed.), *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 223-257.

<sup>28</sup> Igor Cusack, 'Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology: The Postage Stamps of Portugal and its Empire', *Nations and Nationalism*, 11, 4 (2005), p. 604.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Cunich, *A History of the University of Hong Kong: Volume 1, 1911-1945* (Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Hampton, 'Projecting Britishness to Hong Kong: The British Council and Hong Kong House, 1950s-1970s', *Historical Research*, 85, 230 (November 2012), p. 699.

<sup>31</sup> Choi, *Hong Kong History in Stamps*, pp. 94-95.

aimed to create 'a new species of Anglicized Chinese' elites; graduates from the University went on to serve as Justices of the Peace and on the Legislative Council.<sup>32</sup> These elites would serve the British Administration well over the coming decades, particularly in the post-war years; they enabled political stability through their support of and involvement in the British Administration. As Ambrose Yeo-chi King states, the lack of political upheaval in Hong Kong owed itself to the existence of 'elite-consensual' rather than 'mass-consensual' policies.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the commemorative stamp for the University of Hong Kong was a celebration of a very British institution which served as a means of Westernising and 'modernising' segments of the local population – once again 'progress' was an important philatelic theme.

This stamp was important for another reason. It celebrated an institution unique to Hong Kong; through the subtle combination of elements, it presented an image of a unique and individual territory. To begin with, the stamp did not feature the phrase 'Hong Kong University'. Instead, the country of origin ('Hong Kong'); the University's coat of arms; the phrase 'University Golden Jubilee'; and two dates (1911 and 1961) conjured up this message. Working in conjunction, the icons pieced together the story for the viewer. Next, the image of the coat of arms was not a complete copy of the original; it contained numerous inaccuracies. The scroll at the bottom, for example, had an additional pink colouring for 'tonal' reasons, according to designers. Additionally, in the original coat of arms the scroll was coiled, yet on the stamp the extremities of the scroll were folded.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the tongue and claws of the lion were blue in the original, yet this was omitted on the stamp. The differences were certainly minor, but the consequence was that the coat of arms functioned as a symbol rather than a direct copy. Thus, the stamp was a collection of letters, words, and icons which, when pieced together, formed a message specific to Hong Kong. Consequently, whilst this stamp celebrated a very British institution, it was nevertheless an institution exclusive to Hong Kong. Compared to the various regalia and Postal Union stamps, this issue was unique to the colony.

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<sup>32</sup> Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Ambrose Yeo-chi King, 'Administrative Absorption of Politics in Hong Kong', p. 427.

<sup>34</sup> British Library, Crown Agents Philatelic and Security Printing Archive, 'Golden Jubilee of Hong Kong University', 1960.

The duality of this stamp, which was both a promotion of Britishness and a celebration of Hong Kong's individuality, was repeated in the following year, with the commemoration of the centenary of Hong Kong's first postage stamp (SG193-195). The design itself was somewhat unorthodox; the celebration of the colony's postage stamps was subtle. In the previous example, an assortment of words, dates, and symbols amalgamated to convey a single congratulatory message to Hong Kong's Higher Education system. Yet the stamp's centenary issue paid little respect to the centurion itself. Two dates, 1862 and 1962, as well as the phrase 'Postage Stamp Centenary' provided the only references. Instead, two images dominated the canvas: a statue of Queen Victoria and a picture of Queen Elizabeth II. The inclusion of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II acted as the reference points in the history of Hong Kong's postage stamps; the design showcased the first royal used on Hong Kong's initial stamp (the 'Dorian Gray-like image' of Queen Victoria was a clear indicator of postal imperialism throughout the nineteenth century),<sup>35</sup> and then the current royal used on the most recent issue. However, the use of the two monarchs acted as bookends for Hong Kong's philatelic history; ultimately, the timeline of Hong Kong's postage stamps was defined entirely by the presence of the British state. The take-home message was clearly about British rule and 'progress' – they had been the ones to introduce postage stamps to Hong Kong.

In addition to this, the image of Queen Victoria was taken from a photograph of her bronze sculpture in Hong Kong's Victoria Park. The 1962 stamp, which not only celebrated Hong Kong's stamps and a statue unique to the territory, was therefore another example of postal stationery being produced specifically for the colony. However, the statue itself had connotations of imperialism and British authority. Still standing to this day, Elizabeth Ho describes it as an 'anachronistic blip in the international image of the territory'. She continues to describe the 1887 commissioning of the sculpture at the time of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations as a way to 'legitimize the authority of the British Empire in [a] visible, tangible [way], anchoring monumental sites of memory to individual, collective, and political identities'.<sup>36</sup> Due to a metal shortage, the statue was shipped to Japan during

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<sup>35</sup> Jeffery, 'Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post', p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (A&C Black, 2012), p. 1.



their occupation of Hong Kong, but it was discovered in the Sakurajima Arsenal in 1946 and shortly returned. The statue underwent major restoration until it was eventually placed in the new Victoria Park, built on reclaimed land from Causeway Bay in 1957 by Lord Grantham, shortly after his decision to cancel any political reforms. Snow describes the erection of the statue as 'symbolic ... [of] the Grantham counter-reformation'; its return signaled that 'Hong Kong was once more clearly labelled a colony'.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, whilst the postage stamp drew on an image of a statue unique to Hong Kong, the underlying theme was British rule. Coupled with the bookending of Hong Kong's philatelic history with British monarchs, this stamp was far removed from the 1946 Victory stamp, which created an image of a Hong Kong with both Chinese and British citizens. The 1962 centenary stamp highlighted that there was only one voice in Hong Kong.

### **A Changing Population and the International Community**

By the early sixties, the British Administration's attitude towards the non-European section of Hong Kong had shifted dramatically from the view expressed in the mid-forties; Hong Kong's population had also changed significantly. Immigration from China during the forties and fifties differed from previous migration patterns. Typically, Chinese citizens moved to or from Hong Kong for economic reasons, and returned once they had accumulated enough wealth. 'Communism in China,' according to Tsang, 'put an end to this historical pattern'.<sup>38</sup> The population rose from 600,000 in 1945 to over two million by 1950, and by 1955 there were 2.5 million citizens. In part, this was due to the aforementioned civil war in China, but Mao's failed Great Leap Forward contributed significantly to this change. The rolling out of communes, organised industry, and agricultural experimentation instigated widespread famine and political dissent. It has been estimated that in 1962 alone, 150,000 refugees entered Hong Kong. Additionally, Chinese border guards helped between 60,000 and 100,000 citizens illegally cross the border.<sup>39</sup> The population changes in Hong Kong put a severe strain on its resources. The Administration was reluctant to spend on expensive public services in a bid to maintain financial autonomy from London, but eventually its hand was forced. In 1953, a fire in Shek Hip Mei destroyed thousands of

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<sup>37</sup> Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, p. 321.

<sup>38</sup> Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 165.

<sup>39</sup> John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 149.

temporary dwellings used by migrant squatters, and fifty thousand people were made homeless. Consequently, provisions were made to relocate large numbers of the migrant population into multi-storey residencies. However, Governor Grantham was keen to point out that 'what we are doing for the squatter is not done primarily for his benefit but for the benefit of the community at large'.<sup>40</sup> He later stated that the squatter areas were 'harbouring places for criminals and vice-peddlers of all kinds'.<sup>41</sup> This narrative appears similar to that found in discussions of the 'Yellow Peril' mentioned in the previous chapter. Additionally, whilst the Legislative Council was keen to implement policies to remove squatter huts, it was also keen to ensure that resettlement applications would only be approved if squatters lived on land required for development purposes.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the Government would only re-house squatters if it was beneficial to the British Administration.

The issue of refugees grew for Hong Kong, and soon state officials had to implement change.<sup>43</sup> In the fifties, the territory received over twelve million Hong Kong dollars in aid for refugee projects from various Governments. Charities received further donations, and an additional HK\$870,000 was raised locally.<sup>44</sup> In response, the Hong Kong government began rolling out infrastructural developments to the territory, enabling it to better deal with the rising levels of immigration. New schools, healthcare facilities, homes, community centres, and social welfare provisions were listed as key areas for investment. Central to these changes was the concept of integration. According to the 1960 Annual Report, it was vital that the migrant population was integrated into the community and made to 'feel they are citizens of Hong Kong'.<sup>45</sup> As Chi-Kwan Mark argues, this was a major turning point in the local Government's attitude towards the growing number of Chinese migrants in the territory; integration

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<sup>40</sup> Chi-Kwan Mark, 'The 'Problem of People': British Colonials, Cold War Powers, and the Chinese Refugees in Hong Kong, 1949-62', *Modern Asian Studies*, 41, 6 (November, 2007), p. 1150.

<sup>41</sup> Laura Madokoro, 'Borders Transformed: Sovereign Concerns, Population Movements and the making of Territorial Frontiers in Hong Kong, 1949-1967', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 25, 3 (2012), p. 411.

<sup>42</sup> Hong Kong Legislative Council, *Official Report of Proceedings*, 9 November 1960, p. 338.

<sup>43</sup> There exists a wide range of literature on the topic of Cold War refugees; perhaps the most useful for this study is Laura Madokoro's work on Chinese migration under the Communist government. The issue of refugees led to administrative changes in Hong Kong; it also marked a shift in global politics. Madokoro's chapter on Hong Kong humanitarianism is particularly important for exploring the geopolitical aspect of Cold War migration; it also draws attention to the impact refugees had on shaping the representation of the Hong Kong population. For more information, see: Laura Madokoro, 'Promoting Refugees: Western Humanitarians in Hong Kong', *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migration in the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. 55-95.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>45</sup> *Hong Kong Report for the Year 1960* quoted in Mark, 'The 'Problem of People'', p. 1173.

was 'the only solution'.<sup>46</sup> Importantly, the migrant population had managed to trigger the government to launch social welfare initiatives; it had also clearly raised an awareness of local citizenship. As migration between China and Hong Kong became less fluid, this gave rise to the concept of a fixed 'local' population which required state assistance.

As Hong Kong began to focus more on social policy changes, its postage stamps reflected this. Designs in the early sixties had a clear humanitarian focus. In 1963, two stamps were released – one commemorated the 'Freedom from Hunger' initiative (SG211), and the other celebrated one hundred years of the International Red Cross (SG212-213). The first stamp was tied to the Special Assembly on Man's Right to Freedom from Hunger, which convened in Rome in March 1963 in preparation for the World Food Congress held in Washington three months later. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations noted that '140 postal administrations throughout the world issued special FFHC [Freedom from Hunger Campaign] stamps, thus securing the widest possible dissemination of the Campaign message'.<sup>47</sup> The Red Cross commemorative was not a celebration of Hong Kong's own branch, formed thirteen years previously, but instead a nod towards the international organisation. Additionally, whilst the price and country name were translated into Cantonese, the title of each stamp was in English. Ironically, the stamp's status as a disseminator of the UN's message was illegible to non-English speaking populations. Thus, whilst the British Administration was keen to include Hong Kong in global commemorations (and it had begun to discuss the notion of Hong Kong citizenship), there was little interest in creating designs specifically pertaining to Hong Kong; the key audience here was the international community. As the local government was keen to tie Hong Kong into this global setting, the commemoration of humanitarian campaigns, considering Hong Kong's current immigration situation, provided a convenient opportunity.

Yet international involvement was met with a certain degree of trepidation by British colonial officials. As immigration increased, Hong Kong increasingly received attention from global leaders. Primarily due to fears that Hong Kong's growing autonomy from

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<sup>46</sup> Mark, 'The 'Problem of People', p. 1173.

<sup>47</sup> Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 'Freedom from Hunger Campaign', <http://www.fao.org/docrep/f3200e/f3200e01.htm>, accessed 09 February 2017.

British control would be reversed if it became apparent the local Administration could not handle the influx of migrants, the Government was nervous about accepting growing offers for international aid. Additionally, Mark argues the Administration feared that opening up Hong Kong to the international community would expose the colony to external influence. Sure enough, American, Chinese, and Taiwanese involvement in the matter of migration had firm roots in wider political tensions.<sup>48</sup> For America, Hong Kong was important in the wider context of the Cold War. Not only did the Chinese migrants in Hong Kong provide a useful means of gathering intelligence on the inner-workings of the PRC, but sovereignty of Hong Kong became a useful bargaining chip for the United States. For Britain, the growing expenditure on military and migration matters was starting to become a strain. Equally, Britain's imperial decline, exacerbated by the recent Suez Crisis, raised questions in 1957 about its continued presence in Hong Kong. However, American officials, despite their position on colonialism, informed Britain that it could provide support to Hong Kong in return for British cooperation in refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of China's new Communist regime.<sup>49</sup> For Taiwan and China, the battle over Hong Kong's Chinese migrants was used as an extension of the civil war.<sup>50</sup> With regards to postal stationery, the Taiwanese Government used philatelic designs to continue its bitter rivalry with the People's Republic of China.<sup>51</sup> It soon became clear to the British Administration that Hong Kong's migration issue would be monopolised on by the international community.

Concerns over the image of Hong Kong in the midst of rising international involvement in the Colony's migration issue were shared by postal officials. They had become increasingly aware that stamps were important to the colony's international image. Consequently, officials were keen to ensure that designs and slogans could not have any adverse effects. The Postmaster General wrote to the Public Relations Office, warning them to word advertisements wisely. He informed them that particular phrases on postal stationery could be politically harmful for Britain and Hong Kong.

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<sup>48</sup> Mark, 'The 'Problem of People'', pp.1145-1181.

<sup>49</sup> Chi-Kwan Mark, 'Defence or Decolonization? Britain, the US and the Hong Kong Question in 1957', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 33, 1 (January, 2005), pp. 51-72.

<sup>50</sup> Madokoro, 'Borders Transformed', p. 415.

<sup>51</sup> Phil Deans, 'Isolation, Identity and Taiwanese Stamps as Vehicles for Regime Legitimation', *East Asia*, 22, 2 (Summer, 2005), pp. 8-30.

Advertising the United Nations, for example, was seen as a difficult topic considering 'present day world affairs'; likewise, the Post Office rejected the slogan 'Britain says thank you for food parcels' because it could be read as an indication that Britain was 'down and out' and 'almost starving'.<sup>52</sup> Concerns regarding unintentional interpretations of postal messages were also an issue for Hong Kong's commercial ventures. The Colonial Secretary approached the Postmaster General about the topic of using cancelling stamps as advertising tools for local businesses. Considering their role in advertising exhibitions; the 'Drive Carefully Avoid Accidents' campaign; and as reminders to 'Post Early for Christmas', he enquired as to whether cancellation stamps could be sponsored as a source of revenue for the Post Office.<sup>53</sup> The Postmaster turned down the idea and gave three scenarios to the Colonial Secretary. First, a letter with the slogan "'Drink more Bass" Take another glass' being received by a 'staunch leader of a temperance movement'; secondly, the Head Office of Lever Brothers in London getting 'Cusson's Soap is BEST' printed on their mail; and finally, the British Overseas Airways Corporation despatching brochures with 'AIR FRANCE IS CHEAPER AND FASTER' on the front.<sup>54</sup> Whilst these situations were hypothetical, the key point here was that the Post Office was concerned with the interpretation of postal messages. From both a commercial and political perspective, the repercussions of particular designs and campaigns were important elements for consideration.

As the international community became more heavily involved in Hong Kong's immigration issues, philatelic designs focused on commemorating international institutions and events often with a humanitarian leaning; however, these stamps had little to do with Hong Kong specifically. First came the International Telecommunications Union centennial anniversary (SG214-215); followed by the International Co-operation Year (SG216-217) issue; the celebration of the new World Health Organisation's Geneva headquarters (SG237-238); and the twentieth anniversary of UNESCO (SG239-241). Once again, none of these stamps featured a Cantonese translation. The 'Co-operation Year' issue, much like the 'Freedom from Hunger' stamp, was a global initiative to address various 'problems', or 'international

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<sup>52</sup> HKPRO, HKRS41-1-6801, Letter from the Postmaster General to Public Relations Officer, 'United Nations - special Postage Stamps or Postmarks', 19 March 1951.

<sup>53</sup> HKPRO, HKRS41-1-6801, Letter from the Colonial Secretary to Public Relations Officer and Postmaster General, 17 October 1951.

<sup>54</sup> HKPRO, HKRS41-1-6801, Letter from the Postmaster General to the Colonial Secretary, 'Publicity Slogans', 20 October 1951.

tension', in the 'interests of mankind'.<sup>55</sup> Unlike the Hunger stamp though, the message was vague, and instead acted as a reminder of the political ambitions of the United Nations. On a similar level, the UNESCO series celebrated 'Education', 'Science', and 'Culture'; once again, these were celebrations of aspects of UNESCO rather than a bid to further any particular campaign. 'Education' was supposedly encapsulated in English language toy blocks next to a traditional fountain pen nib; 'Science' focused on corn and test-tubes (the use of scientific methods to solve food crises being the key message); and 'Culture' was visualised by the image of two temple columns (reminiscent of ancient European civilisations), and a lyre (a stringed instrument generally associated with Ancient Greece). Clearly this was not a stamp designed to sell Hong Kong to the global community, and instead, as with the impersonal humanitarian stamps earlier in the decade, the purpose was to tie Hong Kong into the international community.

Despite these stamps having little to do with Hong Kong, philately as a hobby had become very marketable. Designs were already being discussed with philatelists in mind, and the Postmaster had warned the Public Relations Officer that stamps should not be rushed out on the grounds that collectors could refuse to purchase such issues and in future overlook Hong Kong stamps.<sup>56</sup> In 1962, the Secretary of State for the Colonies suggested that a separate 'Philatelic Services' department (which would be introduced in the mid-seventies) should be established to deal specifically with requests for stamped envelopes and standing orders for new stamps; this would hopefully alleviate the pressure on the Post Office as demand for postage stamps soared.<sup>57</sup> In 1962 Hong Kong's City Hall exhibited a range of philatelic artefacts to commemorate the centenary of the Colony's first postage stamp. The final product was vastly different to the initial proposal by the Postmaster, and more funds had to be requested to deal with the high levels of interest. Demand for catalogues vastly exceeded expectation, and numerous parties contacted the Post Office to express interest in the exhibition. Such was the exhibition's popularity that it managed to borrow the Queen's private collection of Hong Kong philatelic material, including the

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<sup>55</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations, 'International Co-operation Year', Resolution 1907, 21 November 1963.

<sup>56</sup> HKPRO, HKRS41-1-6801, Letter from the Postmaster General to Public Relations Officer, 'United Nations - special Postage Stamps or Postmarks', 19 March 1951.

<sup>57</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Dispatch 'Postage and Revenue Stamps', 18 January 1962.

original crayon designs for the 1946 Victory stamp. The number of days the exhibition was open for grew from five to nine, and the number of proposed displays for material more than doubled.<sup>58</sup> As interest in the event gained ground, the Hong Kong Tourist Association became involved in the project, and advertised the exhibition in its travel bulletin.<sup>59</sup> The display proved so popular that on its first day, a crowd of 1,800 people filled the City Hall as they queued to use the lifts to take them to the tenth-floor exhibit. On the first day alone, twelve thousand envelopes, over a thousand catalogues, and HK\$2,424 worth of stamps were sold.<sup>60</sup> If the exhibition highlighted anything, it was that Hong Kong had an appetite for philately.

Running parallel with this surge in popularity for postal material, there were growing calls for more postage stamps featuring designs specific to Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Civic Association wrote to the Postmaster in 1963 proposing that the Colony's postal designs could focus on tourist attractions; they suggested particular attention could be given to Hong Kong's 'progress in the economic, social and cultural fields'. Their suggestions included a 'Map of Asia with Hongkong [sic] pinpointed', Victoria Harbour, City Hall, a Street Scene, a fisherman casting his net, Aberdeen, local children, the Peak Tram, Tiger Balm Garden pagoda, a Chinese festival scene, and Repulse Bay. 'This proposal,' they noted, 'if implemented, will do much to foster international goodwill toward Hongkong [sic], and will at the same time create more interest among stamp collectors in many countries'.<sup>61</sup> Over the coming years, more requests began to filter in for stamps featuring local imagery. A piece in the *South China Morning Post* titled 'Our Dowdy Stamps' criticised the lack of local imagery on postal designs.<sup>62</sup> A comment piece in the *China Mail* pushed for stamps of 'an indigenous character'.<sup>63</sup> Eventually, the Postmaster General wrote to the Secretary of State for Colonies enquiring into the use of special issues to promote tourism. 'After discussion with Mr. Crook, Postmaster General and the Crown Agents,' he responded, 'it is felt that, in view of your local demand, such an issue could be agreed exceptionally and as an experiment to judge

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<sup>58</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Letter from the Postmaster General to the Colonial Secretary, 'Stamp Centenary Exhibition', 30 October 1962.

<sup>59</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Hong Kong Tourist Association, 'HK Stamp Exhibition, Dec. 8-16', Hong Kong Travel Bulletin, 4, 11, November, 1962.

<sup>60</sup> 'Large Crowds Clog Lifts At City Hall', *South China Morning Post*, 10 December 1962.

<sup>61</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Letter from the Hong Kong Civic Association to Postmaster General, 19 August 1963.

<sup>62</sup> 'Our Dowdy Stamps', *South China Morning Post*, 09 November 1965.

<sup>63</sup> 'Comment Piece', *China Mail*, 13 April 1966.

the suitability of pictorial stamps for a future definitive issue'. Continuing, he then proposed that a suitable local theme to interest potential tourists could include the celebration 'of the various means of transport in use in the Colony'.<sup>64</sup> The Postmaster General responded by suggesting the topics of local industry or flowers to "sell" Hong Kong overseas'.<sup>65</sup> This, it is worth noting, was in addition to the major policy changes introduced in 1965, which included the local government (and population) in creating Hong Kong's postal stationery. Clearly, stamps were now recognised by the Secretary of State and the Postmaster as key resources in projecting an image of Hong Kong. Thus, in addition to the Postmaster's concern over the interpretation of advertising phrases, the international community (particularly potential tourists) was integral to the stamp design process; their consumption of information was a vital consideration.

### **Social Change and the Riots**

Hong Kong's changing society led to major developments in the colony. As Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi state, 'the basic identity of the Hong Kong Chinese before the 1960s [was] "Chinese"'. They specify, however, that such "'Chineseness" [was] based more on social and cultural factors than on economic or political factors'.<sup>66</sup> As the issue of migration became increasingly political, this led to an identity crisis amongst the Hong Kong Chinese population. This began in 1966, when the Government received plans from the Star Ferry Company to increase the price of first class fares by five cents. The Star Ferry provided transportation between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon across Victoria Harbour. Opposition to the move took the form of protest and hunger strikes. After one prominent protester was arrested for obstruction, demonstrations turned violent. By 8<sup>th</sup> April, one rioter had been killed and 1,400 others had been arrested.<sup>67</sup> After a few days, the police managed to suppress the demonstrators. Importantly, the overwhelming majority of rioters were under the age of twenty.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the riots were in response to first class tickets. According to Carroll this was not an economically motivated protest; nor, he states, was it anti-British. Instead, he argues, it was an expression of 'social discontent'.<sup>69</sup> Whilst the official inquiry found no

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<sup>64</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Letter from the Secretary of State for Colonies to Hong Kong Governor, 'Postage Stamps', 28 April 1966.

<sup>65</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Letter from the Postmaster General to the Colony Secretary, 'Postage Stamps', 15 July 1966.

<sup>66</sup> Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese* (The Chinese University Press, 1988), p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Carroll, *A Concise History*, p. 150.

<sup>68</sup> Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 188.

<sup>69</sup> Carroll, *A Concise History*, p. 150.



substantial reason for the riots, it did concede that living conditions and international political tensions were a contributory factor which 'elsewhere would be more than sufficient cause for frequent disturbances'.<sup>70</sup>

In the following year, further unrest broke out. The Cultural Revolution, Mao's rise to cult-like status, and his attack on party dissent pushed by the youth of China, reached Hong Kong in 1967. As the Red Guards continued Mao's revolutionary struggle in China against an alleged bourgeois elite, Hong Kong channeled its frustration at British imperialism. The origins of this unrest are somewhat disputed; prior uprisings in Macau were important, as were decisions made by the British government towards Hong Kong as early as the fifties, and similarly the level of involvement of China has been debated.<sup>71</sup> That said, the initial spark in Hong Kong lay with labour disputes which erupted on the workers' May Day holiday, and shortly afterwards, symbolism prevalent in the Cultural Revolution became a regular theme.<sup>72</sup> Unrest manifested itself initially in protests and strikes, but gradually events turned violent and culminated in an indiscriminate bombing campaign. Consequently, towards the end of 1967, public opinion had moved sharply away from the initial labour disputes. Faced with a decision between a Cultural Revolution-inspired Communist government and the British imperialists currently in power, the population sided with the 'devil they knew'.<sup>73</sup> In the aftermath of the riots, the imperial British Administration was seen in a more favourable light when compared to the militant leftists.

The events of 1966 and 1967 impacted heavily on the British Administration's attitude towards the Colony. British officials conceded that a key factor in the initial 1966, and subsequent 1967, riots was a 'gap' in communication between the Administration and the population.<sup>74</sup> Reforms came shortly after the 1967 riots. These included the introduction of City District Officers to bridge this communications 'gap' and new labour laws which regulated working hours. Ray Yep has referred to this moment as a

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<sup>70</sup> Carroll, *A Concise History*, p. 150.

<sup>71</sup> Whilst the Cultural Revolution is seen as a key catalyst by many historians for the 1967 Riots, this rhetoric has been expanded in an edited collect, see: Robert Bickers and Ray Yep (eds.), *May Days in Hong Kong: Riots and Emergency in 1967* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> Most notable of these symbols was the waving of Mao's *Little Red Book*, see: Gary Ka-wai Cheung, *Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 Riots* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009), p. 46. For a broader study on the impact of the *Little Red Book*, see: Daniel Leese, 'A Single Spark: Origins and Spread of the Little Red Book in China', in Alexander C. Cook (ed.) *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 23-43.

<sup>73</sup> Scott, 'National Icons', p. 104.

<sup>74</sup> Mark Hampton, *Hong Kong and British Culture, 1945-97* (Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 138.

'turning point' in colonial governance because of the various socio-economic changes which followed the events of 1967.<sup>75</sup> Gary Cheung has called the 1967 riots a 'watershed moment' in so far as it saw the introduction of various education, housing, and welfare reforms. Additionally, he argues, it triggered conversations in Britain about the inevitable handover to China; Hong Kong's political future was seen by officials as closely tied to that of the mainland.<sup>76</sup> The 1967 riots, and subsequent discussions about Hong Kong's future, furthered Hong Kong's autonomy from Britain. Financially speaking, according to Catherine Schenk, 1967 'marked the acceptance of the shifted balance of power between Hong Kong and London'.<sup>77</sup>

The greatest impact of the events of 1966 and 1967 was the development of a local Hong Kong identity. The events of 1967 indicated that Hong Kong was not a part of China, but equally the local population was not British. This gave way to the conception of a new identity, that of the 'Hong Konger'. This change was neatly captured on postal stationery – a clear shift in postal designs can be observed after the riots of 1967. Certainly this was a result of the 1965 postal policy changes; the British Administration was able to focus more on Hong Kong's individuality. Approved in November 1966, the first Hong Kong stamp commemorating the Chinese New Year was released to the public in January 1967 (SG242-243). The 10c. and the HK\$1.30 differed slightly in design, but overall, the message was the same on both denominations. Both stated that this was a celebration of the 'New Year Festival 9th Feb. 1967'; both had Chinese translations for 'Hong Kong', the price, and more importantly a message about the Chinese New Year; and both omitted an image of Queen Elizabeth II and instead opted to use 'ER'.<sup>78</sup> Compared with previous designs, clearly more space had been designated to 'Chinese-ness' rather than 'British-ness'. The inclusion of a non-English translated message suggested that this was something for the Chinese population of Hong Kong; this was also the first example of an explicitly Chinese occasion being philatelically celebrated. It is important, however, to state that

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<sup>75</sup> Ray Yep, 'The 1967 Riots in Hong Kong: The Diplomatic and Domestic Fronts of the Colonial Governor', *The China Quarterly*, 193 (March, 2008), p. 122.

<sup>76</sup> Cheung, *Hong Kong's Watershed*, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Catherine R. Schenk, 'The Empire Strikes Back: Hong Kong and the Decline of Sterling in the 1960s', *The Economic History Review*, 57, 3 (August, 2004), p. 580.

<sup>78</sup> Images of the reigning monarch on postage stamps were seen as interchangeable with regal symbolism (ER, a Crown, and such) for purely design reasons; artistic value often influenced whether it was suitable for a portrait to feature. In an earlier notification, the Postmaster General had informed designers that stamps could include 'either the Royal portrait and Crown or the Royal Cypher or the Crown alone', see: 'Colony Stamp Design Competition', *South China Morning Post*, 01 July 1958.

the first stamp which we can consider to be more 'Chinese' than 'British' was not a celebration of the Chinese people, but instead a nod towards Chinese culture. The design did not feature a prominent local figure, in fact it would take decades before this happened. Furthermore, this stamp was created by an employee at Harrison & Sons, V. Whitely, whose other designs included issues for Rhodesia, Malta, and Malawi. Crucially, this was not a stamp produced *by* the Chinese in Hong Kong, it was a stamp produced *for* the Chinese in Hong Kong. That being said, the philatelic recognition of Chinese customs for the first time in Hong Kong's history was important. The year 1967 marked a turning point in the production of Hong Kong postage stamps; designs began to incorporate iconography which was not solely British.

A stamp issued in 1968 provides a useful analogy for the relationship between post-1967 philatelic symbolism, the British Administration, and the newly developing unique local identity. A commemorative stamp depicting the *Bauhinia Blakeana* (SG253), commonly known as the Hong Kong Orchid Tree, was released to the public in September 1968. It featured a large image of the pink flowered plant, its Latin name alongside the country of origin (Hong Kong), and the price – each had a corresponding Chinese translation. Additionally, an image of Queen Elizabeth II was placed in the top right corner; but as if this was not enough regal symbolism, a crown was also included in the top left corner. At face value this was simply a pleasant image of a flower, however, as with many of the complexities of postage stamps, there was a more subtle message on show. The *Bauhinia Blakeana* was declared the 'flower emblem of Hongkong [sic]' in 1965 by the Urban Council.<sup>79</sup> Thought to be discovered by French missionaries in the 1880s, the plant was completely sterile and only propagated through grafting; it was 'of hybrid origin' with suspected parental species 'not indigenous to Hong Kong'.<sup>80</sup> The flower was named in honour of British Governor Sir Henry Blake and his wife by the Superintendent of the Botany and Forestry Department, Stephen Dunn.<sup>81</sup> Due to this unique relationship with the colony, it was selected from a list of twenty entries to be unanimously voted as the floral symbol of Hong Kong by the Urban Council. To this day it is still used as an emblem for the

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<sup>79</sup> 'Hongkong [sic] Orchid Tree Flower is Colony Emblem', *South China Morning Post*, 20 January 1965, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Carol P. Y. Lau, Lawrence Ramsden, and Richard M. K. Saunders, 'Hybrid Origin of "Bauhinia Blakeana" (Leguminosae: Caesalpinoideae), Inferred Using Morphological, Reproductive, and Molecular Data', *American Journal of Botany*, 92, 3 (2005), p. 525.

<sup>81</sup> Stephen Dunn, 'New Chinese Plants', *Journal of Botany*, 46 (1908) p. 325.

territory and features on the Special Administrative Region's flag. The *Bauhinia Blakeana* acted as a neat symbol for Hong Kong. It was discovered by Europeans and named after a member of the British governing elite, yet at the same time it was indigenous. Its parent crops were not from Hong Kong, but instead transported to the colony where the Orchid Tree then grew; it was a local through birth. Most importantly though, it was a decision taken by members of the Urban Council, the Administrative elite, which led to the *Bauhinia Blakeana* becoming an icon of Hong Kong; this was not a symbol which rose to prominence from a grass roots movement. Despite this, the emergence of the Hong Kong Orchid Tree and its appearance on postal stationery was in stark contrast to the period of time before the events of 1966 and 1967; this was the first symbol truly unique to Hong Kong publicised on a stamp.

However, the *Bauhinia Blakeana* stamp was not a solo issue; it was part of a two-piece set. The other design featured the Hong Kong Coat of Arms (SG254). In 1959, the Coat of Arms was produced and accepted by the Administration onto flags and official documentation; it was a gift from Britain to the Colonial Administration. It featured a lion donning a crown, a Chinese dragon, and a second lion passing a pearl (the 'Pearl of the Orient') to the other lion. Its officialness seemed to juxtapose the naturalism of the Hong Kong Orchid Tree, yet both icons were commissioned by the British; neither one was more 'Hong Kong' than the other. Additionally, when both stamps were viewed as part of the same set, the *Bauhinia Blakeana* design was contextualised; it was an official symbol, not a celebration of local wildlife. However, by producing both stamps together as a set, the juxtaposition between each icon was emphasised. Once compared with the coat of arms, the Orchid Tree's connection to Hong Kong was strengthened; its beauty was not at the hands of a designer, but instead the natural world. This, however, was simply an illusion. Importantly though, both designs were unique to the colony; in post-1967 Hong Kong, postal designs were paying less attention to international and humanitarian agencies and instead focussing on elements unique to the territory.

During the latter half of the sixties, Hong Kong's stamp designs continued to be 'Chinesed'. In a letter to the Colonial Secretariat, the Postmaster General mentioned that new stamps were requested which combined images of Queen Elizabeth II with

'motifs of an essentially Chinese character'. The successful design submission included a background pattern of a traditional Chinese carpet found in seventeenth century temples, a flower panel from a late seventeenth century lacquer tray, and a unit pattern from a Qing period porcelain dish.<sup>82</sup> These designs, as highlighted in the first chapter, were all from material goods popular in Britain (particularly the porcelain dish). Stamps were further 'Chinesed' by the introduction of more descriptive information written in the local language. The celebration of Human Rights Year in 1968 (SG255-256); the Chinese Lunar New Year in 1968 (SG245-246) and 1969 (SG257-258); a 1969 commemorative for the 1963 establishment of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (SG259); and the celebration of the opening of Hong Kong's satellite tracking station in 1969 (SG260) all featured information written in Cantonese. Furthermore, celebrations of events and symbols unique to the territory were becoming more frequent. Lunar New Year commemoratives were issued annually; new communications links were celebrated (the SEACOM telephone cable for example (SG244)); and new technological advancements were used to represent Hong Kong philatelically. Links to international cooperation was certainly a strong theme, but unlike earlier designs these acted as a means of promoting achievements specific to Hong Kong. Additionally, whilst the English language was never removed, the permanent inclusion of a Chinese translation presented a different representation of Hong Kong than earlier stamps for UNESCO, the World Health Organisation, the Postal Union, and the Red Cross. Additionally, a request for the commemoration of the British Red Cross (rather than the International Red Cross) was met with great opposition. According to the Crown Agents, both 'collectors and philatelic trade alike are now quite firmly opposed to omnibus issues of stamps for the Colonial territories'.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the stamps produced in the wake of the 1967 civil unrest and 1965 postal policy changes began to celebrate Hong Kong as a unique space. Pressure from the local population, state officials, and philatelists played a key role in this development.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter set out to answer three key questions relating to the changes in Hong Kong between 1945 and 1969 and what impact this had on the territory's postal

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<sup>82</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-2, Letter from the Postmaster General to the Colony Secretary 'Stamps: New Definitive Issue', 23 April 1969.

<sup>83</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Crown Agents to the Postmaster General, 04 July 1968.

designs. First, the 'Victory' postage stamp was a reflection of the contemporary political atmosphere. Upon the return of British rule, it was seen by both London and Hong Kong officials alike that a continuation of pre-war rule was not a viable option; this in turn gave way to the notion of reforms which became known as the '1946 outlook'. The 'Victory' stamp included a combination of British and Chinese symbolism, and even included a message written only in Cantonese – the overall tone was one of unity. Yet as developments on the international stage progressed, the promise of reform in Hong Kong died down. Events in China presented the new Governor Grantham with an opportunity to ensure that British interests were maintained in the colony. During this period, the designs of postal stationery focussed more on British iconography and neglected Chinese symbolism and Cantonese translations. Despite the fact that these stamps featured references unique to Hong Kong, they ultimately served as celebrations of Britishness. As Hong Kong saw an increase in immigration, it was dragged into Cold War politics and the continued struggle between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. As Hong Kong became increasingly focussed on international relationships, so too did its postage stamps. Commemoratives for global and humanitarian efforts dominated the early sixties stamps; designs made little reference to any unique aspect of Hong Kong. Yet there were growing calls for more locally inspired designs, and mixed with the growth in popularity of philately highlighted by the 1962 City Hall exhibition, it became clear that Hong Kong needed to move away from omnibus editions. The philatelic market was a major force in this decision, however more important were the political events of 1966 and 1967, which presented the Administration with an opportunity to mirror the newly emerging neither-British-nor-Chinese identity on postal stationery; Post Office policy changes also influenced this. Beginning with the Year of the Ram, soon the Hong Kong Post Office was celebrating the Orchid Tree and the official coat of arms. As symbolism unique to the territory began to play a more prominent role on postal stationery, postage stamps saw the return of the Cantonese language. Consequently, despite the many developments in Hong Kong between 1945 and 1969, the postage stamps of this period reflect the contemporary political situation and provide a useful marker for tracking changes in the territory. Importantly, between 1945 and the late sixties, it had become clear that there were a large number of interested parties involved in the process of designing postage stamps. Ultimately though, postage stamps had proven

themselves as important agents in the process of determining Hong Kong's international 'image'. As the next chapter will highlight, this would be significantly developed in the following decade.

### Chapter Three: Showcasing Hong Kong in the 1970s

This chapter continues the trend which had emerged by the end of the sixties; Hong Kong's stamp designs in the seventies began to feature more iconography specific to the territory. Over the next decade a range of themes were celebrated, and they each became increasingly celebratory of particular aspects of Hong Kong life. Expositions and festivals were commemorated throughout the seventies, and the parades and stalls which were attached to the stamps' release showcased a particular image of Hong Kong. Importantly, they built on stereotypes and icons which had emerged in early accounts published in newspapers. Emphasis was given to tradition; this gave legitimacy to the proceedings. With the Hong Kong Festival, for example, age-old rituals were entwined with contemporary activities to create a sense of authenticity. This focus on 'tradition' was equally important in bolstering Hong Kong's tourism industry, and stamps were seen by various officials as a useful means of spreading the word to an international audience. The popularity of postage stamps to the international audience became a key concern for postal officials, and designs were commissioned with collectors in mind. However, there were many other concerns which influenced the creation of Hong Kong's postage stamps; this is most evident in the case of the Lunar New Year issues, which ran between 1967 and 1978. Government departments, City District Officers, the Executive Council, officials, religious groups, philatelists, and the local population were all included in the design process for these twelve postage stamps. As the design process became increasingly complicated, a Stamp Advisory Committee was created in 1973 to alleviate the Governor from a large portion of decision-making.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to celebrating a local festivity, the New Year stamps were also part of a wider push for wildlife to feature on postal stationery. Not only did wildlife present an opportunity for the British Administration to raise considerable funds through stamp sales, as images of fauna and flora were popular amongst global collectors, but it also celebrated the emerging local identity. Similar to festivals, the visualisation of

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<sup>1</sup> This Committee initially decided on designers for each stamp and then put forward their recommendations to the governor, but gradually their role became more important in the design process and key decisions were made by those that were elected. The Committee was headed by the Postmaster General and included the President of the Hong Kong Philatelic Society, a University Lecturer and Art Gallery Curator, the Assistant for Home Affairs, the Assistant Colonial Secretary, an Art Director with the Government Information Services, and an Unofficial Member of the Executive Council.



particular wildlife created a specific image of the territory whilst also claiming this stateless nature for the Colony. Yet the celebration of a Hong Kong identity was matched with key political changes on a local and international level. Externally, China was going through major political change, particularly with the death of Mao. This led to increasing cooperation with western nations, and postal traffic between Hong Kong and the mainland boomed as restrictions were lifted. Internally, tackling corruption became a key concern to the local population; these concerns were also felt with regard to the Post Office, and various complaints were made about letter opening and suspect activities by officials.

Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to track the changes in postal designs in the seventies, and to highlight the importance of Hong Kong specific themes. In doing this, three key questions shall be answered. Firstly, what role did internal and external parties play in postage stamp design and policy process during this decade? Secondly, to what extent did the local population influence philatelic and wider social changes? Finally, how far was the image of the territory shaped through festivals, expositions, images of local wildlife, and concepts of tradition? In answering these questions, this chapter will argue that the process of postage stamp design was complex and required negotiation, yet overall, by the end of the seventies, Hong Kong's philatelic output was a useful tool in visualising Hong Kong.

### **Changes in China**

During the 1970s, China went through a major political upheaval. Opposition to the Cultural Revolution peaked in the late sixties, and besides the continuation of Mao's cult-like status amongst particular sections of society, it had become clear that policies had failed. After jostling with numerous rivals, including the controversial death of Mao's successor Lin Biao, Mao managed to maintain his authority, albeit loosely.<sup>2</sup> The activities of the 'Gang of Four' highlighted the growing power vacuum, and after the death of Mao in September 1976, the Party was in disarray. Hua Guofeng, a relatively unknown Party member chosen by Mao as his successor, faced numerous difficulties in cementing his place in the leadership structure. After two years of struggle, Hua stood aside to allow Deng Xiaoping, a progressive Party member who had formally proved

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Fenby, *The Penguin History of Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power 1850-2009* (Penguin UK, 2008), p. 491.

critical of Hua, to take the position of Chairman. Immediately Deng denounced the catastrophic Cultural Revolution and began rolling out economic changes, which included the establishment of Special Economic Zones, and plans to adopt free market individualism. Additionally, the combination of the Prague Spring in 1968, China's growing relationship with Albania, and the 1969 Sino-Russian border clashes led to the crumbling of Sino-Soviet relations. The introduction of an increasingly compatible economic system alongside this rejection of the USSR led to a thawing of relations between China and the West. Importantly, whilst many differences still existed, a greater symmetry of systems between Hong Kong and China was developing. Thus, Deng's changes were necessary if Hong Kong was to ever return to Chinese sovereignty.

From a postal perspective, relations between China and Hong Kong had improved since the early seventies. For the first time in twenty-one years since the establishment of Communist rule in China, the mainland increased its parcel weight allowance from two to twenty-two pounds in 1970, and lifted its restrictions, which had been in place during the Cultural Revolution. However, there was still concern from customers that the weight allowance increase was merely a ruse to confiscate large packages, as it had been used in the past.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the flow of communication was overwhelmingly one-way – in the first eight days of the restrictions being lifted, sixty-three thousand parcels were sent from Hong Kong to China, but only forty parcels were sent from China to Hong Kong.<sup>4</sup> Yet improved relations were not just restricted to weights and payments, there was also an increase in cooperation dealing with the growing issue of postal bombs, particularly from Kuomintang sympathisers in Taiwan. Chinese Security Services worked with Hong Kong's Special Branch to track down suspect parcels and prevented them from reaching the mainland. Journalists at the time, however, saw this as another example of Hong Kong being brought into the Sino-Taiwanese tensions, and approached this new collaboration between Hong Kong and China with caution.<sup>5</sup> By

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<sup>3</sup> 'Parcel Post to China Will Resume Today', *South China Morning Post*, 15 October 1970.

<sup>4</sup> 'Rush For Letter Writers', *South China Morning Post*, 03 November 1970.

<sup>5</sup> 'Temporary Post Office for Festival', *Sunday Post-Herald*, 23 December 1973.

1976, relations had improved to such an extent that officials from Canton's Post Office visited Hong Kong to discuss postal policy, practices, and management ideas.<sup>6</sup>

The opening up of China to more mail from Hong Kong had another knock-on effect for the colony's postal operations. Combined with the influx of Chinese migrants from the sixties, Hong Kong began to rely more on its local Chinese population to operate its postal business. Many illiterate families in Hong Kong, keen to make contact with relatives in the mainland, required assistance in producing written notes; thus, the business of dedicated local letter writers began to boom, and the services of such professionals were in high demand as the postal restrictions ended in 1970.<sup>7</sup> In squatter areas, certain residents were employed by the Royal Mail to deliver letters, as Post Office staff were unable to navigate these remote locations.<sup>8</sup> In Shingon Village, for example, a local postman, Mr Yeung Choi-chi, was hired to fulfil a number of roles in addition to delivering mail – these included writing and dictating letters for the residents.<sup>9</sup> Often these areas were completely neglected; after the squatter camps were disbanded and re-site zones were established, postal routes were rarely amended. These remote areas, particularly in the New Territories, legally challenged the Post Office in the early seventies, and eventually won the right to have a door-to-door mail delivery service.<sup>10</sup> Navigating both the remote locations and the populous squatter areas was difficult, and the practice of employing knowledgeable locals to work under the remit of the Royal Mail was a necessary measure. Interestingly, in coping with the influx of Chinese migrants, as well as the new Sino-Hong Kong postal regulations, the Colony had to rely on its local population in a similar manner to the post-1945 reliance on non-European workers.

### **Attending Expositions**

Postage stamps at the beginning of the 1970s very much continued the late-1960s theme of internationalism and Hong Kong achievements. One key stamp commemorated the Osaka Exposition in 1970 (SG263-264). Expositions and World

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<sup>6</sup> 'Canton Postal Officials' Visit', *South China Morning Post*, 26 February 1976; 'Canton Postal Men to Visit Hongkong [sic]', *Hong Kong Standard*, 26 February 1976.

<sup>7</sup> 'Rush For Letter Writers', *South China Morning Post*, 03 November 1970.

<sup>8</sup> 'Home Mail Delivery Sought', *South China Morning Post*, 01 April 1969.

<sup>9</sup> 'This Village Postman Helps Write Letters, Too', *Hong Kong Standard*, 06 June 1973.

<sup>10</sup> 'Resite Areas Win Battle for Better Mail Service', *Hong Kong Standard*, 22 July 1975.

Fairs already had a close relationship with postal stationery; the first commemorative stamp ever produced in Britain celebrated the British Empire Exhibition of 1924-25.<sup>11</sup> The theme of the Japanese World Fair was 'Progress and Harmony for Mankind' and had stalls from seventy-six nations, including Hong Kong. Hong Kong had previously showcased its wares at the New York 1964/65 exposition, and Osaka built upon this success. The New York display's 'Oriental-European atmosphere' was encapsulated by the Hong Kong Trading Company which showcased architecture with 'intense colours and intricate carvings'. Split into sections, the 'market street' area suggested 'a busy, modern street in the colony' with shops and stalls selling 'jade and ivory pieces' alongside 'custom clothing'. Restaurants sold traditional dishes including 'Cantonese squab, duckling stuffed with shark fin, and shrimp and beef in lily leaves'. Entertainment was provided by 'Chinese opera singers, acrobats and other groups' in areas which housed 'tiny sampans and ... huge junks with their multicolored sails' to give a 'distinctive appearance of a Hong Kong dockside'.<sup>12</sup> Clearly this exposition contained a large number of stereotypes and symbols which were prevalent in early accounts. Crowded streets, vivid colours, trinkets, and exotic food were used to sell Hong Kong; they built on established norms. Most importantly, though, the junk, which figured so prominently in early correspondence, was gradually playing a more important role. Building on its predominance in New York, it would be used at Osaka as an 'indexical' figure for the colony.

Initially, World Fairs were seen as opportunities to boast and promote technological and industrial ventures. However, as Erik Mattie states, by the latter part of the nineteenth century there were more countries using this as an opportunity to celebrate a nation's history, or to instead treat the event as a festival. Certainly by the twentieth century, '[p]articipating countries prefer[ed] displays that reflect[ed] their national identities rather than exhibits of their industrial products'.<sup>13</sup> Paul Greenhalgh's chapter on 'The National Profile' in his study of expositions and world fairs charts the rise in popularity of boosting national sentiments; interestingly for Britain and its overseas territories, an initial focus on industrialisation gradually merged with

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<sup>11</sup> Keith Jeffery, 'Crown, Communication and the Colonial Post: Stamps, the Monarchy and the British Empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34, 1 (2006), p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> *Official Guide: New York World's Fair 1964/65*, <http://www.nywf64.com/honkon01.shtml>, accessed on 03 September 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Erik Mattie, *World's Fairs* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), p. 8.

celebrations of historical and modern cultural achievements.<sup>14</sup> The New York show placed a clear emphasis on displaying unique attributes of Hong Kong culture, yet it was not until the Osaka Exposition that stronger national sentiments were incorporated. Take, for example, the comments made by Kan Tai-keung, an artist involved in the exposition and the designer of the official stamps, who remembers Osaka as a major event for Hong Kong.<sup>15</sup> According to an interview with him, after the 1967 riots the Government 'tried to improve the status of Hong Kong at the international level'. More importantly though, through this exposition they wanted to 'boast [Hong Kong's] economic capability and strengthen people's sense of belonging'.<sup>16</sup>

The exposition in Osaka presented Hong Kong with an opportunity to showcase the nation. The pavilion chosen to house the exhibition was based on the now indexical figure of a traditional Chinese junk; it was used to 'symbolise Hong Kong's geographical setting as a harbour city'. This was then split into three sections. The first section was titled 'Social Progress' and it told the story of an imaginary Chinese family; their experiences ultimately drew attention to the 'transformation of Hong Kong through the '50s and '60s.' The second section, 'Industrial Progress', highlighted the 'adaptability, diligence, perseverance, ingenuity and dexterity' in Hong Kong's journey to become a manufacturing economy for customers across the globe. The final section celebrated 'Hong Kong's Cultural heritage' which 'gave visitors a taste of everyday life in Hong Kong'. Such 'everyday life' was represented by exhibits focussing on similar themes to New York, including hand crafted items, sculptures, traditional paintings, and jade jewellery. The importance of user participation in expositions has been

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<sup>14</sup> Similar to the Hong Kong street scene, an 'English Village' was reproduced at the Texas Centennial Exposition in 1936 which gave a particular weight to the works of William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Walter Raleigh within the context of a local pub and a theatre. The emphasis was on a period of British history that represented stability, continuity and creativity (Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 125). Although dated, Greenhalgh's book provides a useful analysis of world fairs and expositions in general, but this particular chapter is useful for charting the rise of national sentiment in the context of international shows, see: Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, ch. 5. Jeffery Auerbach's work is equally useful for studying the role international exhibitions played in the depiction of territories, see: Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (Yale university Press, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that whilst many Hong Kong artists were used in the postage stamp design process towards the latter part of the twentieth century, there exist very few accounts published by, or about, them. Kan Tai-keung is frequently alluded to in this thesis, more so than any other designer or Hong Kong local involved in postage stamp design, primarily because his is one of the few published Hong Konger voices relating to the postage stamp design process. Thanks to the work of the Hong Kong Memory Project ([www.hkmemory.hk](http://www.hkmemory.hk)), whilst other Hong Kongers are referenced in later chapters, the detailed insights into Hong Kong stamp design from a 'local' perspective provided by the interviews with Kan Tai-keung are an invaluable resource. Thus, his voice is often used as a key example of a Hong Konger's perception of the philatelic design process.

<sup>16</sup> 'The design of the Hong Kong Pavilion in the World Expo 1970, Osaka', Hong Kong Memory Project, TW-KTK-LIFE-006, 16 September 2009, [http://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral\\_history/All\\_Items\\_OH/oha\\_26/records/index.html#p67747](http://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral_history/All_Items_OH/oha_26/records/index.html#p67747), accessed 02 March 2017.

discussed by Peter Hoffenberg, who argues that various World's Fairs and Exhibitions allowed for social and colonial tensions and hierarchies to be challenged and, sometimes, resolved.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Hong Kong's display at the Osaka Fair featured more contemporary aspects of the territory than in New York; this display was more than an exotic celebration of tradition. An exhibition of Hong Kong's growing textile industry was represented by examples of modern, fashionable clothing items rather than traditional garments. On 18 March, during the official 'Hong Kong Day' at the fair, whilst visitors were treated to a classical Chinese orchestra and a traditional 'lion dance', they also witnessed contemporary Hong Kong pop singers, and fashion and dancing parades.<sup>18</sup>

The first day cover envelope issued with the two commemorative stamps featured an outline of a Chinese junk, referencing the exhibition housing. Likewise, the 25c stamp's (SG264) layout was based upon multiple junks floating on water. Clearly the junk was a major index for Hong Kong in the exposition, and it neatly tied the postal stationery to the unique pavilion. The other key icon featured on all stationery was the Osaka Exposition symbol; however, on only one stamp was the word 'Osaka' actually used. The other stamp simply houses the symbols, and junks, and stated 'Hong Kong' followed by 'Expo '70'; therefore it can be inferred that the message was deemed decodable enough to avoid including too much information. Unlike previous celebrations of international events, these stamps contained a subtle nod towards Hong Kong's individual contribution. As stated, the junks provided a clear symbol of Hong Kong's unique placement at the Expositions. This is important, because Hong Kong was being presented as an individual location, without its ties to Imperial Britain. Josiah Brownell has observed that Rhodesian postage stamps tried to legitimise the nation in an international setting. As it was unable to participate in major global events such as the Olympics, it instead chose to commemorate 'lesser international events' such as World Fairs and expositions.<sup>19</sup> Certainly for Hong Kong, it chose to celebrate the few international events it could actually participate in as a standalone entity (its

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<sup>17</sup> Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire On Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> 'World Expo '70 Osaka Hong Kong Pavilion', [http://www.hkexpo2010.gov.hk/eng/expo/hkpast\\_osaka.html](http://www.hkexpo2010.gov.hk/eng/expo/hkpast_osaka.html), accessed 01 March 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Josiah Brownell, 'The Visual Rhetoric of Stamps: Rhodesia and the Projection of Sovereignty (1965-80)', p. 9, [https://www.academia.edu/29917552/The\\_Visual\\_Rhetoric\\_of\\_Stamps-\\_Rhodesia\\_and\\_the\\_Projection\\_of\\_Sovereignty\\_1965-80\\_.docx](https://www.academia.edu/29917552/The_Visual_Rhetoric_of_Stamps-_Rhodesia_and_the_Projection_of_Sovereignty_1965-80_.docx), accessed 12 July 2017.

participation in the Olympics from 1952 was tied closely to Britain). Additionally, as Claire Wintle has observed, models and representations (often exoticised and frequently modified) were important in creating, or rather reinforcing, perceptions of places and people; exhibitions and expositions were fantastic opportunities to do that.<sup>20</sup>

The Expositions were also important because they combined the authority of the British officials with the ideas of the Hong Kong designers. Certainly the New York and Osaka Expositions cannot be considered 'indigenous' displays; they were orchestrated within the parameters of British control. However, it is vital that the local designers involved in the process are not removed of their agency.<sup>21</sup> Kan Tai-keung's role in the Osaka Exposition was to design the philatelic material for the exposition in addition to presentations, menus, and other graphic resources; this was, according to him, a 'backstage' role.<sup>22</sup> Whilst his work was overseen by British officials (it certainly would have been for the postal stationery), his input into the design process is a clear indicator that the local population played an important role in representing Hong Kong on the international stage. Kan's philatelic and graphic designs were a key part of how the territory was visually displayed in Osaka. Crucially, the celebration of unique and traditional aspects of Hong Kong, however exoticised, moderated or mediated by the British Administration, was an important step in the representation of the Colony to the wider world.

### **Festivals and Fun**

In 1971, a commemorative stamp set (SG273-275) was issued to celebrate a major event in the nation's history, the Festival of Hong Kong. The festival can be seen as a culmination of the previous World Fairs and the celebration of a growing sense of common national identity. The first festival was first held in 1969, but it was only in 1971 that the occasion was celebrated with a set of postage stamps (only a first day cover envelope and label with the orange ball logo was sold in 1969); equally, the 1971

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<sup>20</sup> Claire Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display: Encounters with Material Culture from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (Berghahn, 2013), p. 135.

<sup>21</sup> Wintle makes this point when addressing the numerous 'producers' involved in the process of collecting colonial goods, see in particular: *Ibid.*, pp. 33-36.

<sup>22</sup> 'The design of the Hong Kong Pavilion in the World Expo 1970, Osaka', Hong Kong Memory Project, TW-KTK-LIFE-006, 16 September 2009, [http://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral\\_history/All\\_Items\\_OH/oha\\_26/records/index.html#p67747](http://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral_history/All_Items_OH/oha_26/records/index.html#p67747), accessed 02 March 2017.

festival was a much larger affair. The ‘mammoth festival’, as Brian Hickman of Hong Kong’s Information Services Department wrote, was a ten day event ‘thought to be unequalled in any other part of the world in terms of scope, participation, and audience’. Held between 27th November and 6th December, one hundred thousand participants engaged in a variety of acts. Dancing, singing, variety shows, pageants, dinners, and activities were all included to ensure the event appealed to all demographics; however, there was to be an ‘emphasis on youth’.<sup>23</sup> Sir Cho-yiu Kwan, Chairman of the Steering Committee, stated in his speech at the festival opening ceremony that six hundred events had been arranged ‘for the entertainment and involvement of young people’.<sup>24</sup> Amongst the many events was a music concert held on 4th December with two singers and three groups. Irene Ryder, who represented Hong Kong at the Osaka Exposition, and was billed as ‘the top female singer in town’, starred alongside Esther Chan, ‘one of the best vocalists Hong Kong has ever produced’. Joe Chan and his Ace of Men, who had recently been voted ‘The Best Local Pop Group’, featured with newcomers The Exit and the On Fire whose ‘heavy sounds... [were] getting more and more popular in the local scene’.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, a number of exhibits were held for visitors interested in local history – key attractions included a philatelic exhibition and a currency show. The latter showcased old coins and paper money from the Kwangtung Province, other parts of China, Macau, and Hong Kong.<sup>26</sup> The grand finale mile-long carnival float procession on 6th December was declared a public holiday; the ‘size of the support’, according to an organising official, ‘makes it Hong Kong’s biggest community project, and truly a festival of the people’.<sup>27</sup>

Governor Murray MacLehose’s speech at the Festival’s opening ceremony reflected on Hong Kong’s development. His first comment was on the ‘hard work... [by] both rich and poor’ which had created ‘the industrial phenomenon of Hong Kong’; it was now time to ‘enjoy the rewards’. Yet it was not financial gain which MacLehose focussed on. Whilst the population had observed the ‘rising standard of living’, there was also ‘something new’ which the nation could now enjoy: ‘leisure time’.<sup>28</sup> Previously, as the

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<sup>23</sup> HKPRO, HKRS545-1-340, Brian Hickman, ‘Mammoth Festival is Hong Kong’s Biggest Community Project’, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> HKPRO, HKRS545-1-340, ‘Full Text of Sir Choi-yiu Kwan’s Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Festival of Hong Kong’, 26 December 1971, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> HKPRO, HKRS545-1-340, Enc. 57-59, ‘Tsang Fook’s Pop Show’, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Hickman, ‘Mammoth Festival’, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> HKPRO, HKRS545-1-340, ‘Right Combination of Work and Play: Hallmark of Happy and Successful Community’, p. 3.



Governor observed, 'a holiday merely provided an opportunity to eke out a precarious living with a part-time job', but now many citizens had 'wider horizons'; '[a] quiet revolution [had] taken place'.<sup>29</sup> How had this occurred? According to MacLehose, this had been a two-fold process. 'The stimulus,' he argued, 'has come from the Government'. However, the 'imaginative response has very clearly come from the people'; '[n]o undertaking so massive as this could have been tackled otherwise'.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the product of Hong Kong's changes had been through a combination of influences; the people had provided the impetus and 'imagination', but it was the government who were firmly at the foundations of change. The festival itself neatly encapsulated the changes which had occurred in Hong Kong's society over the previous two decades. The development of leisure time enabled the population to shift from migrant workers to citizens who engaged in, and with, the nation. To take two examples from the festival, the pop show featured bands exclusively from Hong Kong; this was not an event with top global acts, they had to be indigenous. Additionally, the currency show featured a variety of coins and bank notes, but ultimately it served to highlight that Hong Kong had a historical distinctiveness to other nations. Contemporary bank notes were proven to be different to China's, just as they had been in the nineteenth century.

The three stamp set issued in 1971 to commemorate the festival were designed by local artist and Art Director at a commercial design organisation (and former Osaka contributor), Kan Tai-keung. So great was the anticipated popularity of these stamps that the Post Office advised the public to order the issues 'early to avoid disappointment'.<sup>31</sup> The stamps featured three separate designs. The 10c. stamp simply featured the striped orange ball logo the festival had used since 1969 as its key image, followed by the text: 'Festival of Hong Kong 1971'. The 50c. issue showed three 'Chinese dancing girls and lotus flowers'. To the right, a small ball logo was accompanied by the text featured on the 10c. stamp.<sup>32</sup> The HK\$1 stamp featured the *Bauhinia Blakeana* combined with an image of the traditional Dragon Dance. Once again, the small ball logo with the previous accompanying text was placed at the

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> HKPRO, HKRS545-1-340, 'Right Combination of Work and Play: Hallmark of Happy and Successful Community', p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-3-71, Enc. 47-48, 'The Festival of Hong Kong 1971 Commemorative Stamp Issue', p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

bottom right. In an interview with Tai-keung, he revealed the motivation behind each design. For the lotus dance issue, he wanted to shed light on a local feature of Hong Kong; this design was influenced by Han dynasty painting techniques. The Hong Kong Orchid and Dragon Dance stamp was chosen by Tai-keung to showcase the 'uniqueness of Hong Kong'.<sup>33</sup> However, the 10c. postage stamp was not a design chosen by Tai-keung. He recalled being 'instructed' by the Postmaster General 'to ensure that the minimum denomination stamp should showcase the orange ball symbol of the festival'. However, to Tai-keung 'the ball conveyed no message of culture and spiritual value, and was not associated with anything about Hong Kong'.<sup>34</sup> He likened its appearance to a 'beach ball' and added that it was not associated with either the 'nature' of the festival or 'Chinese culture'. To him, the 'design appeared to be western and modern, but it was old fashioned indeed,' adding that it ignored changes in modern art 'such as pop art and minimal art'; interestingly, he concluded that 'it had no connection with Western art'.<sup>35</sup>

The 1971 commemorative stamp set for the Festival of Hong Kong neatly mirrored the sentiments of MacLehose's opening ceremony speech. The people of Hong Kong (here the local artist designing the stamps and the participants in the festival events) provided the energy in advertising the nation. However, it was the government, the 'stimulus', which laid the foundations; it was the Postmaster General, an agent of the British state, who pushed for the visibility of the orange ball logo. This ball logo was designed without the input of the 'imagination' section of Hong Kong; instead, it was produced as a tool to represent the population for whom this icon failed to resonate. The festival itself promoted a notion of national identity. The 1969 festival was a huge success, but the 'mammoth' nature of the 1971 spectacle built on the ever-increasing awareness of an 'us'. Whilst the Government were manufacturing recognisable national symbolism and orchestrating national festivals, it was the local population filling in the gaps and providing the content. Whilst Tai-keung was instructed on the contents of one stamp, he was given freedom with the other two, and he chose to

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<sup>33</sup> Kan Tai-keung, 'The Design of the Festival Commemorative Stamps', Hong Kong Memory Project, TW-KTK-LIFE-011, 16 September 2009, [http://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral\\_history/All\\_Items\\_OH/oha\\_26/records/index.html#p67747](http://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral_history/All_Items_OH/oha_26/records/index.html#p67747), accessed 02 March 2017.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Kan Tai-keung, 'On the symbol of the Festival of Hong Kong', Hong Kong Memory Project, TW-KTK-LIFE-009, 16 September 2009, [http://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral\\_history/All\\_Items\\_OH/oha\\_26/records/index.html#p67747](http://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral_history/All_Items_OH/oha_26/records/index.html#p67747), accessed 02 March 2017.

produce images which celebrated the unique nature of Hong Kong. Combined with the local dancers, local singers, local food, local celebrities, local businesses, and all else local, the Festival was an exposition event on a much larger scale. However, unlike the exhibit at Osaka, its purpose was not to celebrate and advertise Hong Kong to an international audience; instead, the festival was created to promote Hong Kong to the local population.

Festivals became a major philatelic theme throughout the 1970s. Commemorative sets were issued for the 1973 Festival of Hong Kong (SG299-301), the 1974 Arts Festival (SG304-306), and a collection was issued celebrating three festivals held in 1975 (SG331-333). The 1973 Festival continued the theme of the previous events in 1969 and 1971, yet it would ultimately prove to be the last time this event was showcased. The 'beach ball' logo was once again used, and appeared on various advertisements including bus posters. The occasion was larger than its predecessors and featured more than 750 events. Once again, organisers and the Governor were keen to state that it was a festival for all groups of citizens; however, MacLehose especially praised 'the youth of Hong Kong, who play such a prominent part in it [the festival], [who] demonstrate the zest and drive of Hong Kong's people'. He added that this 'zest and drive' made Hong Kong 'the greatest city which it is'.<sup>36</sup> The festival was certainly busy as processions on land and sea entertained thousands of visitors and numerous events celebrated Hong Kong's history. The opening ceremony's proposed budget alone was fifty thousand dollars – almost six and a half times the funds set aside for the same event in 1971. Overall the entire event was set to cost just under four million dollars, almost double that of 1971.<sup>37</sup> There was a strong emphasis on district participation, and regional committees were established to implement 'local machinery' in desired areas to ensure that community involvement was maximised. The Secretary for Home Affairs informed the Festival Steering Committee that '[n]ow that the Festival has become a permanent feature the time seems ripe for you to establish your own links with the public at large'.<sup>38</sup> Essentially, the festival was forcing representatives of the

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<sup>36</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-3-71-1, 'Governor Inaugurates Third Hong Kong Festival'.

<sup>37</sup> HKPRO, HKRS565-18-1, Enc. 692-712, 'Composit Budget', p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> HKPRO, HKRS489-7-24, Enc. 53.1, 'District Participation'.

district committees to involve themselves in local affairs rather than relying on the new City District Officers.<sup>39</sup>

Part of the process of creating these festivals was the underlying illusion of tradition. To cement them in Hong Kong culture, the organisers clearly pushed for key symbols of ritual. Eviropides Zantides calls this 'historic authenticity' – the Cyprus Tourism Organisation frequently uses ancient artefacts and traditions to sell modern Cyprus to potential visitors.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, Elwyn Jenkins highlights the hypocrisy of many nations who readily produce postage stamps featuring old indigenous 'rock art' in a bid to attract tourists, whilst simultaneously marginalising and ignoring the history and heritage of these populations.<sup>41</sup> Certainly in Hong Kong there are comparisons to be made with Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's 'invented tradition', with ritualistic notions of hierarchy being displayed.<sup>42</sup> Often, rituals from other ceremonies and occasions were inserted into the festivals to give them a notion of credibility and importance. From an invention perspective, the first set of commemorative postage stamps were bought by the Chairman of the Steering Committee.<sup>43</sup> This notion paralleled the usual ceremonial process of using a prominent figure to officially begin an activity or event, such as the cutting of a ribbon or the laying of a brick. Applied to this setting then, the stamp was involved in an invented display of authority and tradition. In the case of 'adopted' practices, at the 1971 Festival opening ceremony, Sir Cho-Yiu Kwan invited Governor MacLehose to 'appropriately' begin the festivities with the 'auspicious dotting of the lion's eye'.<sup>44</sup> The origin of 'eye-dotting' is somewhat disputed, but the essential aim of the process was to grant a dragon or lion (or, occasionally, other masks) with eyes, to see or to be awakened for a special occasion. In this example, the festival was brought under the category of 'special occasion' through the implementation of this practice.

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<sup>39</sup> Alleyne states that it is because the CDOs lack the resources and time to tackle festival issues that the Committees themselves should create a dialogue with local citizens; see: *Ibid*.

<sup>40</sup> Eviropides Zantides, 'Looking Inwards, Designing Outwards: National Identity and Print Advertisements of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation', *Visual Studies*, 31, 3 (2016), p. 255.

<sup>41</sup> Elwyn Jenkins, 'Showcasing South African Rock Art on Postage Stamps', *Critical Arts*, 26, 4 (2012), p. 470.

<sup>42</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>43</sup> 'Stamps for Festivals', *South China Morning Post*, 20 November 1973.

<sup>44</sup> HKPRO, HKRS545-1-340, 'Full Text of Sir Choi-yiu Kwan's Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Festival of Hong Kong', 26 December 1971, p. 1.

Postage stamps were also used as a means of celebrating traditional themes of Hong Kong within the context of the Colony's various new festivals. The 1974 Arts Festival stamps (SG304-306), for example, depicted Cantonese opera masks despite the fact that this genre was generally overlooked in the festivities. 'Although Cantonese opera does not have a particularly prominent place in this year's festival,' the *South China Morning Post* reported, 'the stamps show the more picturesque side of traditional Hongkong [sic]'.<sup>45</sup> Henry Choi notes that, whilst the festival overwhelmingly featured Western contributions (ballet, symphonies, etc.) this was entirely ignored by the postage stamp designs produced. Additionally, in a wider context, the Hong Kong Government heavily funded more marketable artistic ventures which often sided with European interests (philharmonic orchestras, contemporary dance studios, theatres, and ballet schools). The Chinese orchestra, however, was overlooked due to fears that its identification with Chinese ideology could be potentially controversial. Ultimately, Choi argues that the Arts festival was more of an international event than a local one.<sup>46</sup> The *South China Morning Post* further evinces this by stating that the inclusion of Cantonese opera masks on the postal designs served to 'draw more overseas visitors in future festivals'.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the illusion of tradition was both a means of legitimising the festivals, and a useful marketing tool.

### **Promoting Tourism**

Around this period of time, stamps were beginning to take on a more prominent role as a means of promoting Hong Kong to potential tourists. Yet links between postal stationery and postage stamps had been realised as early as 1955. The Director of Commerce and Industry wrote to the Deputy Financial Secretary arguing that, as cancellation stamps had been used to advertise Hong Kong products, they could be useful tools in promoting Hong Kong's tourism. He proposed the slogan 'Visit Hong Kong: Riviera of the East'.<sup>48</sup> Dallen Timothy has suggested that philatelists were deemed to be useful subjects for tourism marketing campaigns because their traditionally above-average literacy levels (according to M. Rhodes) meant they would have a greater interest in travelling to experience the places they had learned about,

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<sup>45</sup> JR, 'Arts Festival Stamps', *South China Morning Post*, 06 February 1974.

<sup>46</sup> Henry Choi, *Hong Kong History in Stamps* (Chung Hwa Book Co, 2013), pp. 102-4.

<sup>47</sup> JR, 'Arts Festival Stamps', *South China Morning Post*, 06 February 1974.

<sup>48</sup> HKPRO, HKRS41-1-8565, 'Use of Postal Cancellation Stamp to Assist Tourism', 29 November 1955.

and also to purchase stamps directly from their country of origin.<sup>49</sup> By the seventies, tourism had become a very important aspect of philatelic design. Journalists began to place more emphasis on the portrayal of the Colony overseas; 'the hustle and bustle,' as one stated, 'as well as the beauty of Hong Kong has been vividly brought to every corner of the world'.<sup>50</sup> Another article advertised a large upcoming stamp auction featuring '[s]tamps that gave Asia a face'.<sup>51</sup> A prominent collector of Hong Kong stamps was invited to present his collection in various locations, from London to Australia, and this was seen by journalists and politicians alike as both a method of selling the territory overseas as well as educating audiences about Hong Kong's history. 'Early days of Hong Kong history told in stamp exhibition' the *Hong Kong Standard* declared; 'Solicitor to put Hong Kong on the map' it stated about his trip to the Australian stamp exhibition.<sup>52</sup>

Jonathan Grant has observed that early Soviet postal stationery aimed to serve a similar purpose. In a bid to counter the negative narrative of Soviet life, stamps with particular values most often used for international mail were decorated to a very high quality with 'agitational content'.<sup>53</sup> In a similar vein, Hong Kong's stamps were designed to depict a very particular image of the territory, whilst at the same time appearing attractive. The Secretary for Economic Services, David Jeaffreson, weighed in on the growing trend of using stamps as educational and marketing tools. 'One of the objects of commemorative issues,' he declared, 'is to project Hong Kong's image abroad'. Of the three key themes to be celebrated on postage stamps in 1979, two 'were clearly picked with Hong Kong's image overseas in mind' ('Hong Kong industries' (SG377-379) and 'The Mass Transit Railway'(SG384-386)); the other, 'Hong Kong Butterflies' (SG380-383), 'while perhaps of greater appeal to people in Hong Kong must have created some interest abroad'. Centrally important to each image on a

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<sup>49</sup> M. A. Rhodes, 'Geography Quiz', *The American Philatelist*, 105, 5 (1991), pp. 423-4; Dallen J. Timothy, 'Postage Stamps, Microstates and Tourism', *Tourism Recreation Research*, 26, 2 (2001), p. 86.

<sup>50</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3535, 'Commemorative Stamps to Feature Hong Kong Orchids', Hong Kong Post Office Press Release, 07 August 1977.

<sup>51</sup> 'Stamps that gave Asia a face', *South China Morning Post*, 05 April 1977.

<sup>52</sup> 'Early Days of HK History Told in Stamp Exhibition', *Hong Kong Standard*, 20 January 1976; 'Solicitor to put HK on the map', *Hong Kong Standard*, 05 March 1977.

<sup>53</sup> Jonathan Grant, 'The Socialist Construction of Philately in the Early Soviet Era', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37, 3 (July, 1995), p. 481.

stamp, according to Jeaffreson, was to keep 'Hong Kong's image at least in mind [...] [and] to make sure that it is designed tastefully'.<sup>54</sup>

The Mass Transit Railway stamps which Jeaffreson referred to were proven to be popular. On the initial day of sale, the Post Office had to release a statement declaring stocks of the first day covers had diminished due to 'unprecedented demand' and more would be released in the following week with a limit of ten per customer.<sup>55</sup> As demand for the stamps were so high, many locals were buying multiple copies of the issue to sell to overseas collectors. 'A near-riot broke out at Tsimshatsui Post Office,' noted the *South China Morning Post*, 'where 8,000 copies were sold out within three hours'.<sup>56</sup> As frustrated customers failed to purchase these coveted first day covers, windows were smashed and Post Office staff were accused of hoarding supplies for themselves.<sup>57</sup> The issue was eventually brought up at a Legislative Council meeting and it was agreed that the Post Office would in future ensure that far more first day covers were produced to meet demands. However, it was noted that the Mass Transit stamps had set a record for first day sales; in total, the entire 218,000 issues produced were all sold in 'a matter of hours'.<sup>58</sup>

The Mass Transit sales highlighted the popularity of local stamp designs, yet there were other indicators that Hong Kong was becoming an important philatelic centre. In 1975, the Post Office introduced counters specifically for the sale of postage stamps (a move which had been recommended in the sixties). Alongside this, in the same year, the Philatelic Bureau was established to supply dealers and overseas collectors with new designs, or to manage standing orders. Business rapidly expanded, and by 1979 it was generating almost HK\$700,000 a year – HK\$200,000 more than in 1978.<sup>59</sup> Hong Kong also became more important on the stamp auction circuit. John Farthing, a prominent philatelic auctioneer, noted that the territory was 'a significant centre for the stamp trade'. 'On a recent visit here,' he added, 'I was able to transact business worth well over \$500,000'.<sup>60</sup> Another commentator noted that stamp investment was

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<sup>54</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3535, 'HK's Image Overseas Projected in Commemorative Stamp Issues', 28 November 1979.

<sup>55</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3535, 'Special', 19 September 1979.

<sup>56</sup> 'MTR Covers Start a Stampede', *South China Morning Post*, 20 September 1979.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*; 'No hoarding of 1st day covers by PO staff', *STAR*, 20 September 1979.

<sup>58</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3535, 'Question No. 8'.

<sup>59</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3535, 'Philatelic Bureau Provides World-Wide Service', 12 May 1979.

<sup>60</sup> 'HK Chosen for Stamp Auction', *Hong Kong Standard*, 04 March 1976.

becoming big business in Hong Kong despite the fact that 'only one out of several hundred people collect stamps here [Hong Kong], compared with roughly one in 10 in the U.S.'.<sup>61</sup> Clearly, overseas collectors constituted a significant portion of postal sales. Overall, Hong Kong's stamp designs were attracting a lot of attention, particularly from philatelists abroad; they were also providing the British Administration with a decent revenue stream.

### **Hong Kong's Wildlife**

Festivals played an important role in visualising the nation on an international, and most importantly, domestic level; however, postage stamps also used far more benign symbols of national identity to achieve these aims. Wildlife became a major theme in 1970s Hong Kong philatelic material. Wildlife has become the focus of many modern philatelic collections which are built around birds, insects, and wild animals. In a study by Mangala Anil Hirwade and Ujwala Anil Nawlake, the top themes were ranked amongst global philatelic output, and it was discovered that fauna appeared most frequently, followed closely by flora in third.<sup>62</sup> Certainly amongst younger collectors, wildlife has always been a popular theme; in a study of stamps as educational tools, one child remarked that their 'favorite stamps are ones with horses on them because I am just horse crazy'.<sup>63</sup> Yet in many ways, the collection of animals on postage stamps mirrors the age-old ritual of hunting – certainly for Hong Kong, its collection of exotic animals was a key selling point for the territory. There is a long tradition of imperialists ravaging conquered lands and hunting local wildlife. John Mackenzie provides a useful overview of the intricate and changing relationship between colonialists, animals, and indigenous populations.<sup>64</sup> This relationship developed from one of hunting for exotic trophies to conservationism, a point echoed by Keith Thomas.<sup>65</sup> In many ways, the depiction of exotic animals on postage stamps was a useful tool in the latter stages of conservationism. A collector could have their trophy without having to push another species towards extinction. Of course, this is not to say that would-be hunters

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<sup>61</sup> 'Stamps Becoming a \$m Business', *South China Morning Post*, 17 July 1978.

<sup>62</sup> Mangala Anil Hirwade and Ujwala Anil Nawlake, 'Postage Stamps and Digital Philately: Worldwide and Indian Scenario', *International Information & Library Review*, 44, 1 (2012), pp. 33-34.

<sup>63</sup> Jospeh M. Kirman and Chris Jackson, 'The Use of Postage Stamps to Teach Social Studies Topics', *The Social Studies*, 91, 4 (2000), p. 190.

<sup>64</sup> John Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester University Press, 1997), chs. 9 and 10.

<sup>65</sup> Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (Penguin, 1991), ch. 6.



swapped their rifles for stamp albums, but there are many parallels between the two hobbies, namely collecting trophies from foreign lands. Equally, there are many similarities between philatelists and naturalists. David Elliston Allen notes that the qualities observable in many prominent naturalists include an 'instinctive love of order, system and detailed record; patience; unremitting care'.<sup>66</sup> Certainly the same can be said for the avid collector of postal stationery. Thus, the depiction of wildlife on postal stationery was an important category, mainly because there was already a healthy global appetite for collecting exotic animals from far-flung locations.

Tourism is another factor in producing postage stamps featuring unusual fauna and flora. Wildlife tourism may include hunting and fishing, but its modern connotations have more to do with visiting wildlife parks or natural areas home to specific wildlife.<sup>67</sup> There is equally a large crossover between visiting wildlife areas for entertainment and educational purposes. Both wildlife centres and geographic zones can act as a means of teaching visitors about local fauna and flora.<sup>68</sup> Stamps too can mimic this; not only do they act as hunters' trophies, but through educating collectors on the nature that can be observed in particular geographic areas, they are able to entice potential visitors. However, as has already been discussed, postage stamps can be used to project a very particular image of a nation, which does not necessarily represent the entire truth.

Take, for example, the 1975 set of 'Birds' stamps (SG335-337). Three birds were chosen: the Hwamei, the Chinese Bulbul, and the Black-capped Kingfisher. Whilst the first two birds did not look as exotic as the Kingfisher, their names alone made it clear that they were birds from East Asia. These birds, then, were exotic trophies; providers of information (they had relatively detailed pictures accompanied with each birds' name); and advertisements for what could be found in Hong Kong. However, these birds were not specific to Hong Kong. The Hwamei was native across Asia, specifically in China and Vietnam, and was later introduced to Singapore and Japan. The Chinese Bulbul was also common throughout East Asia, such as in Korea, Taiwan, China, and

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<sup>66</sup> David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: A Social History* (Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 155.

<sup>67</sup> David Newsome, Ross Kingston Dowling, Susan A. Moore, *Wildlife Tourism* (Channel View Publications, 2005).

<sup>68</sup> There are various useful chapters in this work addressing the ecological issues of wildlife tourism, but for specific information on the educational aspects of wildlife tourism see part two: Ismar Lima, Ronda Green (eds.), *Wildlife Tourism, Environmental Learning and Ethical Encounters: Ecological and Conservation Aspects* (Springer, 2017).

Japan. Finally, the Black-capped Kingfisher could be found in India, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, China, and essentially any other Asian nation. It is clearly unsurprising that animals would not adhere to the notion of geo-political boundaries, yet it is interesting how these animals were claimed by other countries. The black-capped Kingfisher, for example, was celebrated on postage stamps in 1965 by North Korea, in 1986 by South Korea, and in 2011 by Bangladesh. It was also commemorated in 2015 by Sierra Leone, which is surprising considering that this particular Kingfisher species is not native there. However, considering the popularity of bird postage stamps, these were most likely produced as a means of raising revenue.<sup>69</sup> Regardless, these birds were not specific to Hong Kong, but by placing them on a postage stamp, they were claimed by the territory.

Wildlife postage stamps, then, had an additional role to play in the context of Hong Kong's developing philatelic designs. As the image of the territory on postal stationery began to grow in the late sixties and early seventies, alongside the new not-China, not-Britain, Hong Konger identity, there was more room to create a more complex image of Hong Kong. Importantly for Hong Kong, wildlife was a natural phenomenon, and when placed on a national postage stamp, it could be claimed as an indigenous resident. Paralleling the traditional aspects of the new local festivals, this 'naturalism' gave Hong Kong a form of legitimacy; it had its own residents. Interestingly, around the same time, the term 'indigenous' was starting to be used in official documentation and legislation. In 1972, the Small House Policy was introduced, which allowed 'indigenous' Hong Kong citizens to safeguard small plots of land in which to build homes as the New Territories underwent a huge process of development. As New Towns and large infrastructure projects were rolled out across the New Territories, this provided the British Administration with a useful means of relocating villagers to less valuable areas of Hong Kong. Most importantly, however, Hong Kong was also given a definition of its 'indigenous' population. 'It was not until 1972,' Selina Chan notes, 'that the term "indigenous inhabitants" was formally adopted'. This, she states, was 'on the occasion

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<sup>69</sup> This had become a popular means of generating revenue for cash-strapped governments; Jack Child's addresses the number of 'garish' designs produced solely as a means of earning money from international collectors; similarly, Agbenyega Adedze notes that many African football stamps were not even offered for sale in their issuing countries, and instead were produced solely for the purpose of raising revenue from international philatelists. For more information, see: Jack Child, *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (Duke University Press, 2008), p. 48; Agbenyega Adedze, 'Visualizing the Game: The Iconography of Football on African Postage Stamps', *Soccer & Society*, 13, 2 (2012), p. 301.

of the institutionalization of the small-house policy'.<sup>70</sup> At a similar point in time, the new Immigration Bill of 1971 introduced the phrase 'Hong Kong believer'; as Agnes Ku observes, this was a direct attempt to establish in positive terms who was entitled to enter and reside in the territory'.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Hong Kong's celebration of indigenous wildlife was part of a wider process of celebrating the unique aspects of the territory and introducing new concepts of citizenship.

Through this celebration, the British Administration was able to advertise the unique elements of Hong Kong, as well as producing visually appealing philatelic designs. The set of stamps celebrating Hong Kong's butterflies (SG380-383) was a particular success in this area. The *South China Morning Post* lauded the set's beauty, and even suggested that stamps issued afterwards (particularly the one commemorating the Mass Transit Railway) failed to measure up to expectations set by the butterfly issues.<sup>72</sup> The set was also presented as an awareness campaign. A spokesperson for the Post Office stipulated that the theme of butterflies was chosen to draw attention to the 'increasing urban development [which] poses a threat to their existence'.<sup>73</sup> Going back to the hunting parallels, postage stamps were seen as useful tools for conservationism. Thus the butterfly set was useful for a variety of means: they were visually appealing, which was good for philatelists and postal revenue; they were issued alongside a message of ecological awareness; and they were celebrations of fauna observable throughout Hong Kong. Such was the popularity of these issues, that in a letter from the Postmaster General to the Colonial Secretary, it was noted that 'in the absence of any bids' the Post Office would readily produce designs featuring local wildlife.<sup>74</sup> Wildlife issues, then, were clearly rising in popularity amongst officials and collectors alike. By placing them on a stamp from a specific territory, they became observable features of that location, whether that was in the form of tourist attraction or indigenous resident.

### **Celebrating Lunar New Year**

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<sup>70</sup> Selina Ching Chan, 'Politicizing Tradition: The Identity of Indigenous Inhabitants in Hong Kong', *Ethnology* 37, 1 (Winter, 1998), p. 40.

<sup>71</sup> Agnes S. Ku, 'Immigration Policies, Discourses, and the Politics of Local Belonging in Hong Kong (1950-1980)', *Modern China*, 30, 3 (July, 2004), p. 346.

<sup>72</sup> 'Giving the stamp of approval', *South China Morning Post*, 03 October 1979.

<sup>73</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3535, 'New Stamps to Feature HK Butterflies', 13 April 1979.

<sup>74</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-2, Letter from the Postmaster general to the Colonial Secretary, 'Stamp Issues', 25 January 1972.

Yet wildlife also featured in another capacity on postage stamps, most notably on Lunar New Year issues. Briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, the series began with the 1967 Year of the Ram issue (SG242-243). This set was introduced for two key reasons, as outlined by the Postmaster General: 'politically, in the local appreciation of this evidence of [the] Government's imagination and sensibility to what appeals to Hong Kong people; and in prestige value for Hong Kong abroad'.<sup>75</sup> This was important, as the decision behind manufacturing these designs would have to balance an awareness of local support alongside marketing these stamps to the wider international market. This was a theme which would continue throughout the coming years, and multiple influences, both global and local, impacted on the design process. A key difficulty in approving these stamp designs lay with the 'celebration' of certain animals, particularly during the Year of the Pig and the Year of the Rat. Many parallels can be drawn between this example and Ewan Morris' study of the Irish Free State's 1928 coinage celebrating local wildlife. In his example, there were various disagreements over the pagan connotations of animals featuring on currency, as well as issues of respectability when using images of particular animals.<sup>76</sup> Initially, only the 1967 stamp was planned, but considering the popularity of it, the Governor of Hong Kong requested the Secretary of State approve plans to produce another eleven sets to complete the full lunar cycle.<sup>77</sup> Thus, 1967 saw the Year of the Ram (SG242-243), then the Monkey (SG245-246), Cock (SG257-258), Dog (SG261-262), Pig (SG268-269), Rat (SG276-277), Ox (SG281-282), Tiger (SG302-303), Rabbit (SG325-326), Dragon (SG338-339), Snake (SG359-360), and finally Horse (SG371-372). A brief analysis of key sets reveals the complexities and various factors in producing Hong Kong postage stamps, whilst also charting the societal changes which occurred during the seventies.

The Year of the Ram stamps set the tone for the coming years; for many officials, considering the local population in the design process was a steep learning curve. The greatest obstacle to overcome was the use of the phrase 'Chinese New Year'. In 1967,

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<sup>75</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Letter from the Secretary for Chinese Affairs to the Postmaster General, 'New Year Stamps', 04 October 1965.

<sup>76</sup> Morris' work centres around the importance, and multiple interpretations, of national symbolism, for this section chapter two of his work is most useful, see: Ewan Morris, 'Silent Ambassadors of National Taste': Seals Stamps, Banknotes and Coins of the Irish Free State', *Our Own Devices: National Symbols and Political Conflict in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Irish Academic Press, 2005), pp. 70-106.

<sup>77</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Governor of Hong Kong to the Secretary of State, 'Postage Stamps - Commemorative Issue', 06 April 1967.

the Director of Information Services asked why the Post Office had opted to use the phrase 'Lunar New Year' rather than 'Chinese New Year'; he was directed towards a document written by the Secretary for Chinese Affairs in 1965.<sup>78</sup> They explained:

'The Nationalists many years ago and the Chinese People's Government even more firmly in recent times, adopted the Western-style calendar; and for Hong Kong blandly to suggest to the world that the Chinese peoples still adhere to the old calendar would be regarded as tactless and untruthful. But to mark, with a stamp issue, a traditional festival would not step on sensitive corns. Of course there are other Lunar Years in the world and other New Year Festivals, but I suggest that it is hardly necessary to spell out "Chinese New Year Festival". The fact that Hong Kong is issuing the stamp and the presence of Chinese characters, should be sufficient explanation of the Chinese aspect; apart from the objection of introducing more words and characters than are necessary on a stamp.'<sup>79</sup>

Responding to the Director of Information Services, a Mr. A. T. Clark added that:

'I think that it is only a tiny non-Chinese minority that is likely to be puzzled if officialdom always refers formally to "Lunar New Year" or "New Year Festivals". The implication in another's usage that one's own version of anything is the odd one out can be offensive - the French and the English insult each other by attributing certain diseases and vices to the other; Spanish champagne, Australian sherry; there are other comparable occasions for resentment, depending on the intention and manner of the proposition made. I side myself with those who try to avoid suggesting that Chinese practices are abnormal'.<sup>80</sup>

Clearly set against a backdrop of societal change, this stamp showcased a shifting attitude towards the local population. The introduction of the first real Chinese postage stamp in Hong Kong highlighted the ignorance of officials; it also signified a marker that the local population would begin to be considered in postal design.

The release of the Year of the Dog issue coincided with the growing presence of Hong Kong specific imagery featuring on postage stamps. The 1970 set is unavoidably

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<sup>78</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from A.T. Clark to the Director of Information Services, 25 October 1967.

<sup>79</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Letter from the Secretary for Chinese Affairs to the Postmaster General, 'New Year Stamps', 04 October 1965.

<sup>80</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from A.T. Clark to the Director of Information Services, 25 October 1967.

'Chinese' in its appearance, but this was no coincidence. In tandem with improved considerations for local people on its postage stamps, the Post Office also began looking for indigenous wildlife to celebrate where it could. The dog chosen to represent 1970 was a Chow, a dog local to China for two thousand years. More importantly, however, was the fact that the stamp image came from a photograph of a Hong Kong show dog taken by the Photographic Section of the Government Information Services, and recommended for use by the Senior Veterinary Officer.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, there was a long tradition of fetishisation of Chinese dogs. Whilst this applied more to the Pekingese breed rather than the Chow and the Pug, Chinese dogs were often seen by the West as symbols of the exotic and traditional China.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, this postage stamp fit the brief of appealing to a local audience, whilst also marketing Hong Kong to global collectors quite effectively. Furthermore, the trend for more locally-focused stamp imagery coincided neatly with the celebration of a local custom; this combination was soon pounced upon as a marketing tool for local businesses. This tactic had been used by other nations; Phil Deans notes that Taiwanese stamps celebrating fruit were actually a reference to one of the nation's most profitable rural economies.<sup>83</sup> As for Hong Kong, the Year of the Ox stamp in 1973 was seen as a great opportunity to celebrate local cattle farming.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, the Year of the Pig set in 1971 was also used as a means of advertising Hong Kong pork.<sup>85</sup> Thus, the celebration of each Lunar New Year was also seen as an opportunity to celebrate agricultural elements of Hong Kong's economy in a similar vein to Morris' Irish Free State coins.<sup>86</sup>

Alongside its role as an agricultural advert, the Year of the Pig stamp proved to be controversial; the design process was lengthy. Animals have always had particular connotations, and in Britain the pig had long been associated with negative traits. Harriet Ritvo's work addresses the hierarchy of animals and their metaphorical link

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<sup>81</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Postmaster General to the Colonial Secretary, 'Postage Stamps: Lunar New Year 1970', 11 August 1969.

<sup>82</sup> Sarah Cheang, 'Women, Pets, and Imperialism: The British Pekingese Dog and Nostalgia for Old China', *Journal of British Studies*, 45, 2 (April 2006), pp. 359–387.

<sup>83</sup> Phil Deans, 'Isolation, Identity and Taiwanese Stamps as Vehicles for regime Legitimation', *East Asia*, 22, 2 (Summer, 2005), p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, 'Memo', 19 May 1972.

<sup>85</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, 'Memorandum for Executive Council Special Postage Stamps for the Lunar New Year 1971', 18 August 1970.

<sup>86</sup> Morris, *Our Own Devices*, p. 89.

with status and classes of people.<sup>87</sup> Even in 1965, the Secretary for Chinese Affairs noted that there could be difficulties. A closer translation of each animal revealed that each year was a celebration of animal 'groups', so a rat could be a mouse, ox a buffalo, goat a sheep, and so on. For the pig, however, this was 'Swine', yet the Secretary was keen to note that this word did not carry the weight of 'English unpleasant associations'.<sup>88</sup> Interestingly, whilst the postage stamps were supposedly being produced with, chiefly, the local population in mind, it was the reservations of British officials which played a more important role in the design process.

The Governor of Hong Kong received a letter from the Secretary of State about the proposal to feature a pig on one of its postage stamps. 'As it would be considered to be in bad taste both here and in other (particularly Muslim) countries,' he noted, 'I regret I cannot submit for Her Majesty's approval'.<sup>89</sup> Responding to this, the Governor observed that he did not 'consider it feasible to produce a satisfactory design commemorating the Year of the Pig without incorporating a pig'. He added that 'I am advised that the Chinese Muslim community would see nothing incongruous or offensive in this design'. Furthermore, regarding the Secretary of State's concerns for the 'proximity to the Royal Cypher' to an image of a pig, he noted that British Honduras issued a stamp in 1968 featuring a wild pig alongside the Royal Cypher. 'It could probably be argued that rats and snakes would not normally be singled out for portrayal in this way,' he noted, 'but they appear in this series of symbols to which we are committed'.<sup>90</sup> This interaction revealed a few key points. First, there was a deep concern by British officials for how the monarchy would be represented; British prestige was on the line through Hong Kong's postage stamps. Secondly, one can infer that the Chinese Muslim population was included in these discussions; this consultation highlighted the increased role key locals demographics could play in the design process. In addition to this, the Year of the Pig issue was the first Lunar stamp to use the designs of a local artist (exposition and festival ball designer Kan Tai-keung).

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<sup>87</sup> Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Harvard University Press, 1987), chs. 2 and 3.

<sup>88</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Letter from the Secretary for Chinese Affairs to the Postmaster General, 'New Year Stamps', 04 October 1965.

<sup>89</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Secretary of State to the Governor of Hong Kong, 'Hong Kong Postage Stamps: Commemorative Issue Lunar New Year', 13 August 1970.

<sup>90</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Governor of Hong Kong to the Secretary of State, 'Hong Kong Postage Stamps: Commemorative Issue Lunar New Year', 18 August 1970.

'Following the success of the Tung Wah Centenary issue, which was designed by a local artist,' read an Executive Council memorandum, 'it was decided that the 1971 Lunar New Year's issue ... should be selected from designs submitted by local artists'.<sup>91</sup> Finally, this was a clear example of the hierarchy of animals (or 'symbols') influencing the official decision-making process; iconography and interpretation were clearly important.

The controversial aspect of the pig stamp also revealed friction between the various government departments. The Secretary of State responded to the Governor by stating he did not object to the 'principle' of a pig, but more the design; British Honduras' 'less conspicuous' stamp was suggested as a useful template for Hong Kong's Lunar Year issue.<sup>92</sup> After further correspondence, the Postmaster eventually contacted the Colonial Secretary stating that the Secretary of State had changed their mind on flatly refusing a stamp depicting a pig – he Postmaster informed them that 'the root of the trouble is the inclusion of an indisputably female pig in the design'. However, the use of a female pig was important to the design because it featured 'a fine specimen of an improved local Chinese breed which the Agriculture & Fisheries Department is encouraging local farmers to develop'.<sup>93</sup> In response to these concerns, the Governor sent the Secretary of State a design which featured a boar 'no less conspicuous than was the previous pig but I hope it may prove less open to the unspecified objections which your advisers saw'; he added that a less conspicuous image of a pig would defeat the point of celebrating the Year of the Pig.<sup>94</sup> A final request to greyscale the finished product was met with criticism; '[the] proposal seems unconnected with earlier objections', noted the Postmaster.<sup>95</sup> What is illuminating about this exchange is the tediousness of negotiating a final design with various different parties. Furthermore, the frustration can be felt in the letters written by the Governor and Postmaster, particularly as neither party actually received an explanation for the stamp's initial grounds for refusal. The final request for a black and

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<sup>91</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, 'Memorandum for Executive Council Special Postage Stamps for the Lunar New Year 1971', 18 August 1970.

<sup>92</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Secretary of State to the Governor of Hong Kong, 'Your telegram No. 541: Lunar New Year Stamp Issue', 19 August 1970.

<sup>93</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Postmaster General to the Colonial Secretary, 'Lunar New Year Stamp Issue: Year of the Pig', 24 August 1970.

<sup>94</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Governor of Hong Kong to the Secretary of State, Lunar New Year Stamp Issue', 28 August 1970.

<sup>95</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Postmaster General to the Colonial Secretary, 'Lunar New Year Stamp 1971', 09 December 1970.



white pig appears to be more of an assertion of authority by the Secretary of State rather than a genuine concern for the visual appearance of the stamp.

The following year's Rat edition proved to be an equally challenging process. The Secretariat for Home Affairs briefed the Postmaster General on what should feature in the design. Water was considered an 'auspicious element', therefore if it did not jeopardise the finished product, it would be seen as a beneficial addition. Conversely, the colour yellow, a rat running or eating, and depictions of cracks and holes were to be avoided.<sup>96</sup> This information was important, particularly as the Lunar New Year stamps were presented as a display of government consideration of the Chinese population. For the Rat issue, the local population was also involved in the design process, partly because officials were nervous about the idea of depicting a rodent on one of the territory's stamps. The City District Officers were utilised by the Post Office; they spoke to members of the local community to gauge public reception of the proposed issue. The response was positive, and many locals noted that the rat was a symbol of 'wit, vitality and alertness [sic]'. Furthermore, some interviewees even began giving design recommendations, 'one went so far as to suggest [...] Walt Disney's "Mickey Mouse"'. After this feedback, it was decided that the design should 'convey a sense of cheerfulness and vitality'.<sup>97</sup> The input of the local population was central to the Secretariat for Home Affairs' brief.

Certainly this feedback was important, and it provided the Post Office with the impetus to continue pushing through the Rat design despite concerns from certain officials. However, members of the Executive Council did not take to the proposed stamp design initially put forward. The key bone of contention was the 'too realistic' appearance of the rat; the Board requested a more 'stylized' creature.<sup>98</sup> In response, the Home Affairs Secretary enquired into the existence of a prominent rat character in any Chinese operas or legends which could influence a stylised design proposal, yet unfortunately none existed.<sup>99</sup> The final result passed through the Executive Council,

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<sup>96</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Secretariat for Home Affairs (H.K. Chan) to the Postmaster General, 'Lunar New Year 1972 - The Year of the Rat', 16 February 1971.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Secretariat for Home Affairs to the Postmaster General, 'Postage Stamps for Lunar New Year 1972', 17 June 1971.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

but was met with a general disapproval from a design perspective. 'I am not happy about the design and two local officers whose comments I invited thought that the design was so stylized as to be unrecognisable,' noted one official. 'I must admit to complete distaste of the design which is more like a stylized mouse or even a cat, in my view,' stated another.<sup>100</sup> The stylistic element of the stamp attracted the most objections, but the portrayal of a rat on a stamp was unfathomable in itself for certain officials; one argued that the design was essentially 'a pest control advertisement'.<sup>101</sup> Overall, the appearance of certain animals on state-sanctioned postal stationery was once again a controversial topic. What is interesting, however, is the role played by the City District Officers in the design process. Introduced as a communication link after the 1967 riots, in this case their role was to judge public perception of these images. Whilst it is difficult to ascertain to what degree this feedback influenced the design process (the Executive Council seemed to have the overall say by implementing a stylised rat after all), the involvement of the local population in the design process is certainly noteworthy. Similar to the previous year's consultation with Chinese Muslims, local citizens were playing a far greater role in the creation of Hong Kong's stamps than ever before.

Yet feedback was not always sought from the local population in the design process; that seemed to be reserved for issues featuring generally unpopular animals. An early draft for the Year of the Tiger set, for example, featured a light blue tone. When asked why the colouring needed to be changed, the new Secretariat for Home Affairs noted that whilst light blue may be 'very pleasing to the eyes of Westerners', it actually 'looks extremely inauspicious particularly during the New Year as the colour conveys the implication of death'.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, the Year of the Ox set also had colour limitations. It did not feature any shades of green because it was a 'prohibitive colour for the year'; consequently brown was chosen as a suitable substitute for the grass.<sup>103</sup> This issue was brought up in the *Daily Express*, who informed their readers that this 'botanical oddity is not, I am assured, caused by the hot sun in that region'; instead, it was the

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<sup>100</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, 'Memo', 20 July 1971.

<sup>101</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Secretariat for Home Affairs to the Postmaster General, 'Postage Stamps for Lunar New Year 1972', 17 June 1971.

<sup>102</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Secretariat for Home Affairs (K.L. Wong) to the Postmaster General, 23 January 1973.

<sup>103</sup> HKPRO, HKRS1082-1-3, Letter from the Secretariat for Home Affairs (H.K. Chan) to the Postmaster General, 'Lunar New Year 1973 - The Year of the Ox', 04 November 1971.

result of 'a decree [...] issued [every year] in Hong Kong banning different colours on their stamps'.<sup>104</sup> This was not the case, as in the same year the stamps celebrating the Hong Kong Festival featured the colour green in two of its designs (SG299 and SG301). What is revealed by these two examples is the lack of awareness for the culture surrounding the Lunar New Year. Whilst market research was occasionally done for stamps depicting unconventionally celebrated animals, a general ignorance towards the event persisted beyond the discussion of 'Chinese New Year' versus 'Lunar New Year'. However, an equally significant consideration is the important role played by the Secretary for Home Affairs, who was not only responsible for liaising with the City District Officers, but also in educating officials on the cultural practices associated with the Lunar New Year.

What can firmly be observed through these various examples of the New Year postage stamps were the numerous variables which impacted on the stamp design process. Considerations for the local population included contacting local Muslim citizens, gaining feedback on certain animals from Chinese communities, using the new City District Officers to collect information, and utilising the knowledge of the Home Affairs department. The input of different government bodies was equally important, but, as has been revealed, this often caused friction between officials and slowed down the design process. Furthermore, considerations were made about how these postage stamps could be used to the territory's economic advantage, and in some cases, specific images were chosen to promote aspects of Hong Kong's agricultural economy. In a similar vein, monopolising on the recent impetus for more Hong Kong specific images (combined with a growing local identity), the inclusion of a local Chow for the Year of the Dog issue was an important statement. Finally, symbolism was important. To the Secretary of State, the connotations of the Royal Cypher next to an image of a pig were too much for them to approve the proposed designs; in many other aspects, negotiating and accompanying seemingly insignificant details (particularly to Western eyes) was an important part of creating these stamps. Overall, the Lunar New Year stamps reveal an interesting and colourful aspect of postal design throughout the seventies. Compared to the sixties, there was clearly a considerable shift in the process of representing Hong Kong on a domestic and international level.

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<sup>104</sup> 'The Hong Kong', *Daily Express*, 20 January 1973.

## Complaints and Corruption

As with the Year of the Rat set, postage stamps began to come under increasing criticism if their designs did not meet a particular level of satisfaction. 'Never underestimate the power of the Post Office,' one commentator wrote, 'they have just printed up the two ugliest stamps possible'. Specifically, they took opposition to the increasing use of one particular shape: '[t]here are other designs besides triangles!' declared the author, who signed off as 'Triangle Hater'.<sup>105</sup> The *South China Morning Post* ran a piece celebrating the introduction of the Stamp Committee, which it saw as an overdue quality watchdog. Discussing Hong Kong's stamps, the article stated that they 'ranged from the awful to the abominable, with their worst defect being their complete irrelevance to Hongkong [sic]'.<sup>106</sup> Even the Chairman of the Philatelic Society commented on Hong Kong's postage stamps, although he was less concerned with the designs and more with the pricing of collectors pieces which he described as 'overpriced', and urged philatelists to purchase Hong Kong stamps overseas.<sup>107</sup>

Complaints to the Post Office were not just limited to stamp design; often criticism was aimed at the services provided. A piece by Marsha Prysuska, a vocal critic of the postal service in Hong Kong, detailed in her column her recent experience with a delayed letter: 'I suppose one should be grateful that it got delivered at all,' she conceded.<sup>108</sup> Another article wrote about a sender's recent experience at the Post Office where they saw a letter left on the floor: 'I thought everyone in the world give priority and respect to the "Royal Mail" but from the way this Hongkong [sic] postman behaves, this is quite the contrary'.<sup>109</sup> Criticism was not restricted to local postal services, and often complaints were published about the general global transportation of mail. One article, for example, informed the Hong Kong community that Italian postal workers were selling letters for pulp.<sup>110</sup> Another, once again written by Prysuska, detailed her experience with a letter being sent to Turin rather than Hong Kong: 'Ah well, it's nice to know we don't have a concession on idiot sorters, and that others have them

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<sup>105</sup> 'Two Ugly Stamps', *Hong Kong Standard*, 05 May 1976.

<sup>106</sup> 'Better Designs for Hongkong [sic] Stamps', *South China Morning Post*, 03 November 1973.

<sup>107</sup> 'Don't Buy Stamps Here', *South China Morning Post*, 10 November 1978.

<sup>108</sup> Marsha Prysuska, 'This is Hong Kong', *Hong Kong Standard*, 29 May 1974.

<sup>109</sup> 'My Mail Was Left on the Floor', *STAR*, 04 July 1974.

<sup>110</sup> 'Italian Mail Sold for Pulp', *China Mail*, 03 July 1974.

too'.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, postal strikes in Lisbon, America, and Australia were documented, and journalists speculated on the wider ramifications for global communications.<sup>112</sup> Criticism of the Post Office was not just restricted to the pages of local tabloids, and in 1974 protestors urged the Postmaster General to investigate possible criminal activity within the organization – particular focus was given to the detaining of letters.<sup>113</sup>

The issue of letter-opening was one which began to receive more attention, and it became a contentious issue during the seventies. Alongside the protests, locals submitted their stories to newspapers; they speculated as to what motives could be behind the retention and inspection of their post. One citizen wrote to the *South China Morning Post* informing them that they had received mail which had been 'slit' and then patched over with a tag reading 'Received Damaged'; they speculated as to whether this was a tactic employed to open suspect post.<sup>114</sup> Another reader wrote in to add that they knew of multiple occasions where a letter had been 'opened and resealed with an official-looking slip marked "Opened by H. M. Customs - Currency Control'. 'One presumes,' they added, 'that such an overt act must be legal'.<sup>115</sup> In response to such allegations, the Post Office published a notice in the same paper informing the Hong Kong community that it could not open mail; it noted that only the Colonial Secretary had the authority to do such a thing upon receiving a warrant. They did mention, however, that damaged mail would often have to be resealed.<sup>116</sup> Such complaints, however, continued.

Yet these concerns regarding the opening of post were part of a wider distrust of the British Administration. Corruption ran deep into the system, and little was being done to confront it despite it being a frequent complaint amongst locals since the 1950s. Whilst the majority of British officials felt that corruption existed mainly in the police force and amongst low-ranking Chinese officials, evidence to suggest otherwise began emerging. The formation of the Advisory Committee on Corruption in 1958 was seen at the time as a sign of positive progress; however critics suggested that this was

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<sup>111</sup> Marsha Prysuska, 'This is Hong Kong', *Hong Kong Standard*, 10 July 1974.

<sup>112</sup> 'Lisbon Postal Strike is 'Most Serious'', *Hong Kong Standard*, 19 June 1974; 'Postal Strike Spreads Scross United States', *Hong Kong Standard*, 23 March 1970; 'Postal Strike in Australia', *South China Morning Post*, 24 February 1970.

<sup>113</sup> 'Protest Goes to Post Office', *Hong Kong Standard*, 14 July 1974.

<sup>114</sup> 'Any Reason for Tampered Mail?', *South China Morning Post*, 17 November 1975.

<sup>115</sup> 'Disconcerting Even if Legal', *South China Morning Post*, 22 November 1975.

<sup>116</sup> 'We Don't Tamper With Mail - Post Office', *South China Morning Post*, 18 November 1975.

merely a token distraction.<sup>117</sup> The Star Ferry Riots prompted the Government to again address allegations of corruption; officials were sent to the former British colony of Singapore to see how it tackled corruption.<sup>118</sup> By the 1970s, corruption was rife throughout most sections of the civil service. Steve Tsang argues that the erosion of traditional means of promoting cadets and police officers from the upper echelons of society culminated in low paid officers continuing their illegal practices when in higher posts.<sup>119</sup> Regardless of whether this was the case, there was certainly a more widespread acknowledgement of corruption throughout the colony. Henry Lethbridge's work on corruption in Hong Kong sheds light on the vast scale of bribery and abuse of power throughout the territory, most notably from the police.<sup>120</sup> Additionally, Carroll refers to firefighters refusing to turn on their hoses before being paid 'water money'.<sup>121</sup> Such corruption, whilst widely observed by the local population, was ultimately ignored by officials. It was not until the high profile case of Peter Godber, a decorated ex-police official who laundered government money to a private offshore account, that the Government finally introduced changes.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was introduced by Governor MacLehose in February 1974 to investigate internal criminal activity. Whilst the population was initially dubious about the appointment of the ICAC, after the successful extradition of Godber in 1975, public opinion began to swing in its favour. Investigations into the police force, which ended in thousands of officers rioting and attacking ICAC staff, also highlighted the Administration's commitment to tackling such issues.<sup>122</sup> It was also involved in an investigation into fraudulent activities within the Post Office during the 1980s, with officials using franking machines for their own financial benefit.<sup>123</sup> Support for the ICAC ebbed and flowed; the public felt particularly let down by the soft handed approach taken by the Governor and senior officials towards convicted police officers. However, as Leo Goodstadt argues, 'the speed with which society rallied behind the ICAC and its crusade to outlaw dishonesty and abuses

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<sup>117</sup> Leo Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners: The Conflict Between Public Interest and Private Profit in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 143.

<sup>118</sup> John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 173.

<sup>119</sup> Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (I.B Tauris, 2007), pp. 202-3.

<sup>120</sup> Henry J. Lethbridge, *Hard Graft in Hong Kong: Scandal, Corruption, the ICAC* (Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>121</sup> Carroll, *A Concise History*, p. 174.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>123</sup> Peter Topping, 'PO Fraud Suspects Arrested', *South China Morning Post*, 10 April 1986.

in the public sector' was a sign of a 'moral dimension' important in Hong Kong society.<sup>124</sup> Whilst the police amnesty caused issues for members of the public, generally speaking the decision to tackle widespread corruption led to a more relaxed attitude amongst the Chinese Hong Kong population towards Government officials – 'public opinion on this subject had changed fundamentally'.<sup>125</sup> Through high-profile cases, citizens could see that members of the public sector and the business world were being held accountable. However, in reality, the 'ICAC investigations brought about the disgrace of a small number of senior officials and some minor business and professional persons'; if anything, it served as a token approach to an issue of serious friction between the local community and government officials.<sup>126</sup>

What is noticeable, however, is the introduction of tighter regulations relating to postal issues alongside the activities of the ICAC. Concerns regarding letter bombs had prompted the Post Office to collude with the police to investigate suspect mail.<sup>127</sup> Despite complaints from Post Office Box holders, the Post Office was committed to dealing with criminal activity in a more public manner.<sup>128</sup> In 1975, the *Hong Kong Standard* notified its readers that the Postmaster General was to receive 'greater powers' to 'open mail bags at any time and dispose of all undeliverable items'.<sup>129</sup> In a couple of high profile cases, the Post Office used these new tools to detect and detain various illicit goods. Most notably of these were cases against pornographers who had smuggled materials in from Denmark.<sup>130</sup> Alongside changes to the Postmaster's powers, greater penalties were enforced for convicted illegal couriers, with punishment raised from two years imprisonment to five.<sup>131</sup> This crackdown on illegal mail traffic systems also threatened Hong Kong's various private couriers, as the new Post Office Bill tackled the transportation of 'letters' outside of the Royal Mail. The definition of 'letter' was changed from personal correspondence to any means of communication; thus, organisations could not transmit written business information

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<sup>124</sup> Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners*, p. 155.

<sup>125</sup> Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 204.

<sup>126</sup> Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners*, p. 151.

<sup>127</sup> 'L-Bomb Terror in Gem Shop', *Hong Kong Standard*, 25 April 1974; 'Letter Bomb: A Probe of Tourist Agencies', *Hong Kong Standard*, 26 April 1974.

<sup>128</sup> HKPRO, HKRS514-1-3, Letter from 'A Group of G.P.O. Box Holders' to the Postmaster General, June 1974.

<sup>129</sup> 'Postmaster General to Have Greater Powers', *Hong Kong Standard*, 06 February 1975.

<sup>130</sup> '72 Reels of Smut Seized', *South China Morning Post*, 11 October 1975; 'Fined for Smut Films', *South China Morning Post*, 26 November 1975.

<sup>131</sup> 'Postmaster General to Have Greater Powers', *Hong Kong Standard*, 06 February 1975.

through private systems.<sup>132</sup> Criticism of this came from a number of high profile international business figures, who had interests in Hong Kong, but this failed to stop the Post Office expanding its authority over the transportation of mail.<sup>133</sup> Thus, as part of a wider approach to tackle corruption, by the late seventies, the Post Office had increased its authority in a bid to crack down on illegal activity (both official and non-official), whilst also expanding its controls on the conveyance of correspondence, to cement its authority as the primary communications system in Hong Kong. Interestingly, part of the process of tackling corruption saw an increase in letter-opening, an activity previously denounced by both the public and postal officials alike.

### **Conclusion**

By the end of the seventies, Hong Kong's Post Office had seen major changes. Cooperation with China had allowed for improved communications, and officials from both territories were even exchanging strategy ideas. This was part of a wider push to incorporate Hong Kong into the wider international setting. Expositions and festivals created an image of what it was to be a Hong Konger to both a domestic and international audience; often these built on the topics prominent in early mail. Paralleling this was the growth in iconography unique to Hong Kong appearing on postal stationery; this was simultaneously appealing to overseas collectors and also acted as a sign of the British Administration's willingness to celebrate non-British aspects of the territory. Images of local wildlife also became a popular fixture on postal stationery. The importance of their popularity amongst collectors cannot be ignored, yet it is important to note the nationalistic connotations of celebrating local wildlife. Amongst other issues, pictures of fauna and flora also served as a useful tool for Hong Kong's tourism industry. However, as designs became more specific, and the marketing potential of certain special issues became a lucrative business, the process of creating postage stamps became more complex. Various interested groups began to influence how stamps were created; officials in London, private organisations, the Crown Agents, City District Officers, religious groups, philatelic bodies, and even the local population all affected the final product. As the example of the Lunar New Year issues highlight, the production of postage stamps was not as simple as the British state deciding

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<sup>132</sup> 'Discussion on Post Office Bill', *South China Morning Post*, 28 February 1975.

<sup>133</sup> 'US Banker Explains Backlash of Mail Bill: Threat to Pull Out of Colony', *Hong Kong Standard*, 05 May 1975.



outright what designs should be used; certainly key British officials had a major say, but the decision process was complex. However, whilst the Post Office operated primarily as a transporter of communication, amidst the government's efforts to tackle issues of corruption the Royal Mail became an increasingly vigilant force. Previously a vocal opponent of letter-opening, by the late seventies more illicit goods were being intercepted, and reports of tampered mail were frequently published in newspapers. Overall, the seventies saw a major change in the Post Office and postal stationery. Certainly for postage stamps, the days of ubiquitous Red Cross issues were over, and instead a constant supply of iconography specific to Hong Kong was being created; a particular, and unique, image of the territory was being sold to the domestic and international market. As the following chapter will showcase, Hong Kong-specific stamps made popular in the 1970s enabled the British Administration to promote carefully constructed narratives.

## Chapter Four: Exploring Hong Kong Through Time and Space, 1980-1989

The seventies' exploration of imagery specific to Hong Kong enabled stamps in the eighties to explore themes in a more thorough manner. However, discussions between Britain and China over Hong Kong's future set the tone of the eighties. The initial confusion, followed by Britain's reluctant acceptance of the inevitability of Hong Kong's return to China, gave way to an uncertainty over the territory's future. The designs of Hong Kong's postage stamps countered this political mood by attempting to define and project an image of what Hong Kong was, had been, and would be. The popularity of philately had continued to grow from the seventies, and journalists in particular were interested in interviewing designers and collectors, but also studying the stories of stamps themselves. This fascination with stamps as educational tools, particularly in the context of Hong Kong's history, was shared by the Post Office, who began to produce many sets dedicated to the territory's past. Often this was framed around the arrival of the British, and in turn the territory's story was given a particularly British narrative. A key aspect of these historical series was their celebration of change in Hong Kong; many sets detailed the progression of the colony, particularly through infrastructure projects and technology. Alongside this, the agreement to transfer authority of Hong Kong to China led to a number of stamps celebrating ties to the mainland; this often came under the guise of commemorating 'Chinese tradition'. A set of postage stamps featuring historical 'Maps of Hong Kong' (SG254-257) provided a useful crossover between time and the other key postal theme of space. A number of stamps were produced which displayed Hong Kong's geographical territory; these could be used to celebrate the territory's recreational spaces, or the various infrastructural investments made by the British Administration, and even those which were yet to come. Overall, these stamps served as a celebration of British development in a similar vein to the stamps which celebrated Hong Kong's historical progress. Additionally, in the context of an uncertain future, these stamps played an important role in projecting a stable Hong Kong which would continue to grow and develop in the future, just as it had done in the past.

Ultimately, this chapter aims to analyse three key research questions. First, what role did the themes of time and space play on postage stamps produced throughout the

eighties? Secondly, how did the British Administration feature in the narrative of these themes? Finally, to what degree was the notion of change and progression important to the Colony and the British Administration? In answering these questions, this chapter will highlight the important role played by postage stamps in visualising a particular image of Hong Kong's past, present, and future.

### **The Joint Declaration**

In 1979, Governor MacLehose was invited by Li Qiang, China's minister for foreign trade, to discuss the future of Sino-British international relations; this was to be the first British state visit to China since the 1840s. Despite being advised by Chinese officials to avoid the topic of Hong Kong's handover, MacLehose pressed Deng Xiaoping on the territory's future. MacLehose's reasoning for pressing Deng was an attempt to differentiate between the various treaties affecting Hong Kong's geography (Hong Kong Island, for example, was the only area to be leased in perpetuity), and to assure lenders that the future of the territory was stable.<sup>1</sup> Deng's response was mixed. He informed MacLehose that Hong Kong was considered a Chinese possession, yet failed to clarify whether the mainland would push for reunification; he did, however, suggest that, regardless of future Chinese intentions, Hong Kong's investors should be assured that the territory would not necessarily be brought under China's socialist umbrella.<sup>2</sup>

Returning to Hong Kong, MacLehose made a public statement reassuring the population that China had no plans for a handover and future investment should continue; overall, the population and markets responded well to this news.<sup>3</sup> However, after contacting Chinese officials about land leases in the New Territories which would exceed the 1997 deadline for British authority, the situation in Hong Kong changed. As Chinese officials refused to allow British officials to issue leases with an indefinite termination date, the question of the 1997 deadline became more important. As Deng stated in 1982: 'If China failed to recover Hong Kong in 1997 [...] it would mean that the present Chinese government was just like the government of the late Qing Dynasty

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (I.B Tauris, 2007), p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup> Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 215.

and that the present Chinese leaders were just like Li Hongzhang!<sup>4</sup> Whilst the current situation suited China quite nicely, a decision was made by the Chinese Politburo in 1981 to recover sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1997. Under the same principles which were to apply to Taiwan, Hong Kong would operate under a 'one country, two systems' policy; capitalism and socialism would be allowed to coexist.

In the following year British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher visited Beijing. Deng immediately denounced the legitimacy of the 'unequal treaties' and, despite Thatcher's assertion that they were upheld by international law, and sovereignty over Hong Kong Island had been permanently ceded, British officials soon accepted the inevitability of a handover. The need to agree to mutually beneficial terms for a British withdrawal led to the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984. It stipulated that Hong Kong would return to China on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1997, and until that date Britain would administer the territory and maintain the economic and social situation; China would cooperate to ensure the transition went smoothly. As of 1997, Hong Kong would become a Special Administrative Region of China which would maintain a high degree of autonomy except in areas of foreign affairs and national defence. The local government would keep control of economic policies, and the majority of current laws would be maintained; mainland troops stationed in Hong Kong would not interfere with national affairs. Reaction in Hong Kong to this news was mixed. Opinion polls suggested the majority of Hong Kong's population would prefer to remain a British colony, but many of these people had come to accept 'this was not a reality'.<sup>5</sup> Despite many Hong Kongers resigning themselves to the inevitability of the handover, the atmosphere of Hong Kong in the eighties was one of uncertainty.

### **The Popularity of Stamps**

This uncertainty was tackled by the British Administration through the means of postal stationery which, by the early eighties, had become popular. In part this was due to the key personnel brought into the Post Office to boost stamp sales and Hong Kong's global philatelic brand during the decade. The former British Post Office Philatelic Bureau Manager was appointed in 1984 to increase postage stamp sales to

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<sup>4</sup> Deng Xiaoping quoted in Chi-kwan Mark, 'To 'educate' Deng Xiaoping in capitalism: Thatcher's visit to China and the future of Hong Kong in 1982', *Cold War History*, 17, 2 (2017), p. 173.

<sup>5</sup> John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 181.

international collectors. The purpose of this was to expand their overseas marketing campaign, improve customer relations, and work more closely with the tourism board.<sup>6</sup> Speaking to journalists, he stated that his ambition was to ensure postal stationery was 'relevant to Hong Kong' and to 'maintain a high standard' of designs.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, after identifying that stamp sales made up forty percent of postal revenue, he was keen to stress that commemoratives would be limited to ensure that the market would not be saturated; he added that Hong Kong's postage stamps were a firm favourite amongst philatelists.<sup>8</sup>

Certainly, the popularity of Hong Kong's postage stamps was evident throughout the eighties. The Royal Wedding Stamp (SG399-401) issued in 1981 broke record sales, with nearly five million stamps sold on the first day alone. Such was the popularity of this issue that despite 550,000 first day covers being printed, the Post Office had to produce another 250,000 to cope with demand.<sup>9</sup> These, too, all sold out.<sup>10</sup> In total the Post Office pocketed HK\$7,700,000.<sup>11</sup> The combination of the rising popularity of postage stamps and the global interest in the British monarchy was clearly a lucrative one. During key events, such as the Far East and South Pacific Games, the Post Office sought new ways to accommodate the high demand. Special counters were set up for 'normal business', freeing up the rest of the offices for philatelists; press releases were also issued in various newspapers urging the public 'to show tolerance and, if possible, to transact their normal postal business on the next day'.<sup>12</sup> Clearly philately was a large revenue source for the Hong Kong government, and the Post Office's decision to concentrate resources on selling stamps rather than sending communication is certainly revealing.

Stamp sales figures were not the only marker for an increased interest in Hong Kong postal stationery. The growing popularity of postage stamps can also be seen in the number of media articles dedicated to interviews with designers and the impact postal

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<sup>6</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-147, 'Press Enquiry from Miss Lam Siu Lai of TVB', 27 July 1984.

<sup>7</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-146, 'Reply by Mr P. Jacobs, Secretary for Economic Services, to a question by the Hon. W. C. L. Brown, in the Legislative Council', 25 January 1984.

<sup>8</sup> 'Expert leads new postage stamps drive', *South China Morning Post*, 26 January 1984.

<sup>9</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3534, 'Attention News Editors', 08 July 1981.

<sup>10</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-146, 'Post Office Stepping Up Philatelic Services', 31 July 1984

<sup>11</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3534, 'Record Royal Wedding Stamp Sales', 09 August 1981.

<sup>12</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3534, 'Stamp Rush Expected', 19 October 1982.

design had on them. These interviews, as with the Lunar New Year accounts and the transcription of conversations with Kan Tai-keung, provide useful information which tracks the developmental stages of postal stationery. Claire Wintle's work on Andamanese and Nicobarese material goods analyses the relationship between product, producer, and collectors within an imperial setting, and re-addresses the 'skewed power dynamic' which is often associated with colonial collecting.<sup>13</sup> Certainly, there are major differences between the colonial subjects on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Hong Kong population, but it is vital that the traditionally state-centric analysis of the power-relationship involved in postage stamps design is examined. Some scholars have explored how designers in occupied nations subverted authority through stamp imagery. In German occupied Czechoslovakia, for example, artists risked 'instant execution' to produce subtle references to national identity in philatelic designs which slipped under the radar of moderating authorities.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Kristi Evans has analysed the subversive postage stamps produced illegally by the Solidarity movement in Soviet Poland. Whilst she only briefly mentions the 'generally unknown' artists, she does state that they risked arrest by producing these illegal materials.<sup>15</sup> Whilst future work on designers is certainly needed, it should suffice to say that the few examples highlighted so far in this thesis suggest that the relationship between the British state officials and designers was a complex one. Artists certainly had more agency in the design process than other philatelic studies which focus solely on national identity would suggest; yet they still operated within parameters set by such officials (unlike in the German and Soviet examples mentioned above).

What is interesting about the interviews with Hong Kong designers in the eighties is the motivation behind taking up such a task. For artist Johnny Yim, who designed the Mid-Autumn Festival Chinese Lanterns series (SG458-461), it was 'the highlight of his career'. "'Until now,'" he told journalist Sheri Tillman, "'I was a faceless name in the credits of a number of books, publications and brochures'". Yet after working with the Post Office 'all branches of media [were] after him'. In many ways this came down to the highly selective process of being 'invited' to submit ideas for commemorative

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<sup>13</sup> Claire Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display: Encounters with Material Culture from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (Berghahn, 2013), p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Davis, 'Maps on Postage Stamps as Propaganda', *The Cartographic Journal*, 22, 2 (1985), p. 130.

<sup>15</sup> Kristi S. Evans, 'The Argument of Images: Historical Representation in Solidarity Underground Postage, 1981-87', *American Ethnologist*, 19, 4, *Imagining Identities: Nation, Culture, and the Past* (November, 1992), pp. 751-2.

stamp themes; "It's a don't-call-us-we'll-call-you process," he explained.<sup>16</sup> This element of prestige is visible in an interview with the designer of the Historical Chinese Costumes issues (SG559-562), the respected illustrator Sumiko Davies. Journalist Fiona MacMahon remarked on 'a very noticeable note of pride in her voice when she talks about the collection'; "I hadn't quite realised what it was until my family started getting so excited," Sumiko stated.<sup>17</sup> An interview with graphic designer Henry Steiner, employed to create the Hong Kong Fishing Vessels set (SG521-524), highlighted that stamp design provided artists with an opportunity to do something different. "It's the first time I have designed stamps," he stated, "It is also the smallest job I have ever done". What is apparent in Steiner's interview is the lengthy and complex process required to produce each design. Completing each stamp in the four-part set relied on his assistant designer, Po Hing-ming, researching what fish were caught by particular vessels, and whether each boat model was correct. Finally, the finished products were examined by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department and the Marine Department. The final words of Steiner are revealing about the design side of stamps; he stated that it was 'one of the least cost-effective jobs', but ultimately it was 'a labour of love'.<sup>18</sup> Overall, it was clear that the popularity of stamps brought a level of prestige to designers, who were happy to be a part of the process despite the low financial rewards. These brief interviews provide an insight into the lives of the local artists involved in this process.

In a bid to ensure the future of philately would not fold, postal officials deployed different tactics to encourage young people to collect postage stamps. An exhibition was staged in the Northern District's Cheung Wah Community Hall, which showcased Hong Kong's postal developments. According to organisers, its aim was to 'arouse residents' interests, especially young people's, in philately and encourage them to engage in a healthy pursuit during the summer holidays'.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, stamps were beginning to be seen as potential educational tools, and the Post Office began improving their services to schools in a bid to encourage philately.<sup>20</sup> In 1984, the Post Office sent out questionnaires to schools to gauge the level of interest in stamps

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<sup>16</sup> Sheri Tillman, 'Festival stamp designs: Johnny had them licked', *South China Morning Post*, 11 September 1984.

<sup>17</sup> Fiona MacMahon, 'Sumiko's latest work shows the stamp of class', *Hong Kong Standard*, 04 November 1987.

<sup>18</sup> Kate Southam, 'Designer Henry hooked over latest stamp issue', *South China Morning Post*, 31 August 1986.

<sup>19</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-146, 'Philatelic Exhibition for North District', 04 August 1986.

<sup>20</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-146, 'Post Office Stepping Up Philatelic Services', 31 July 1984.

amongst Hong Kong's young population. Out of 1,300 schools, fourteen percent had collectors' clubs, and half of these had a membership higher than thirty. Additionally, they identified that first day covers, postcards, souvenir sheets, and mint stamps were the most popular collectors' items amongst local students. The establishment of a 'School Advance Order Service' introduced in March 1984 to enable students to guarantee the receipt of every new issue was judged to be 'generally well received and provides a useful means to enhance the students' interest in the hobby of stamp collecting'. Overall, the findings of the survey suggested that whilst many schools were keen to promote philately there was 'plenty of scope for an expansion of these activities in student stamp collector clubs'; in response, the Post Office noted it was 'willing to provide guidance in this matter'.<sup>21</sup>

This link between postage stamps and education has been identified across multiple articles. The Soviet Union identified from an early stage the opportunity to educate its population through the medium of postage stamps.<sup>22</sup> They later used postal cards to teach agricultural workers key skills such as skinning pigs and how to store sugar beets.<sup>23</sup> Thomas Di Napoli's article on the German Democratic Republic's stamps identifies how they were used as powerful tools in the campaign to educate the world about the territory's achievements through a particular narrative.<sup>24</sup> Whilst it is clearly difficult to gauge the impact of these campaigns, Mark Posnansky suggests that stamp collectors in Western Europe, the United States, Japan, and Hong Kong have a vision of Africa which has been heavily influenced by philatelic designs rather than museums.<sup>25</sup> Wintle makes a similar point. She notes that theatre productions, book plots, and popular culture influenced how people interpreted foreign lands; additionally, these impacted on how museum exhibitions were read, rather than the other way around.<sup>26</sup> As the first chapter's analysis of accounts published in newspapers highlights, this was clearly true for China and Hong Kong. Additionally, many scholars have identified postage stamps as a useful resource for teachers. Joseph Kirman and Chris Jackson

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<sup>21</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-147, 'Press Enquiry from Mr. Chu Wai-Kit of Sing Tao Wan Pao', 04 December 1984.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Grant, 'The Socialist Construction of Philately in the Early Soviet Era', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37, 3 (July, 1995), pp. 476-496; Alison Rowley, 'Miniature Propaganda: Self-Definition and Soviet Postage Stamps, 1917-41', *Slavonica*, 8, 2 (2002), p. 138.

<sup>23</sup> William Moskoff, 'Soviet Postal Material and State Propaganda, 1928-1945', presented at *The Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium* (Smithsonian National Postal Museum, 30 September to 01 October 2010), pp. 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Di Napoli, 'Postage Stamps and the Teaching of GDR Culture and Civilization', *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*, 13, 2 (Autumn, 1980), pp. 193-205.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Posnansky, 'Propaganda for the Millions: Images from Africa', *African Arts*, 37, 2 (Summer, 2004), p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display*, pp. 190-1.



have proposed a number of potential activities and projects to try in classrooms.<sup>27</sup> Jack Child references the various government initiatives across the Americas which aimed to promote learning about other nations; he states that foreign language teachers in particular found them useful aids.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Jack Trammell notes that postage stamps which feature two languages on them (usually English and another), such as Hong Kong issues, are a useful way to increase language skills.<sup>29</sup>

Many people in Hong Kong also identified the ways in which postage stamps were useful educational tools. Writing about the Queen Mother commemorative stamp (SG493-496) released in 1985, the *Hong Kong Standard* spoke to 'well-known banker' Bill Brown of the Standard Chartered Bank. When asked about why he enjoyed philately, he commented that he could 'learn the customs of different countries by looking at the stamps'.<sup>30</sup> They were also framed as educators of the past as well as the present. Remarking on material displayed at an exhibition showcasing Hong Kong's wartime postal stationery, Urban Councilor Paul T.K. Young called the stamps "Meaningful reminders of the value of freedom in communication".<sup>31</sup> This link to the past had been drawn out previously, most notably in the sixties. The centenary of Hong Kong's postage stamp played a key part in this fascination, and a number of articles were published; however, the majority of these texts had the philatelic audience, rather than the general reader, in mind. James Mackay wrote a piece for *Stamp Weekly* which charted the history of Hong Kong's postal stationery, but in the context of perforations and surcharges.<sup>32</sup> An article in *The Asia Magazine* provided a detailed coverage of Hong Kong's postal arrangements prior to 1945; yet particular emphasis was given to the contractual agreements for various transportation companies.<sup>33</sup> *The Stamp Lover* featured a lengthy overview of Hong Kong's postal

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph M. Kirman and Chris Jackson, 'The Use of Postage Stamps to Teach Social Studies Topics', *The Social Studies*, 91, 4 (2000), pp. 187-190.

<sup>28</sup> Jack Child, *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 32-3.

<sup>29</sup> Jack Trammell, 'Examining Postage Stamps as Visual Cultural Markers', presented at *The 2010 Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium* (Smithsonian National Postal Museum, 30 September to 01 October 2010), p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> 'Guess who queued up for Queen Mum stamps', *Hong Kong Standard*, 08 August 1985.

<sup>31</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-146, 'Postal History Display Reminder of Freedom', 10 July 1987.

<sup>32</sup> James Mackay, 'Hong Kong Britain's Toe-Hold on the Chinese Coast and the Only Window on Chairman Mao', *Stamp Weekly*, 05 March 1969.

<sup>33</sup> E. F. Gee, 'Hong Kong Stamps Tell a Hundred-Year story', *The Asia Magazine*, 31 March 1963, pp. 14-15.

history, but it focused mainly on the technical aspects and oddities of Hong Kong's postal stationery.<sup>34</sup>

Journalists in the eighties returned to Hong Kong's postal history, yet their work was aimed far more at the general audience. Most notable was a three-page spread by Beverly Howells, which appeared in the *Hong Kong Tatler* in 1983. 'There can be few more accurate means of documenting the history and development of any place than its postage stamps,' her article began.<sup>35</sup> The piece briefly addressed the formative years of the Hong Kong Post Office, but the bulk of her commentary focused on the various postage stamps produced by the Colony. What marks Howells' piece apart from articles in the sixties is that it does not dwell on perforations, contracts, or cancellation stamps. Instead, more emphasis is given to the story of Hong Kong's Post Office. As she only briefly touched on such a rich topic, she encouraged further research to be carried out, to satiate the growing interest in Hong Kong's postage stamps and postal history: 'The significance of stamps in providing one of the most accurate retrospective views of Hong Kong has yet to be properly exploited'.<sup>36</sup> What is important about this piece is that it is more an examination of Hong Kong's past than a cutting for the keen philatelist. This was part of a greater trend in the eighties which tied Hong Kong's postage stamps to Hong Kong's past.

### **Heritage and Narratives**

The theme of 'heritage' played an important role in eighties stamp design; in many ways it served to provide a continuity to the colony in a time of uncertainty. In 1980, the first postage stamps to be released were part of the 'Rural Architecture' (SG387-389) set. Whilst the title itself omitted framing this series within a heritage context, the images were inescapably historical. The 20c. design featured the Tsui Shing Lau Pagoda, or 'Pagoda of Gathering Stars', which, still to this day, is the only surviving ancient pagoda in Hong Kong. According to Hong Kong's Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the pagoda is over six hundred years old and was constructed by the Tang clan of Ping Shan. It was built 'to improve fung shui of the locality in order to prevent

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<sup>34</sup> Eric Glasgow, 'Hong Kong and Its Centenary', *The Stamp Lover*, June-July 1962.

<sup>35</sup> Beverley Howells, 'War or Peace - Hong Kong's Stamps Reflect Its History', *Hong Kong Tatler*, 1983.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

flooding disasters to the village'.<sup>37</sup> The HK\$2 stamp celebrated the Pailou, either an archway or gateway, of the Ching Chung Koon Temple. Established in Tuen Mun at Kei Lun Wai, the temple was purchased from a Catholic nun in 1960. Now a Taoist temple, the main building itself was only constructed in the 1940s; since then multiple other buildings have been built which provide services to the elderly and poor. In 1977 traditional medicinal practices were replaced by Western methods, but still charged at a minimal price.<sup>38</sup> The final stamp, the HK\$1.30, is of a nondescript 'Village House'; however, the building essentially pays homage to traditional Chinese architectural design. Considering the recent infrastructural developments in the rural New Territories, land was at a premium; the rural community was far more likely to inhabit financially and spatially economic 'new builds' (essentially concrete cubes) rather than red-roofed, wood-and-stone, traditionally decorated dwellings.

The unspoken rule of the 'Rural Architecture' series was to celebrate the past. The Pagoda was chosen because it was firmly rooted in Hong Kong's ancient history; the inclusion of the Ching Chung Koon Temple, whilst only a thirty year old building, was a celebration of local culture and overtly traditional design; and the 'Village House' was a depiction of an ideal past far removed from contemporary rural life in Hong Kong. In essence, these stamps presented a romanticised vision of rural Hong Kong. Certainly for the 1980s series, legislation from the seventies had equated rural life to indigeneity, which in turn was linked to tradition. The decision to omit any mention of these being 'historical' buildings certainly strengthened this connection. Moreso, a romanticised image of the New Territories as a traditional 'Chinese' space connected Hong Kong to an imagined past; rural Hong Kong became a metaphor for pre-modern Hong Kong. This was also a hangover of the nineteenth century imagination of a 'stagnated' Chinese empire prominent in early accounts. This series was the first of many 'historical' postage stamps produced by Hong Kong in the eighties.

The next historical postage stamp set of note came in 1985; it celebrated the colony's 'Historic Buildings' (SG467-470). This set contained a rather eclectic mixture of Hong

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<sup>37</sup> Antiques and Monuments Office, 'Tsui Sing Lau Pagoda', *Declared Monuments in Hong Kong*, [http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/monuments\\_75.php](http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/monuments_75.php), accessed 17 March 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Historic Building Appraisal, 'Ching Chung Koon - Pavilion', p. 1192, [http://www.aab.gov.hk/form/brief\\_information\\_no\\_grade.pdf](http://www.aab.gov.hk/form/brief_information_no_grade.pdf), accessed 17 March 2017.

Kong heritage sites; the accompanying information identified key aspects of each building. The 40c. issue commemorated the Hung Shing Temple. According to the first day cover it was believed to have been founded in 1860, although according to Hong Kong's Antiques and Monuments Office it could have been created in 1773.<sup>39</sup> It was an example of 'excellent granite work [...] with a balustrade along the whole front. [...] Other interesting features include the Shek Wan Pottery decorations [...] and the large boulder inside'.<sup>40</sup> The HK\$1 stamp featured Saint John's Cathedral, which had its foundation stone laid in 1847, and was opened for service in 1849 by then-Governor John Davis. 'It is one of the oldest buildings still standing in Hong Kong', claimed the literature.<sup>41</sup> It functioned as a military garrison and also a clubhouse during the Japanese Occupation. Interestingly, the 'comparatively short tower with granite course binding, the use of window shutters and the adoption of opening trefoil and quatrefoil windows reflect[ed] the adaption of European Gothic architecture to Hong Kong's sub-tropical climate'.<sup>42</sup> The HK\$1.30 celebrated the Old Supreme Court House which opened in 1911 and, as of 1985, was home to the Legislative Council Chambers. It was 'a typical example of Edwardian public building architecture with neo-classical columns, arches and a dome'.<sup>43</sup> The final stamp, the HK\$2 issue, was a celebration of the Wan Chai Post Office on Hong Kong Island. Built in 1912, but used by the Royal Mail in 1915, this was the 'oldest of all the existing post offices in Hong Kong'.<sup>44</sup>

Clearly the emphasis in this set, as with the Rural Architecture series, was on Hong Kong's past. The decision to celebrate buildings specific to Hong Kong were certainly new to the eighties, as in the sixties a very different approach had been taken by the Postmaster General:

Buildings and scenes with few exceptions make poor stamps as they could be like buildings and scenes elsewhere and only the inscriptions on the stamps differentiate one from the other. Neither can it be said that we have any buildings of architectural

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<sup>39</sup> Antiques and Monuments Office, 'Hung Shing Temple', *Declared Monuments in Hong Kong*, [http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/monuments\\_107.php](http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/monuments_107.php), accessed 17 March 2017.

<sup>40</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-146, 'Historical Buildings Stamps out March 14', 18 February 1985.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Antiques and Monuments Office, 'St. John's Cathedral', *Declared Monuments in Hong Kong*, [http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/monuments\\_60.php](http://www.amo.gov.hk/en/monuments_60.php), accessed 17 March 2017.

<sup>43</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-146, 'Historical Buildings Stamps out March 14', 18 February 1985.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

significance which is only to be expected in a situation where every square foot has to be functional.<sup>45</sup>

So what had changed? To begin with, there was a growing conservation movement in the 1980s born out of concerns that, with land at a premium in the densely-populated colony, huge redevelopment projects were destroying heritage sites. In 1976, the British Administration introduced the aforementioned Antiquities and Monuments Office – particularly in the eighties and nineties, this branch of government aimed to protect numerous historical sites. The decision to feature 'historical buildings' on Hong Kong's postal stationery would certainly have been part of a campaign to raise awareness of locations the British Administration deemed historically significant.<sup>46</sup> Importantly, this coincided with the Post Office's decision to celebrate far more unique aspects of Hong Kong compared to the sixties; the celebration of its local buildings was therefore not out of place. Also, Hong Kong's stamps were seen as a way of educating collectors about the territory whilst also encouraging potential tourism. Furthermore, as the seventies showed, stamps provided the state with a useful means of mirroring aspects of Hong Kong back to the local population; they were being used as tools of representation. Thus, the use of historical buildings in the eighties made sense, mainly because they not only celebrated specific aspects of Hong Kong, but they also gave the territory a history. What is most interesting about the 1985 set is the combination of typically Chinese and European architecture which, in many ways, added to the celebration of Hong Kong as a unique entity. Architectural hybridity was one of the earliest observations present in the accounts of chapter one, after all. The decision to celebrate these buildings was certainly justified by the demand which followed. Stamp sales reached just under HK\$3.5 million and 265,000 first day covers were sold.<sup>47</sup> Alongside the stamps, extra collector's items were made available. For the first time, collectible A4 prints of each stamp were available to purchase. Likewise, gold stamps and booklets were produced to coincide with Hong Kong's Red Letter Day.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Letter from the Postmaster General to the Colonial Secretary 'Postage Stamps - Definitive Issue 1968', 03 September 1965.

<sup>46</sup> John Stubbs and Robert Thomson, *Architectural Conservation in Asia: National Experiences and Practice* (Taylor and Francis, 2016), p. 93.

<sup>47</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-147, 'Press Release', *South China Morning Post*, 16 March 1985.

<sup>48</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-146, 'Special Stamp Issue Out Thursday', 12 March 1985; James Sun, 'Red letter day for stamp collectors', *South China Morning Post*, 15 March 1985.

In 1986, a similar postage stamp set was released, which celebrated nineteenth century Hong Kong portraits (SG525-528). The portraits consisted of 'The Second Puan Khequa' attributed to the painter Spoilum; 'Chinese Lady' by an unknown artist; a self-portrait by the artist Lam Qua; and the 'Wife of Wo Hing Qua', attributed to George Chinnery. Spoilum was a Chinese artist located in Canton who dealt mainly with traders, mostly from the West. Whilst he worked closely with British merchants, his close ties with American traders explains why his work is still exhibited across many American galleries. This particular portrait depicts a member of the Puan Khequa family who were well known in Canton for doing business with predominantly foreign merchants. George Chinnery was a British artist who established himself in India but later moved to South China. Whilst he settled on Macau, he frequented Canton and painted western merchants, families, sea captains, and Chinese workers. His portraiture work is well known, but he also spent a lot of time producing landscape work. Artwork of his 1846 Hong Kong tour provided the British Administration with an early record of the topography of the colony, and became an important historical resource. Lam Qua, also known as Lamqua or Guan Qiaochang, was the son, 'or possibly grandson' of Spoilum (variations between the name Lamqua and Lam Qua on artwork have raised concerns that these could have possibly been two separate artists).<sup>49</sup> He specialised in Western-style portraits, inspired by George Chinnery, which made him marketable to the West. 'In general,' according to Peter Perdue, 'both Chinese and Western artists produced only for the foreign community and their renderings were highly selective. Except for some of the hong merchants, the Chinese themselves were not interested in pictures either of commerce or of foreigners'.<sup>50</sup> Lam Qua painted for foreign traders, hong merchants, and Chinese officials, but is perhaps best known for his collaboration with a United States medical missionary Peter Parker; he produced visual records of patients with an assortment of tumours. Regarding the 'Chinese Lady', there is a clear Western influence in this piece which is certainly attributable to the popularity of Chinnery's work in the early nineteenth century.

Oddly, these portraits have very little connection to Hong Kong. Considering that this stamp set was titled 'Hong Kong Portraits', there are remarkably few Hong Kong

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<sup>49</sup> Craig Clunas, *Art in China* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 198.

<sup>50</sup> Peter C. Perdue, 'The Artists' Narrow World', *Rise & Fall of the Canton Trade System - I: China in the World (1700-1860s)*, [https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise\\_fall\\_canton\\_01/cw\\_essay04.html](https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_01/cw_essay04.html), accessed 17 March 2017.

artists. Admittedly the 'Chinese Lady' is unattributed, but otherwise each artist's connection to Hong Kong is tenuous as they mainly operated in Canton. Thus, the link between Hong Kong and these portrait artists boiled down to British, and more widely Western, imperial expansion into China. Not only was Canton Britain's initial Chinese possession, it was also the catalyst for the handover of Hong Kong. Furthermore, the popularity of these artists was directly linked to the presence of Western imperial forces in China. Foreign merchants not only provided a market for these portraits, but the popularity of Western-style paintings influenced Chinese artists. Through the adoption of this particular technique, these products became far more marketable to Western sailors which in turn resulted in artists becoming more recognisable.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the connection to Hong Kong was through the British Administration, rather than the local Chinese population. However, without the support of the additional information provided by the first day covers, to an uninformed audience these stamps were simply portraits of unknown figures. None of the stamps housed information regarding the artist, subject, or piece's name. The key information which did feature on each stamp, however, was the name of the collection and, specifically, the phrase 'nineteenth century'. Thus, one can infer that the art itself was not the recipient of the philatelic commemoration; instead, these images were selected as part of a process of dating Hong Kong. They could be woven into the territory's heritage by the British Administration, who were in fact the common link between these portraits and colonial Hong Kong. This was a tactic which had been used by other Imperial Powers, who often framed the history of Colonies around their presence.<sup>52</sup> Thus, not only was Hong Kong's past being dictated through the British Administration's Hong Kong Post Office, but its history was being defined in direct relation to British imperialism. Stamps, then, were important in Carroll's aforementioned 'myth' of Hong Kong's Anglo-centric history.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Katrina Hill notes that visiting soldiers often rejected 'local' artwork in favour of Chinnery's products (or those inspired by Chinnery) because it was in high demand in Britain. See: Katrina Hill, 'Collecting on Campaign: British Soldiers in China During the Opium Wars', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 25, 2 (2013), pp. 236-7.

<sup>52</sup> See in particular: Igor Cusack, 'Tiny Transmitters of Nationalist and Colonial Ideology: The Postage Stamps of Portugal and Its Empire', *Nations and Nationalism*, 11, 4 (2005), pp. 607-8.

<sup>53</sup> John M. Carroll, 'Colonial Hong Kong as a Cultural-Historical Place', *Modern Asian Studies*, 40, 2 (2006), pp. 532-5.

## The Theme of Progress

Continuing the 'nineteenth century' theme was a series released in 1987 which commemorated the 'Historical Scenes of Hong Kong' (SG534-537). The 50c. and HK\$1.30 stamps were both images created by Auguste Borget, a French artist who travelled throughout the Americas and Asia. The two images, 'A Village Square, Hong Kong Island, 1838' and 'Boat Dwellers, Kowloon Bay, 1838', are from his work entitled *Sketches of China and the Chinese*. Borget was keen to capture snapshots of his destinations, creating something of a representation of 'normal' life. According to him, in painting the village scene, he simply sat down and sketched what was happening in front of him.<sup>54</sup> The HK\$1.70 design features Murdoch Bruce's 'Flagstaff House, Lt. Governor D'Aguilar's Residence, 1846'. Bruce was a Scottish artist who also served as an architect and engineer for the Hong Kong Government, constructing early buildings and roads. The Flagstaff House was the original residence of the Commander of the British Forces in Hong Kong during British Colonial rule; during the Japanese occupation it was inhabited by the Japanese Commandment. The final stamp, the HK\$5, was Andrasi's 'Wellington Street, late nineteenth century'. Named after the Duke of Wellington, this street operated as a place for trading on Hong Kong Island.

Together, these stamps charted different aspects of Hong Kong over the nineteenth century, but at their core was the theme of progression. To begin the tale is Borget's rural Hong Kong Island village of 'indigenous' workers and his depiction of local 'boat dwellers' from Kowloon, both set in 1838. The following painting, the residence of the British Commander, is set eight years later and acts as a symbol of a new era in Hong Kong. Finally, the late-nineteenth century image of Hong Kong's urbanised Wellington Street brings the story together; infrastructural development (the market) and British colonialism (the street name) indicate change. There are certainly a lot of comparisons to be made with Claire Wintle's analyses of an image depicting the observation of the solar eclipse in the Nicobar Islands, which was featured in the *Illustrated London News*. In this visual, the scientific equipment is juxtaposed against a sparse local population not involved in the process of monitoring the phenomenon; 'the 'observatory' (read scientific) and 'village' (read pre-industrial), highlight the civilized/primitive dichotomy'

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<sup>54</sup> Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, 'The Question of Who: Chinese in Europe', in Kumkum Chatterjee, Clement Hawes (eds.), *Europe Observed: Multiple Gazes in Early Modern Encounters* (Associated University Presses, 2010), p. 84.



which was referenced in the accompanying article.<sup>55</sup> This can also be seen on Rhodesian postage stamps which regularly produced comparative pieces arguing that progress was entirely attributable to Western or, more specifically, white settlers.<sup>56</sup>

In the case of Hong Kong's stamps, when the set was viewed in its entirety, there was a clear sign of progress and change linked closely to Western interventionism. The rural homes and boat dwellers are juxtaposed against the grand Flagstaff House and a bustling market area housed in 'Wellington Street'. The narrative was also identical to that found in early published accounts. The boat-dwelling locals and rural villagers were gradually 'advanced' by the presence of colonial administrators and Western economic interests. Henry Choi comments that the view of Wellington Street should be read as a reference to the migrational shift which occurred in Hong Kong; as colonisers established urban trading environments, the rural local population soon began settling nearby.<sup>57</sup> He also notes that the various Chinese characters placed on shop signs and market stalls are inaccurate scribbles intended to allude to the local language, rather than actually present it.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the Chinese language, much like the people, became symbolic of a foreign land. The painting, just like Hong Kong, was being transformed and crafted by Western influence with little consideration for the local population. Similarly, when the image was placed on a stamp in 1987, the same scene served as a reminder of British influence; the contribution of the local Chinese population in Hong Kong's grand history was unimportant.

The theme of 'progress' became a popular one on eighties stamp designs. A set of four stamps were issued to showcase 'Maps of Hong Kong' (SG254-257) in 1984. Maps have always been a popular, if not controversial, philatelic topic. Stamps have regularly been used in territorial disputes – the Malvinas/Falklands, South American Antarctica, internal South American border disputes, Dominica, Israel, and Palestine, to name but

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<sup>55</sup> (Parenthesis in original) Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display*, p. 125.

<sup>56</sup> Josiah Brownell, 'The Visual Rhetoric of Stamps: Rhodesia and the Projection of Sovereignty (1965-80)', p. 32, [https://www.academia.edu/29917552/The\\_Visual\\_Rhetoric\\_of\\_Stamps-\\_Rhodesia\\_and\\_the\\_Projection\\_of\\_Sovereignty\\_1965-80\\_.docx](https://www.academia.edu/29917552/The_Visual_Rhetoric_of_Stamps-_Rhodesia_and_the_Projection_of_Sovereignty_1965-80_.docx), accessed 12 July 2017; Jonathan R. Waltz, 'Archaeopolitics and Postage Stamps in Africa', *African Arts*, 38, 2 (Summer, 2005), p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> Henry Choi, *Hong Kong History in Stamps* (Chung Hwa Book Co, 2013), p. 173.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

a few, have all been contentious topics on stamp designs.<sup>59</sup> In a colonial context, they have also been used to tie the notion of progress, nation-building, and modernity to the imperial power.<sup>60</sup> In the case of Hong Kong, this series presented a particular narrative of the territory's history. The 40 cent stamp featured an 1836 map created by Captain Edward Belcher (who also produced the first survey of Hong Kong in 1841). The second stamp, the HK\$1, displayed a 1929 map of Kowloon published by renowned Edinburgh printer John Bartholomew. The HK\$1.30 issue housed, according to accompanying literature on the first day cover envelope, the 'earliest known European style map of Hong Kong waters' (see figure 3.1 in the appendix). Finally, the HK\$5 stamp presented, again from the official literature, 'a Chinese style map' drawn in 1819 (figure 3.1). These four maps were quite distinct from one another. In advertising the stamps, the Post Office noted that the purpose of this series was to 'represent interesting phases in the history of Hong Kong'.<sup>61</sup> Importantly, whilst the focus of each stamp was a different 'Map of Hong Kong', the territory itself became the subject. Denis Cosgrove has written about the blurring of art and science when analysing maps, and certainly in this example the map acted as both a piece of art and an informational tool.<sup>62</sup> The subjectivity behind cartographic representations of geographic areas has a rich historiography, with the most notable contribution coming from J. B. Harley;<sup>63</sup> space, too, has important connotations within imperialism, as examined by Jane Jacobs.<sup>64</sup> For Hong Kong, both the space and date of the maps was significant.

A key purpose of this series was to visualise Hong Kong's progress. As with the 'Historical Scenes' issues, these maps identified a local history which changed over the years. The 40c. postage stamp featured only Hong Kong Island. The Kowloon Peninsula was then celebrated on the HK\$1 issue, and the HK\$1.30 brings both of these locations

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<sup>59</sup> Child, *Miniature Messages*; Davis, 'Maps on Postage Stamps as Propaganda'; Yehiel Limor and David Mekelberg, 'The Smallest Ideological and Political Battlefield: Depicting Borders on Postage Stamps - The Case of Israel', *Nations and Nationalism*, 23, 4 (2017), pp. 902-928.

<sup>60</sup> Cusack, 'Tiny Transmitters', p. 608.

<sup>61</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-8-3534, '1984 Stamp Issues Announced', 10 December 1983.

<sup>62</sup> Denis Cosgrove, 'Maps, Mapping, Modernity: Art and Cartography in the Twentieth Century', *Imago Mundi*, 57, 1 (2005), pp. 35-54.

<sup>63</sup> J.B. Harley, 'Deconstructing the Map', *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, 26, 2 (1989), pp. 1-20.

<sup>64</sup> Jacobs closely exams how colonial cities grew from the Imperial powers' need to control the local population, extract materials, and produce goods. There was also an educational element; cities were seen as important spaces for the transference of modern capitalist culture to colonial subjects. For a further discussion of cities and imperialism, see: Jane Margaret Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (Routledge, 2002), pp. 13-37.

together. The New Territories is excluded from all of the stamps bar the 'Chinese style map'. In each case, the depiction of each area was neatly twinned to the concept of time. The 'Chinese style' stamp was old, and the New Territories, as earlier described, was by now synonymous with 'tradition'. The depiction of Hong Kong Island symbolised the beginning of British rule; importantly the map was far more detailed than on the HK\$5 issue. The 'earliest European' map was not dated in the official literature, but Henry Choi suggests that it was produced by Clarke Abel, a medical officer and naturalist on board William Pitt Amherst's voyage to begin trade talks with China, in 1816.<sup>65</sup> Placed in chronological sequence, the final stamp in the set was the HK\$1 issue focussing solely on the Kowloon Peninsula, or more specifically Tsim Sha Tsui. Not only was the detail on the stamp a signifier of its modernity (Hong Kong had various key roads and man-made harbours), but the technical design of the map itself was also an indicator of its age.

Kowloon acted as an icon of modernity in this context. Kowloon was the second section of modern Hong Kong to be ceded to Britain; thus, it was a symbol of territorial change in Hong Kong at the hands of the British. Additionally, through a land reclamation programme, Hong Kong's landscape, again under British rule, significantly changed. Of course, Hong Kong Island certainly changed during the land reclamation process, but Kowloon was drastically modified in the early twentieth century. With the benefit of recently developed online resources, it is possible to comprehensively chart this change in Hong Kong's topography over the course of the last one hundred and fifty years.<sup>66</sup> The reclamation process was exclusively beneficial to areas of Hong Kong which were urbanised; whilst Hong Kong's overall land area was increased by less than two percent, over twenty five percent of urban areas had been expanded by 1985.<sup>67</sup> Tsim Sha Tsui in particular was expanded and modernised by the British Administration and private organisations over the course of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; it has been known as Hong Kong's major entertainment and shopping district for decades (certainly post-1945). The HK\$1 postage stamp showcased the development project along the coastline, particularly the expansion of the harbour on

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<sup>65</sup> Choi, *Hong Kong History in Stamps*, p. 25.

<sup>66</sup> Vivian Ngo, 'Hong Kong Coastline Map', *Mapping the History of Land Reclamation in Hong Kong*, <http://www-scf.usc.edu/~ngov/Map.html>, accessed 11 September 2017.

<sup>67</sup> Brian Morton, 'Pollution and the Sub-Tropical Inshore Hydrographic Environment of Hong Kong', in Brian Morton (ed.), *The Marine Flora and Fauna of Hong Kong and Southern China*, Volume Two (Hong Kong University Press, 1990), p. 11.

the West side. Thus, this stamp was not only a symbol of Hong Kong's geographic change through treaty with China, but also one related to technological progress.

This contrasted neatly with the only 'Chinese style map' which originated from an 1819 cartogram which identified different 'clans'. The naming of this map is interesting. The HK\$1.30 stamp is described as the 'earliest known European style' map of the area; the implication here was that there had since been newer maps and this was simply an extract of an old image. However, the HK\$5 was described as a 'Chinese style' map; in this case, the map was not dated by the use of the term 'earliest known', but instead linked to a particular nation. The inference here was that 'Chinese style' was analogous with antiquity (the map was simplistic, sepia-toned, and vague). Thus, in the context of the entire set, the 'Chinese style' map was very clearly the earliest representation of the territory and a reference point for the arrival of the British. The theme of change, and indeed the notion of chronological progress, was thus framed around British rule. Prior to 1842, Hong Kong was a simple marker on a 'Chinese style' map, yet after one hundred years, it was a place of redevelopment and modernity. As with the 'Historical Scenes', Hong Kong's past was shaped in direct relation to British presence.

This theme of progress was reiterated throughout the 1980s. In the same year as the map stamps, a set of four postage stamps charting the change in Hong Kong's aviation technology (SG450-453) was released for sale. Aviation had always been a popular topic on stamps; as previously mentioned it was often used to promote the recent innovation of airmail. However, for other nations it became a sign of progress; in the Soviet Union, for example, the depiction of aircraft was seen as evidence that the nation had 'joined the ranks of the most industrialized nations on earth'.<sup>68</sup> For Hong Kong, the stamps were very much tied to the notion of development. The stamps showcased the changes in avionics since 1891, beginning with the Baldwin brothers' balloon, to the contemporary Boeing 747 jet. Each image charted a separate journey: the de Havilland DH.86 on the 40 cent stamp marked the link between Penang and Hong Kong in 1936; the HK\$1 stamp featured the Sikorsky S-42B *Hong Kong Clipper* flying boat which begun service between Hong Kong and San Francisco in 1937; the HK\$1.30 Cathay Pacific Boeing 747 was undated, but celebrated the colony's major

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<sup>68</sup> Rowley, 'Miniature Propaganda', p. 145.

airport and own international airline (and was clearly the most recent example of Hong Kong aviation); and finally the touring American Baldwin brothers' balloon parachuting display in 1891 held at Happy Valley was commemorated on the HK\$5 issue. The point of this series was not to celebrate Hong Kong's current aircraft. Additionally, this was not a set commemorating major milestones in the global history of aviation. Instead, these postage stamps used aviation as an opportunity to celebrate change specific to Hong Kong. Through the celebration of technological advances in aeronautical capabilities, the Post Office celebrated progress whilst simultaneously advertising the Colony's historical and modern global links.

Technology and the theme of past and present were explored by other stamp sets. The 1982 'Port of Hong Kong Past and Present' series of four stamps (SG407-410) celebrated different snapshots of Hong Kong's seafront. The series began with the 1856 painting 'Victoria from the Harbour'; the 1847 painting of West Point in Hong Kong followed; then a fleet of junks; and finally a contemporary image of the Queen Elizabeth 2 (QE2) liner docked at Hong Kong. Each image featured some form of ship; Hong Kong's ports were displayed as being busy and vibrant throughout the ages. Both the maritime technology and seafront changed in each image, which gave a sense of progression throughout the series. Interestingly, the junks issue (HK\$1.30) was in many ways timeless because the junk had taken on an indexical role (the Opening of the Cross-Harbour Tunnel stamp (SG278), for example). However, it contrasted with the image of the QE2, not only due to maritime technology factors, but also because of the image quality of the liner. The use of a photography neatly contrasted with the other images, bringing an extra layer of contemporariness through technological progress to the set. Importantly, and similar to the map and aviation series, Hong Kong's 'Past and Present' was linked directly to the presence of Britain. The story begins in 1847, the beginning of British rule, with an image of a landmass dominated by mountains and sea; it culminated in a picture celebrating the technological and economical progression of the colony. By using both points of reference as Britain's arrival and contemporary British Hong Kong, the colony's progression became directly linked to its British administrators.

## Hong Kong's Population

One of the final stamps to be produced in the eighties celebrated the 'Hong Kong People' (SG616-619). The stamps themselves depicted four elements of Hong Kong, but the additional literature outlined the progression of the Colony. 'Hong Kong,' it began, 'was a barren island in the 1840s, with a population of about 3650, scattered over 20 villages and hamlets.... The territory now [had] a population of about 5.74 million and [was] one of the most densely populated places in the world'. The literature continued to note the lack of resources and its dependence on trade; however, 'Hong Kong [was] now one of the major centres of the world in terms of manufacturing, international trade and finance'. Almost replicating MacLehose's 1971 Festival speech, the envelope declared that a key factor in 'Hong Kong's success [was] its people' (see figure 3.2 in the appendix). Without stating it outright, whilst this envelope dedicated the 'success' of Hong Kong to the territory's population, the clear undertone was a congratulatory reference to Britain; the rhetoric mirroring that of classic 'first contact' narratives prominent in imperial histories.

The reference point for this brief history lesson began on the eve of Rear Admiral George Elliot's arrival and culminated in the present day. The 'scattered' population of Hong Kong were not explored or described, and their story, like the 'barren' islands', also began in 1840. There was no mention of the Opium Wars or Unequal Treaties, yet this is somewhat unsurprising since there appeared to be an unspoken rule that postal material would not reference the illicit opium trade after the Postmaster General complained about a 1962 bulletin for upcoming definitive stamps which mentioned such activity.<sup>69</sup> Of course, the complexities of Hong Kong's history could not be captured on the back of an envelope; just as scholars have discussed the difficulties of including information on such a small area during postal design, this should also be extended to first day covers. However, in the same manner in which postage stamps are noted for their 'political visualization', a state-sanctioned history lesson on a commemorative envelope was a clear example of the ruling elite's narrative.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> HKPRO, HKRS163-1-1262, Letter from the Postmaster general to the Director of Information Services, 'Postage Stamps - New Definitive Issue', 08 May 1962.

<sup>70</sup> Stanley Brunn, "Stamps as messengers of political transition", *The Geographical Review*, 101, 1 (2011), p. 19.

What is illuminating about this set is that, for the first time, the British Administration visualised to the international and domestic market Hong Kong's society. Prior to the eighties, only one stamp set, the 1978 Centenary of Po Leung Kuk women and children's hospital (SG375-376), can be said to depict the local population, but even then, the figures were stylised. The eighties saw a few sets visualise people in Hong Kong. The 1989 Cheung Chair Bun Festival (SG592-595) set featured two young girls, and the Support the Community Chest stamps (SG583-586) pictured a deaf girl, an elderly woman, a blind boy, and a mother and child. The 1984 Centenary of the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club (SG462-465) celebrated a female nurse, a female ballet dancer, and a man using a wheelchair playing handball. Similarly, the 1987 Hong Kong Medical Centenary (SG555-558) set featured two male doctors, one female nurse, and an old undated picture (although assumedly from around 1887) of either patients or staff. These examples provide a useful comparison to the 'Hong Kong people' set, but they did not visualise the population in quite the same way; for the first time, the 'People' were the focal point of the stamps rather than acting as agents, or recipients, of an organisation or charity.

Four stamps made up the 'Hong Kong People' set. The first featured a male child playing with a mid-Autumn Festival lantern and included a reference to the Lunar New Year (60c.). The second represented hobbies and sport, depicted by a male boxer, and horse racing (HK\$1.40). The following stamp included a male construction worker and a male foreign-exchange dealer (HK\$1.80). The final stamp represented Hong Kong's 'cosmopolitan nature' and featured four people, two male and two female, of different ethnicities (HK\$5) (figure 3.2). The demographics represented in the HK\$5 stamp are thus: two males, one East Asian and one white, both wearing suits; and two women, one East Asian and one South Asian, both in traditional garments (what appeared to be a Saree and a Cheongsam). A common theme throughout the few examples of Hong Kong postal stationery that visualised its population, was the reliance on gender stereotyping. The medical postage stamps, for example, cast the male characters as doctors and the female figures as nurses; women were also regularly cast as maternal figures with their children. Gender stereotypes played an identical role in the depiction of medical staff on Finnish stamps; women were shown to be 'madonna-like care-

giver[s]'.<sup>71</sup> In the 'People' set, males were presented in a construction setting, wearing professional attire, or shadowboxing, which contrasted sharply with the only two women drawn wearing traditional dress in an unspecific role. This should be relatively unsurprising; Hong Kong was, according to Mark Hampton, often portrayed as a 'man's playground'; leisure pursuits and sexual exploits were focused almost exclusively on male experience.<sup>72</sup> As Hampton states, women '*did* practice various forms of leisure' but these were either portrayed in terms of shopping, dining, and occasionally sporting activities, or more serious pursuits such as charitable work.<sup>73</sup>

Postage stamps have long been examples of masculine spaces. Igor Cusack has addressed the patriarchal construct of Portuguese nationalism on postage stamps. Cusack argues that, on the rare occasion female figures did appear on postal stationery, they tended to be references to themes of justice and liberty or heads of state; male figures featured in designs, however, were far more likely to be real historical or contemporary figures.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, Marina Warner has noted that 'Often the recognition of a difference between the symbolic order, inhabited by ideal, allegorical figures, and the actual order, of judges, statesmen, soldiers, philosophers, inventors, depends on the unlikelihood of women practising the concepts they represent'.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, women were also used as an allegory for 'backwards' populations. On Soviet stamp designs, female rural workers, symbolic of one of the lowest societal classes, were pictured with contemporary technology as an example of the state's commitment to modernisation.<sup>76</sup> In terms of leisure and sports, whilst some female athletes have appeared on postal stationery to encourage citizens to exercise, generally women have been entirely overlooked in areas of sports.<sup>77</sup> Despite women making up a huge proportion of supporters and players across African football leagues, they have been ignored by stamp designers.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Gary Osmond observes that on Hawaiian postal stationery, males surfers are often celebrated as 'emblematic of

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<sup>71</sup> Pauliina Raento and Stanley D. Brunn, 'Visualizing Finland: Postage Stamps as Political Messengers', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human geography*, 87, 2, Special Issue: Power Over Time-Space: The Inaugural Nordic Geographers Meeting (2005), pp. 155-156.

<sup>72</sup> See particularly his chapter titled 'A man's playground' in: Mark Hampton, *Hong Kong and British Culture, 1945-97* (Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 72-99.

<sup>73</sup> [Emphasis in original]: *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>74</sup> Cusack, 'Tiny Transmitters', pp. 591-612.

<sup>75</sup> Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: the Allegory of the Female Form* (Picador, 1987), p. xx.

<sup>76</sup> Rowley, 'Miniature Propaganda', pp. 150-1.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-1.

<sup>78</sup> Agbenyega Adedze, 'Visualizing the Game: The Iconography of Football on African Postage Stamps', *Soccer & Society*, 13, 2 (2012), p. 304.



Hawaiian masculinity', however if women appear on stamps they are usually portrayed as stereotypical 'hula girls'.<sup>79</sup>

In the case of Hong Kong, traditional gender roles determined how women appeared on postage stamps; there were no female doctors, female boxers, female construction workers, or female finance directors. Most importantly, however, was the clothing they wore; the traditional attire given to the two female characters on the HK\$5 stamp fitted neatly in with the notion of 'cosmopolitan'. In this case, the two male figures, whilst ethnically different, are both presented as professionals within a working environment. Both women, however, are drawn wearing a Saree and a Cheongsam, which were two traditional garments for South Asia and East Asia respectively. Thus, the female characters assumed allegorical roles for multiculturalism; their ethnicity, and Hong Kong's cosmopolitan culture, was reinforced with the use of traditional clothing. It is also worth noting that the Cheongsam had become an eroticised symbol. As Mark Hampton has observed, part of the process of eroticising Asian women included a close examination of their clothing, particular this traditional garb.<sup>80</sup> The Cheongsam contrasted a 'high, rather stiff collar' which suggested formality, against 'flirtatious slits' in the lower half of the dress,<sup>81</sup> and the height of the skirt's slits was often linked to promiscuity.<sup>82</sup> Ultimately, women on Hong Kong postage stamps played a passive role; mirroring their position within the context of masculine imperialism, their pursuits and actions were symbolic.

### **Links with China**

Throughout the eighties another important theme emerged: China became an increasingly relevant philatelic topic in Hong Kong, particularly after the signing of the Joint Declaration in 1984. Commemorative Chinese stamps were available for purchase in Hong Kong for only the second time since the establishment of the PRC.<sup>83</sup> An exhibition on Chinese stamps was staged in a Commercial Press bookshop to showcase elements of the mainland's philatelic history.<sup>84</sup> Such was the success of this event that

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<sup>79</sup> Gary Osmond, 'Modest Monuments?: Postage Stamps, Duke Kahanamoku and Hierarchies of Social Memory', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 43, 3 (December, 2008), p. 324.

<sup>80</sup> Hampton, *Hong Kong and British Culture*, pp. 91-2.

<sup>81</sup> Ian Fleming, *Thrilling Cities* quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>83</sup> 'Stamps to Help the Disabled', *South China Morning Post*, 14 March 1985.

<sup>84</sup> 'China Stamps for All to See', *South China Morning Post*, 12 July 1985.

in the following year it was held again, but this time with material dating as far back as the fourteenth century B.C.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, commemorative seals celebrating the Sino-British agreement were made available for free to Hong Kong philatelists, who wanted anything relevant to the Joint Declaration stamped.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, the agreement between Portugal and China for the return of Macau was also philatelically commemorated with an envelope.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the growing links between Hong Kong and China was recognised, and celebrated, on local postal stationery; mirroring the political climate, the mainland began to become a more important philatelic presence.

Chinese traditions had always been a marketable philatelic topic for the Post Office to use; however, in the eighties these stamps took on a more significant role. Hong Kong began to celebrate aspects of its pre-British history in a bid to draw on a common history with the mainland. Seth Harter has written about the warming of relations between China and Britain during the clearing of the Walled City of Kowloon which began in the mid-eighties. Through cooperation, the run-down area was converted into a classical Chinese garden in the nineties.<sup>88</sup> Carroll has observed that this garden 'unite[d] Hong Kong's precolonial past with its postcolonial present and future'.<sup>89</sup> Importantly, the Hong Kong planners agreed that an early Qing design celebrated a prosperous time for China, and one before the Opium War and thus free from Western influence. 'By turning to the early Qing,' Harter notes, 'the ASD [Architectural Services Department] was consciously rejecting a later model that might have suggested an East-meets-West hybridity'.<sup>90</sup> Whilst the postage stamps of Hong Kong did not necessarily align with this pre-Western period of time, there was certainly a greater emphasis placed on aspects of Hong Kong's Chinese linkages during the eighties, which mirrored the contemporary political climate.

A set of postage stamps celebrating 'Historical Chinese Costumes' was released in 1987 (SG559-562). According to the Stanley Gibbons catalogue, the set was comprised of: a 'Casual Dress with Fringed Hem' prominent between 220 A.D. and 589 A.D. (otherwise

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<sup>85</sup> 'Chinese Early Post on Display', *South China Morning Post*, 23 September 1986.

<sup>86</sup> 'Memorial Seal for Philatelists', *Hong Kong Standard*, 28 May 1985.

<sup>87</sup> 'Envelopes to Mark Signing of Sino-Portugal Agreement', *Evening Standard*, 18 April 1987.

<sup>88</sup> Seth Harter, 'Hong Kong's Dirty Little Secret: Clearing the Walled City of Kowloon', *Journal of Urban History*, 27, 1 (November, 2000), pp. 104-5.

<sup>89</sup> Carroll, *A Concise History*, p. 188.

<sup>90</sup> Harter, 'Hong Kong's Dirty Little Secret', p. 104.

known as the 'Period of Disunity'); 'Two-piece dress and wrap' from 581 A.D. to 960 A.D. (the Sui and Tang Dynasties); a 'Formal dress' from the Song Dynasty, 950 A.D. to 1279 A.D; and a 'Manchu empress costume' belonging to the period 1644 A.D. to 1911 A.D..<sup>91</sup> Barring the years between the Song Dynasty and the Manchu period, this set showcased traditional clothing over the past two millennia. The use of the word 'Chinese' in this series' title is important. Over the past couple of decades elements of Hong Kong's 'Chinese' traditions had been celebrated as either a means of promoting a local identity or tourism (certainly through festivals and events), yet this had always been framed as something specific to Hong Kong. Additionally, the term 'Chinese' itself did not feature on any postal stationery until the eighties, despite the fact that various traditions had been celebrated. The celebration of 'Historical Chinese' attire on postage stamps took on a different meaning in the eighties because of the political climate. Whereas the seventies had picked out unique aspects of Hong Kong in a bid to create a sense of individuality within a global context, the eighties began to celebrate common themes between the Colony and the mainland. In essence, modern Hong Kong was being linked back to 220 A.D. China through the medium of historical mainland clothing. The historical connection between the two territories was being emphasised.

Tradition, particularly Chinese, was important in other stamp designs as well. The 'Chinese Lanterns' set (SG458-461), which celebrated the 1984 Mid-Autumn Festival, received a lot of media attention. According to their designer, the aforementioned Johnny Yim, they were a 'modern presentation of some very traditional items'. Importantly though, Yim selected the various animal lanterns specifically because 'to Chinese people they have a lot of meaning'.<sup>92</sup> A lot of comparisons can be made between this set and the Lunar New Year series. Alongside the symbolism and auspiciousness behind certain animals, the focus on the Chinese population is interesting. Unlike in earlier festival stamps which tended to use traditional iconography to boost tourist trade (the Cantonese Opera masks (SG304-SG306) set issued for the 1974 Arts Festival which did not feature Cantonese Opera, for example), these stamps were produced with the local population in mind. It is also worth noting

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<sup>91</sup> 'Historical Chinese Costumes', *Stanley Gibbons Commonwealth Stamp Catalogue: Hong Kong*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Stanley Gibbons Ltd, 2013), p. 20.

<sup>92</sup> Sheri Tillman, 'Festival stamp designs: Johnny had them licked', *South China Morning Post*, 11 September 1984.

a further comparison to the Lunar Year series comes in the form of Yim's ability to design something for a particular audience. His interview reveals a lot about the design process, as mentioned previously, but importantly, the designer was able to exert some level of input in the process. Certainly the process of designing stamps was different to the ASD garden project, but the dynamic of power between the Post Office and Hong Kong designers was not quite so rigid. Additionally, it is important to observe that tradition continued to be used as a tourist attraction. The 1985 Dragon Boat Festival (SG488-491) set, for example, celebrated its traditional origins and was advertised by the Tourist board.<sup>93</sup> Yet despite commemorating the Ch'ü Yuen, a patriotic Chinese poet who drowned himself in a river to protest the corrupt government in fourth century BC, the emphasis of the festival was on attracting international teams to compete against one another in a social setting.<sup>94</sup> Ultimately, Hong Kong still used tradition as a way of marketing itself, yet it was also beginning to focus more on Chinese aspects of its community in the eighties than in previous decades.

### **Visualising the Land**

Another key feature of Hong Kong's 1980s philatelic designs was a visualisation of landscapes. Already this chapter has touched on the 'Historical Scenes of Hong Kong', 'Port of Hong Kong Past and Present', and 'Maps of Hong Kong' series, which all showcased aspects of the colony's topography. Yet these sets addressed either early versions of Hong Kong scenery, or charted its development over the years; other sets were released to celebrate contemporary landscapes. In 1980, the trend was started with the 'Parks' series (SG391-394), featuring an array of artistic representations of local parks. The 20c. Botanical Gardens stamp drew attention to the exotic assortment of flowers and trees, whilst two flamingos bathe in a pool of water. The HK\$1, Ocean Park, had a strong nautical theme with a bluish hue dominating the image of fish, a giant seahorse, and a performing dolphin. Kowloon Park, the HK\$1.30, was emphasised as a recreational area – whilst the design was dominated by a tree, the key image was of a football match. Finally, the HK\$2 stamp commemorated the various Country Parks; the park chosen to represent this general bracket was the Tai Tam

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<sup>93</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-146, Hong Kong Tourist Association, 'Stamps to Commemorate Dragon Boat Racing', 09 May 1985.

<sup>94</sup> HKPRO, HKRS70-11-147, Press Release, 29 April 1985.

Country Park. The image painted a serene scene of a stone bridge and nearby greenery set against either a sunrise or sunset. Overall, these postage stamps provided a beautiful celebration of Hong Kong's various parks. The decision to use paintings of each park was important; the result was an idealised, almost nostalgic, interpretation of each setting. Nostalgia has always been closely twinned to images of landscapes on postage stamps. Osmond observes that Hawaiian stamps regularly featured picturesque images of the island, devoid of buildings or development, to deliberately present a 'pure, unadulterated, nostalgic view' of the territory.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, Landscape paintings have often been criticised for delivering a skewed version of events or scenery. John Barrell's work, for example, on eighteenth and nineteenth century English paintings has examined the role of the 'rural poor' in various settings; their inclusion was often allegorical and served to fulfil the role of 'industrious' figures.<sup>96</sup> Landscape paintings were also closely tied to notions of imperialism and Empire.<sup>97</sup> Daniel Rycroft argues that images of foreign lands acted as 'interpretive gateways' which influenced, or reinforced, popular opinion.<sup>98</sup> Liza Oliver has written about the misrepresentation of colonial Brazil by Frans Post; the realities of colonial frictions and impenetrable wildernesses were overlooked, and instead an exoticised, romantic version of the colony was sold to buyers in Holland.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, Wintle observes the tendency for paintings of colonies to reinforce stereotypes; colonised subjects, for example, were pictured naked next to clothed colonisers.<sup>100</sup>

The stylistic representation of Hong Kong's parks served to deliver an idealistic version of the territory to a domestic and international audience. From a touristic point of view, these four images could sell the colony to potential international visitors. As each stamp celebrated a different aspect of Hong Kong's outdoor pursuits (exotic animals, sea life, sports, and serene views), Hong Kong was depicted as a place which 'had it all'. Yet parks were also important on a domestic level. As Choi notes, the Country Parks in particular were established after the 1967 riots, as a way of avoiding societal unrest

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<sup>95</sup> Osmond, 'Modest Monuments?', pp. 323-4.

<sup>96</sup> John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>97</sup> Glenn Hooper (ed.), *Landscape and Empire, 1720-2000* (Ashgate, 2005).

<sup>98</sup> Daniel Rycroft, *Representing Rebellion: Visual Aspects of Counter-Insurgency in Colonial India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 115.

<sup>99</sup> Liza Oliver, 'Frans Posts Brazil: Fractures in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Landscape Paintings', *Dutch Crossing*, 37, 3 (2013), pp. 198-219.

<sup>100</sup> Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display*, p. 124.

through the provision of recreational spaces.<sup>101</sup> Moreso, each of these portrayed parks were situated on Hong Kong Island (Botanical Gardens, Ocean Park, Tai Tam Country Park) or Kowloon (Kowloon Park); there were no celebrations of the vast amounts of natural space in the New Territories. Thus, the focus of these stamps was less on exploring Hong Kong's natural environment, and instead on a promotion of recreational space within the confines of the territory's urban areas. Parks, of course, are manufactured spaces.<sup>102</sup> As with the stylised and exotic images chosen to depict the parks on this set of postage stamps, the parks themselves were examples of idealised, maintained, and regulated spaces.

The conveyance of Hong Kong's geography via the medium of paint was certainly a way of romanticising the territory, but the use of photography was also employed as a means of visualising the colony on postage stamps. In 1983, the series 'Hong Kong by Night' (SG442-445) featured four images of Hong Kong's landscape. Victoria Harbour (30c.), the Space Museum (HK\$1), a fireworks display over the city skyline (HK\$1.30), and Hong Kong's illuminated 'Jumbo' floating restaurant (HK\$5) were the chosen subjects. Contrasting with the serene parks, these stamps featured aspects of Hong Kong's other terrain, the modern city centres of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. Whilst this was a celebration of Hong Kong's geography, the presence of electronic lights in each stamp served as a means of accentuating the urbanised areas of the land. As Raymond Williams noted in his *The Country and the City*, the depiction of lights in cities 'was an obvious image for the impressive civilization of the capital, visibly growing in wealth and in conscious public effect'.<sup>103</sup> Yet the firework display, famous eatery, and the Science Museum add a recreational, if not fun, element – Hong Kong's geography was also a place of culture and leisure. However, the areas captured in these photographs were exclusively urban; they did not feature the New Territories or other rural locations. The use of unnatural light to map out the landscape would clearly have been ineffective in expansive village areas; these stamps were less 'Hong Kong by Night', and more a collection of images of 'Victoria Harbour by Night'.

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<sup>101</sup> Choi, *Hong Kong History in Stamps*, p. 107.

<sup>102</sup> The definition of what constitutes a natural or manufactured area within the parameters of urban environments is still debated, but if administrative forces have shaped the area in any way, they are generally not a 'natural' space or considered an example of 'urban wildscapes'. A good overview of this can be found in *Urban Wildscapes*, particularly Dougal Sheridan's chapter: Dougal Sheridan, 'Disordering Public Space: Urban Wildscape Processes in Practice', in Anna Jorgensen and Richard Keenan (eds.), *Urban Wildscapes* (Routledge, 2012), pp. 201-220.

<sup>103</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Paladin, 1975), p. 275.

As postage stamps only allowed designers a small space to work with, often key geographic areas were chosen to represent broader areas. Katyn Forest, for example, became an allusion to the atrocities committed by Russian forces to the entire of Poland on Solidarity postal material.<sup>104</sup> In a colonial context, East African colonies often 'appropriated' images of Mount Kilimanjaro or Lake Naivasha; the aim was to create a general representation of the colonial possession.<sup>105</sup> For Hong Kong, the selection of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon in stamps which celebrated 'Hong Kong' was a regular theme. The 'Maps of Hong Kong' set, for example, focused predominantly on these two locations. The Commonwealth Day commemoratives of 1983 (SG438-441) did the same. The thirty cent stamp featured an 'Aerial View of Hong Kong'; however, this view disregarded the New Territories, and instead exclusively focussed on the urban areas of Kowloon Peninsula and the northern coastline of Hong Kong Island. Likewise, two other stamps in the set (the HK\$1 and HK\$5) featured Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour famous cityscape; not one stamp in the collection featured the New Territories. The Halley's Comet commemoration set (SG507-510) charted its flight path from the solar system towards Earth and eventually over Hong Kong; the image used to showcase this was the Victoria Harbour skyline. Thus, the built up areas of Hong Kong had, in many ways, taken on an indexical role for the Colony; Kowloon and the Island, or indeed Victoria Harbour, could be used to celebrate the territory of Hong Kong in its entirety.

The popularity of this particular scene on postal stationery was in many ways paradoxical. Hong Kong's waterfront had by now become a popular image of the city, and its unique blend of skyscrapers and green hills was seen as an 'icon of the Asian metropolis'.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, the Harbour was a fixed point of reference in the territory's history; it had always remained a constant. David Scott argues that the image of Marianne was a frequent fixture in French stamp design because it was a recognisable and constant icon throughout French history. In 1989, an image of Marianne 'reborn' as a French model appeared on a postage stamp; Scott argues that, whilst she was placed within a contemporary context, she ultimately served to

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<sup>104</sup> Evans, 'The Argument of Images', p. 756.

<sup>105</sup> Cusack, 'Tiny Transmitters', p. 604.

<sup>106</sup> Charlie Q. L. Xue, *Hong Kong Architecture 1945-2015: From Colonial to Global* (Springer, 2016), p. 153.

illustrate that France maintained a core sense of values and beliefs, which could be traced back through time with this historically symbolic figure.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, the Port could be reimagined and developed, but it still provided a connection to Hong Kong's past (the 'Port of Hong Past and Present' set evinces this). Yet at the same time, its popularity was based upon its modern, transnational qualities equated with progress and Western-ness; as Leslie Sklair has argued, 'despite their regional characteristics,' such spaces 'could be almost anywhere in the world'.<sup>108</sup> Thus, Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour skyline was at once a unique aspect of the territory, but also a symbol of transnationalism which could fit into any 'modern' location. Conversely, the New Territories was a place of agrarian and 'indigenous' identity. Whilst it was represented in series such as 'Rural Architecture' or 'Historical Scenes', this was because it fulfilled the role of a 'traditional' Hong Kong setting; for contemporary scenes, the urban environment was far more frequently used. Yet it is worth adding that the British Administration's policy towards the New Territories was to 'interfere as little as possible with the lives of the people';<sup>109</sup> in turn, this area seems to have generally been underrepresented on postal stationery.

One philatelic exception to the New Territories being exclusively portrayed as a traditional, rural space does exist. The British Administration released a stamp celebrating the introduction of 'New Towns' along the border between the New Territories and Kowloon. However, the purpose of this stamp was not to celebrate the New Territories as a modern space, but to instead highlight Britain's commitment to modernising Hong Kong in its entirety - the New Territories was not being deliberately left as a rural and traditional space by the British Administration. In 1981, a four stamp set was produced to celebrate 'Public Housing' (SG402-405). The four stamps formed a panoramic view of the new suburban living spaces. Key features included modern transportation, large accommodation buildings, and a children's playing area. The design resembled an architect's vision, paralleling the 'Parks' set, rather than capturing the true image of these new developments. In reality, this urbanisation had been highly disruptive, and large rural communities had been uprooted in a bid to cope with

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<sup>107</sup> David Scott, 'National Icons: The Semiotics of the French Stamp', *French Cultural Studies*, 3, 215 (October, 1992), p. 324.

<sup>108</sup> Leslie Sklair, 'Towards an Understanding of Architectural Iconicity in Global Perspectives', in Gregory Bracken (ed), *Aspects of Urbanization in China: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou* (Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 37.

<sup>109</sup> D. J. Dwyer, 'Land Use and Regional Planning Problems in the New Territories of Hong Kong', *The Geographical Journal*, 152, 2 (July, 1986), p. 232.



the rising pressures of urban population increases. Whilst the New Towns were supposedly built as self-contained environments, in reality planners and administrators had failed to provide enough employment opportunities; consequently, large numbers of new residents had to commute from these new remote locations which heavily strained the already stretched transportation links.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, the ecological effects of such a huge infrastructural development were monumental, and a multitude of environmental issues sprang out of the result of poor planning.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, the spaciousness expressed on the postage stamps was far from the truth. Population density in the New Territories shifted from around three to four hundred people per hectare before the New Towns, to between 2,500 and 3,000 people per hectare in the residential areas; the New Towns were overcrowded.<sup>112</sup> In depicting these new residential areas, it was clearly preferential for the British Administration to showcase the idealised plan for the New Towns, rather than the disruptive reality.

The public housing commemoratives were part of a wider trend of celebrating the British Administration's architectural achievements in Hong Kong - however, the remaining stamps focussed on architecture exclusive to Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. The 'New Buildings' set (SG503-506) celebrated the introduction of the Academy for Performing Arts (fifty cent), the Exchange Square (HK\$1.30), Hong Kong Bank Headquarters (HK\$1.70), and the Coliseum (HK\$5). All completed in the 1980s, these four architecturally striking buildings are presented on top of squared graph paper; they were fresh off the drawing board. Whilst these images did not feature wandering couples or children playing, their purpose was the same as the public housing stamps; in essence, they served to celebrate the British Administration's investment in contemporary Hong Kong. This technique was often used by governments to legitimise their authority. In Taiwan, officials regularly celebrated construction projects in a bid to highlight the positive impact they had on the country.<sup>113</sup> In the Soviet Union, 'far-flung parts of the country' were depicted with modern technology and infrastructure to highlight positive change.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, Wintle

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<sup>110</sup> Ian Scott, 'Administering the New Towns of Hong Kong', *Asian Survey*, 22, 7 (July, 1982), p. 668.

<sup>111</sup> Dwyer, 'Land Use and Regional Planning', pp. 236-238.

<sup>112</sup> Ying-keung Chan, 'The Development of New Towns', in Ambrose Y. C. King, Rance P. L. Lee (eds.), *Social Life and Development in Hong Kong* (Chinese University Press, 1981), p. 14.

<sup>113</sup> Phil Deans, 'Isolation, Identity and Taiwanese Stamps as Vehicles for Regime Legitimation', *East Asia*, 22, 2 (Summer, 2005), p. 13.

<sup>114</sup> Rowley, 'Miniature Propaganda', pp. 143-4.

notes that this was part of a long tradition in colonial images; pictures of cut trees suggested deforestation, piers symbolised new transport links, newly built houses juxtaposed leafy shelters, and lighthouses and churches suggested development and civilisation.<sup>115</sup>

In addition to previous achievements, the British Administration also celebrated proposed developments. 'Building for the Future' (SG620-625) was a set of six postage stamps which featured modern infrastructure and architecture projects which would benefit Hong Kong in the long term. The University of Science and Technology (60c.), the Cultural Centre (70c.), the Eastern Harbour Crossing (HK\$1.30), the Bank of China (HK\$1.40), the Convention and Exhibition Centre (HK\$1.80), and the Light Rail Transit (HK\$5) were all examples of the British Administration planning for the territory's future. This portrayal of contemporary and stylish buildings on stamps was used across nations to ensure that their country was 'synonymous with high quality, sophisticated style and clever innovations'.<sup>116</sup> In an environment of uncertainty shaped by the Sino-British Joint Declaration, these postage stamps served as a means of steadying the ship. By highlighting plans for future investment and development, the British Administration could reassure the domestic and international communities that Hong Kong would continue to progress.

## **Conclusion**

The handover discussions which began the eighties played an important role in how Hong Kong designed its postal stationery in the decade. As stamps became increasingly popular and the Hong Kong Post Office brought in specialist staff to improve their international marketing strategies, they were clearly seen as important to the British Administration. The two key themes which dominated postage stamp design in this period, time and space, were used as a means of presenting Hong Kong's timeline. Often these themes were approached with specific relation to the British administration. The various series which charted Hong Kong's change over time almost exclusively began in the 1840s with the arrival of the British; it was seen as a watershed moment for change. Other stamps addressed change in different ways;

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<sup>115</sup> Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display*, p. 128.

<sup>116</sup> Raento and Brunn, 'Visualizing Finland', p. 153.

geographic alterations which came through reclamation projects were celebrated alongside urbanisation. Infrastructural investments were also celebrated, and Hong Kong was presented as a modern and advanced location. However, this was specific to location; whilst urbanisation projects in the New Territories were celebrated on postage stamps, generally this area was treated as a symbol of tradition. Kowloon and Hong Kong Island essentially took on an indexical role for the entire territory. Alongside contemporary developments, society was denoted on a stamp set. In representing the demographics of the cosmopolitan Hong Kong, the masculine genetics of imperialism – and Hong Kong society more generally – were reinforced and displayed. Finally, the future of Hong Kong's infrastructural plans was showcased on postal material; it served the function of reassuring the population that Hong Kong would continue to grow due to British planning. Ultimately, in a period of uncertainty, the postage stamps of the eighties highlighted the positive changes which had occurred in Hong Kong's timeline and presented a version of Hong Kong's history moulded around the British Administration. In many ways, the fascination with change in Hong Kong was symptomatic of the planned transfer of control; the handover to China was simply the next chapter in a long tale of transformation. The exploration of Hong Kong both spatially and throughout time further promoted Hong Kong as a unique entity in a global context; as the next chapter shall indicate, this key theme would be more deeply explored in the stamps of the nineties.

## **Chapter Five: Promoting Individuality and Preparing for the Handover, 1990-1997**

The postage stamps of the eighties defined Hong Kong across space and time by celebrating particular aspects of its history, geography, and culture through a specific top-down narrative. The stamps of the nineties built on this by promoting Hong Kong as a unique entity. Philatelic design in the nineties focussed on Hong Kong's international presence. As Hong Kong would not be granted democratic representation or independence from British or Chinese rule, these stamps served to suggest Hong Kong had the qualities of an individual territory. The influence of the international community on Hong Kong was emphasised on various designs; the consumption of overseas culture was also used as a way of presenting Hong Kong as a diverse place. International events, mainly sporting, allowed Hong Kong to identify its interaction with the international community; competing as an individual entity, and not as a British colony, allowed it to present itself as autonomous. Moreover, through the hosting of events, the colony cemented its place as a regular fixture on the sporting calendar, which further solidified its position within the global community. Postage stamps also showcased Hong Kong's uniqueness, both to the world and within its borders. Whilst links to China were stressed as the handover loomed, the ultimate focus of these designs was to attract visitors. Wildlife, terrain, landmarks, and modern buildings sold a particular concept of Hong Kong to stamp collectors and the global audience. Finally, as the handover approached, the Post Office began producing nostalgic reproductions of previous postage stamps. These were certainly produced to raise as much revenue as possible from the philatelic market before Britain transferred authority over to China. However, these stamps were also used as analogies for colonialism. As Britain could not overtly celebrate its imperial past, it commemorated the Post Office and its philatelic output over 150 years instead – the institution itself became an indexical figure for British imperial control.

Ultimately, this chapter aims to analyse three key research questions. Firstly, to what extent did the postage stamps of Hong Kong link the territory to the international community? Secondly, how were postage stamps used to highlight the unique contributions and aspects of Hong Kong? Finally, how was postal stationery used to allegorically commemorate British rule in Hong Kong over the past 150 years? In

answering these questions, this chapter will highlight how Hong Kong visualised its international connections and imperial history. Hong Kong was sold as a unique place despite the fact it would continue to be administered by another external government after the handover.

### **The Global Community**

The beginning of the 1990s was heavily influenced by the events of Tiananmen Square in 1989. The use of the Chinese military to suppress the student movement of 1989 was seen as a watershed moment for China. The protest was depicted as a rejection of Chinese Communism in favour of Western liberalism; China's younger population was seen as challenging the authoritarian status quo.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of the collapsing Soviet empire, contemporary critics viewed the Tiananmen protest as a key moment in the end of global Communism; Tiananmen provided an opportunity for a South-East Asian Berlin Wall moment.<sup>2</sup> Particularly in Hong Kong, there was considerable backing for the students; protests and music concerts raised money for the occupiers.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, as news circulated about the atrocities which had taken place on 4<sup>th</sup> June, one million citizens took to the streets to demonstrate against the Chinese Government. Many Hong Kong citizens began donating blood and withdrawing money from PRC banks to force a run.<sup>4</sup> The Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China received over HK\$30 million in donations, anti-China protest groups and political parties were established, and marches condemning the 4th June events continued.<sup>5</sup> A survey held before the events in China indicated that seventy-five percent of the population was optimistic about the territory's future; after Tiananmen this figure had dropped to fifty-two percent.<sup>6</sup>

The events of 1989 resonated with the Hong Kong population chiefly because Hong Kong did not have the political apparatus in place to protect its citizens from a similar situation once the handover was completed. The signing of the Joint Declaration had

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Li, Marjorie H. Li, Steven Mark, *Culture and Politics in China: An Anatomy of Tiananmen Square* (Transaction Publishers, 2011), pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Louisa Lim, *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited* (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (I.B Tauris, 2007), p. 246; John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), p. 191.

<sup>4</sup> Tsang, *A Modern History*, p. 248.

<sup>5</sup> Carroll, *A Concise History*, p. 191; Bob Beatty, *Democracy, Asian Values, and Hong Kong: Evaluating Political Elite Beliefs* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Norman Miners, *The Government and Politics of Hong Kong* (Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 39.

failed to take into account the wants and needs of the local population. With little say in the proposed transfer, many citizens began to push for an increase in local political participation. However, the Joint Declaration stipulated that institutional changes in Hong Kong were forbidden. Furthermore, the publication of the Basic Law in 1990 tied Britain to withholding any institutional reforms. Whilst the British Administration had toyed with the idea of expanding political participation to the wider local population, it ultimately dropped these plans and argued its hands were tied by the Chinese Government. Of course, Britain had the opportunity to implement these changes long before handover discussions were even on the table; the '1946 outlook', for example, had proposed reform. Thus, the policy of 'convergence' was met with animosity by the citizens of Hong Kong, who viewed this capitulation to China as a failing of the British Administration.<sup>7</sup> Coupled with the events in Tiananmen, unease over Hong Kong's return to Chinese authority clouded the following seven years.

Philatelically, the handover and the events in Tiananmen were completely ignored. Hong Kong would not be given independence; so instead, the postage stamps of the nineties were used as a way of highlighting Hong Kong's international links and individuality. Not only did these designs address how the international community had impacted on Hong Kong's development, but importantly, they celebrated the unique contributions Hong Kong had given to the world. One of the first set of stamps to be released in the 1990s commemorated 'International Cuisine' (SG636-641). According to the first day cover envelope, 'chefs from different countries of the world have [...] helped Hong Kong become the culinary capital of Asia' (see figure 4.1 in the appendix). The set of six stamps were chosen to celebrate the multitude of cuisines which had inspired such a change; two stamps pictured Chinese food, then on the remaining four stamps Indian, Thai, Japanese, and French foods were commemorated. Yet these stamps were only in part a celebration of Hong Kong's culinary dominance in Asia; the specific reference of 'chefs from different countries' highlighted the inclusion and impact of various cultures and nationalities on Hong Kong's population. In many ways, the diversity displayed on these postage stamps did more to highlight Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan society than the previous year's 'Hong Kong People' set.

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<sup>7</sup> Carroll, *A Concise History*, p. 186.

In 1991, the British Administration published the census results which boasted '100% enumeration of all persons by age and sex'.<sup>8</sup> According to information on the nationality of the population (which as the census pointed out, was defined by travel documents and not necessarily related to 'ethnicity, race or place of origin'), the population of Hong Kong, which stood at about 5.7 million, was overwhelmingly either British (albeit with right of abode in Hong Kong only) (60.8%), or Chinese (with place of domicile in Hong Kong) (35.3%). The remaining 3.9% was composed of 'Others'.<sup>9</sup> This category comprised of Japanese (0.2%), Canadian (0.3%), Thai (0.2%), American (0.3%), Portuguese (0.3%), Filipino (1.2%) and the combined category of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan (0.3%), with a final category of 'others' (1.1%).<sup>10</sup> Additionally, there were 51,847 Vietnamese migrants who were counted separately due to immigration categorisation issues.<sup>11</sup> Considering the global reputation of the French cooking schools, the presence of a French cuisine stamp is unsurprising. Regarding the other stamps, the representation of food from Japan, Thailand, and India seems to be a key indicator of the breakdown of this 'others' category. However, considering the dominance of nationals from the Philippines, the largest minority national group, it seems odd to not philatelically mark their cuisine. This, though, most likely reflected the position of Filipino nationals in Hong Kong society; their presence was linked with rising demands for domestic workers.

The economic boom in the eighties saw a sharp increase in middle class households hiring domestic workers; high earning families traditionally employed almost exclusively female Filipino nationals.<sup>12</sup> Yet a large portion of Thai migrants, whose cuisine was represented on a stamp, who entered Hong Kong also took employment as low paid domestic workers, although their numbers were far lower than immigrants from the Philippines.<sup>13</sup> Comparatively, since the formation of British Hong Kong in the early nineteenth century, South Asian migrants, particularly from Colonial India, were

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<sup>8</sup> Census and Statistics Department Hong Kong, 'Hong Kong 1991 Population Census: Graphic Guide', p. 5, [http://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/hist/1991\\_2000/B11200701991XXXXB0100.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/hist/1991_2000/B11200701991XXXXB0100.pdf), accessed 30th March 2017.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Census and Statistics Department Hong Kong, 'Hong Kong 1991 Population Census: Summary Results', p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Erino Ozeki, 'Migration Frontier of Filipino Women: Ethnic Relations of Filipina Domestic Helpers with Chinese Employers in Hong Kong', *Southeast Asian Studies*, 34, 4 (March 1997), pp. 677-678.

<sup>13</sup> Nicole Constable, *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Migrant Workers* (Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 4.

employed in either the military, the police, as security workers, or as traders.<sup>14</sup> For the Japanese, Heung Wah Wong notes that many migrants, particularly young women, came to Hong Kong for university; many others came to fill managerial positions for Japanese businesses opening in the colony.<sup>15</sup> Of course, there were exceptions to the rule, but generally speaking, Filipino and Thai migrants held positions of domestic servitude whereas South Asian (specifically those from India) and Japanese migrants did not; thus, there was a hierarchy within the minority 'Others'. Consequently, this stamp set provided an interesting reflection of the composition of the colony's population. By focussing on cuisine which had influenced Hong Kong's palette, this series highlighted the diversity of Hong Kong's demographic; Hong Kong was an international territory.

Besides looking at aspects of Hong Kong society, the international theme of the nineties postage stamps did a lot to emphasise the territory's participation in global events. Sporting events are a popular theme on postage stamps, and various scholars have analysed the philatelic marking of such events.<sup>16</sup> For Hong Kong, the biggest sporting event it was involved with was the Olympic Games. As Dennis Altman states, the Olympic Games was a prime example 'of the internationalisation of Western values and organisations, and hence part of the construction of a global culture that is depicted on stamps'.<sup>17</sup> The territory first participated in the Olympics in 1952 as a British colony; however, despite gradually gaining more autonomy in terms of its membership of international sporting federations, Hong Kong's experience of the Olympics was dominated by the Cold War. As David Cauter has explored, the Olympics, particularly the 1980 Moscow games, were symbolically useful for the West to confront the politics of the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> Brian Bridges has analysed the relationship between Hong Kong, Britain, China, the United States, and Russia during the

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<sup>14</sup> Melvin Ember, Carol R. Ember, Ian Skoggard (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*, Volume II: Diaspora Communities (Springer Science & Business Media, 2004), p. 510; Barbara-Sue White, *Turbans and Traders: Hong Kong's Indian Communities* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Heung Wah Wong, *Japanese Bosses, Chinese Workers: Power and Control in a Hong Kong Megastore* (University of Hawaii Press, 1999), p. 148.

<sup>16</sup> Gary Osmond and Murray G. Phillips, 'Enveloping the Past: Sport Stamps, Visuality and Museums', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28, 9-9 (2001), pp. 1138-1155; Agbenyega Adedze, 'Visualizing the Game: The Iconography of Football on African Postage Stamps', *Soccer & Society*, 13, 2 (2012), pp. 294-308.

<sup>17</sup> Dennis Altman, *Paper Ambassadors: The Politics of Stamps* (Angus & Robertson, 1991), p. 75.

<sup>18</sup> The Moscow Olympics is mentioned numerous times in Cauter's work, but his discussion of Tom Stoppard's BBC television play highlights how the 1980 games provided a rich source for his work, see: David Cauter, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 363.



boycotting of the 1980 Moscow Olympics.<sup>19</sup> Despite Hong Kong's eagerness to participate in this event, external pressures from Thatcher ultimately ensured that it followed British demands.

Despite joining in 1952, it was not until 1991 that the Olympics were celebrated on postal stationery (Barcelona sheetlet (SG685)). Sheetlets were comparable to first day covers inasmuch as they provided the collector with additional imagery; the perforated stamps were often situated in a wider setting. For the Barcelona sheetlet, the main image was of three athletes (a javelin thrower, a runner, and a high jumper); however, the stamp itself featured the 1998 HK\$10 definitive stamp which featured Queen Elizabeth II's portrait and a small line drawing of two ships (including the iconic junk) in the indexical Victoria Harbour. The practice of placing definitive stamps in a commemorative sheetlet was used throughout the nineties, and provided the Post Office with a neat way of raising postal revenue without creating new stamp designs. The sheetlet stated that this commemorative issue was a way of celebrating the co-sponsorship of the Olympic Games with thirty-one other postal services. The objective of the sponsorship was to 'strengthen the role of postal administrations in world communications infrastructure and to further the ideals of the Olympic movement' (see figure 4.2 in the appendix).

The same Olympic Games, however, were also commemorated by a set of postage stamps in the following year (SG696-699); these were then re-released (SG722) three months later in a slightly different sheetlet. The four stamps featured five athletes (the same javelin thrower, runner, and high jumper as before, alongside a cyclist and a swimmer). The first day cover once again reiterated the Hong Kong Post Office's position as 'co-sponsor' and celebrated the fact that these four stamps were 'the first Olympic stamps ever issued by the Hong Kong Post Office' (see figure 4.3 in the appendix). The Olympic stamps and sheetlets revealed two important aspects about Hong Kong philatelic material in the nineties. First, it would play an important part in highlighting Hong Kong's participation in, and contribution to, major international events. Secondly, the introduction of sheetlets to sell definitive stamps in

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Bridges, 'Sustaining Identities: Hong Kong and the Politics of an Olympic Boycott', in Fan Hong and Zhouxiang Lu (eds.), *Sport and Nationalism in Asia: Power, Politics and Identity* (Routledge, 2016), pp. 4-17.

a new context, in addition to the re-releasing of commemorative stamps, indicated that the British Administration aimed to raise as much revenue from Hong Kong postal sales as possible before the colony returned to China.

Competing in international sporting events certainly helped cement Hong Kong's status within the international community; however, hosting international events further legitimised the territory's position. The 1995 Hong Kong International Sporting Events stamp set (SG798-801) was a celebration of four international sporting occasions unique to the colony. The first, the Rugby Sevens (HK\$1) stamp, commemorated one of the largest Sevens events in the international calendar. Beginning in 1976, the tournament gained ground as a prominent rugby fixture in Asia; Hong Kong Rugby Football Union Chairman and Sevens co-creator A.D.C. Smith noted after the opening event that it 'put Hong Kong on the international sporting map'.<sup>20</sup> The HK\$1.90 stamp focussed on the China Sea Race, a biennial event which became officially recognised by the Royal Ocean Racing Club in 1972. The race was a six hundred mile journey between Hong Kong and Subic Bay in the Philippines. The International Dragon Boat Race (HK\$2.40), touched upon in the previous chapter, was also featured. The final stamp, the HK\$5 'Hong Kong International Races', celebrated one of the colony's most renowned sports: horse racing. Hosted by the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, separately commemorated in their centennial year, 1984, for their charity work (SG462-465), the event was expanded in the early nineties to accommodate more races and competitors due to its popularity. Through these various stamp sets, Hong Kong cemented itself not only as a global sporting competitor, but also as an organiser and host to major events in the international sporting calendar.

In addition to the celebration of Hong Kong's 'national' contribution to the international stage, the achievements of prominent locals were philatelically commemorated. Gary Osmond notes that the philatelic celebration of famous personalities usually involved lengthy campaigning and numerous bureaucratic procedures. Thus, when they were eventually accepted as stamp subjects, this meant

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<sup>20</sup> 'The Hong Kong Sevens', *Hong Kong Sevens*, <http://hksevens.com/about-us/the-hong-kong-sevens>, accessed 31 March 2017.

they clearly occupied 'an important place in history'.<sup>21</sup> In Britain and its overseas territories, no living figure, besides members of the Royal family, may feature on a postage stamp; thus, suggestions are usually made for historical figures or recently deceased persons. When certain people are chosen, there can be numerous problems. For example, as Jack Child notes, an Argentinian commemorative for Evita Perón caused controversy when officials objected to the use of cancellation stamps on her portrait.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, a collaborative stamp between the United States and Mexico which celebrated the life of Frida Kahlo was condemned by American officials; they did not want to give attention to 'a Communist, a drug addict, and a bisexual'.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the decision to commemorate particular individuals was a considered one, usually political, and certainly a statement about the issuing nation.

Hong Kong, under British occupation, only issued two sets of stamps commemorating Hong Kong people, and both appeared in the nineties. The first, in 1994, was of Chinese scholar Dr. James Legge (SG787). Legge worked as a Scottish missionary-scholar in Hong Kong and China and was responsible for the translation of many major Chinese texts into English. Additionally, he established and taught in a number of schools and colleges in Hong Kong, and eventually became the first Professor of Chinese at the University of Oxford. Undoubtedly, Legge contributed to the Western interpretation of Chinese literature, yet the decision to use him as the first figure to be commemorated on a Hong Kong stamp begs the question of why. Within contemporary academic circles, Legge has certainly received attention, most notably from two large studies by Norman Girardot and Loren Pfister.<sup>24</sup> Outside of the academy, however, Legge would have been a relatively unknown entity; this ultimately made him the perfect icon to appear on Hong Kong's stamps. In the politically charged, post-Tiananmen, near-handover period of the nineties, whatever philatelically celebrated figure was chosen could not be a controversial Kahlo-esque figure. Legge was, at face value, a transferor of knowledge and a symbolic link between China and

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<sup>21</sup> Gary Osmond, 'Modest Monuments?: Postage Stamps, Duke Kahanamoku and Hierarchies of Social Memory', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 43, 3 (December, 2008), p. 326.

<sup>22</sup> Jack Child, *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 113-4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (University of California Press, 2002); Loren F. Pfister, *Striving for the "Whole Duty of Man": James Legge and the Scottish Protestant Encounter with China*, Two Volumes (Peter Lang, 2004).

the West. As the first day cover stated, Legge's ultimate aim was to enable 'the learning of the East to scholars and missionaries of the West' (see figure 4.4 in the appendix). However, as Girardot argues, clearly this was not a bid to absorb Chinese teachings; instead Legge's ambition was to learn about China and its traditions in a bid to enhance Protestant missionaries' hopes of converting the local Chinese population.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, then, the commemorative for Legge, whilst presented as a celebration of academia and Sino-British relations, was in reality a nod towards British cultural imperialism. However, what the stamp did achieve was to highlight international collaboration; the first Hong Kong 'personality' to be celebrated linked Hong Kong and China to the international stage.

The other stamp set issued to commemorate popular locals was released the following year, in 1995. This time, the subjects were far more recognisable: Hong Kong Film Stars (SG812-815). One of the most internationally well-known Hong Kong celebrities, Bruce Lee, featured on the HK\$1.20. Lee held dual nationality for Hong Kong and the United States, and his father was a major Cantonese opera star. Finding initial fame as a supporting star in American television and film, it was not until he moved to Hong Kong that he began to star in major films and played a pivotal role in crafting the 'kung fu' genre. The following stamp, the HK\$2.10, featured Leung Sing-Por. He starred in over four hundred films, and was a major figure in Cantonese opera. Initially playing civil and martial roles, he eventually became known for his 'clown' persona. In 1976, he became the first local artist to be given an MBE. Yam Kim-Fai, star of over three hundred films, was pictured on the HK\$2.60. Another notorious Cantonese opera star, she became a household name by playing both male and female roles. In 1995, she was awarded the '100 Years Opera Movie Hall Award' at the Hong Kong Film Awards. Finally, the HK\$5 stamp featured Lin Dai, the only Mandarin-speaking film star in the set. Born to a Chinese politician, her family arrived in Hong Kong in 1948. She starred in many films produced by the renowned Shaw Brothers Studio, who popularised kung fu films.

The celebration of these stars contrasted sharply with Legge; here was a collection of postage stamps honouring major personalities who had played an intricate role in the

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<sup>25</sup> Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China*, pp. 204-205.

development of Hong Kong popular culture. Yet these artists also charted a significant change in Hong Kong's film history, from the popularity of Cantonese opera, which began to wane in the seventies, to the rise of Hong Kong's martial arts stars. This was an artistic device used by philatelic designers; figures were often chosen as allegories of genres and events. African stamps celebrating famous footballers, for example, deliberately featured people who reflected the 'iconology of the game in history'; they were used to represent different epochs in time, styles of play, teams, nations, and tournaments.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, the Hong Kong subjects were examples of managing change. It was not until Lee left San Francisco for Hong Kong that he began to carve out his well renowned career. Lin Dai's family political ties meant that she had to uproot her life on the mainland and move to Hong Kong at a young age, in order to escape the Civil War and establishment of the PRC. Kim-Fai alternated between male and female characters depending on the requirements of the role; her career was based around versatility. Leung carved his career out of playing civil roles in Cantonese operas; however, as he aged and gained weight he was forced into playing the 'clown act', a role which he thrived in.

In an age of uncertainty caused by the impending handover, these individuals played an important role as symbols of perseverance and adaptation in Hong Kong's history. Not only were they examples of Hong Kong's changing cultural scene, they were examples of weathering change. However, these were also figures who were recognisable representatives of Hong Kong's popular culture on a domestic and international level. Their influence on global culture was unquestionable, particularly in the case of the internationally renowned Bruce Lee. Hong Kong was showcasing its unique contribution to the international stage. At face value, there appears to be no connection between Legge and these four stars. As an academic with ties to cultural imperialism, Legge appears juxtaposed against four icons of Hong Kong popular culture. However, all parties translated Hong Kong for the world. Whether Cantonese operas, kung fu films, or Chinese literature, these famous locals helped to create an image of Hong Kong and China that was consumed on an international level. Considering that only five people were ever commemorated on Hong Kong's postage

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<sup>26</sup> Adedze, 'Visualizing the Game', p. 303.

stamps under the British Administration, each one was responsible for selling a representation of the territory to a global audience.

These various stamp sets highlighted Hong Kong's growing relationship with the international community. The allegorical cuisine series celebrated Hong Kong's diverse community; however, hierarchies of nationalities ultimately determined which foods were celebrated. Participation in global events also highlighted the territory's interaction with the wider world; its independent involvement began marking it as an individual entity. Hosting events furthered this illusion – as Hong Kong became a regular and important destination on the fixture list, the colony emphasised that it not only participated in, but also contributed to global events. Finally, through the celebration of popular local personalities, Hong Kong highlighted its unique contribution to the world. Overall, Hong Kong's philatelic themes in the nineties served to showcase the territory's absorption of, and contribution to, the international community.

### **Hong Kong's Uniqueness**

Alongside highlighting Hong Kong's individual contribution to the world, the unique qualities of the territory were also showcased on postal stationery. As Stanley Brunn notes, territories (often very new states) produced literature to exaggerate the unique qualities of a nation, to ingratiate and promote it to the world.<sup>27</sup> For Hong Kong, whilst this postal material celebrated the colony's complex cultural traditions and links to both China and Britain, it also served to sell Hong Kong to tourists. Chinese Opera was philatelically celebrated on a 1992 set of four stamps (SG724-727). The 80 cent stamp pictured the 'Principal Male Role', the HK\$1.80 featured the 'Martial Role', the HK\$2.30 pictured the 'Principal Female Role', and the HK\$5 was the 'Comic Role'. The roles of each performer were characterised by symbolic costumes, make-up, and accessories, and the performances consisted of a combination of dancing, acting, and singing. According to the first day cover, the themes of the operas developed from various 'pre-historic dances and songs' (see figure 4.5 in the appendix). The choice of phrase here, 'pre-historic', was particularly odd. Whilst Chinese operas could be traced

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<sup>27</sup> Stanley Brunn, 'Stamps as Iconography: Celebrating the Independence of New European and Central Asian States', *GeoJournal*, 52, 4, Iconographies (2000), pp. 315-323.

back thousands of years to Ancient China, this was hardly an undocumented period of time. Clearly, then, this term was being used in a hyperbolic sense; it served to strengthen the genre's ties to tradition whilst also highlighting Hong Kong's links to ancient culture.

Links to specifically 'ancient' China not only served to highlight Hong Kong's timeline, but also avoided the difficult situation of celebrating Communist China. As Phil Deans has observed, Taiwan had a similar issue to Hong Kong, and chose to exclusively promote images of pre-1949 China. These were often romanticised, and allowed for the celebration of Chinese traditions without placing them in a contemporary context.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, whilst the celebration of Cantonese opera can be read as a bid to highlight historical ties between the mainland and the colony, it can also be read as a celebration of British infrastructural development. The first day cover noted that a key factor in larger theatre attendances over the past decade – and indeed a revival in the genre's popularity – was attributable to the 'increased venues for performances' made available by the British Administration (figure 4.5). Furthermore, the celebration of Chinese theatre was made specific to the people of Hong Kong; Cantonese opera was chosen to represent the entire genre as it was the 'most popular form [of Chinese theatre] in Hong Kong' (figure 4.5). Thus, the stamp set was at once a link to ancient Chinese tradition, a celebration of British development, and a nod towards Hong Kong individualism.

Hong Kong clearly had strong cultural ties to the mainland, and these were certainly drawn out on postage stamps. Sometimes they were personalised to Hong Kong, such as with the Cantonese operas, and on other occasions they were used as tools to appeal to foreign collectors. For example, a set of stamps celebrating 'Chinese String Musical Instruments' (SG737-740) was released in 1993, which appeared to highlight Hong Kong's links to the mainland. The Pipa (80c.), Erhu (HK\$1.80), Ruan (HK\$2.30), and the Gehu (HK\$5) were pictured on four stamps. Accompanying literature on the first day envelope gave a brief history of each instrument. The objects were not framed as unique to Hong Kong, instead they were 'Chinese'; the Erhu was described

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<sup>28</sup> Phil Deans, 'Isolation, Identity and Taiwanese Stamps as Vehicles for Regime Legitimation', *East Asia*, 22, 2 (Summer, 2005), p. 15.

as 'one of the most widely used bowed instruments in China'. As with the opera set, the stamps emphasised the age of particular instruments; once again the celebration of Chinese tradition was not linked to contemporary China. The Pipa, for example, was described as having a 'history of more than two thousand years'; similarly, the Ruan had a 'history of over one thousand six hundred years'. Yet whilst these stamps served to highlight the links between Hong Kong and China, the intended audience was clearly overseas. 'The gehu is a bass string instrument,' declared the cover, 'it is the Chinese equivalent of the cello', the key difference being 'a membrane of snake skin' (see figure 4.6 in the appendix). The reference point here was a Western instrument – this was a set of stamps which served to educate foreign collectors.

Further emphasis of observable 'China' in Hong Kong came through the 1993 'Hong Kong Goldfish' (SG752-755) set. The four fish depicted – the Red Calico Egg-fish (HK\$1), the Red Cap Oranda (HK\$1.90), the Red and White Fringetail (HK\$2.40), and the Black and Gold Dragon-eye (HK\$5) – were given a brief description on the back of the first day cover. The Oranda, described by the first day cover as one of the most 'famous goldfish varieties', dated back to sixteenth century China. People 'all over the world' had come to recognise this 'famous goldfish [...] bred in China'. Similarly, the Dragon-eye was described as being the 'most representative goldfish of China,' which could be 'found in ancient Chinese drawings'. Its name originated from its bulging eyes, similar to those of a dragon – 'a legendary animal of China'. The Fringetail, according to the literature, 'originated from China but was further developed in Japan' (see figure 4.7 in the appendix). Two key themes are present in these descriptions. Firstly, the transnational nature of these fish – emphasis was clearly given to China, but links to Japan were also teased out. Furthermore, the international audience became a reference point. The beauty of the fish made them globally recognisable examples of the contribution Hong Kong and China had made to the natural world. Secondly, time was once again an important theme; the fish were observable throughout Chinese history and twinned with the 'legendary' dragon. However, despite being marked as products of China, these fish were described as 'common in Hong Kong'. Wildlife, as with the stamps of the seventies, was being claimed by the territory. As with the Cantonese Opera, these foreign species were made specific to, and observable in, Hong Kong – the international was being individualised.



The theme of international influence in Hong Kong was furthered by another wildlife set featuring 'Hong Kong Migratory Birds' (SG884-887). Unlike previous nature stamps, these species were placed in a global context. The Yellow-breasted Bunting (HK\$1.30) was described as a 'passage migrant'. The Falcated Teal (HK\$3.10) was noted as being a 'winter visitor' from north-east Asia. The Black-faced Spoonbill (HK\$5) was also described as a 'winter visitor' but 'with occasional summer visits'. The Great Knot (HK\$2.50) used Hong Kong as a 're-fuelling stop' as it travelled from North Siberia to Australia with a few birds 'winter[ing]' in the colony (see figure 4.8 in the appendix). In many ways, the birds could be read as tourists. The Great Knot's migration route, for example, mimicked the journey plans of travelers to Oceania, who frequently changed flights in Hong Kong.<sup>29</sup> The personification of the birds as 'visitors' and 'migrants' further added to this illusion. At their core, though, these stamps were an example of Hong Kong's individual role in a wider, global, ecological environment – through these migratory birds, Hong Kong became linked to other countries. However, their allusion to Hong Kong being a perfect stopover location for visitors was certainly a useful insinuation for Hong Kong's tourist board. It is also worth noting that, whether intentional or not, these designs were poignant in the context of the impending handover. Released two months before the transfer, the transitory nature of the birds can be read as an allegory of the shifting authority over Hong Kong from Britain to China. Overall though, these stamps showcased Hong Kong's role within a wider global context.

The connection between tourism and wildlife in Hong Kong was more overt in a set titled 'Corals' (SG788-791) released in 1994. Described as one of Hong Kong's 'valuable assets', the first day envelope stated that it was important they were conserved for the sake of marine life (see figure 4.9 in the appendix). Environmentalism was an important theme on postage stamps, but it often served as a marketing tool more than anything else. Dennis Altman notes that conservation stamps usually paid 'lip-service' to major issues which governments generally ignored.<sup>30</sup> On Cypriote tourist material,

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<sup>29</sup> Knowles and Harper have explored 'Hong Kong's swirling transience'; they are particularly interested in Hong Kong as an 'intersect' for global travellers. For more, see: Caroline Knowles and Douglas Harper, *Hong Kong: Migrant Lives, Landscapes, and Journeys* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. xi.

<sup>30</sup> Altman, *Paper Ambassadors*, p.72.

ecological themes were used to directly promote tourism; Cyprus cared about its waters to ensure it was perfect for visitors.<sup>31</sup> In Hong Kong, the corals provided habitats and protection for 'rare and threatened marine life', protected shorelines from erosion, and provided 'medicinal and pharmaceutical' benefits. However, the stamp also noted that the coral communities provided 'beautiful [...] recreational opportunities for divers and other visitors'. Furthermore, the cover detailed the exact 'unspoiled areas' where tourists could access these reefs; the waters were described as 'clear' and 'warm' (figure 4.9). Similar to the bird set, Hong Kong's specific role in the wider ecological setting was being emphasised; the territory played an important part in the ecosystem. However, in this example the natural world was used as a tool to attract potential visitors. Not only could the coral connect Hong Kong to global environmental concerns, they could also be used to attract international sightseers.

Natural landscapes were also showcased on postal stationery; whilst presented in an informational tone, the first day cover clearly promoted these locations as tourist destinations. The 1996 'Hong Kong Mountains' (SG837-840) envelope described the peaks' characteristics to collectors. Information such as the type of stone, height, and location of each mountain accompanied the serene images of these natural wonders. The mountains were emphasised as being important to the colony; they 'characterised' Hong Kong's topography. They were also linked to the region's cultural history; the Pat Sin Leng escarpment (HK\$1.30), for example, derived its name from an 'ancient Chinese tale'. The images themselves were certainly enticing; starry skies, sunrises, rainbows, and bright sunny days created a blissfully romanticised vision of these landscapes. Lantau Peak (HK\$5) was advertised as a 'popular spot for hiking and sunrise watching' (visualised on the stamp itself) (see figure 4.10 in the appendix). The combination of local myth and romantic imagery has long been associated with mountainous terrain; Gareth Jones has observed that the interpretation of Yellowstone has been highly influenced by visual materials and folklore.<sup>32</sup> Finnish stamps often produced similar material as well; local terrain was used to create a notion of 'nostalgia, preservationism, recreation, and exoticism in the minds of the

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<sup>31</sup> Eviropides Zantides, 'Looking Inwards, Designing Outwards: National Identity and Print Advertisements of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation', *Visual Studies*, 31, 3 (2016), pp. 254-5.

<sup>32</sup> Gareth Jones, 'Image/Text/Geography: Yellowstone and the Spatial Rhetoric of Landscape', in Thomas Patin (ed.), *Observation Points: The Visual Poetics of National Parks* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 140-167.

urbanites' in a bid to encourage visitors.<sup>33</sup> Certainly the Hong Kong set served to educate philatelists. Yet ultimately, by stating that these mountains 'characterised' the territory and were perfect for leisure activities (and presented in an idealised format), this set served to entice potential tourists to Hong Kong. They functioned as messengers of Hong Kong's unique and defining assets.

Man-made landmarks were also utilised in a similar manner. The 1991 'Hong Kong Landmarks' (SG679-683) set celebrated five monuments in the territory: the Bronze Buddha (80c.), the Peak Pavilion (HK\$1.70), the Clock Tower (HK\$1.80), the Catholic Cathedral (HK\$2.30), and the Wong Tai Sin Temple (HK\$5). As with the mountains set, the accompanying literature gave a brief explanation of each attraction. The Bronze Buddha was celebrated for being the 'tallest outdoor Bronze Buddha in the world'; the Peak Pavilion boasted 'one of the most celebrated [views] in the world'; the Catholic Cathedral was described as being 'one of the oldest buildings in Hong Kong'; and the Wong Tai Sin Temple was named 'probably the most popular Chinese temple in Hong Kong' (see figure 4.11 in the appendix). These descriptions served to highlight why these monuments were being celebrated, but they also acted as reasons to visit such places. The use of superlatives (tallest, oldest), and the terms 'most celebrated' and 'most popular' suggested to viewers that they were worthwhile tourist destinations. Furthermore, by placing them in an international context (the Buddha being the world's, not just Hong Kong's, tallest, for example) they highlighted the unique draw of Hong Kong. In a similar vein to the mountain set, these stamps were used as a means of highlighting the individuality and draw of the colony in a global setting.

Another set which celebrated Hong Kong's features was released in 1997. Titled 'Hong Kong Modern Landmarks' (SG893-896), four stamps showcased the Hong Kong Stadium (HK\$1.30), the Peak Tower (HK\$2.50), the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HK\$3.10), and the Lantau Link (HK\$5). Once again, the first day cover provided information on the buildings and their contribution to Hong Kong. Similar to previous landmark sets, these stamps served to advertise Hong Kong to overseas tourists; the additional literature read as promotional material to attract

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<sup>33</sup> Pauliina Raento and Stanley D. Brunn, 'Visualizing Finland: Postage Stamps as Political Messengers', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human geography*, 87, 2, Special Issue: Power Over Time-Space: The Inaugural Nordic Geographers Meeting (2005), p. 153.

customers. The Stadium was billed as a 'multipurpose' venue which could host an assortment of events. Described as an updated and larger version of the previous stadium, it was billed as a place to visit for entertainment purposes. The 'distinctive' Peak Tower boasted 120,000 square feet of floor space spread over seven levels, featuring entertainment attractions, restaurants, shops, and viewing terraces for 'overseas tourists and local people'. The Convention and Exhibition Centre was a 'state-of-the-art' facility for major international events planned for completion in June 1997. Described as 'one of the most spectacular exhibition and convention facilities in the world', the first day cover noted its 'banking facilities, on-site car parking, shops and office space'. Finally, the Lantau Link was advertised as the 'key connection' for Hong Kong's infrastructural development; carrying 'both road and rail traffic', the first day cover noted that 'the world's longest suspension bridge' was a vital project for trade and mobility between Hong Kong and neighboring islands (see figure 4.12 in the appendix). Jacques Leclerc notes that images of modern buildings were often used as an 'outline of the centre'; they were symbols of authority and control.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Alison Rowley states that new buildings were often depicted to indicate the government's focus on developing particular major cities and towns.<sup>35</sup> Certainly for Hong Kong, these stamps 'outlined' the nucleus of the territory (Hong Kong Island and Kowloon). However, this set also undoubtedly operated as a brochure for attracting prospective tourists. Unlike the previous landmark sets, it was not the beauty of these locations, but instead the practicality and luxuriousness available to visitors which made them alluring. On-site parking and office space contrasted with the blissful image of a sunrise across Lantau Peak, but it served a similar purpose. Likewise, similar to the 1991 Landmarks series, these buildings were celebrated in a global context ('world's longest', 'most spectacular [...] in the world'). Finally, and most importantly, these were examples of recent developments – Hong Kong was producing internationally attractive contemporary spaces to cement its place as a current and future provider of modern professional and tourist facilities.

Alongside the celebration of modern landmarks, images of heritage sites filled Hong Kong's postal stationery. The 'Rural Heritage' (SG802-805) set, released in 1995,

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<sup>34</sup> Jacques Leclerc and Nora Scott, 'The Political Iconology of the Indonesian Postage Stamp (1950-1970)', *Indonesia*, 57, Archipel (April, 1993), p. 40.

<sup>35</sup> Alison Rowley, 'Miniature Propaganda: Self-Definition and Soviet Postage Stamps, 1917-41', *Slavonica*, 8, 2 (2002), p. 146.

showcased houses and villages situated across the colony's rural areas. A souvenir pack was available for purchase which featured four mini-sheets of ten copies of each stamp, along with detailed accompanying literature. To emphasise that this was a commemoration of traditional Hong Kong, the stamps were printed in both Intaglio and Lithography. Intaglio was a 'traditional printing process seldom used' by modern Hong Kong designers. Similar to recess-printing, paper was pressed into black ink; colour was then applied using lithography.<sup>36</sup> Each page featured information on the heritage site, a black and white intaglio version of the stamp, a picture from the building, and a map locating where it could be found. As with the 1980 Rural Architecture set, the Tsui Shing Lau pagoda (HK\$1) was celebrated; it was clearly a focal point for rural heritage sites. The other locations had been converted into folk museums (Sam Tung Uk (HK\$1.90)); were protected examples of traditional communities (Lo Wai (HK\$2.40)); or had been declared monuments (Man Shek Tong (HK\$5)). This was a celebration of the New Territories – the nineties certainly continued the custom of heavily linking Hong Kong's northern rural areas to notions of 'tradition'. Whilst this was certainly a commemoration of Hong Kong's important heritage sites, the inclusion of a map and hyperbolic descriptive language meant this booklet could easily be read as a tourist brochure.

The following year, an 'Urban Heritage' (SG843-846) set was released. The four buildings commemorated were the University of Hong Kong (HK\$1.30), the Western Market (HK\$2.50), the Old Pathological Institute (HK\$3.10), and the Flagstaff House (HK\$5). The University of Hong Kong had itself been commemorated in the sixties, and the Flagstaff House had featured in the 1987 'Historical Scenes of Hong Kong' set. The Western Market was a figurehead of trade in the colony and the Old Pathological Institute had played an important role in developing Hong Kong's medical sciences. These stamps juxtaposed the 'Rural Heritage' sites of the previous year; this was a celebration of British, rather than 'Chinese', heritage. Whilst most of these urban buildings had become monuments or museums themselves, each site served as a metaphor for the 'advancement' of the colony. Governance, medicinal progress, education, and trade were all represented. Conversely, the theme of the rural sites was 'tradition', and an indicator of where tourists could find examples of Hong Kong's

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<sup>36</sup> *Hong Kong Rural Heritage Souvenir Booklet* (Hong Kong Post Office, 1995).

links to its Chinese past. Thus, the classic theme present throughout decades of postal design in Hong Kong was repeated once again: the rural New Territories should be read as a heritage site linked to China, whereas the urban area should be viewed as a modern space linked to British rule. As the handover loomed, this narrative acted as an important legitimisation of imperial rule. However, in terms of selling an image of Hong Kong, the promotion of a complex, hybrid past with Chinese and British influences certainly presented the territory as unique and noteworthy.

Hong Kong's past was further explored on a set of stamps titled 'Hong Kong Archaeological Finds' (SG828-831), made available in 1996. Celebrated finds included a painted pottery basin dated to the Neolithic Period, c. 4500-3700 B.C. (HK\$1.20); a stone 'Yue' (ceremonial axe) from between 2900-2200 B.C. (HK\$2.10); a stone 'Ge' (halberd) again from the Neolithic Period but dated between 2200-1500 B.C. (HK\$2.60); and a pottery tripod from the Eastern Han Dynasty 25-220 A.D. (HK\$5). In a similar vein to the 'Historical Chinese Costumes' set of the eighties, these stamps covered historical periods with each image. Unlike the heritage sets which served to celebrate observable historical spaces within contemporary Hong Kong, the celebration of archaeological discoveries served to highlight the colony's earliest past. Stamps celebrating archaeological finds have often been used for political purposes.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, they have provided a neat way of 'illustrat[ing] the geo-historical continuum' of a territory; ancient materials provide a link to the past for territories and have often served as a form of legitimisation for regimes and in land disputes.<sup>38</sup> By philatelically signposting Hong Kong's prehistoric populations, the territory was given a lengthy timeline. Hong Kong had been inhabited for thousands of years; it had a history which was unique and individual to the people who lived there. The Urban and Rural heritage sets served to showcase Hong Kong as a complex entity; conversely, the archaeological discoveries transcended notions of sovereignty and a Sino-British hybridity. Thus, in a period of uncertain authority and identity, this set served to highlight Hong Kong's long and individual history which spanned thousands of years.

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<sup>37</sup> Jonathan R. Waltz, 'Archaeopolitics and Postage Stamps in Africa', *African Arts*, 38, 2 (Summer, 2005), pp. 8+88+96; C. Foss, 'Postal Propaganda: Promoting the Present with the Past (Archaeological Themes on Postage Stamps)', *Archaeology*, 52, 2, (1999) pp. 70-71.

<sup>38</sup> Yehiel Limor and David Mekelberg, 'The Smallest Ideological and Political Battlefield: Depicting Borders on Postage Stamps - The Case of Israel', *Nations and Nationalism*, 23, 4 (2017), p. 923.

Part of internationalising Hong Kong required its unique characteristics to be displayed. Links to China were highlighted on numerous postage stamps. Whilst these served to indicate Hong Kong's lengthy timeline, traditions, and historical artifacts, the focus on pre-1949 China meant that these were not celebrations of the modern PRC. Additionally, the inclusion of British contributions highlighted the hybridity of Hong Kong, which further promoted its uniqueness. Whilst these stamps can be read as an effort to bring Hong Kong and China closer as the handover loomed, ultimately they served to sell Hong Kong to the overseas market. Many of these issues emphasised the benefits of visiting the territory; whether to observe natural wonders, traditional monuments, or use state-of-the-art facilities, Hong Kong was pitched as a key destination. Thus, alongside the philatelic celebration of international cooperation, Hong Kong's individual characteristics were also a key theme on postage stamps during the nineties.

### **Celebrating the Post Office**

Philatelic output in the nineties certainly paid a lot of attention to celebrating international links and cementing Hong Kong as a unique place; however, stamps were also designed as a swansong for British rule. Notions of 'progress' linked to the British Administration were present in designs discussed above, but a particular focus came through the development of stamps celebrating the Royal Mail; the postal commemoration of which Leclerc has called 'narcissis[ti]c'.<sup>39</sup> In 1991, the Hong Kong Post Office celebrated its 150th anniversary; in doing so it released four stamps (SG673-677) depicting historical postboxes. The first day cover contained a brief history of the Post Office: 'The postal history of Hong Kong goes back to the earliest days of the territory in 1841. In response to the needs of early settlers, a civil post office was established'. 'From humble beginnings 150 years ago,' it continued, 'the Hong Kong Post Office has grown with Hong Kong and has played an important part in its development' (see figure 4.13 in the appendix). The phrase 'earliest days of the territory' was an interesting choice – the inference here was that Hong Kong's history dated only 150 years. Rather than state that this was the beginning of Colonial Hong Kong, the term 'territory' implied the history of the geographical area. To some extent this was certainly true, Hong Kong as a geopolitical space was shaped by British

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<sup>39</sup> Leclerc, 'The Political Iconography', p. 21.

imperial policy and treaties with China. However, this rhetoric contradicted the 'ancient' timeline suggested by the heritage, opera, and archaeology stamps.

This stamp series was a subtle celebration of the British Administration. Rather than commemorate 150 years of British rule, officials chose instead to mark the anniversary of 'one of the first Government departments' (figure 4.13). As Pauliina Raento has observed, 'Absences in the stamp imagery can communicate loudly as well - through a pointed silence'.<sup>40</sup> There was certainly a 'pointed silence' with regards to the outward celebration of British colonialism; instead a substitute was used. Another institution also received a 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary stamp; the Royal Hong Kong Police Force was commemorated in 1994 (SG772-777). These celebrations allowed the British Administration to mark its presence in Hong Kong through government bodies, rather than a set which recognised the history of imperial conquest. Thus, when the Royal Mail highlighted the role played by the Post Office in Hong Kong's development, this was more of a comment on British progress. Ultimately, not only did this set serve as a statement about Hong Kong's historical timeline, it was also a subliminal celebration of British colonialism.

The use of the Post Office as a means of celebrating the presence of British forces in Hong Kong was furthered by the 'Hong Kong Classics' series published between 1991 and 1997. Towards the final days of British rule in Hong Kong, the territory became increasingly nostalgic. Certainly in film, nostalgia became an important theme; remakes of early cinema became increasingly popular.<sup>41</sup> Catherine Chan has observed the use of nostalgia in the branding of consumer goods; in an age of uncertainty, longstanding, established products exploited this melancholic atmosphere to provide a form of stability.<sup>42</sup> With particular regards to postal stationery, John Carroll notes that the general feeling of nostalgia led to eleven thousand stamp collectors queuing for the final set of Queen Elizabeth II postage stamps – many, he states, even camped

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<sup>40</sup> Pauliina Raento, 'Communicating Geopolitics through Postage Stamps: The Case of Finland', *Geopolitics*, 11, 4 (2006), p. 613.

<sup>41</sup> Natalia Chan Sui Hung, 'Rewriting History: Hong Kong Nostalgia Cinema and Its Social Practice', in Poshek Fu and David Desser (eds.), *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 252-272.

<sup>42</sup> Catherine Chan, 'The Currency of History in Hong Kong: Deconstructing Nostalgia Through Soybean Milk', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 44, 4 (2015), pp. 145-175.



overnight.<sup>43</sup> Nostalgia, then, was a useful marketing tool for Hong Kong and its Post Office, and the 'Classics' series certainly monopolised on it.

Featuring ten releases in total, the various sheetlets of the 'Classics' series served to revisit Hong Kong's historically important philatelic moments. Whilst the series technically began with the 150th Anniversary of the Post Office set, it was not until 1993 that the first 'Classics' sheetlet (SG745) was produced. The 'theme' of the sheetlet was King George V's 1935 Silver Jubilee. Featuring King George V, the sheetlet's main background image was of a Hong Kong Jubilee street party scene. Whilst the main stamp for circulation was the HK\$10 1992 definitive (as it was for many of the following 'Classics'), four reproductions of the 1935 Jubilee commemoratives were also attached; these were Hong Kong's first Royal commemorative pictorial stamps produced. The following three 'Classics', released in the same year, were dedicated to the various monarchs who had reigned during Britain's occupation of Hong Kong; they were included in the 'A history of Hong Kong Definitive Stamps' booklet which celebrated 130 years of local definitive stamps. The first sheetlet focussed on Queen Victoria; the second showcased King Edward VII, King George V and King George VI; and the final celebrated Queen Elizabeth II's reign. Ultimately, then, the first four sheetlets in the 'Classics' series celebrated key philatelic moments linked directly to the British monarchy.

The fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War was the focus of the sixth sheetlet (SG811). The image used on the sheetlet was of the Liberation Day proceedings at Hong Kong's Cenotaph; the attached historical stamp was the 1946 'Victory' issue. The 1946 stamp was clearly important – not only did it mark the return of Hong Kong to British rule; it also embodied the '1946 outlook'. The sepia-toned image of the military parade, with the Union Jack as the main focal point, presented a powerful image of British military strength. The sheetlet also carried a subtle reference to the phoenix rising from the ashes. It was designed to appear as if its upper layer had been burnt away, revealing the Cenotaph scene. Interestingly, whilst the stamp carried a message of unity for the Chinese and British populations in Hong Kong going forward, the commemorative sheetlet from 1995 focussed more on British military personnel.

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<sup>43</sup> Carroll, *A Concise History*, p. 209.

Whilst this was part of the 'Classics' series, the actual celebration was for the end of the Second World War; consequently, the sheetlet was less of a tribute to early postal material and more a nod towards the liberation of Hong Kong from Japanese forces. Thus, the sixth chapter in the 'Classics' series continued the theme of making the presence and achievements of Britain central to its message.

Considering the early sheetlets' focus on British achievements and historically important philatelic moments for Hong Kong, the following three 'Classics' at first appear to be odd choices. Rather than highlighting poignant moments, they were instead re-releases of stamps produced only a few years before. The seventh sheetlet (SG872a) was a reprint of the 1990 set marking the centenary of Hong Kong's electricity supply; the eighth (SG872b) was a re-release of the 1991 150th anniversary of the Post Office (SG673-677) (which was technically the first edition of the 'Classics' set); and the ninth sheetlet (SG872c) featured the 1991 one hundred years of public transport in Hong Kong commemorative (SG667-672). These were clearly not poignant moments in Hong Kong's history, neither were these designs particularly noteworthy. However, these 'Classics' were produced with the February 1997 Hong Kong Stamp Exhibition in mind – they were included in a collectors booklet entitled 'Hong Kong - Past & Present'. The sheetlets served as elements of a wider celebration of 'the developments of three major public services in the territory' (see figure 4.14 in the appendix). These sheetlets, then, were an excuse to celebrate British achievements whilst also allowing the Post Office to generate revenue from old designs. As Henry Choi notes, 'Hong Kong fever' swept the world in 1997, and collectors wanted to ensure they each had a material piece of history. The Post Office monopolised on this, and began (re)producing vast quantities of new and existing postal stationery.<sup>44</sup> The inclusion of these editions in the 'Classics' series allowed for an increase in revenue precisely because they declared themselves to be 'classics'. Besides needing to purchase these three sets to complete their collections, philatelists would have spent money on these designs because they were sold as being unforgettable issues. Furthermore, their inclusion in a commemorative booklet was justified because they were 'classic' memories of Hong Kong's postal history. As revenue was at the heart of these three sets, the international market clearly continued to be an important

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<sup>44</sup> Henry Choi, *Hong Kong History in Stamps* (Chung Hwa Book Co, 2013), p. ii.

consideration in the Hong Kong stamp design process. Not only did these stamps reinforce the benefits of British rule in Hong Kong, they also highlighted the influence collectors maintained until the point of handover.

To further indicate that collectors were an influential consideration in nineties Hong Kong stamp design, the topic of philately itself was commemorated (SG718-721) on four postage stamps in 1992. The stamps featured four accessories used by collectors: a perforation gauge (80c.), a pair of tweezers (HK\$1.80), a magnifying glass (HK\$2.30), and a watermark detector (HK\$5). The first day cover envelope extolled the virtues of stamp collecting, repeating the notion that they were educational tools. These 'works of art' enabled one to 'wander through different lands, times and history'. 'Their aesthetic value appeals to some', it stated, 'their historical interest to many, and their geographical relationships to almost every collector' (see figure 4.15 in the appendix). Thus, stamps were collected as informational tools. Whilst each stamp in the series celebrated philatelic equipment, each object was being used to collect specifically Hong Kong stamps. The selected stamps themselves were interesting: the 80c. contained the 1989 Royal Visit stamp, which featured Princess Diana and Prince Charles. Alongside this stamp was a copy of the 1991 Lunar New Year Stamp. From this image alone, Hong Kong was presented as a diverse place – it was at once an area which featured British Royalty alongside Chinese tradition. The following three stamps in the set each depicted a poignant historical stamp. The Victory issue featured on the HK\$2.30; the 1891 Hong Kong Jubilee stamp (Hong Kong's first special issue) was on the HK\$1.80; and the HK\$5 featured Hong Kong's first stamp ever produced. Ultimately, these four stamps subtly described Hong Kong and its history; from the unique and diverse genetics of the territory showcased on the 80c. stamp, to the important stages in Hong Kong's philatelic story, the Colony was pictured to collectors. As previously mentioned, the overt celebration of British colonialism was ignored, and instead the Royal Mail was used as an allegorical poster boy. In this set, the HK\$1.80 stamp included a veiled celebration of 150 years of British rule. Whilst the focus of the stamps was supposedly the tweezers being used to delicately handle postal material, the stamp being gripped was the 1891 fiftieth anniversary of Britain in Hong Kong issue. Subtly, then, through the celebration of equipment relevant to stamp collecting, this set advertised the qualities of Hong Kong and paid homage to British rule.

Philately not only connected Hong Kong to the world through postal designs, the territory also attended, and hosted, International Stamp Exhibitions during the nineties. Hong Kong's participation in the Stamp Exhibitions of Auckland 1990 (SG646), Tokyo 1991 (SG684), Chicago 1992 (SG701), Kuala Lumpur 1992 (SG723), Bangkok 1993 (SG751), and Singapore 1995 (SG810) was commemorated by an individual sheetlet and the HK\$10 definitive stamp of 1989 and, afterwards, 1992. There were two Stamp Exhibitions held in Hong Kong: one in 1994 and the other in 1997. Between them both, seven sheetlets were issued to promote and commemorate the event. Whilst stamp collecting was the focus of these issues, they also acted as promotional tools for the tourist board with the phrase 'Visit Hong Kong' emblazoned across each issue. This was a common tactic for nations – stamps commemorating events would often be used as 'mini travel posters'.<sup>45</sup> In 1993, the first day cover for the 'Visit HONG KONG '94 Stamp Exhibition' (SG746) estimated that about 200,000 visitors would be in attendance. The 'first ever regional stamp exhibition' would be used to 'celebrate the long history of Hong Kong postage stamps'; the event would be supported by the Federation of Inter-Asian Philately. The ultimate ambition was to generate interest in philately and to 'foster cooperation and improved relations between the various parties concerned'. The unique selling point of the 1993 sheetlet was its inclusion of the 'newest and most dramatic addition to the Hong Kong skyline' and Asia's tallest building, the Central Plaza (see figure 4.16 in the appendix). In the following year, a sheetlet was produced for the same event (SG771) which featured four images showing the process of creating Hong Kong postage stamps; the title of the piece, 'a stamp is born', was set against an image of Hong Kong Island's waterfront.

The 1997 Stamp Exhibition commemoratives continued this trend. Titled 'Visit HONG KONG '97 Stamp Exhibition', in total five sheetlets were released between 1996 (SG821; SG827; SG841) and 1997 (SG872; SG873). Each sheetlet featured an image of Hong Kong. According to the second 1997 issue, the first three sheetlets showcased images of Hong Kong's changing skyline since the 1850s, and the final two releases focussed on Victoria Harbour (see figure 4.17 in the appendix). Another key difference between the first three issues (released in 1996) and the two 1997 sheetlets was the

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<sup>45</sup> Dallen J. Timothy, 'Postage Stamps, Microstates and Tourism', *Tourism Recreation Research*, 26, 2 (2001), p. 86.

definitive stamp attached to each edition. The 1996 set featured the 1992 HK\$10 definitive, yet the final two sheetlets housed the newly released 1997 HK\$10 definitives. These new stamps pictured different sections of Hong Kong's skyline and, for the first time in the territory's history, housed no British iconography – 'the stamp has a neutral design with no connotation of sovereignty', noted the first day cover (figure 4.17). Hong Kong was being prepared for the handover. As early as 1994, the Legislative Council faced questions regarding the use of the Queen's image on postal stationery considering the impending transfer of authority to China. In response, officials noted that this would be dealt with before the point of handover to ensure the public and postal services were not adversely affected. Additionally, the council noted that all stamps featuring royal insignia would be suitably dealt with closer to 1997.<sup>46</sup> This latter response explains the inclusion of numerous 1992 definitives across various sheetlets in 1996 (most notably the seventh, eighth, and ninth editions of the 'Classics' series).

The 1994 and the 1997 Stamp Exhibition sheetlets and first day covers housed interesting information and symbolism. First, the early issues boasted of Hong Kong's new architecture and, in a similar manner used to celebrate various local landmarks, placed them in an international context: not only should people come to Hong Kong for its philatelic show, but also to see Asia's tallest new building. Secondly, Hong Kong's skyline and Victoria Harbour were entirely indexical of Hong Kong. Used on every piece of philatelic promotional material, they were iconic images chosen to celebrate the uniqueness of the territory. Third, international co-operation was central to these exhibitions. The exhibition held in 1997 was supported once again by the Federation of Inter-Asian Philately, but this time the Federation Internationale de Philatelie was also involved. Not only did foreign bodies showcase their work at the show, but Hong Kong was partnering up with global organisations. Finally, the changing definitives used across the various sheetlets served as an indicator that Hong Kong was changing. The royal symbolism which had dominated Hong Kong's stamps since their introduction disappeared from the final two issues, and was replaced with an image of the iconic Harbour. Overall, these various issues utilised images and marketing strategies which had been used by the Post Office over the previous few decades. Through marketing

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<sup>46</sup> HKPRO, HKRS545-9-243, 'LegCo Question No.12', 23 March 1994.

the two Stamp Exhibitions to the world, Hong Kong itself was being advertised; up to the end, stamps were inextricably linked to selling the territory.

The final issue released by the British Administration was the ultimate swansong to the Post Office and the British Administration. The tenth and final sheetlet of the 'Classics' series, the 'History of Hong Kong Post Office' (SG899), was published on the last day of British rule. The key stamp attached was the HK\$5 issue from the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary postboxes set. The sheet itself pictured the first, second, third, and fourth Post Offices erected throughout Hong Kong between 1841 and 1976. Alongside this were 'Selective definitive stamps issued between 8 December 1862 and 30 June 1997'. The nine 'selected' stamps were interesting. Five of the stamps were reproductions of each monarch's first Hong Kong issue. The remaining four stamps housed symbolism specific to Hong Kong. The *Bauhinia Blakeana* and Arms of Hong Kong set from 1968 occupied two spaces. The final two stamps featured a map of Hong Kong and its flag; they were part of the 1987 definitives set. Overall, this was a celebration of Britishness and imperial rule once again channeled through the medium of postal stationery. The inclusion of each monarch symbolised the timeline of Hong Kong; its progression was related solely to the changing British heads of state. Symbols specific to Hong Kong were included, but these were icons created by the British Administration and planted on to the colony. The flag and emblem were clearly manufactured symbols, but the flower and map were no less synthetic. The Hong Kong Orchid Tree had been picked by the Urban Council to represent the colony. The map of Hong Kong visualised the three different territories which had gradually been amalgamated over the nineteenth century to form modern day Hong Kong; the process of mapping foreign lands was also an important aspect of imperial domination. Consequently, these were not references to Hong Kong identity; they were emblems of British imperialism. Thus, as with the previous Royal Mail commemoratives, the final piece of postal stationery issued by the British Administration celebrated British rule through the banal and benign postage stamp.

## **Conclusion**

The events of Tiananmen Square certainly shaped the beginning of the decade. However, the postal stationery of Hong Kong throughout the nineties served to place

the colony firmly in an international context. Not only did designs serve to highlight Hong Kong's participation in events, stamps also showcased the territory's role in hosting global competitions. Its individual importance was further emphasised through various postage stamps which promoted unique characteristics of the colony. From mountains to luxury conference halls, these images sold a specific vision of the territory. Whilst these would certainly have been consumed in Hong Kong, the language on many of the first day covers, as well as the symbolism within the designs, revealed that these issues were created to promote Hong Kong to the wider world. Finally, the Post Office itself assumed a metaphorical role for British colonialism on commemorative stationery. As nostalgia swept over the territory, historical stamps were rereleased to the public. In a bid to raise as much revenue as possible before their departure, British officials placed meaningless sets in its 'Classics' series and sold them to collectors in souvenir booklets. Ultimately, stamps allowed Hong Kong to highlight its links to the world and to celebrate its unique qualities. However, they also enabled the British Administration to reflect fondly on its colonial dominance. Thus, as Hong Kong prepared itself for its next foreign power, it philatellically celebrated its former rulers and presented an illusion of autonomous individuality.

## Conclusion

The key aim of this thesis has been to highlight the ways in which Hong Kong was visualised by the British between the early nineteenth century and the handover in 1997. Philatelic material is a generally understudied resource in academia, but this thesis has proven that it deserves to be examined more closely. More importantly, when postal stationery has been researched, studies have generally drawn on material produced by home governments. Studies which explore postage stamps produced by external powers certainly do exist, but not on the same scale as has been examined in this thesis. Specifically for Hong Kong, the few texts which do approach this topic focus solely on the 'philatelic' attributes of postage stamps, rather than exploring their wider contextual significance. Furthermore, the decision to compare the contents of both postage stamps and published accounts in newspapers meant an interdisciplinary methodological approach was required. Key works in the fields of both textual and visual studies underpin this research project. In exploring these rich sources, a number of key themes have emerged, and by tracking them over a 150 year period, this thesis has identified the ways in which Hong Kong was visualised on a domestic and international level by Western figures from the early nineteenth century until the 1997 handover.

Three research questions were outlined in the introduction. First, how was Hong Kong represented in published accounts, and what role do these sources play in the wider visualisation of Hong Kong after 1945? Chapter one examined a number of images which featured heavily in personal accounts circulated by the British Press. A key visual element which became synonymous with Hong Kong was its mountainous terrain surrounding the famous Victoria Harbour. Described in colourful terms by early visitors, Hong Kong's landscape and waterfront featured in numerous accounts; they were quickly adopted by fiction writers as popular settings. Initially these locations starred as tranquil spaces, but soon these areas became known for large crowds and bustling trade routes. As chapters four and five highlight, certainly for the Harbour, these locations began to take on an indexical role for the colony. Hong Kong Island and Kowloon were common images on late-twentieth century postal stationery. These two urban locations became synonymous with Hong Kong in its entirety; the rural New



Territories were frequently excluded on postage stamp designs. This certainly tied in with the rhetoric that Hong Kong had blossomed into an urbanised, modern space. The New Territories was also closely entwined with notions of China and tradition; the rural, undeveloped area was said to retain the characteristics of the agrarian 'indigenous' population of Hong Kong which maintained close ties to the Chinese mainland. Thus, the prominent image of Victoria Harbour soon came to represent the benefits of British imperialism. The rural New Territories existed to showcase what Hong Kong would have been *without* the presence of a modernising British force and influences.

This tied in to a number of key themes present in early letters and accounts of the colony. Firstly, that Hong Kong's history began with the arrival of the British. The 'progress' of the colony in just a few decades was seen as an example of the benefits of imperialism – Hong Kong had grown from a cluster of fishing islands to a bustling metropolis under the guidance and investment of Western powers. For example, architectural techniques introduced from Europe were said to have been of great benefit to the colony's expansion; yet in reality architectural influences came from numerous sources, including Britain's other imperial possessions such as Australia, India, and Singapore. These developments, coupled with territorial changes brought about by three different treaties between Britain and China in the nineteenth century, gave rise to what John Carroll has called the 'myth' of Hong Kong's history.<sup>1</sup> Local Chinese and European settlers alike soon began to promote the idea that Hong Kong's timeline began in 1840. This 'myth' can be read in a number of Hong Kong's postage stamps; themes of 'progress' and Hong Kong's heritage were tied to the presence of British forces. Various 'then and now' editions of stamps charted changes in Hong Kong's history. These typically began with the arrival of Britain, and showcased the grand developments which had happened across a 150 year period. These stamps would also compare Hong Kong under China, or elements of Hong Kong's traditional 'Chinese' population, with the urban, colonial areas of the territory. First Day Cover literature, particularly the Hong Kong People issue (figure 3.2), also advanced Hong Kong's history 'myth'; its story of the region's past mirrored classic 'first contact' narratives prominent in imperial literature (as highlighted in chapter four).

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<sup>1</sup> John M Carroll, 'Colonial Hong Kong as a Cultural-Historical Place', *Modern Asian Studies*, 40, 2 (2006), pp. 532-5.

Other key topics prevalent in both early accounts and twentieth century postage stamps were exoticism and hybridity. Certainly for cultural representations, one common theme was the depiction of women. In early accounts of Hong Kong, women were used to personify non-Christian, alien, and often dangerous cultural practices. This narrative was usually taken for the custom of foot-binding, which featured heavily in early accounts of Hong Kong; it was often an object of both fascination and disgust. As chapter one highlighted, women who engaged in this practice were depicted as both victims and villains. They were simultaneously a helpless product of the barbaric and archaic Chinese culture which desperately needed civilising (similar to cultural practices in India), whilst also existing as a counter to the 'natural' bodies of European women. Postage stamps also used women as allegorical figures for non-Western traditions. The aforementioned 'Hong Kong People' set depicted male figures engaging in both business and leisure, whilst female figures wearing traditional South and East Asian attire were used to showcase Hong Kong's varied cultural demographic. The exoticisation of Chinese culture extended to a number of other topics, including food, festivals, fauna, flora, landmarks, architecture, and art. These often existed alongside overtly British themes (predominantly images of the royal family). This continued the notion of hybridity which was solidified in early accounts. Commenters noted that Hong Kong was a mixture of Eastern and Western practices and people; the postal stationery of the twentieth century continued to channel this hybridity. By visualising the territory as an example of Britishness and Chineseness, Hong Kong was at once a place of Western progress and – in an image familiar to a lot of philatelic consumers – Eastern exoticism. Clearly the themes of progress, British influence, exoticism, and hybridity present in early accounts of Hong Kong became key topics on the state-sanctioned postage stamps of the twentieth century.

The second research question asks, with particular regards to postal stationery, to what extent did social and political changes, in both Hong Kong and on a global level, influence the representation of Hong Kong? As chapter one highlights, Hong Kong was presented in both a positive and a negative light; this usually mirrored international relations between China and the Western powers. In times of peace, Hong Kong and the local population were an object of fascination and intrigue; during the Opium

Wars, they were seen as dangerous and undesirable. The influence of global politics on the representation of Hong Kong continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It clearly shaped postage stamp designs. The '1946 outlook' adopted by the British Administration after the Japanese Occupation promoted cooperation between the British and Chinese populations of Hong Kong. The 1946 'Victory' stamp (SG169-170) mirrored this message; it advocated a combined effort to restore Hong Kong, and featured messages in both English and Cantonese. This message soon changed with the arrival of the new governor, Alexander Grantham, who, in the wake of mainland China's shifting politics, argued that Chinese migrants cared little for political representation. The postal stationery of this period highlighted this new approach; designs focussed on British iconography and largely avoided and overlooked any imagery specific to Hong Kong. Additionally, in the wake of the growing issue of migration from Mao's China into the colony, a large number of postage stamps celebrated international charity events as Hong Kong increasingly worked with global bodies to deal with its increasing population at a time of global movement and migration.

The philatelic content of Hong Kong changed considerably in the mid-sixties; this owed a lot to political events in the colony. A product of riots in the sixties was the formation of a local identity; the Hong Kong people, primarily the younger generation, began to view themselves as neither Chinese nor British. Paralleling these shifts, local postage stamps introduced iconography unique to Hong Kong; more importantly though, they started to showcase Chinese traditions such as the Lunar New Year. Throughout the seventies, postal designs explored aspects of Hong Kong's wildlife, culture, and development. As a local identity clearly began to flourish, the British Administration's postage stamps captured these changes. Building on designs in the seventies, chapter four highlights the ways in which the colony's philatelic output served to counter feelings of uncertainty that emerged in the wake of news of the Joint Declaration. The Post Office began producing material which gave Hong Kong a timeline. These stamps, as mentioned above, highlighted for domestic and global audiences the changes which Hong Kong had witnessed under British rule. Postage stamps were used to promote a sense of security. Additionally, stamps featuring new development plans served to

inform the global community that, just as Britain had always traditionally operated in the interests of Hong Kong, it would continue to do so in the future.

By the nineties, a handover date had been confirmed; however, following the events in Tiananmen Square, the local Hong Kong population became deeply concerned about a transfer of sovereignty to China. Alongside stamp designs created to assure the local population that the future would be positive, the Post Office introduced designs which promoted Hong Kong in an international context. Imagery emphasised Hong Kong's international and cosmopolitan foundational history – they celebrated the colony's diverse demographic and its engagement in global events throughout the decades. From world fairs and expositions to Olympic Games and food festivals, stamps were used to celebrate Hong Kong's individual contribution on the global stage. Sports, famous figures, ecology, and musical instruments were just a few of the themes used to showcase Hong Kong's individuality. The purpose of this was to assure the Hong Kong population that the colony would not become an extension of the Chinese mainland. Instead, Hong Kong's status as a unique space would legitimise its place in the global community. In reality, these stamps served to distract from Britain's failure to implement democratic reform in Hong Kong before the handover. Finally, as the handover approached, the Post Office, and postage stamps themselves, were used by the British administration as an analogy for British imperialism. Unable to promote Britain's colonisation of the territory outright, it chose to instead celebrate 150 years of Hong Kong's Post Office. Ultimately, the decision to explore Hong Kong's postage stamps on a decade-by-decade basis has enabled this thesis to clearly outline the ways in which postage stamp design charted shifting global and domestic political changes. Through a close reading of the colony's philatelic iconography, changes affecting Hong Kong's population and administration were clearly intertwined with postal stationery designs. External and domestic changes clearly influenced how the colony was represented on stamps.

The final research question set out to explore the ways in which developments in Post Office policy affected the philatelic portrayal of the colony. As the first chapter highlights, as soon as postage stamps started to be produced for Hong Kong, collectors began to purchase large quantities of supplies. By the 1960s, it had become clear to

the British Administration that stamps could serve a wider purpose than simply marking whether postage had been paid. As mentioned above, part of the reason for the production of Hong Kong-specific postal stationery in the late-sixties was due to local riots, but postal reforms had a huge impact as well. Changes to the design process in 1965 enabled the British Administration to have a greater involvement in creating philatelic products. This coincided neatly with requests from philatelists to include imagery unique to the colony on Hong Kong's stamps, as opposed to the ubiquitous designs produced for the entirety of Britain's overseas territories. The 1965 reforms ultimately enabled the British Administration to have greater agency and control over postal designs which, in turn, saw more iconography specific to the colony on postage stamps. Additionally, local designers benefitted from these changes; artwork by Hong Kong illustrators began to be selected over the work of large international organisations. Combined with social policy changes after the mid-sixties riots, postage stamp reforms enabled the British Administration to philatelically capture an emerging local identity.

Reforms in 1973 also had huge repercussions for philatelic designs. The introduction of the stamp design committee gave Hong Kong officials a greater say in the creation of postage stamps. The committee was comprised of a multitude of members, including curators and numerous government bodies. Whilst the introduction of this panel gave Hong Kong greater autonomy over its postal products, a number of London officials, most notably from the Colonial Office, were involved in the process. As chapter three highlights, this procedure was time consuming. Through the analysis of the Lunar New Year editions, it is apparent that numerous bureaucratic forces battled to create Hong Kong's postage stamps. The introduction of the stamp committee gave local designers and the Secretary for Chinese Affairs greater influence in this process; stamps started to be produced *by* the local population *for* the local population. Additionally, the introduction of the City District Officers after the sixties riots gave the local Chinese population a voice in the design process; their opinion was sought for numerous designs. Importantly though, whilst non-British voices were involved in the process, the British Administration ultimately oversaw the decision-making process. Interviews with Kan Tai-keung throughout this thesis highlight the complex relationship between British officials and Hong Kong designers; furthermore, chapter four explores the role

local artists played in the design process. This is something which previous scholarly work on postal stationery has overlooked. The inclusion of the local population in the design process enabled postage stamps to become more specific to the colony. One clear example of this is the number of stylistic changes which came about in the seventies; most notable of these was the inclusion and removal of certain colours and patterns (particularly for the Lunar editions) from designs produced by Western artists operating outside of Hong Kong. Consequently, it is clear that postal reforms in 1965 and 1973 led to a number of changes in Hong Kong's postage stamp designs.

Ultimately, the aim of this thesis has been to explore the representation of Hong Kong on a domestic and global level through a close analysis of traditionally underused sources. The combination of published accounts and postage stamps has enabled this thesis to provide a broad study of the British Administration's portrayal of Hong Kong. As Stanley Brunn argues, stamps are 'windows' of the state.<sup>2</sup> If one peers through the images used on the postage stamps of Hong Kong, it is possible to read the ways in which the British Administration either viewed its colonial possession, or wanted it to be viewed. An examination of early letters and accounts of Hong Kong in this study gives an historical context to the various prominent themes and images which appear on twentieth century postal stationery. By separating chapters chronologically, this thesis has shown that global and domestic changes directly influenced Hong Kong's postage stamp designs. In this sense, stamps are clear indicators of social, cultural, and political change. Yet it is not enough to look at images and geopolitics to contextualise postage stamps; the mechanics of the Post Office itself plays a vital role in the visualisation of a territory. For Hong Kong, reforms in the sixties and seventies facilitated the production of iconography specific to the colony. More importantly, it brought the local population into the design process.

This thesis' analysis of Hong Kong's postage stamps has contributed to a number of academic fields. It has highlighted the degree to which visual culture played an integral role in influencing perceptions of Hong Kong. Additionally, building on recent trends in the field of material culture, this thesis has explored the relationship between 'local'

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley D. Brunn, 'Stamps as Iconography: Celebrating the Independence of new European and Central Asian States', *GeoJournal*, 52 (2000), p. 315.

producer and 'imperial' consumer, and, most importantly, the role collectors played in shaping representation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, this thesis has shed light on the complex relationship between the European and Chinese populations of Hong Kong, the British Administration, London officials, shifting Chinese governments, the wider international community, and, importantly, philatelists. It has explored numerous themes, from fauna and flora, to Cold War migration in a broad chronology. Until the production of this thesis, there existed no academic study of Hong Kong's postage stamps which scrutinised their semiotic messages and contextualised them within a contemporary social and political framework. More importantly though, the scholarly work which does exist on philately has not approached the examination of postage stamps in the same manner as this thesis; thus, this project is a unique contribution to the academic study of postage stamps and the broader analysis of the role visual sources play in representing places and people.

Overall, this thesis has highlighted the usefulness of postage stamps to historical scholarship. Up until now, they have often been underappreciated. A survey of the evidence presented in this thesis demonstrates that stamps deserve to be an integral part of scholarly study. For Hong Kong, this thesis has only covered one stage of the territory's philatelic history; more work is needed on its philatelic output since 1997. Yet in analysing the accounts and stamps of Hong Kong between 1840 and 1997, this thesis has revealed the ways in which the British Administration carefully manufactured an image of Hong Kong intended to be consumed on a global and domestic level. The postage stamp is not a passive indicator of whether postage has been paid for; it is a powerful tool of representation utilised by the state to conjure a specific image of a territory in the minds of the billions of people who come into contact with it on a daily basis. For Hong Kong, postage stamps became a key conveyor of visuals and rhetoric which were ultimately moderated by British officials. Building on early narratives found in newspapers, postage stamps allowed the British Administration to sell a very particular and considered image of Hong Kong to a domestic and global audience.

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<sup>3</sup> For relationship between collectors and producers within an imperial context, see particularly: Claire Wintle, *Colonial Collecting and Display: Encounters with Material Culture from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (Berghan, 2013), ch. 1. For collectors playing a role in imperial representation see: *Ibid.*; Anthony Shelton (ed.), *Collectors: Expressions of Self and Other* (Horniman Museum and Gardens, 2001); Sarah Longair and John McAleer (eds.), *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience* (Manchester University Press, 2012).

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POST47/260  
POST52/1312  
POST108/380  
POST111/42  
POST118/14269  
POST121/625  
POST122/187  
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HKRS70/3/616  
HKRS70/7/411  
HKRS70/7/412/1  
HKRS70/7/412/2  
HKRS70/8/3534  
HKRS70/8/3535  
HKRS70/8/3536  
HKRS70/8/3537  
HKRS70/8/3538  
HKRS70/11/146  
HKRS70/11/147



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HKRS163/1/509  
HKRS163/1/510  
HKRS163/1/998  
HKRS163/1/1262  
HKRS163/1/1730  
HKRS163/1/2252  
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## **Appendix**

### **Stamps from Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5**

Note: The postal stationery reproduced here has not been published according to actual dimensions. They have been altered to fit the formatting of this document.

Postage Stamps for Chapter One

SG163-168



Postage Stamps for Chapter Two

<p>SG169-SG170</p>	
<p>SG171-SG172</p>	
<p>SG173-SG176</p>	

SG177			
SG192			
SG193-SG195			
SG211			

SG212-SG213			
SG214-SG215			
SG216-SG217			
SG218-SG221			

SG237-SG238	
SG239-SG241	
SG242-SG243	
SG244	

SG245-SG246			
SG247-SG252			
SG253-SG254			
SG255-SG256			

SG257-SG258			
SG259			
SG260			



Postage Stamps for Chapter Three

<p>SG242-SG243</p>			
<p>SG245-SG246</p>			
<p>SG257-SG258</p>			

SG261-SG262			
SG263-SG264			
SG265-SG266			
SG267			

SG268-SG269			
SG273-SG275			
SG276-SG277			
SG278			

SG279-SG280			
SG281-SG282			
SG297-SG298			
SG299-SG301			

SG302-SG303			
SG304-SG306			
SG325-SG326			
SG329-330			

SG331-SG333			
SG335-SG337			
SG338-SG339			
SG359-SG360			

SG361-SG363	
SG364-SG367	
SG368-SG370	
SG371-372	

SG373-SG374



SG377-SG379



SG380-SG383



SG384-SG386





Postage Stamps for Chapter Four

<p>SG254-SG257</p>	
<p>SG278</p>	
<p>SG375-SG376</p>	

SG387-SG389			
SG391-SG394			
SG399-SG401			
SG402-SG405			

SG407-SG410			
SG438-SG441			
SG442-SG445			
SG450-SG453			

SG458-SG461	
SG462-SG465	
SG467-SG470	
SG488-SG491	

SG493-SG496			
SG503-SG506			
SG507-SG510			
SG521-SG524			

SG525-SG528	
SG534-SG537	
SG555-SG558	
SG559-SG562	

SG583-SG586			
SG592-SG595			
SG616-SG619			

SG620-SG625





Figure 3.1



Figure 3.2

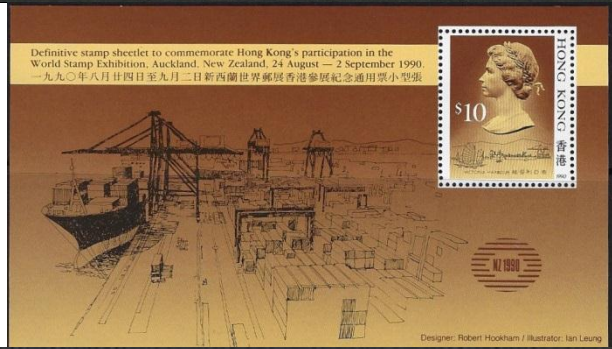


Postage Stamps for Chapter Five

SG636-SG641



SG646

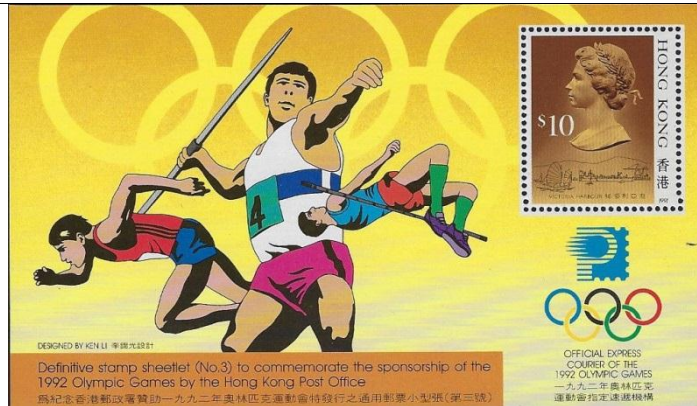


SG667-SG672



SG673-SG677			
SG679-SG683			
SG684		<p>Definitive stamp sheetlet no. 2 to commemorate Hong Kong's participation in PHILANIPPON '91 Tokyo, Japan. 16 to 24 November 1991</p> <p>一九九一年 十一月十六日 至二十四日 日本東京世界郵展 香港參展紀念 通用票小型張</p> <p>PHILANIPPON '91</p>	

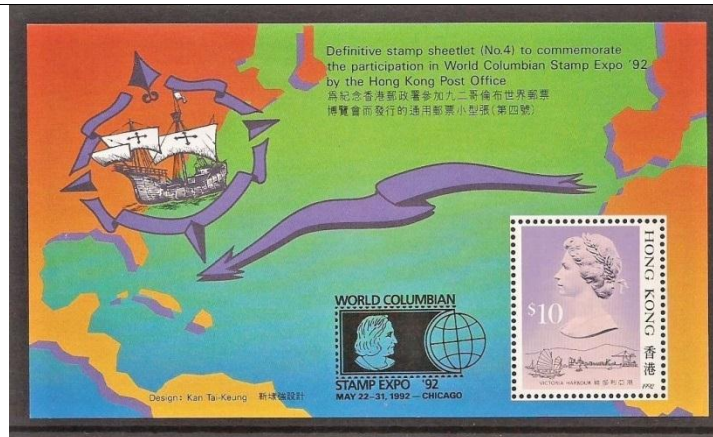
SG685



SG696-SG699



SG701



SG718-SG721



SG722



SG723



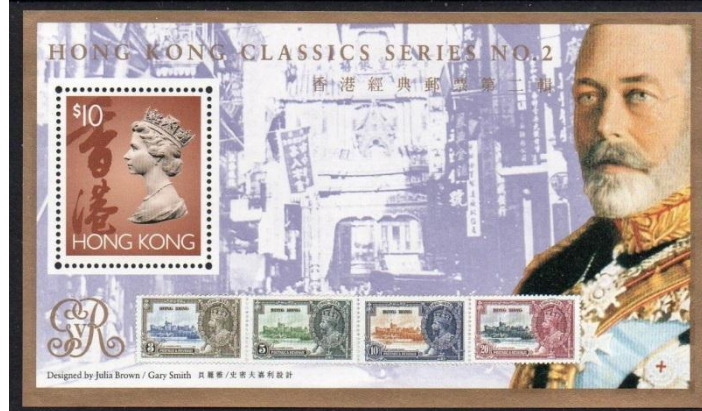
SG724-SG727



SG737-SG740



SG745





SG746



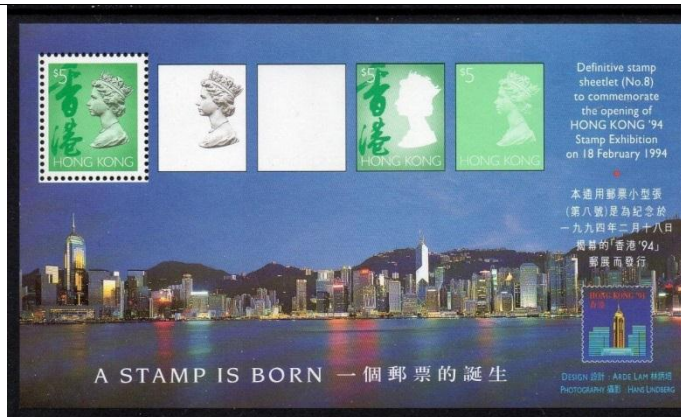
SG751



SG752-SG755



SG771



SG772-SG777



SG787



SG788-SG791



SG798-SG801



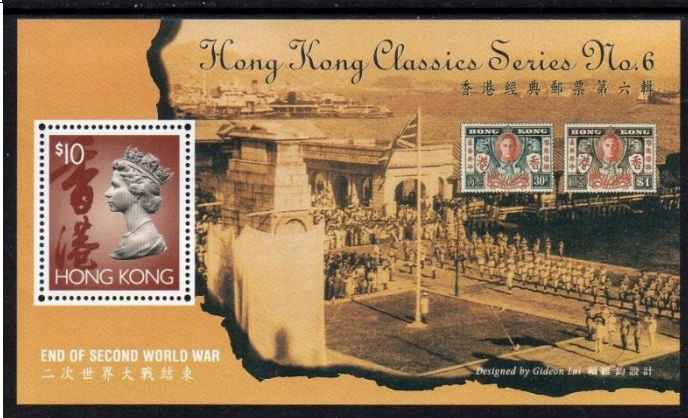
SG802-SG805



SG810



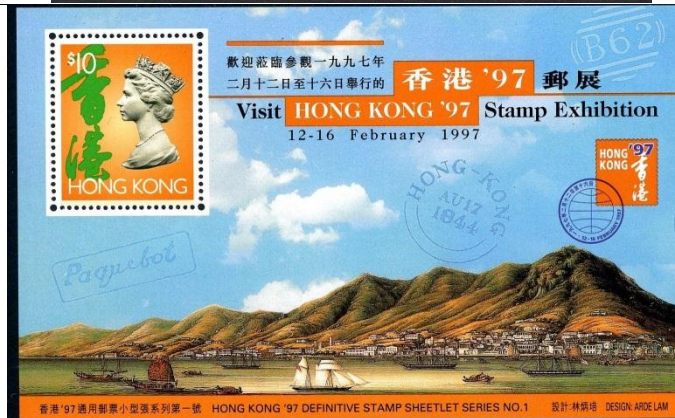
SG811



SG812-SG815



SG821



SG827



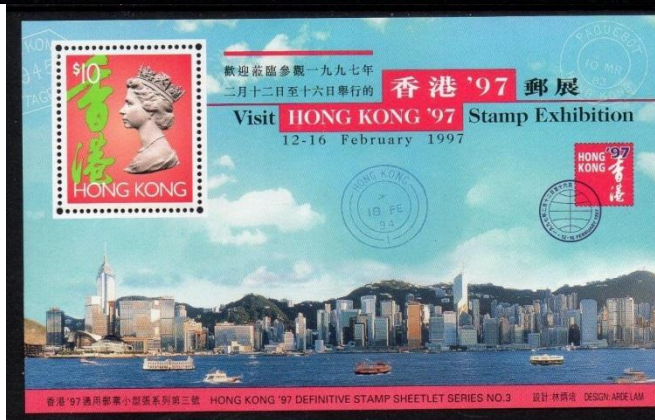
SG828-SG831



SG837-SG840



SG841



SG843-SG846



SG872 (SG872a,  
SG872b and SG872c)





SG873



SG884-SG887



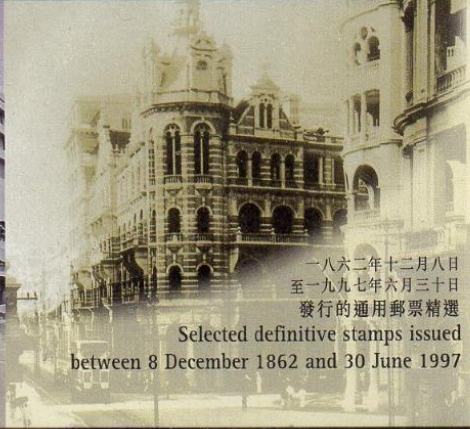
SG893-SG896



SG899

香港經典郵票系列

第十輯



一八六二年十二月八日  
至一九九七年六月三十日  
發行的通用郵票精選  
Selected definitive stamps issued  
between 8 December 1862 and 30 June 1997



DESIGNED BY ARDE LAM FOR POSTNET

Figure 4.1

*Hong Kong – International Cuisine*  
國際美食在香港

郵政總局 Official Postage Stamp Issue 一九九〇年四月二十六日 26 April 1990 Post Office, 2 Cantonment Place, Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a place for great eating adventures. There are some 19,000 dining establishments in the territory to choose from, representing an average of one for every 300 people. This reflects the enthusiasm and love of the local people for fine food. Over the years, chefs from different countries of the world have been attracted to Hong Kong. Their culinary skill and influence have helped Hong Kong become the culinary capital of Asia.

This set of six stamps was designed to depict some of the popular cuisine found in restaurants in Hong Kong, viz. Chinese, Indian, Thai, Japanese and French.

香港是馳譽世界的美食天堂，有大小食肆約一萬九千家，即平均每三百名居民便有一家。佳餚美饌，應有盡有，足見香港人講究飲食之遠。多年以來，香港吸引了各國名廚蒞臨獻技，他們烹飪技術高超，為香港飲食業增添光彩，使香港成為亞洲美食之都。

這套以「國際美食在香港」為主題的郵票，共有六款，介紹在香港廣受歡迎的菜餚，包括中式菜、印式菜、泰式菜、日式菜和法式菜。

**Stamp Printing Details**  
Designers: Nalpechi Yarg. Illustration: Sumbho Davies  
Printer: Eschsché - Holland. Process: Lithography  
Stamp Size: 43 x 28.64mm  
Sheet Size: 50 set in 2 panes of 25 stamps  
Perforations: 13 x 12.5. Paper: Unwatermarked  
Date of Issue: 26 April 1990

**郵票印刷詳情**  
設計者：馮光南 繪畫者：Sumbho Davies  
承印者：Eschsché - Holland  
印刷方法：平版印刷術 郵票面積：43 x 28.64毫米  
紙張面積：五十枚郵票分兩張排列，每張有二十五枚  
齒孔：13 x 12.5 紙張：並無水印  
發行日期：一九九〇年四月二十六日

GPO  
香港郵政

Figure 4.2



Figure 4.3



Figure 4.4



Dr. James Legge 1815 - 1897

理雅各博士

OFFICIAL FIRST DAY COVER

5 October 1994

Hong Kong Post Office

2 Cross Street

Central

Hong Kong

舊日封

一九九四年十月五日

Dr. James Legge was born on 22 December 1815 in Abernethy, Scotland. He came to Hong Kong as a Christian missionary in 1841 and founded the Union Church in 1844 where he remained in minister throughout his service in Hong Kong.

Dr. Legge was an educationalist. He set up missionary schools in Hong Kong for Chinese boys and girls, including Ying Wa College. He was also the progenitor of the Government Central School, the forerunner of Queen's College. His work in the cause of primary schools in Hong Kong, teaching both in English and in the vernacular, laid the foundations for Hong Kong's education system.

Hong Kong gave Dr. Legge the opportunity of becoming acquainted at first hand with the many aspects of Chinese scholarship and he undertook the arduous task of translating Chinese classical works into English. In 1861, assisted by a translator, he published the first volume of his translation of the Chinese Classics. By the end of 1871, Volume IV was published, and Volume V, the last of the series, was in use in Europe months later.

After accomplishing the task, Dr. Legge left Hong Kong permanently for Britain in 1873. He later became the first Professor of Chinese in the University of Oxford. He eventually passed away on 20 November 1897.

Dr. Legge's Chinese Classics consisted of five volumes, and comprised translations of *The Confucian Analects*, *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Works of Mencius*, *The Book of Historical Documents*, *The Book of Poetry*, *The Ch'un T'zu* with *The Tao Chuan*. Apart from the Chinese Classics, Dr. Legge also contributed many translations of "The Sacred Books of China" including the texts of *Confucianism* and *Taoism*.

Dr. Legge had devoted a great part of his lifetime to translating and explaining the learning of the East to scholars and missionaries of the West. His work has been hailed by students and scholars in the West as the greatest contribution ever made to the study of Chinese.

The stamp depicts the portrait of Dr. James Legge with a background showing Dr. Legge discussing Chinese classic literature with other Chinese students.

Stamp Printing Details  
 Designer: LAI Wai Kuen, Golden  
 Printer: Leigh-Mardon Pty Ltd, Australia  
 Process: Lithography Stamp Size: 27.94 X 44.47 mm  
 Sheet Size: 50 set in two-joints of 25 stamps  
 Perforations: 14.12 X 14.85 Paper: Unwatermarked  
 Date of Issue: 5 October 1994

理雅各博士於一八一五年十二月二十二日在蘇格蘭阿伯內西出生。

一八四一年，他抵達香港，並在維多利亞道設立了聯合教會。

理雅各博士是一位教育家。他在香港創辦了多間學校，其中包括英華書院、英華女學校、以及政府中央學校（即前皇后大道中學校的前身）。

理雅各博士在香港的經歷使他得以親身了解中國學術的許多方面，並承擔了艱鉅的任務，將中國古典著作翻譯成英文。一九六一年，在翻譯家的協助下，他出版了第一卷的《中國經書》。

一九七三年，理雅各博士在英國牛津大學擔任中國語文教授。

理雅各博士的《中國經書》共分為五卷，包括《論語》、《大學》、《中庸》、《孟子》、《詩經》、《春秋》、《禮記》、《易經》等。

理雅各博士一生致力於將中國學術介紹給西方學者，他的貢獻被譽為對中國研究最偉大的貢獻。

這枚郵票展示了理雅各博士的肖像，背景顯示他正在與中國學生討論中國古典文學。

郵票印刷詳情  
 設計者：羅偉基  
 印刷者：萊格-馬登有限公司，澳洲  
 工藝：石印 郵票尺寸：27.94 X 44.47 毫米  
 郵票規格：50 枚裝，分兩頁，每頁 25 枚  
 perforations: 14.12 X 14.85 紙張：無水印  
 發行日期：一九九四年十月五日



A16

Figure 4.5





Figure 4.6

*Chinese String Musical Instruments*  
中國弦樂器

PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF HONG KONG  
14 AP 93

PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF HONG KONG  
14 AP 93

首日封 Official First Day Cover 一八九三年四月十四日 14 × 4 × 1993 Post Office 2 Connaught Place Hong Kong

集郵郵票郵票 : 115.8.1

This set of stamps features some Chinese string musical instruments:

**80¢ Pipa** : The pipa is a Chinese lute with a history of more than two thousand years. Because it has a resonant, delicate, clear and enchanting timbre, it holds a unique position among many Chinese plucked instruments. As an instrument of fine handicraft, its exquisite workmanship and beauty also appeal to musicians abroad.

**\$1.80 Erhu** : The erhu is one of the most widely used bowed instruments in China. Its tone is mellow and bright. It is now extremely popular for both solo and orchestral performances.

**\$2.30 Ban** : The ban is a Chinese fretted instrument with a history of over one thousand six hundred years. It is used by orchestras and for accompanying operatic performances.

**\$5 Guqin** : The guqin is a bass string instrument. It is the Chinese equivalent of the cello. However, unlike the cello, the resonator of the guqin is resonated with a membrane of snake skin.

**Stamp Printing Details**  
Designer: Susukin Davies Printer: Leigh-Mardon Pty. Ltd., Australia  
Process: Lithography Stamp Size: 27.94 x 41.25 mm  
Sheet Size: 50 set in two pages of 25 stamps  
Perforation: 14.32 x 14.85 Paper: Unwatermarked  
Date of Issue: 14 April 1993

這套郵票以幾種中國弦樂器為主題：

**8角 琵琶** : 琵琶是一種中國撥弦樂器，已有二千多年歷史。琵琶的音色清脆婉轉，在眾多中國撥弦樂器中佔有獨特的地位。此外，琵琶的工藝精湛，外形優美，深受海外音樂家所喜愛。

**1元8角 二胡** : 二胡是一種在中國極為流行的拉弦樂器，音色圓潤清越，是樂隊及合奏中廣泛使用的樂器。

**2元3角 阮** : 阮是中國彈撥樂器之一，有超過一千六百年的歷史，多用於合奏及戲曲的伴奏。

**5元 古琴** : 琴是一種拉弦樂器，其外形與西樂大提琴相似，不過，琴韻因其特殊的蛇皮泛音。

**郵票印刷詳情**  
設計師: Susukin Davies  
印刷者: 澳洲 Leigh-Mardon Pty. Ltd.  
印刷方法: 平版印刷 郵票面額: 27.94 × 41.25 毫米  
郵票間隔: 十四點三二及十四點八五 紙張: 無水印  
發行日期: 一九九三年四月十四日

Figure 4.7



figure 4.8



Figure 4.9



Figure 4.10



**HONG KONG  
MOUNTAINS**

Official First Day Cover - 11 September 1996  
Hong Kong Post Office, 2 Connaught Place, Central, Hong Kong



香港山嶽起伏，地勢大多陡峭，且有少量的沖積平原。由於山麓受到剝蝕，山麓地帶多為堆積區廢物所覆蓋。大帽山是香港最高的山嶽，高957米，矗立新界中部。

這套郵票以香港的著名山嶽為主題，一、二、三、四號郵票分別描繪大帽山、這套山嶽位於新界，離離離離離離離離離離，山嶽地帶多為堆積區廢物所覆蓋，共有八峰，位於新界中部的八和五五，最高峰是狗頭峰，高957米。

二、三、四號郵票分別描繪大帽山、大帽山高957米，位於新界中部，其嶺脊多由堆積物所覆蓋，而較低的山麓則由沖積物所覆蓋。

三、四號郵票分別描繪大帽山、獅子山高499米，由花崗岩所構成，位於九龍半島以北的陸地帶上，其嶺脊多由堆積物所覆蓋，離海約一公里。

五號郵票分別描繪大帽山、大帽山高957米，由花崗岩所構成，是香港最高的山嶽，亦是香港的第二高峰，為遠足和觀賞日出的勝地。

The topography of Hong Kong is characterized by steep and rugged mountains with only limited areas of alluvial plain. Much of the terrain at the foot of the mountains is dominated by slope deposits transported downslope by erosion. The highest peak in Hong Kong is Tai Mo Shan (957 metres) which is located in the central New Territories.

This set of stamps depicts four famous mountains in Hong Kong. The \$1.30 stamp depicts the crest of the Plover Cove escarpment, located in the New Territories overlooking the Plover Cove Reservoir. The ridge consists mainly of volcanic rocks and sandstone. There are eight peaks along the escarpment which derive its name from the ancient Chinese tale of the Eight Immortals. The highest peak is Shan Young Fung (511 metres).

The \$2.50 stamp depicts Mt. On Shan (702 metres) in the New Territories. The name is derived from the shape of the mountain which resembles a saddle. Volcanic rocks are exposed on the summit of Mt. On Shan, whereas the lower slopes consist of sandstone.

The \$3.10 stamp depicts Lion Rock peak (499 metres). Lion Rock is a prominent granitic peak on the Kowloon Peninsula to the north of the Kowloon Peninsula. The shape of the mountain resembles a lion perching on a hill ridge.

The \$5 stamp depicts Lantau Peak (954 metres) which consists of a thick sequence of volcanic rocks. Known locally as Pung Wong Shan (Plover's Mountain), it is the highest peak in Lantau Island and is the second highest peak in the territory. It is a popular spot for hiking and sunrise watching.

**郵票印刷詳情**

設計師: 李國輝	設計者: 李國輝
印刷商: 香港郵政	印刷商: 香港郵政
印刷日期: 1996年9月11日	印刷日期: 1996年9月11日
印刷地點: 香港	印刷地點: 香港

**STAMP PRINTING DETAILS**

DESIGNER: Lee King Fui, Arts	PRINTED: 10 sets in two pages of 20 stamps
DESIGNER: Lee King Fui, Arts	DESIGNER: Lee King Fui, Arts
DESIGNER: Lee King Fui, Arts	DESIGNER: Lee King Fui, Arts
DESIGNER: Lee King Fui, Arts	DESIGNER: Lee King Fui, Arts

Figure 4.11





Figure 4.13





Figure 4.14



Figure 4.15

Selling price 郵價: HK \$1

# 集 郵





STAMP COLLECTING Official First Day Cover 15 July 1992 Hong Kong Post Office 2 Connaught Place.  
集郵首日封一九九二年七月十五日

Since postage stamps were introduced in 1840 as a means to decrease payment of postal charges, stamp collecting has developed into a popular hobby worldwide.

The compactness of stamps is an important advantage: over most other collectible items. Their aesthetic value appeals to some, their historical interest to many, and their geographical relationships to almost every collector. Stamps are works of art. With the help of stamps, one can wander through different lands, times and history. The fun of collecting stamps lies in the excitement of building up one's own collection through sorting and searching for references, and meeting fellow collectors to exchange stamps and to talk about individual collections.

Stamp collecting is very popular in Hong Kong. It is the Postmaster General's policy to issue five sets of special stamps each year. Stamps are designed to high standards and are well received by collectors.

This set of four stamps depicts some major accessories used by collecting stamps:

- a perforation gauge (180)
- a pair of tweezers (151, 101)
- a magnifying glass (152, 50)
- a watermark detector (155)

一八四零年，郵票首次發行，作為已付郵費的證明。自此以後，集郵逐漸成為世界各地不少人士的嗜好。

郵票小巧精緻，比大部分收藏品都優勝。有些人因其藝術美觀而集郵，亦有不少人因為郵票有歷史意義而集郵；於此不少位集郵人士，藉郵票所代表的地理環境深深吸引。集郵是看遍世界，遊覽各式的郵票。我們可以穿梭於不同時空，探求古今今來。集郵人士喜愛將郵票分門別類及搜集參考資料，增進郵票的數量，與其他集郵愛好者的人交換郵票和討論私人珍藏，更甚其樂融融。

集郵在香港非常流行，郵政署每年通常每年發行五套特別郵票。這些郵票都設計精美，深受集郵人士歡迎。

這套郵票共有四種圖案，分別描繪一些主要的集郵工具：

- 量齒尺（180角）
- 鉗大鏡（152角3分）
- 郵票膠（151角8分）
- 水印章（155角）

**Stamp Printing Details**  
 Designer: KAN Tai Kwong    Photographer: C. K. Wong  
 Date of issue: 15 July 1992  
 Printer: Leigh-Mardon Pty. Ltd., Australia    Process: Lithography  
 Stamp Size: 27.99 x 14.69 mm  
 Sheet Size: 90 set in two pieces of 25 stamps  
 Perforation: 14.52 x 14.95    Paper: Cosewatermarked

**郵票印刷詳情**  
 設計師：靳建強    攝影師：王正剛  
 發行日期：一九九二年七月十五日  
 承印者：澳洲 Leigh-Mardon Pty. Ltd.  
 郵票面積：27.99 x 14.69 毫米    印刷方法：平版印刷  
 紙張面積：五十枚郵票分兩張排列，每張二十五枚  
 齒孔：14.52 x 14.95    紙張：熟水印

Figure 4.16

Official souvenir cover  
to publicise the Stamp Exhibition  
**HONG KONG '94**  
Hong Kong Post Office  
2 Connaught Place  
香港郵政總局宣傳  
「香港'94」郵展而發行的  
正式紀念封





Visit **HONG KONG '94** Stamp Exhibition  
18-21 FEBRUARY 1994 AT  
HONG KONG CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE

郵展開幕郵票  
一九九四年二月十八日至二十一號  
香港會議展覽中心舉行  
「香港'94」郵展

12 AUG 1993

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On 18-21 February 1994, Hong Kong will organise the first ever regional stamp exhibition "HONG KONG '94" to celebrate the long history of Hong Kong postage stamps, which dates back to 1842. The Exhibition is organised by the Hong Kong Philatelic Society and co-organised by the Hong Kong Post Office. Other participants include All China Philatelic Federation (Beijing), Chinese Topical Philatelic Society (Taipei) and Clube Filatelico De Macau (Macau). The Exhibition is supported by the Federation of Inter-Asian Philately.

HONG KONG '94 is expected to generate considerable interest among stamp collectors. Organisation of such an exhibition is likely to foster cooperation and improved relations between the various parties concerned. 400 frames of invited and competitive stamp exhibits will be displayed. 70 sales booths will be made available for renting by overseas postal administrations and local and overseas dealers. The attendance is estimated to be 200,000.

To publicise this special philatelic event, a \$10 definitive stamp sheetlet (No. 6) is issued. The "HONG KONG '94" logo shown on the stamp sheetlet features the newest and most dramatic addition to the Hong Kong skyline — Central Plaza, Asia's tallest building.

香港將於一九九四年二月十八日至二十一號舉行一項名為「香港'94」的郵展，以慶祝香港郵票的悠久歷史——追溯至一八四二年。這項郵展在香港舉行的首次地區郵展。郵展是由香港集郵學會主辦，並由香港郵政總局協辦。其他參與組織包括中國集郵聯合會（北京）、中國專題集郵學會（台北）及澳門集郵俱樂部（澳門）。郵展獲得亞洲集郵聯合會贊助。

「香港'94」郵展預計將大大引起本地及世界各地集郵人士上的興趣。舉辦此類郵展有可能促進有關組織的合作，以及增進與此有關的關係。屆時共有400個框架，可將展出獲邀參加的展品及比賽的展品。另外還有70個銷售攤位，供海外郵政總局、本地及遠程郵政總局租用。展覽期間預計參觀人數達200,000人次。

為宣傳這項郵展盛事，郵政總局發行一枚10元值的郵票小型張（第6號）。小型張上圖的「香港'94」標誌包括香港最新、最壯麗的建築——中環廣場，亞洲最高建築。

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**STAMP SHEETLET PRINTING DETAILS**  
Designer: Arde Loin (stamp sheetlet) Ian Leung (definitive stamp)  
Printer: Joh. Enschedé, the Netherlands  
Process: Lithography  
Size: 80 x 115mm  
Paper: Unwatermarked

**郵票小型張印刷詳情**  
設計者：林炳良（小型張）梁國榮（郵票）  
印刷廠：荷蘭 Joh. Enschedé  
印刷方法：平版印刷  
尺寸：80 x 115 毫米  
紙張：無水印

