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Author(s)	Lam, WM
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Depoliticization, Citizenship, and the Politics of Community in Hong Kong

Lam Wai-man

Lam Wai-man, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Macau, Taipa, Macau; email: wmlam@umac.mo

This article critically examines the government discourses on citizenship and community in Hong Kong from the 1960s to the present. By making special reference to the government's discourses on three public events: the 1966 Star Ferry riots, the 1981 riots, and scuffles such as those that took place at the Cultural Center, Tsimshatsui, on Christmas and New Year's Eve of 2002, it reconstructs the meaning of good citizenship as promoted by the Hong Kong colonial and Special Administrative Region (SAR) governments respectively. These three public events are selected as cases highly indicative of what the government expects an ideal citizen to be because all of them aroused substantial public attention which subsequently invoked considerable government discourses and action. Citizenship is built upon a shared sense of community. Considered in this context, this article also traces the understanding of community of the governments, as it is intertwined with the notion of citizenship, through the development of government policies on youth and citizen education in the city from the 1960s onward. It is obvious that citizenship is constituted from both above (by the government) and below (by the civil society). By reconstructing the government discourses in this regard, this paper will shed light on part of the process of citizenship making in Hong Kong.

Citizenship and Its Constitutive Stories

Although definitions of citizenship are numerous, they usually encompass three major themes. Pamela J. Conover offers an example, explaining citizenship as the fundamental relationship of a person to a political community that consists of a collection of individuals who are "committed to dividing, exchanging, and sharing social goods." A political community is "constituted by its members and its formal institutions, and citizenship shapes how individuals relate to both components. It is the basis, therefore, upon which people answer the fundamental questions about public life: Who am I? What can I do? What must I do?" (Conover, 1995, pp. 134-5)

Conover's idea of citizenship reveals that it encompasses three elements. The most basic element is membership in the political community. The second element is the sense of citizenship, which consists of the concept of citizen identity, that is, the affective significance people give to their membership in a particular community. It also connotes the common beliefs that people engender about their relationship to the state and other citizens. The final element of the idea of citizenship is practice, that is, the behaviors that people engage in as part of their public lives. The practice of citizenship includes both political participation and civic activity (Conover, 1995, pp. 134-5). While political participation manifests an active citizenship through which citizens assert their rights and influence their government, civic activity indicates a relatively passive citizenship by which people's obedience and fulfillment of civic duties serve to keep the political system going.

In theory, the construction of the concepts of citizenship and political community

is a process embedded with a sense of reciprocity and egalitarianism, as both the government and the citizenry have a part to play in bringing good citizenship to fruition. There should be a dual emphasis on the importance of political and civic activity. However, in real politics, as Roger M. Smith (2001, pp. 79-80) argues, the status of citizen is often utilized for creating common memories and feelings of identification, as well as to create belief in the importance of practices beneficial to governance. While citizenship indicates a political identity of a people, this identity, like other identities, is a political construction, subject to political manipulation. Also, shaping a sense of citizenship is a political process embedded with competing narratives of an economic, political, and constitutive nature. Each type of story serves particular political functions. Economic stories promote accounts of interests, arguing that a particular version of citizenship advances each member's economic well being. Political narratives foster trust in the worth of a citizen identity by promising the people enhancement of their political power through institutions and policies, and protection from all external enemies. Constitutive stories show members of the community with shared identities, as defined by their common religion, race, ethnicity, language, culture, history, and so on.

Building upon Smith's perspectives, this article demonstrates that the official discourse of citizen identity and practices in colonial and post-colonial Hong Kong is on the whole depoliticized, although the Hong Kong colonial and SAR governments were also responsible for re-politicizing Hong Kong as a result of the proto-democratic reforms of the former and the promotion of nationalism of the latter (Lam, 2004, pp. 231-242). The colonial depoliticized notion of citizenship places great value on cultivating a passive citizenship. It is intertwined with economic discourses that place emphasis on citizenship

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qualities such as self-reliance, economical usefulness, and contribution. It is basically an individualized and instrumental account, promoting a shallow sense of community. As a result, this notion affirms the historic vision of the Hong Kong people as economic animals, and sees society's primary goal as enabling economic activities to flourish. A narrowly defined identity for its citizenry is entrenched within a constricted vision of society or community, which assists in weaving the people together and strengthening governance. Although it has largely adopted the colonial government's depoliticized understanding of citizenship and narrow sense of community, the Hong Kong SAR government has been confronted with different political and economic circumstances since 1997. Because of these circumstances, it has endeavored to cultivate nationalism as a part of citizenship and to experiment with various constitutive stories of a Hong Kong identity that caters to its governance needs.

The Three Events in Focus

The three public events selected here demonstrate vividly the development of the official discourses on citizenship and community from the 1960s to the present. The 1966 Star Ferry riots took place at a delicate moment in Hong Kong's history. In 1965, a run on the banks had occurred. At the same time, there was a recession in the real estate market and many of its ancillary activities. The Star Ferry Company's application for a fare increase further depressed the people in Hong Kong. Although the proposed magnitude of the rise in fare was not substantial,[1] public opposition soared—at its height attracting 174,398 signatures on a petition against the increase. Regardless of the opposition, the company's

application, although with a reduced level of permitted increase, was eventually granted. A significant turning point in the event came on April 4, 1966, when So Sau-chung, a young man in his twenties, began a lone hunger strike in protest. His hunger strike attracted numerous young supporters. As events escalated, riots also took place and a curfew was finally imposed on April 7. Order was restored on April 9. One casualty and twenty-six injuries were reported.

Relatively smaller in scale and less political in intent, it appears that the 1981 riots were triggered by crowds of people concentrated in the downtown areas celebrating Christmas and the New Year. It was reported that a car bumped into a pedestrian on Christmas Eve, which subsequently led to arguments and open fighting. The driver was beaten up while other people began to riot. The crowds smashed the car and other cars nearby. They set fire to cars, assaulted people (notably foreigners), stoned policemen, and later rampaged into nearby districts, causing even more damage to public and private properties. Order was restored the next day with eleven injuries and twelve arrests, all of whom were ages fifteen to twenty-seven. A few days later, on New Year's Eve of 1981, another similar hostility took place. Two non-Chinese youngsters danced on the street, which provoked hostility from the crowds that were also celebrating. The police subsequently made a number of arrests, with most of them being young people (Wong, 1996, p. 10; Ng, 1995, pp. 71-2).

Among the three events in discussion, the following scuffles were the smallest in scale. In recent years, the Hong Kong Cultural Centre has become a popular venue where people, notably youngsters, would gather and celebrate Christmas and the New Year. However, the problems of littering, graffiti, illegal hawking, and vandalism are

increasingly serious, and scuffles between youngsters and the police and minor disorders incited by excited gangs have also become common during the celebrations. On Christmas of 2002, conflicts happened between young celebrators and the police at the Cultural Centre leading to several arrests. Both the youngsters and the police complained about being assaulted. Similarly, during the celebrations for New Year of 2003, a crowd of youngsters sang and danced to express their feelings but were stopped by a police officer. Scuffles happened, and the policeman was surrounded. The police eventually took steps to disperse the crowds, cleared the venue, and arrested at least seven youngsters. The authority accused the celebrators, notably members of youth gangs, of a lack of self-discipline and care for public property, getting excited too easily, and not cooperating with the police to maintain public order.

Although the three types of events under study appear to be different in nature, they manifest the government's changing focus in the construction of citizen identity, and the constitution of the types of citizenship stories suggested by Smith.

Political Passivity and Depoliticized Citizenship

It is no exaggeration that the official discourse on citizenship in Hong Kong has been narrowly focused and depoliticized. This depoliticized discourse consists of several major characteristics, including, first of all, a passive notion of citizenship.

The events described reflect that the concept of citizenship promoted by the Hong Kong colonial and SAR governments are strikingly passive. It emphasizes civic duties rather than political rights and the development of critical ability. For example, in the

1966 riots and the 2002 scuffles examined in this study, the main blame for the conflicts was placed on the actions of so-called irresponsible youths who were also accused of just wanting excitement, lacking self-control, behaving in an ill mannered way, and so on. On the whole, the young people involved in the conflicts were accused of lacking a sense of citizen consciousness, with the term "sense of citizenship" defined as well-mannered, well-adjusted, and socially responsible. Citizenship in this sense skips its activist components.

In fact, educating local people on how to become responsible citizens has remained a constant theme of the Hong Kong colonial and SAR governments' youth and community building policies since the 1960s. For example, the aims of many of the activities organized for young people and for community development were explicitly stated as designed to promote public-spirited citizenship. As early as the beginning of the 1950s, the Social Welfare Department stated that its common ideal was:

> to enable every member of the community to develop into a reliable neighbour, and a useful and informed fellow-citizen. Every practical step taken towards that ideal meant a gain to the community, inasmuch as successful social work resulted in fewer social misfits, more individual self-reliance, and less dependence upon "charity" by families or persons. . . . in short, citizens with a much more highly developed social consciousness and sense of social responsibility than had existed previously (Social Welfare Department, 1955, p. 1).

Similarly, as exemplified in a report published before the 1966 riots, citizenship means being cooperative and fulfilling civic obligations:

> This [community centre] is the network by which residents are helped to become citizens, to develop co-operative attitudes, to increase their capacity to work together, and, by furthering their own particular interests, to serve the wider interests of the community (Social Welfare Department, 1965, p. 9).

After the 1966 riots, the colonial government carried out a series of measures to strengthen its legitimacy. With regard to citizenship, it implemented the City District Office scheme,[2] improved social welfare services, nurtured a sense of belonging in the people, and developed civic education. The colonial government further promoted civic education in the 1980s in response to the 1981 riots and the impinging question of Hong Kong's political future. In the 1998 *Policy Address*, Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa also stated that he looked to the younger generation to not only seek their rights as individuals, but also to meet their obligations to society (Tung, 1998, para. 111). In a similar vein, in the 2002 scuffles, calls for cultivating a sense of civic responsibility and civic consciousness among Hong Kong citizens were frequently heard. Notably, 140 "Ambassador" volunteers were mobilized as exemplary youth in assisting Madam Tung Chee-hwa to clear up the situation at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre.

A Citizenship Intertwined with Economic Narratives

We can make sense of the governments' emphasis on promoting civic obedience and responsible citizenship very easily. These qualities are essential conditions to maintaining stability and harmony in society, which are prerequisites for favorable economic investment and prosperity. Indeed, another notable characteristic of the depoliticized discourse of citizenship of the governments is its economic emphasis.

First of all, there is a tendency in government discourses to seek economic explanations for poor citizenship. In the three social conflicts examined above, government officials closely scrutinized the occupations and social classes of those involved. The rioters or the so-called problem youth were described as unemployed, underemployed, undereducated, or double-losers in competitions in schools and in the job market. The employment situation of the youngsters involved were said to have had a part to play in causing the riots or conflicts, and also contributed to their poorly developed citizen consciousness. For example, regarding the rioters of the 1966 riots, the report of the Commission of Inquiry stated that:

> the type of employment many of the boys were in held little for them by way of future security or advancement and this, coupled with the long unorthodox hours they worked, as well as the low pay they received, contributed to the feeling of aimlessness and boredom which was part of the motivation behind their involvement in the riots. Because of the demands of their employment, they lacked opportunity for normal teenage fun, so used the riots as one outlet for this need (Commission of Inquiry, 1967, p. 106).

So, it appears that the jobs of the youngsters had a part to play in causing the riots. Like the 1966 riots, the discourse invoked during the 2002 scuffles has a similar component. The participants of the scuffles were presumed to be unemployed and were labeled as "losers" in schools. They were the so-called double losers, who had neither career nor educational prospects, and amounted to around 100,000 in number according to the government. Indeed, among the three events, this type of economic explanation is particularly prevalent in the 2002 scuffles, reflecting the predominance of economic narratives in the city since the 1997 handover.

Second, good citizenship means not relying on government and, further, it means contributing to the economic growth of society. Suggestions to enable young people to become self-reliant and contributive were found in the events under study. In the aftermath of the 1966 riots, voices had been raised to secure better prospects and more stable employment for young people through improved educational and training programs (Social Welfare Department, 1968, p. 1). Such suggestions were also prominent in the 2002 scuffles, which doubtless indicates that the Hong Kong SAR government regarded helping youngsters to find employment and offering employment retraining programs as feasible solutions to the perceived problems of the young. Further, since reunifying with China, the aim of social welfare was commonly stated as to help young people to "become participating and contributing members of society" and to provide individuals "with opportunities to achieve self-reliance and self-betterment, and promote social cohesion and harmony" (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2001). This emphasis on the concept of self-reliance explains why Comprehensive Social Security Assistance[3] recipients who are able-bodied people and have the ability to work are a problem. Driven

by the fear that such recipients will become dependent on the government, the Active

Employment Assistance Programme under the Support for Self-reliance Scheme has been

implemented to help them to become self-reliant again, offering them job retraining and

job-hunting assistance (Social Welfare Department, 2003, p. 11). Such calls for

preserving a self-reliant culture and being economically contributive, reveal an economic

emphasis in the governments' notions of ideal citizenship.

If the concept of self-reliance is to orient the people of Hong Kong to be

economically independent and useful, then the fulfillment of such a goal requires an

active attitude from the people to search continuously for knowledge and skills beneficial

to the city's economic recovery and reconstruction. Since the handover, we see an

increasing emphasis on this "activist attitude" that was not found before. This discourse

encourages people to actively acquire economic skills so as to be contributive and useful

to the economic recovery of Hong Kong. For instance, the 1997 *Policy Address* says:

> It is important that we educate our young people, so that they master the
>
> knowledge and skills needed to make a living and to contribute to society. But
>
> this is far from being the only aim of importance. Knowledge and skills can
>
> propel economic growth, ... (Tung, 1997, p. 104)

An Instrumental Overtone

The economic orientation of the idea of citizenship promoted by the Hong Kong colonial

and SAR governments clearly contains an instrumental overtone, seeing youth

development and citizenship education as a social investment that in the end would mean a gain to the community or lead to economic and social prosperity. For example, a government report in 1964 states that the government is obliged to concentrate on those social services that contribute directly to the self-reliance of individuals and so to the greater economic and social prosperity of the community as a whole (Social Welfare Department, 1964, pp. 3-4). It can therefore be understood that good citizenship means, at least partly, satisfying the economic demands of the government. Good citizens should not constitute an economic burden. Instead, they should be able to contribute to the economic growth of the city. Worthy of note, such demands from the governments would intensify when Hong Kong's economic situation deteriorates. Since the economic downturn in 1999, the Hong Kong SAR government's promotion of this ideal citizenship has become particularly prevalent.

The instrumental overtone of the official stories on citizenship is also revealed by government's emphasis on social control. Good social control leads to good citizenry, which is potentially beneficial to economic growth. If citizens were all politically cooperative and socially responsible, they would pose no threat to stability. And social stability is a prerequisite for economic growth according to the governments. There is thus no surprise that in each of the three instances examined, the Hong Kong colonial and SAR governments stressed the need to enable young people to use their energy constructively.

Since the 1966 riots, the government has focused its efforts on organizing summer youth programs and parties, and has promoted youth activities. The 1981 riots led the Home Affairs Department to endorse the same themes. In order to avoid an over-

concentration of restless youngsters in one district of the city in the subsequent year, the District Boards were even given a special grant to set up lighting and Christmas and New Year's celebrations in each district, so as to ensure that adolescents would celebrate the festivals in their respective neighborhoods. The same "energy release" theme was reiterated during the 2002 scuffles. For instance, Legislative Councilor Chan Yuen-han stated, "Adolescents are rebellious, we need to provide them with proper channels to release their feelings" (*Oriental Daily*, January 5, 2003). Under the instrumental view of citizenship promoted by the governments, the narrowly constructed political function of a good citizenry is merged with its economic functions.

The Construction of a Narrow Sense of Community

A sense of community is a prerequisite to a sense of citizenship. However, given the depoliticized overtone of the idea of citizenship in Hong Kong that has prevailed since the colonial era, it is no surprise that the cultivation of a sense of community was not perceived as imperative until the 1960s. Before that, the colonial government considered the promotion of Hong Kong citizenship and a local sense of belonging irrelevant or of negligible importance.

An interesting example comes from the government's response to the petition of the Reform Club of Hong Kong regarding the Young Plan (for example, Tsang, 1988, pp. 32-3) to expand the Hong Kong electorate to include "Hong Kong citizens" (Colonial Office, 1946-52). In 1946, Governor Mark Young proposed to establish a Municipal Council based on representation, which would be granted a high degree of financial

autonomy and authority to handle certain important functions of the government. The proposed council would be composed of forty-eight members, of which sixteen would be elected Chinese members, sixteen elected non-Chinese members, and sixteen members nominated by Chinese organizations and non-Chinese organizations. In response to this proposal, the petition of the Reform Club of Hong Kong, submitted on June 22, 1949, suggested that the defined electorate in Hong Kong should be composed of British subjects and Hong Kong citizens. Those who had resided in the city for five years and applied for registration with an expressed commitment to upholding the interests of the colony would be qualified as Hong Kong citizens and eligible voters. It was hoped that the proposal would help to build up a large and loyal body of citizens. Although attractive, Governor Alexander Grantham considered the proposal "based on a false premise." In his perspective, promoting citizenship was of little value to governance, since there was not such an entity as a Hong Kong citizen. To quote him:

> This idea is superficially attractive but it is based on a false premise. There is no half-way house between a British national and a Chinese national, and it would be absurd to rely on any paramount loyalty of non-British Chinese other than self-interest arising from long and close connexion with the Colony and a desire to maintain the status quo. Any Chinese, who felt as a "Hong Kong citizen" ought to feel, would have applied to become a British subject long ago (Colonial Office, 1946-52).

In addition to the mistrust in the value of cultivating a local identity, the colonial government's relative lack of interest in this regard was probably also generated by political fear. It appeared to believe that "if local interest was awakened, there were very real dangers of exploitation by triad societies or undercover political agents" (Social Welfare Department, 1955, p. 32). Indeed, it was believed that the constitutive stories of a citizen identity, once invoked, might engender too much solidarity and potentially threaten colonial rule. Why was that?

If it is true to claim that a depoliticized discourse has prevailed in Hong Kong, one of the characteristics of this discourse was the widespread belief that political instability was the result of a left wing or local activist conspiracy. Because of Cold War politics, which in the Hong Kong context was further complicated by Chinese politics and the competing political allegiances of the Hong Kong people to the governments of the People's Republic of China or the Republic of China (Taiwan), society seemed to be trapped in an atmosphere of political sensitivity that constantly feared Communist subversion. Also, high levels of political activism in the city, notably left wing activities in the 1950s and 1960s, and those by young people in the 1970s, further accelerated such fears. From the perspective of the colonial government, a Hong Kong identity contextualized by the city's colonial history was probably harmful to governance because it united the people around the themes of nationalism and democracy (for example, Lam, 2004).

In the 1960s, the need to stimulate a sense of community in Hong Kong had become imperative, notably after the 1966 and 1967 riots. The sense of community, if successfully created, would encourage citizens to play a part in the development of a

society comprised of responsible members, and hence ensure stability (Social Welfare Department, 1965, pp. 6-7; 1969, p. 11). Look at a typical example of this thinking:

> There has been an urgent need for conscious efforts to quicken this process without allowing this rootlessness characteristic of the past years' remarkable development to take its own course and to expose the population to irresistible influences (Social Welfare Department, 1969, p. 11).

However, intentionally or unintentionally, the colonial government had been careful to construct only a shallow community identity among the people of Hong Kong, as a buffer against Chinese communist influence, yet still allowing it to protect its rule from the dangers of too much local interest and solidarity. In this construction, the people were depicted as a "great assemblage of people," rootless refugees, sharing little common in their histories and memories. An interesting example includes:

> Hong Kong is in most practical ways not a settlement with a history of 124 years (much less an outpost of the world's most ancient continuous and uniform culture) but rather a great assemblage of people, few of whose corporate memories can go back as long as twenty or twenty-five years without some traumatic break (Social Welfare Department, 1966, p. 6).

Further, it was believed that most of these rootless refugees "had come here solely to make a living for themselves, to seek asylum, or to take advantage of Hong Kong's

social services" (Social Welfare Department, 1955, p. 32). As a result, they were somewhat socially and politically apathetic, self-interested, and would likely return to China if circumstances allowed (for example, Hong Kong Government, 1966, p. 11). In these examples, economic and political stories worked jointly to constitute a narrow understanding of the people and a constricted imagination of what constituted Hong Kong society. Indeed, in the past few decades in Hong Kong, such narratives had become very pervasive not only in the official discourse on society but also in academia and within many sectors of the population.

Nevertheless, contradictory attempts of repoliticizing Hong Kong on the colonial government's part are witnessed since the 1980s. Negotiations between China and Britain over the political future of Hong Kong began in 1979. In 1984, the two countries signed a Joint Declaration stating that the British administration of Hong Kong would end in 1997, and Hong Kong would become a special economic zone under Chinese sovereignty. However, Britain and China were of two different minds about Hong Kong's arrangement after 1997. While China determined to maintain Hong Kong's capitalistic way of life, Britain introduced democratic reforms in the territory on the eve of the handover. For example, the 1981 White Paper "District Administration in Hong Kong" represented a turning point in government policy, introducing universal suffrage into Hong Kong's district elections. The Legislative Council started to have an indirect election element in 1985. In 1991, the colonial government allocated some seats for direct election by geographical constituencies in the Legislative Council election, opening eighteen out of sixty seats. Intentionally or unintentionally, the British

democratic reform in Hong Kong helped promote political activism in the community

and unite the community under the umbrella of democracy.

Limited Repoliticization: Good Citizens as Nationalists

In every postcolonial society, reconstruction of community or citizen identities is one of

the foremost tasks of the newly established postcolonial regimes. Examples include India,

Algeria, and many other colonies in Asia or Africa (Fanon, 1965; Chatterjee, 1986;

Chatterjee, 1993; Anderson, 1991). In the reconstruction of a collective identity,

nationalistic discourses often play an important constitutive role. So, not surprisingly,

contrary to the colonial government's ambivalence, we see in Hong Kong the new SAR

regime's attempt to consolidate a "thicker" set of common memories necessary for

increasing the sense of community by introducing nationalism into the concept of ideal

citizenship. It is hoped that these memories can serve to consolidate the philosophical

foundation of a cooperative and socially responsible citizenry. However, probably

different from examples in other parts of the world, nationalistic discourses in Hong

Kong exclude, instead of include, democratic discourses in the process of creating a

collective postcolonial identity. Rather, the SAR regime has been keen on producing

nationalism in citizenship building as a measure to eliminate the sense of community

built under the umbrella of democracy in the final years of British colonial rule of Hong

Kong.

For example, in education, although depoliticization was a norm in the colonial

era (Morris et al., 2000, p. 247; Morris and Chan, 1997; Morris and Sweeting, 1991; Tse,

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1999, p. 178),[4] Tung started limited and directive repoliticization. Contrary to the colonial government's ambivalence, the new Hong Kong SAR's regime is dedicated to repoliticizing civic education and the school curriculum. The *Guidelines on Civic Education* implemented since September 1996 aim to enhance students' understanding of the Basic Law and the principle of "One Country, Two Systems," cultivate a sense of belonging to the Hong Kong SAR, nurture an identity with the home country, and encourage contribution to the global community. In 1998, the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education stepped up efforts to promote various themes of civic education, ranging from respect for human rights, equal opportunities and good citizenship to instilling a sense of belonging to Hong Kong, concern for the motherland, and understanding of the Basic Law (Hong Kong SAR Government, 1998, pp. 146, 163).

However, the aim of repoliticization has been limited to renationalization, which promotes citizens' ethnic nationalism and a sense of belonging to China rather than an all-round political consciousness and activism. Subsequent to its establishment, the Hong Kong SAR government carried out series of measures to strengthen the Chinese elements in the existing school curriculum. For instance, school textbook publishers were provided with "guidelines" advising them to observe the "one China" policy. From 1998, Putonghua, the national language of China, has been taught in all primary schools, and civics was made available as an elective subject in Secondary One to Three (Morris et al., 2000, p. 249).

In this light, the image of a good citizen is a nationalist, in the hope that this narrative will facilitate the building of a new collective identity in postcolonial Hong Kong. As Tung said in 1998:

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we must step up civic education so that our youngsters will have a better understanding of China, the Chinese culture and history, the concept of "one country, two systems" and the Basic Law. Through better understanding, we hope to inculcate in them the passion and the concern for China, the pride of being Chinese, and a constant readiness to contribute towards the well-being of not just Hong Kong but the entire country (Tung, 1998).

In this regard, Tung has obviously attempted to construct a "thicker" set of common memories necessary for the sense of community to build upon and hopes these memories can serve to consolidate the philosophical foundation of a cooperative and socially responsible citizenry. Unlike the colonial government that constructed the people of Hong Kong as a mere assemblage of rootless refugees, he has explicitly endorsed neo-Confucianism and Asian values as the sources of the qualities of good citizenship. Singapore has been cited at times as exemplary of good governance and a good government-people relationship. As expressed by Tung:

Every society has to have its own values to provide a common purpose and a sense of unity. ... For a long time, Hong Kong has embraced the eastern and western cultures. We will continue to encourage diversity in our society, but we must also reaffirm and respect the fine traditional Chinese values, including filial piety, love for the family, modesty and integrity, and the desire for continuous improvement. We value plurality, but discourage open confrontation; we strive

for liberty but not at the expense of the rule of law; we respect minority views but also shoulder collective responsibilities (Tung, 1997).

Experimental Constitutive Stories of Citizen Identity and Collective Memories

While Tung's intentions are obvious, the question remains whether the people of Hong Kong will accept these constitutive stories of their citizen identity. Apart from the fact that neo-Confucianism and Asian values are a bit anachronistic to the people of Hong Kong, the complexity of the question of Hong Kong identity also makes Tung's attempts difficult to achieve. The development of Hong Kong society has increased the multiplicity of a postcolonial Hong Kong identity. Hong Kong's people are both traditional and modern, cosmopolitan and familial, eccentric and conventional, apathetic and populist, materialistic and post-materialistic, and so on. It is the hybridity of this identity that keeps the city's culture constantly in reformation and it is still open to various possibilities. Also, for many, the discourses of neo-Confucianism and Asian values are rather hard to swallow. At the most, the ideas of homogeneity, consensus, and harmony stressed by these values can only be a partial description of the identity of some sectors of the population. Also, there are obviously difficulties in invoking an imagination of community that unites people only around the theme of nationalism and not democracy, since democratic ideals have been part and parcel of the people's identity since the 1990s.

Indeed, the post-unification Hong Kong has been like an experimental ground for constitutive stories of citizenship. In this respect, the Hong Kong SAR government is

certainly more imaginative than the colonial government, and their efforts are certainly

comparable to any postcolonial government in the world. After the neo-Confucian and

Asian values discourses, government officials also invoked other stories to cultivate

community cohesiveness, notably the "Lion Rock myth" raised by former Financial

Secretary Antony Leung Kam-chung. Lion Rock is a geographical landmark of Hong

Kong. In the 1970s, a television drama series entitled "Below the Lion Rock," produced

by the government's Radio Television Hong Kong and featuring stories of lower class

people, had become very popular, which consequently facilitated the government's

attempt at that time to consolidate a Hong Kong identity. Typically the myth was

embedded with nostalgic feelings, praise of traditional values, such as hardwork, mutual

help and tolerance, and a community spirit believed to underpin Hong Kong's economic

takeoff in the 1970s. It urges the return of these virtues and a community of good people

working to overcome their hardships. It is true that these memories are part of the

collective memories and therefore might be appealing to local people. However, they

were not well received.

There were many reasons for this rejection. Critics considered these narratives

undisguised means of discursive control and excuses on the part of the government to try

to shirk its responsibility to the people.[5] Also, Hong Kong has never been as harmonious

as suggested, and the core values acknowledged by the people of Hong Kong at large

appear quite different than those the government and the ruling elites imagine. As

reflected in a recent call for upholding Hong Kong's core values by local famous

academics and professionals, the values they hold dear to their heart and to society

include freedom and democracy, although more remotely they include the morals of

endurance, diligence, and unquestioned obedience as promoted by the government and ruling elites.[6] The Hong Kong identity has changed to an extent and in ways that the political leaders have thus far failed to recognize.

Tung's dilemma is that, although he perceives the need for common memories to support the language of citizenship, he has to be very careful in his choice of frameworks. Too much solidarity on unwanted issues, such as democracy, will be harmful to governance. Within the depictions of good citizenship as patriotic, cooperative, and socially responsible, together with the promotion of neo-Confucianism, Asian values, and the Lion Rock myth, we see the Hong Kong SAR government's deep fear of losing control over its people.

Parallel to the Lion Rock myth, the government also went back to an economic concept of citizenship, invoking the economic theme of self-reliance. In contrast to the talks previously mentioned, this narrative seems to have worked quite well up until now. It matches the capitalistic tradition of the city and the Hong Kong SAR government's intentions to reaffirm economic development as the society's primary goal. It also serves political functions. Amidst the economic downturn in Hong Kong, the theme of self-reliance served to provide the "losers" with individualized explanations for why they failed and solutions to their plight.

In the recent controversies about whether Hong Kong's people can directly elect their Chief Executive in 2007 and all Legislative Council members in 2008, economic narratives were developed further. While it is no surprise that Chinese government officials and members of the pro-Beijing camp in Hong Kong labeled the city as an economic city and restated economic reconstruction as its primary goal, it is amazing that

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the individual pursuit of economic well-being was packaged as the society's collective

goal. In these discourses, the city was urged by PRC leaders to reconsider its priorities,

which should be economic development and preservation of such prerequisites for

economic development as stability, to be China's world-class city, and to achieve a

decent living standard for everyone, rather than political reforms.[7] Hong Kong has been

compared off and on with other international cities such as New York and London. Such

talk thus serves to redirect the efforts of Hong Kong society to an economic rather than a

political agenda by boosting the economic identity of Hong Kong's people. It is hoped

that in the end the people's economic identity could absorb their political identity, or they

would simply forgo their political identity. If, as Smith argues, political narratives have

any significance in the making of citizenship, it is the depoliticizing functions of certain

political narratives that have worked hand-in-hand with the aforementioned economic

talks in Hong Kong. The official notions of citizenship and community are unsurprisingly

constricted and thin.

Conclusion

This paper critically examines the government discourses on citizenship in Hong Kong

from the 1960s to the present. By making special reference to three public events: the

1966 Star Ferry riots, the 1981 riots, and the scuffles in 2002, it reconstructs the

meanings of good citizenship as promoted by the Hong Kong colonial and SAR

governments respectively. Also, it traces the understanding of community of the

governments through the development of the policies on youth and citizen education in the city from the 1960s onward.

The idea of citizenship as promoted by the Hong Kong colonial and SAR governments is depoliticized. It places exclusive importance on the values of economic independence and contribution, and lauds an enterprising characteristic of citizenship. Also, stressing civic obedience and responsibility instead of rights and critical judgment, it is narrowly defined politically. For both the Hong Kong colonial and SAR governments, economic stories intertwined with political stories to provide notions of good citizenship that provided individualized explanations and hope for those who had thus far failed. While the discourses on citizenship of both governments are on the whole depoliticized, the Hong Kong colonial government has given weight to the need for repoliticization by starting proto-democratic reforms from the 1980s onward and the SAR government for renationalization. Although both governments recognized that community identification was a prerequisite for the development of good citizenship, they feared that the solidarity thereby engendered would be too hot to handle. As a result, they chose to construct predominantly limited and shallow community memories based on the themes of political passivity, economic self-reliance, and self-interest.

In the governmental discourses on citizenship and community in Hong Kong, we see the merging of depoliticized, economic, and constitutive narratives. However, the political narratives for making sense of citizenship suggested by Smith are packaged in highly depoliticized language, although they are similarly embedded with political intentions to strengthen governance.

While the making of citizenship clearly indicates the prevalence of a depoliticized narrative in the territory, it should be noted that the narrative has been paradoxically balanced by political activism existed at significant levels. Hong Kong society has had a rich history of collective mobilization, numerous social organizations and an active media. Looking back, the civil society in Hong Kong, for example, numerous civic and resident associations active during the colonial era, has contributed significantly in challenging the depoliticized narrative, and building up an active and democratic citizenship. These circumstances combine to make the process of citizenship building in Hong Kong highly interesting and complex.

Endnotes

[1] The proposed fare increase included that of the round trip fare for both first and second class on the Central to Tsimshatsui route, which would be raised ten cents. Also, the cost of an adult's monthly ticket was to rise from HK $8 to $10, and a child's monthly ticket from HK $4 to $5.

[2] The City District Office scheme was implemented in 1969. The scheme established ten City District Offices and a number of area committees in the urban areas of Hong Kong for better government coordination.

[3] This is a type of government financial assistance serving as a "safety net" for those unemployed and poor.

[4] Not surprisingly, depoliticization is again a major theme in the colonial government's education policy. The postwar period saw the colonial government exercising extensive power to ensure that schools did not promote political ideologies. The education system

in Hong Kong was designed to produce depoliticized and denationalized individuals. The situation did not change until the 1980s.

[5] See, for example, the criticisms of Cheung Man-yee published in the *South China Morning Post*, April 24, 2002, p. 16. Cheung was the producer of "Below the Lion Rock" and formerly the Director of Broadcasting in the colonial government.

[6] Recently, there has been a pervasive fear that Hong Kong is losing its freedom, as witnessed by the resignation of three renowned radio talk-show hosts. All of them alleged that, because of being critical of the Hong Kong SAR and the central Chinese governments, they received threats authorized by the latter. The radio talk-show programs were famous and important platforms for articulating public opinion in the city. In response to these incidents, some sections of the population, for example, professionals and academics, called for a defense of freedom of speech in Hong Kong. See, http://www.hkcorevalues.net/b5_declar.htm.

[7] For example, President Hu Jintao of China expressed serious concerns over the debate on political reform in Hong Kong, and claimed that the most pressing priority for the city was to stand united to improve the economy. See *South China Morning Post*, April 24, 2004.