THE HONG KONG WEEK OF 1967 AND
THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN HONG KONG IDENTITY

by

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ABSTRACT

The birth of the modern Hong Kong identity has long been attributed to the events following the 1967 Riot. This thesis affirms the current understanding that a renewed sense of self-awareness and identity was experienced by the people of Hong Kong as a direct result of the riots. However, the thesis argues against the general scholarly consent that this identity was at its inception a cultural identity, but proposes that this Hong Kong awareness began as a political identity, advocated by the elites of the Hong Kong society and subsequently accepted by its majority. The cultural dimensions of the Hong Kong identity would take another decade to evolve. The thesis also compares the cases of Hong Kong and Singapore, and argues that both underwent processes of identification that were in many ways similar.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................... ii
Table of Contents .................................................................................................. iii
List of Figures ......................................................................................................... iv
Notes on Convention ............................................................................................. v
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................ vi
Dedication ............................................................................................................... vii

1. **Introduction** ..................................................................................................... 1

2. **The Leftists in Hong Kong - From 1950s to the 1960s** ...................................... 7
   2.1 Immigrant Society of Postwar Hong Kong ....................................................... 7
   2.2 The “Myth” of the Hong Kong Political Stability ............................................. 9
   2.3 “Chinese” political activities in Hong Kong, 1950–1966 ................................. 11
   2.4 The Kowloon and Tsuen Wan riots of 1956 .................................................... 13
   2.5 Strengthening of the Leftists in the 1960s ......................................................... 14

3. **The Early 1967 – The Struggle for Public Support** ....................................... 17
   3.1 The Business Sector and the Precursor of the Hong Kong Week ................... 17
   3.2 Battling for Public Support ............................................................................. 21
   3.3 Terrorism, Alienation, and the Turn of Tide .................................................... 25
   3.4 The Elites fight back ....................................................................................... 28

4. **The Late 1967 – The Hong Kong Week and a new identity** ......................... 31
   4.1 Changing Nature of the Conflicts .................................................................... 31
   4.2 A Battle of Patriotism ..................................................................................... 34
   4.3 The Identity Clash: Hong Kong versus Motherland ......................................... 38
   4.4 Forging the New “Hong Kong People” ............................................................ 42

5. **Conclusion** ...................................................................................................... 46
   5.1 The Aftermath ................................................................................................ 46
   5.2 The Construction of Cultural Identity .............................................................. 47
   5.3 The Case of Singapore .................................................................................... 51

Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 56
Appendix – The Hong Kong Week Program .......................................................... 62
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 “Dreaming hard about it” ................................................................. 40
Figure 4.2 “In support of the Hong Kong Week” .................................................. 41
Figure 4.3 “Can never be painted away” ............................................................. 42
NOTES ON CONVENTION

Some Cantonese romanization and Hong Kong convention is preserved and used in the essay as they appear in the original primary or secondary sources (e.g. names of authors such as Lui Tai-lop [p.5], or other famous personnel such as Sik-Nin Chau [p.18] or places such as San Po Kong [p.17]), for the sake of consistency. Pinyin will be provided when these words first appear in the essay, except when the author only writes in the English language.
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Special thanks to my wife and kids, who have endured my long hours of work and absence, and have showered me with their kisses during the difficult times of academic pursuit.
DEDICATION

To my wife and kids

For their patience, support, and love
1 INTRODUCTION

How and when did the modern Hong Kong identity emerge? Was the emergence of such an identity a result of political detachment from China, or was it the outcome of the territory’s particular economic and social development? Many researchers have argued that the emergence of the “Hong Kong People” has followed the pattern of identity solidification born out of cultural distinctiveness. This pattern has been observed by scholars studying identity formation of Chinese ethnic groups, such as the Hakkas. For example Nicole Constable observes that many of the cultural differences of the Hakka people, though fluid and often become negligible after a generation or two, would persist in the constructive process of a cultural distinctiveness and cultural identity. S. T. Leong also argues that when two or more Chinese groups are in competition with another, the shared (cultural) markers within a group are often consciously chosen to promote solidarity and mobilization. The idea that the identity of “Hong Kong People” is essentially a cultural identity, emerged out of the social and cultural differences Hong Kong people felt towards the Mainland Chinese, is generally accepted by Hong Kong scholars. According to Matthew Turner, Hong Kong residents’ refusal to be identified with Communist China has allowed “the discourse of race (whether an attachment to Guomin or regional ethnicity) to be displaced by a more flexible, ambiguous, more generously inclusive, local and popular

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1 By “modern” I intend to refer to the Hong Kong identity emerging in the late 1960s and 1970s, and distinguish it from the local identity associated with the aboriginals of Hong Kong, living largely in the New Territories, such as discussed by Selina Chan (“Politicizing Traditional: The Identity of Indigenous Inhabitants in Hong Kong,” Ethnology, 37.1 [1998].)

2 “There are few, if any, actual observable cultural differences that distinguish Hakka from others across the board. Hakka language is diminishing in a number of settings, Hakka mountain songs are rarely sung, and Hakka clothing is no longer worn. But ideas about Hakka distinctiveness – that they have distinctive gender roles; that they are cooperative, hard working, egalitarian, or frugal; and that they share a common past – persist.” Nicole Constable, ed., introduction to Guest People – Hakka Identity in China and Abroad (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 33.

cultural identity.

Hugh Baker also writes about how urban lifestyle has defined the “Hong Kong Man” - by his tastes, his language and his sense of pride and condescendence above other Chinese people. In addition, Gordon Matthews argues that the sense of “HongKongese as an autonomous cultural identity” began to emerge in the late 191960s and 191970s, and that “HongKongese” started to become ideologically distinct from “Chinese” following the 1967 Riot.

A much-quoted survey conducted by Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi in 1985 is often used to illustrate how this process of identification with Hong Kong would succeed in turning a city of immigrant and sojourning Chinese into a city of HongKongers. Of the people who responded to the survey, 59 percent would consider themselves “HongKongers” as comparing to 36 percent would consider themselves “Chinese”. More significantly, 67.9 percent would agree with the statement that “HongKongers have a lot of common characteristics (that) make it difficult for them to get along with the Chinese on the Mainland”. Although the findings of the survey have serious limitations, they do indicate that a sense of local awareness and distinction among the residents of Hong Kong with the modern sense of self-awareness and identity are often called the “Hong Kong People”, “HongKongers”, “Hong Kong Man”, “HongKongese” etc. This paper makes no distinction among these terms.

Matthew Turner, “60s/90s: Dissolving the People”, in Hong Kong Sixties: Designing Identity, eds. Turner and Ngan (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Arts Centre, 1995), 20.

The residents of Hong Kong with the modern sense of self-awareness and identity are often called the “Hong Kong People”, “HongKongers”, “Hong Kong Man”, “HongKongese” etc. This paper makes no distinction among these terms.

“He is go-getting and highly competitive, tough for survival, expects his children to do so, drinks western alcohol, has sophisticated tastes in cars and household gadgetry, and expects life to provide a constant stream of excitement and new openings. But he is not British or western (merely westernized). At the same time he is not Chinese in the same way that the citizens of the People’s Republic of China are Chinese. Almost alone in the Chinese world Hong Kong has not adopted Putonghua (Mandarin) as the lingua franca: instead Cantonese hold sway. Admiration for and empathy with his compatriots Hong Kong Man certainly has, but he also now has pride in and love of the society which he has created through his own determination and hard work. (Hugh Baker, “Life in the Cities: The Emergence of Hong Kong Man,” The China Quarterly 95 [1983]: 478-9.)


One of such is mentioned by Gordon Mathews, that the survey does not tell us what the terms “HongKongese” and “Chinese” mean to those who identify themselves as such. Gordon Matthews, “Heunggongyahn: On the Past, Present, Future of Hong Kong Identity”, Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars 29.3 (1997): 8.
people of Hong Kong, as well as the degree of their alienation from Mainland Chinese had become quite pronounced by the mid 1980s.

The recognition of the 1967 Riot as a watershed in the history of identity formation in Hong Kong is widespread but problematic. Though scholars have associated the Riot with the emergence of the Hong Kong identity, many are puzzled by the time gap of about a decade between the Riot and the obvious visible appearance of the Hong Kong cultural distinctiveness.¹⁰ This thesis affirms that the emergence of a distinct Hong Kong identity was indeed a direct consequence of the 1967 Riot. But unlike earlier scholars, I argue that it was a political identity, rather than a cultural identity, that had first emerged. By political identity I mean identifying oneself with a certain standing along the political spectrum. So the identity is itself a political declaration, and can have little or no obvious social or cultural distinctiveness to back it up. In other words, in contrast to conventional understanding, the articulation of a distinct political identity in Hong Kong actually preceded the emergence of various cultural markers that would from the 1970s on be used to differentiate the “Hong Kong People” from the Mainlanders.

The body of this thesis is divided into 4 sections. In Section 2, I examine the political environment of Hong Kong, beginning with the closing of the Hong Kong-China border in 1950 up to the riots years of 1966 and 1967. Though the debate of whether the Hong Kong society was politically passive towards colonial rule continues, what is becoming clear is that the land had not ceased to be an extended battlefield of Chinese political antagonism, which saw continuous feuds between Guomindang (GMD) supporters and leftists. By the 1960s, a substantially well-established structure of leftist organizations permeated the Hong Kong society at various mid and

¹⁰ Lui Tai-lok (Lü Dale) admits that although he, like most Hong Kong historians, recognizes the riots in 1966 and 1967 as a historical watershed for the birth and development of a local identity, there is a problem with the time gap, as the social and cultural phenomena that clearly distinguished the Hong Kongese to the Mainland Chinese only appeared in the mid 70s. See Lui Tai-lok, “1974 – A year of little importance” in Hong Kong, Research, Culture (Hong Kong: The Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 23.
lower levels. Section 3 examines how the Cultural Revolution and the December 3rd Incident of Macau prompted the Hong Kong leftists to employ more aggressive tactics in the midst of labor disputes, and turn their focus against colonial rule. It also reveals how the local elites such as business leaders and local politicians took the lead in stabilizing society by rallying behind the government. Section 4 focuses on the Hong Kong Week of 1967, a festival originally planned for no more than business purposes. It shows how the use of slogans with terms like “Hong Kong People” triggered a fierce response from the leftists, who were facing defeat in their campaigns to destabilize Hong Kong. As nationalism and patriotism were revolved in fierce argument, the articulation of an identity started to gain recognition towards the end of 1967. The concluding section examines how the debate that was triggered by the Hong Kong Week played a pivotal role in the formation of the Hong Kong identity, and how it was different from the cultural identity Hong Kong would witness in the mid/late 1970s. It also attempts to compare the construction of the Hong Kong identity with that of the Singaporean identity. Singapore is chosen as a comparison because it appears to have undergone a similar experience of identity construction in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The thesis is a detailed study of the various events associated with the proposed emergence of a distinct Hong Kong Identity following the 1967 Riot, and of the pivotal role played by Hong Kong Week of October/November 1967. The festival has generally been ignored by scholars in the past, because of the general lack of in-depth research of the Riot episode as a whole, but also because it appeared that the “major” events of the Riot were all but over by September of 1967. Not only was the Week scarcely mentioned in many of the studies, but there was much misconception about it too. Uncovering important government documents and

11 Lui Tai-lok (Lú Dale) thinks that the use of the Hong Kong Festival was a failure in creating a sense of belonging among the Hong Kong people because it “would eventually be terminated quiet” is a gross oversimplification. Not only did the Hong Kong Week and 3 Hong Kong Festivals spanned over a period of 7 years, its lack of effectiveness was greatly underestimated (Lui, Tai-lok, “It is not easy to
revisiting a great number of contemporary literatures, this paper represents a breakthrough in the study of the emergence of the modern Hong Kong identity by carefully going through the statements, writings and interviews of major groups of players during the Riot, including government officials, local Chinese elites, leftist leaders and leftist media. It concludes that the Hong Kong Week of October 1967, with the fateful use of the slogans “Hong Kong People Buy/Use Hong Kong Goods”, sprouted the articulation and debate of the ethnicity and “nationality” of the “Hong Kong People”. With emotions building up over months of physical disputes and bloody antagonism, the Week marked the first time in modern Hong Kong history that the general public were engaged in the debate about nationality and ethnicity, and many were forced to answer the questions of “what means by a Xianggangren”, and how did a Chinese residing in Hong Kong differ from a Chinese from the Mainland. At the end the Hong Kong residents refused to be defined by the narrow Chinese political profiles of pro- or anti-communist, but chose to adapt a political identity of neutrality and independency. This modern Hong Kong identity, first born out of a political situation, would in times acquire cultural characteristics, and consolidate as a cultural/ethnic identity recognizable throughout the world.

This study calls for a new evaluation of the significance of the Hong Kong Week, and by associating the 1967 watershed to the birth of a political identity, it contributes to the scholarly understanding of this period of Hong Kong history, explaining the time gap problem in association with the perceived birth of the Hong Kong “awareness”. By comparing the case of Hong Kong with that of Singapore, the study also hopes to suggest another model of viewing
ethnic identity construction, in which cultural elements are conveniently – even aggressively - discovered and invented for political identification purposes.
2 THE LEFTISTS IN HONG KONG - FROM 1950S TO THE 191960S

2.1 Immigrant Society of Postwar Hong Kong

Before the Communist takeover of China in 1949, the Hong Kong government allowed unrestricted passage of Chinese people into and out of the colony through the border, based on the understanding that many of those who entered would eventually return to the Mainland.\(^{14}\) The balance of population flux greatly tilted towards one side as the Civil War broke out in China, with more than half a million people crossing the border into Hong Kong between 1946 and 1950, especially during the latter months when the collapse of the GMD looked imminent.\(^{15}\) No longer facing a regular migration pattern but an influx of refugees who showed no intention to return, the colonial government closed the border in 1950, allowing only Guangdong residents with a permanent address in Hong Kong to enter without a permit. When even that proved ineffective to curb the refugee inflow, the border was closed to all Mainlanders on May 15, 1951.\(^{16}\)

The closure of the border simply made sojourners no longer possible, at least in status, and the tens of thousands of Chinese who had moved to Hong Kong after the war officially became the residents of Hong Kong. However what the legislation could not do was to create a local identity right away. With the arrival of the postwar immigrants, the New Territories villagers sought to solidify their “indigenous” status by emphasizing their role as guardians of


tradition and reinventing an anti-colonial past\textsuperscript{17}, but their numbers dwarfed in the face of the army of immigrants marching south, and their claims largely deemed insignificant, if not altogether ignored. The change of mentality of the Hong Kong residents is captured by Sir Alexander Grantham, Hong Kong Governor from 1947-1957:

The majority of Chinese in the Colony ... had little loyalty to Hong Kong. Like the Europeans, they came to Hong Kong to work until they retired home to China, just as the Europeans returned home to Europe. Not inaptly Hong Kong has been likened to a railway station, and its inhabitants to the passengers who pass in and out of the gates. The Chinese who have lived all their lives in the Colony and intend to leave their bones there, are a small minority; as are the Eurasians who have no other home. They are the \textit{true citizens of Hong Kong}, but their total number is insignificant. The picture is changing since China went Communist, and few Chinese in Hong Kong now intend to return to the country of their birth. They are becoming permanent citizens.\textsuperscript{18}

But permanency doesn’t mean that the new population necessarily felt attached to this piece of land after 1951, and Lau and Kuan maintain that “even though no hard evidence is available, it might not be unreasonable to characterize the basic identity of the Hong Kong Chinese before 191960s as ‘Chinese’”\textsuperscript{19}. A large portion of the population arguably saw themselves as Chinese residing in Hong Kong, even if no longer sojourning. They would contend with surviving and making a living in this piece of foreign land, but their sense of identity would continue with what they had inherited, and they would still regard themselves as Chiu Chow (\textit{Chao Zhou}), Hoklo (\textit{Fulao}), etc. As observed by Elizabeth Sinn and Wai-Ling Wong, many of these Chinese “ethnic” groups would make use of traditional religious rituals like that of the

\textsuperscript{18} Alexander Grantham, \textit{Via Ports} (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1965), 112.
The organization of the Yulan Festival in post-war Hong Kong, “Place, identity and immigrant communities: The Yulan Festival in post-war Hong Kong,” Asia Pacific Viewpoint 46.3 (2005): 296.


Lau Siu-Kai, Society and Politics in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982), 185.
stability, to the point that Lau claims an “absence of any experience in intense political struggles among the majority of the Hong Kong Chinese”. Young is certainly correct when he traces through various social disturbances of Hong Kong, especially during the 50s and 1960s, and exposes the belief that “Hong Kong has always enjoyed political stability” is a historical myth. The alternative model suggested by him – that manageable stability or “equilibrium” was a result of the ongoing checks and balances among the colonial government, Communist China, and the Hong Kong people – however, is broad and lacks specificity. Young tends to overemphasize the role played by the external factors, and readily blame them for the troubles experienced by the colony. Even when the problems were started by warring groups of Hong Kong residents displaying loyalty towards the CCP and GMD respectively, Young would attribute it to “external influences”, simply because the target of loyalty lying outside of Hong Kong.

This paper concurs that Hong Kong has not always enjoyed political stability during the postwar era of economic development, and finds that many cases of unrests and bloodsheds were in fact the doing of Hong Kong residents, still pleading allegiance to the CCP and GMD and continuing their struggle after the in support of Communist China and Taiwan respectively – what Lee Ming-Kwan terms as “Chinese politics on Hong Kong soil”. While external factors (e.g. Communist China) played a part in some of these cases, such as the March 1 Incident in 1952 and the 67 Riot, this paper still regards these political unrests as internal affairs of Hong Kong because they were clearly initiated and carried out by Hong Kong residents. On the other hand,

24 Ibid.
26 “As it is only too clear that the colony’s ups and downs have often been the work of external factors.” Ibid., p.135.
27 Ibid., p.139.
the 1950s pattern of out-of-proportion brawls over apparently small incidents only showed the calamity building up as a result of the increasing factionalism of the Hong Kong society, which witnessed a continuous growth of the leftist organization power and size. This leftist section of the Hong Kong population deserves a closer look before we can understand the events happened in 1967 carefully.

2.3 “Chinese” political activities in Hong Kong, 1950–1966

Since regaining control of Hong Kong after Japan’s defeat in 1945, the British government had been acutely aware of the growing Chinese nationalism and its vulnerable position of holding on to its colony under the watchful eyes of the Mainland. The British strategy called for keeping “a foot in the door” of China without antagonizing the Chinese government, while discouraging political activities in Hong Kong, whether in the name of supporting Chinese intervention or against it. Before the eventual triumph of the CCP in China, the Hong Kong government had already begun curbing Chinese political activities within Chinese communities, most notably in restricting trade unions, schools and civilian organizations. Even after 1949, British government documents reveal that the colony’s main concern was not an invasion from the north, but the internal unrest “inspired by the Communist-dominated trade unions”. A number of laws were passed in 1948 and 1949 to restrict the formation and activities of trade unions, schools and organizations, leading to the closure of a few leftist schools and the cancellation of the registration of a number of leftist organizations. Modern leftist writers like Zhou Yi complain that the colonial government was especially harsh against the leftist establishments, in comparison to their GMD counterparts, in late 1940s and 1950s – a reasonable

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speculation given that the leftist groups posted the biggest threats to Hong Kong’s stability, thanks to their possible tie to the powerful neighbor to the north.

Hong Kong government’s uneasiness and cautions towards the Communists were clearly shown during the March 1 Incident of 1952. It all began when a relief delegation from Guangdong attempted to meet with victims of the Tung Tau Village Fire (21 November 1951) at the Jordan Road area. Suspicious of the Chinese intention, the delegates were stopped and asked to return home. Governor Grantham would later comment on the merit of the government’s decision:

[The leftist] press made bitter attacks on the government. A more dangerous tactic was the intention they expressed of sending from Canton a ‘comfort mission’, the outcome of which was not difficult to foresee. The mission would have come to Hong Kong; fiery speeches would have been made against the ‘imperialists’, aid would have been promised from ‘Mother China’; all this be it noted, on Hong Kong soil.32

The incident ended in a riot when the dispersing crowd started clashing with the police. A textile worker was shot dead during the confrontation, and about 100 rioters were arrested, with 18 charged and 12 eventually deported. The major leftist paper Dagong Bao was banned from publication for 6 months after issuing inflammatory statements against the police.33 The episode was only one among a long list of “skirmishes” between the leftists and the Hong Kong government, and even though it involved only a small portion of the population, it reveals that local political unrests were brewing underneath the apparent tranquility of Hong Kong, and in 1956 a far worse incident would further shatter this outward “peace”, while having a lasting impact on the local leftist establishments.


2.4 The Kowloon and Tsuen Wan riots of 1956

The 1956 riots were also referred to as the “Double Tenth Riots”, which began when Nationalist flags displaced during the “Double Tenth” celebration in the resettlement quarters of Kowloon and Tsuen Wan were allegedly removed and destroyed. Pro-Nationalist mobs began to gather and start fire, looting, turning over vehicles, and attacking Pro-Communist establishments. The 1956 riots were a lot more serious than the 1952 riot, with hundreds wounded and 60 killed, including the wife and driver of the Swiss vice-council when their car was set on fire. The investigation report that came out afterwards, Riots in Kowloon and Tsuen Wan, October 10th to 12th, 1956, implicitly laid blame on the enlarged confrontation between pro-Nationalist and pro-Communist factors in Hong Kong, though falling short of speculating on deliberate planning of the riots:

People of Nationalist persuasion egged on by criminals bent on personal gain and power. In Tsuen Wan, although there is no evidence of any planning prior to the outbreak of disorder in Kowloon, it would appear that people of Nationalist persuasion joined in collaboration with triad gangs to redress old scores and to attempt to win a dominant position in the labour world.35

Still, the colonial government, taking no chances, came down hard on the “people of Nationalist persuasion” in the following year (1957), just before the Double Tenth celebration, arresting more than 1,500 triad members and deporting 119 of them.36 Although the Hong Kong government was no closer to the Pro-Communist groups than to the Pro-Nationalist groups, the brutality of the 1956 riots temporarily made the Pro-Nationalist factor, especially with their ties

34 Ibid., pp. 138-9.
36 Zhou Yi, Xianggang Zhupai Douzheng Shi (Hong Kong: Liwan Publication, 2002), 155.
with the 14K triads, a bigger risk to Hong Kong’s security. On the other hand, the 1952 riot was internally criticized by Zhou Enlai and Liao Chengzhi as wrongly “stirring up city workers to engage in anti-British struggle.”37 From the second half of 1950s on, Foreign Minister Chen Yi and Liao Chengzhi began to supervise the leftist movement in Hong Kong and Macau directly, repeatedly reminded the Hong Kong sector to “watch out for Left and prevent from being too Left”.38 The result was a focus on strengthening the leftist establishments and staying away from campaigns and activities, which would quickly transform the leftist power base in Hong Kong.

2.5 Strengthening of the Leftists in the 191960s

With the livelihood in Hong Kong remained tough and the majority of its residents showing little support to the violent confrontation between the two political factions39, the Pro-Communist groups in Hong Kong began to focus on a grass root movement and undergo considerable growth. The leftist trade unions greatly expanded, recruiting and controlling workers from many of the major public utility companies such as the Hong Kong Electrical Company, the Hong Kong Telephone Company and the Hong Kong and China Gas Company, and those from other public sectors such as water supply and public transits. On the other hand the Xinhua Agency took over the major leftist papers Dagong Bao and Wenhuibao, and began establishing smaller and more diversified newspapers in the late 1950s, including Jing Bao, Xinwan Bao, and Shang Bao. The increased variety allowed these mid-leftist papers to soften the “official” tone and focus on more popular items such as horses and dogs racing. They became so popular that by the onset of the 1966 riots, the leftist newspapers enjoyed almost two thirds of the Hong Kong news print market, reaching daily sales of 500,000 copies.40 The leftist establishments also permeated other parts of the Hong Kong society, from the flourishing of the leftist movie

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37 Jin Yaoru, Xiangjiang Wushilian Yiwang (Hong Kong: Jin Yaoru Memorial Fund (2005), 116.
38 Ibid.
40 Jin Yaoru, Xiangjiang Wushilian Yiwang (Hong Kong: Jin Yaoru Memorial Fund (2005), 64.
companies to the expansion of Chinese goods stores, which were especially popular with its supply of cheap daily items exported from the Mainland. And although the Hong Kong government continued to keep a close watch over the leftist schools, it could do little to stop their growth. It is safe to say that by 1966, the leftist establishments were closely intertwined with many fabrics of the Hong Kong society, even if they mostly confined to the mid and lower levels. But despite the appearance of the popular front, the leftists continued to see themselves politically tied to Communist China, and the schism within the Hong Kong society continued to exist. According to the research and interviews done by Raymond Yep\textsuperscript{41}, many leftists back in the 1960s would only buy goods from leftist stores, read leftist newspapers and enroll their kids in leftist schools. These people, though a minority group, would remain alienated and suspicious towards the colonial government.

1966 marked a year of unrest in Hong Kong after years of relative tranquility. The Star Ferry Incident and the subsequent riots in April exposed the social problems and frustrations of the younger generation in Hong Kong. As the colony itself experienced the first postwar riots that were not a direct result of the “Chinese politics”, the news of the often confusing Cultural Revolution gradually reached Hong Kong. Although the leftist organizations refrained from taking part in the Star Ferry Incident, even pleading for calm on both sides through the leftist media\textsuperscript{42}, by the end of 1966 the revolutionary fever began to spread from the north, and talks of involvement became increasingly audible. The unexpected success of the Macau leftists in crippling the local colonial government in December of 1966 was no doubt a big encouragement as well as a challenge to the leftists in Hong Kong to follow up the acts. The main enemy would no longer be the Pro-Nationalist and Pro-Taiwan factions, but the colonial government itself, and

\textsuperscript{41} A conversation with Dr. Yep during the International Conference of Asian Scholars in Kuala Lumpur, August 2007.

\textsuperscript{42} Cheng Ka Wai, \textit{Inside Story of 1967 Riot in Hong Kong} (Hong Kong: Pacific Century Press Ltd., 2000), 16-7
the local elites who were seen backing the government. What followed would be a struggle both physical and ideological, with both sides trying to win the support of the Hong Kong public.
3 THE EARLY 1967 – THE STRUGGLE FOR PUBLIC SUPPORT

3.1 The Business Sector and the Precursor of the Hong Kong Week

Even before the riots of 1967 began to affect Hong Kong people from all walks of life, one of the first groups to sense trouble was the business sector, probably as early as the end of 1966. The exodus of investment cash out of Macau since the communist “victory” on 3 December 1966 was a serious warning sign, given the Hong Kong export was already seeing some slow down with increasing operation costs and rising protectionism in its overseas market. The impact of further labor dispute and political unrest could be disastrous, driving foreign investors to neighboring countries and states such as Singapore, the Philippines, and Taiwan etc.43 With most of Hong Kong’s manufacturing and exports concentrating on light industries such as textiles and garments (these alone were responsible for more than 42% of the total employment of the manufacturing sector in 1966)44, this fluidity and importance of foreign investments made the Hong Kong business sector especially vulnerable. Hence long before the clash at the San Po Kong (Xin Pu Gang) Artificial Flower Works in early May45, the increasing political instability following the Star Ferry riots of 1966 and the increasing labor problems in the early months of 1967 had already pushed the Hong Kong business sector to play a more active role in maintaining stability.

On March 9 of 1967, the Hong Kong Federation of Industries the Hong Kong and Trade Development Council jointly announced the launching of the Hong Kong Festival of Fashions, to be held from 30 October to 3 November of 1967. Lauded as the first of its kind in Asia, the 5-day

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43 These worries were laid out by the business editorial of the Japan Daily (11 May 1967) early in the riots: “The Hong Kong exporters understood that since the lion share of the foreign money was invested in the light manufacturing industries such as garments, electronics and toys.”


45 Regarded by most as the event that marked the beginning of the 67 Riot, when a group of dismissed workers of San Po Kong Artificial Flower Works were roughed up by riot police at the picket line in May of 1967.
festival would feature various garment exhibitions and fashion shows focusing mainly on ladies' wear, and would include “all Hong Kong manufacturers, exporters of Hong Kong manufactured garments, boutiques selling Hong Kong-made garments, and designers of Hong Kong clothes”. The Festival was said to be in the planning as early as September of 1966, with its duel aims to “promote design and fashion consciousness in the Hong Kong textile industry” and to “help promote export and tourism for Hong Kong”. The event was also sponsored by the Hong Kong Tourist Association, the Hong Kong Garment Manufacturers Association, and the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, with notables such as Dr. S. Y. Chung (Chair of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries) and Mrs. Dhun Ruttonjee (wife of the famous Indian entrepreneur of Hong Kong) serving on the panel. Although the Festival of Fashion was solely a commercial event and involved no more than a section (though a big section) of the manufacturing and exporting sector, the focus on Hong Kong was unmistaken. The official announcement was given during a boat cruise, and the significance of the boat bearing the name “Bauhinia” was spelt out by Sik-Nin Chau (Zhou Xi Lian), the chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council:

It is no accident that the boat we have chosen bears this name. We deliberately selected the “Bauhinia”, for the Bauhinia, Hong Kong’s national flower, is to be the theme of the Festival. It will be used for decorative and publicity purposes throughout the Festival time – which you will realize coincides with the blossoming of this lovely flower in Hong Kong.

However, as the situation in Hong Kong worsened, there would be a quick change of heart with the organizers of the Festival of Fashions, that perhaps the occasion should call for a more general celebration of all the manufacturers in Hong Kong, and the focus should be more than just fashion and garment. During the eventual Hong Kong Week in early November of 1967, leftist newspapers would accuse the whole week of events as an “anti-China plot”. In an article

46 HKRS70-1-130, “The Launching of the Hong Kong Festival of Fashions” (09 March 1967), 2
47 Ibid., 1
48 Ibid., 1
published on 2 November, the Wenhuibao accused the HK government for using “running dogs and Chinese traitors to organize these (Hong Kong Week) activities apparently to promote business merchandises, but in reality to resist the People’s Republic of China.” The Xinwan Bao even called it a cruel plot to “salvage the filial love among Chinese flesh and blood”. To these accusations R.G. L. Oliphant, the Executive Director of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and one of the members of the original Festival of Fashions committee, simply called it “nonsense”, as he explained that “the Hong Kong Week approach was made as early as April [of 1967] to more than 40 firms”, and the idea was “an enlargement of a still earlier suggestion for a festival of fashion.”

In retrospect, the Festival of Fashion was surely more than just an “earlier suggestion”, and although it’s uncertain if the idea of expanding the fashion week to a more encompassing Hong Kong Week was born as early as April, the first evidence of the change of scheme was the report of an approach made to other local firms to expand the week of fashions into a week of celebrating Hong Kong products in general surfaced on 12 May 1967. The South China Morning Post reported that “more than 50 commercial establishments have replied “yes” to a questionnaire from the Trade Development Council asking if they would like to participate in a Hong Kong Week to promote Colony products (in Hong Kong).” The date was significant because it was just one week after the violent standoff at the San Po Kong Artificial Flower Works happened on 6 May 1967. Given that it had taken months for the Festival of Fashions to take shape and that it had already been officially announced, the rush change of plan was unlikely to be the result of some mere afterthoughts, but prompted by some important and significant developments, likely the violent escalation of events in the week following May 6. One can speculate that the change

49 Wenhuibao (2 November 1967).
50 Xinwan Bao (2 November 1967).
51 “Red ‘Plot’ talk a lot of Nonsense”, Hong Kong Standard (2 November 1967).
52 “Proposal to Hold Hong Kong Week”, South China Morning Post (12 May 1967).
of menu happened rapidly in May, followed by the questionnaire hurriedly sent to local business players to seek for an expansion of the week, just barely 2 months after the original announcement. Oliphant’s claim that the Hong Kong Week was an idea already circulated in April – a month before the “official” start of the riots – was probably less than accurate, with the intention to dissociate the planning of the Hong Kong Week with the escalation of labor unrests.

There is indeed evidence that the Hong Kong business sector responded rapidly and strongly at the first sign of troubles. Even pro-Mainland local merchants were troubled by the development of the situation, with the telling example of merchant Huo Ying Don, famous for the patriotism he displayed during the Korean War when he smuggled much needed supplies and goods to China despite an UN embargo. Just one day after learning about the riots broken out at San Po Kong on May 6, he flew to England in the morning and would stay in Europe and North America for half a year. Years later he admitted to his biographer that he had been worrying about the situation ever since the leftist revolt (the December 3 Incident) in Macau in 1966, and had witnessed the ongoing labor dispute at the taxi company run by his merchant friend Wu Ying Xiang in the early months of 1967. So to Huo, the flower works riot was just the final straw. It is not difficult to understand the awkwardness felt by Huo, given his wealth and reputation, if he was to stay aloof in the midst of the ‘patriotic” and revolutionary activities in Hong Kong. In fact many entrepreneurs “escaped” out of Hong Kong around the same time, some for vacation and some with the intention to relocate their enterprises in foreign countries like Canada, with Vancouver being a favorable choice for many millionaires. The Immigration Department of British Columbia reported of receiving about 1,500 professional class immigration applications a month, and had to rely on ten times its usual staff to cope with the rush. For those entrepreneurs

53 Leng Xia, *Huo Ying Dong Zhuan* (Hong Kong: Yiwen Books, 1997), 271-276
54 Such as Tung Ho Yun, the father of Tung Jian Hua. *The diary of Tung Ho Yun*, vol. 2, p.635.
and industrialists who did not want to go or could not go, the only option was to stand by the government and took the initiative to stabilize the situations.

3.2 Battling for Public Support

With everything to lose and much to gain, it’s not surprising that when a list of 98 organizations in support of the Hong Kong government first appeared in mid May, the top 4 organizations were all heavy weights from the business sector: the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, the Indian Chamber of Commerce, and the Chinese Manufacturers Association. Many of those in support were regional Kaifong associations, offices originally set up to offer new immigrants free and low cost services in the 50s, and had become a major vehicle of communication between the government and the local communities at that time. This early show of support was not wholly spontaneous, as district officers were “told to do all they could to solicit support from as many organizations as possible”. Nonetheless, that number would swell to 620 by the end of June, and the business sector that jumped out at the start would continue to be a strong and visible supporter of the government, such as setting up a fund for the higher education of the children of police officers, and attracted millions of donations within a very short time.

One of the major reasons why the government often found its hands tied during the riots was because of the clear political liabilities, as one respected journalist wrote in June:

During the riots, because of the penetration of foreign political forces, the Hong Kong law cannot function effectively. For example, the Hong Kong government is afraid to shut down the Dagongbao, the Wenhuibao, or the Xinhua Agency (even though these organizations have

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56 Many of these associations were the Kaifong associations (neighborhood associations).
served David Trench with so much insults, and their activities can easily be regarded as instigating riots.59

Vivienne Poy also writes about how Jack Cater, Defense Secretary of Hong Kong at the time, would often went to see her father, tycoon Richard Charles Lee, and asked him to reach out to the Chinese leaders (most notably Zhou En Lai) to pressure the Hong Kong communists to end the riots.60 In addition, the business sector would often come forward and try to give the situation a more positive spin, both for the support of the government and in the interests of doing business. For example Michael Montague, the chairman of the British National Export Council’s Asia Committee, would go on record and say that “the current Communist-engineered disturbances were only having a temporary ‘alarmist’ effect on Hong Kong”61. R. G. L. Oliphant went still further, and made the controversial claim in an interview:

The riots did not cause any substantial disruption of trade or scare off any potential investors in Hong Kong. The whole economy continued to function virtually as normal during the riots. Absenteeism was never a problem because by and large people went lost in all sectors of industry because of the curfew.62

It appears that the expansion of the Festival of Fashions was yet another attempt to support the government and to help the Hong Kong society to return to normal. After doing some surveys and re-planning in May, the event known as the “Hong Kong Week” was officially announced on 28 June 1967 – not to “replace” but to be held concurrently with the Hong Kong Festival of Fashions. Another Hong Kong Week Committee was set up, with Sik-Nin Chau being the chairman, and representatives from the Hong Kong Tourist Association (Hugh Barton), the C.M.A. (C. K. Choi), Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (M.A.R. Herries), and the H.K.

61 HKRS 70-1-297, Public Record Office, Hong Kong (1967).
62 Ibid.
Indian Chamber of Commerce (B. K. Murjani) serving on the committee.\textsuperscript{63} It is also strategically important to find members of the government (such as C. P. Haddon-Cave, Deputy Director of the Commerce and Industry Department), representatives from individual companies (such as Lane Crawford, Shui Hing Department Stores, British Airways), as well as representatives of the pro-government media (Wah Kiu (Huaqiao) Daily News, South China Morning Post, and Kung Sheung (Gong Shang) Daily News) included in the committee, giving it a much wider representation and advantage in promotion and coverage. According to the organizers, "a general antipathy (was) felt among Hong Kong people towards locally-made goods", despite the fact that "overseas countries (were) amazed at the wide variety of top quality Hong Kong products".\textsuperscript{64} Hence the festival would aim at helping Hong Kong people "to feel a sense of pride in seeking and buying Hong Kong products", as well as encouraging the manufacturers, department and retail stores to focus more on the local market and on Hong Kong goods. The organizers would also hope that the Hong Kong Week would take advantage of the hundreds of overseas buyers coming to attend the Festival of Fashions to see other Hong Kong products, or at least help lure them over as foreign buyers were already questioning about the timing of the Festival in the midst of social disturbances, with skeptics like Nick Walvis from Canada predicting that the Festival was "being held at the wrong time of the year, and [would] attract few international buyers."\textsuperscript{65}

It is also evident that the Hong Kong elites were starting to look at the Hong Kong Week as more than just a commercial event, but wanted to use the occasion for purposes other than just doing business, as Sik-Nin Chau said during the Hong Kong Week announcement:

But it will not be all the serious business of promoting Hong Kong goods on the local market.
Where Hong Kong people buy Hong Kong products a community activity is generated. To

\textsuperscript{63} HKRS70-1-130, "Press Release", Public Record Office, Hong Kong (1967).
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} “Proposal to Hold Hong Kong Week”, South China Morning Post (12 May 1967).
further the community spirit, we will add a number of festive features—things that all of us as citizens of Hong Kong can enjoy.\(^{66}\)

The change and expansion of the focus to kindling the “community spirit” signaled the emerging leadership role of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries and the Trade Development Council in staging public events to foster a sense of community among the Hong Kong citizens. By June the public sentiment often focused on healing and recovery, as it appeared to many in Hong Kong that the riots were finally over or winding down\(^{67}\), after the leftists failed to cripple the city by the tactics of strikes and protests (a general strike was called on June 24), which their Macau counterpart used to achieve great effectiveness in 1966. The vice chairman of the Xinhua Agency Liang Shang Yuan would later reflect, “the ‘general’ strike didn’t cripple British Hong Kong, but instead led to the loss of our markets, self-inflicting us with ‘wounds’ that took a long time to recover.”\(^{68}\) To the contrary, the unrests and hostilities had aroused a sense of appreciation of Hong Kong as a safe refuge among members of the Society, as a University student whose parents were Mainland immigrants wrote:

We cannot conclude that Hong Kong means little or nothing to us. We can never explain away the fact that when we were homeless, Hong Kong housed us, when we were hungry Hong Kong fed us, when we were hopeless Hong Kong gave us hope and refuge, and a chance to start afresh. You can’t escape it: Hong Kong is your home.\(^{69}\)

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\(^{66}\) HKRS70-1-130, “Press Release”, Public Record Office, Hong Kong

\(^{67}\) A famous local commentator wrote in late June that “Up to now, we can say that the riots have finally come to an end” Cen Yifei, Pan Ku Magazine 4 (27 June 1967): 12. In another article a University student wrote: “It seems that the riots have died down, but as Chinese compatriots we must still pay attention, and watch out for more tricks to lead the public astray.” Yu Zi Xian, “The way I see the riots”, Undergrad (13 June 1967).

\(^{68}\) Cheng Ka Wai, Inside Story of 1967 Riot in Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Pacific Century Press Ltd., 2000), 82.

\(^{69}\) Al Bum, “Has Hong Kong a Future?” Undergrad (13 June 1967).
Such was the general feeling on the streets as claimed by governor David Trench when he temporarily returned to Britain and spoke to reporters in July, boasting that “one of the most remarkable things, of course, has been the extent to which the ordinary man in the street in Hong Kong has come out in support of the Government. We know very well that 98 per cent of the people in Hong Kong felt as they did and did not want any part of this cultural revolution but what was surprising was when they came out and said so.”

3.3 Terrorism, Alienation, and the Turn of Tide

However, the riots didn’t end with the failure of the “general” strike in June 1967 as had hoped. With the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG)-controlled Renmin Ribao (The Peoples’ Daily) keeping up the hostile and combatant rhetoric, the situation was beginning to turn violent with every failed leftist attempt to cause widespread social chaos. When 300 Chinese “civilians” – rumored to be led by local military units - crossed the Sha Tou Kwok (Sha Tou Jiao) border and started a skirmish that led to the death of 5 Hong Kong policemen on July 8, the colonial government decided to take the initiative. In response, with what Hong Kong officials later called the “turning point of the riot,” the government began searching leftist union facilities and making arrests in large scale on July 12, and in the following weeks arrested popular artists and famous leftist activist couple Fu Qi and Shi Hua (July 14), stormed the Qiao Guan Building using army units and arrested leftist leaders (August 4), among a series of tough actions. Feeling that they had the backing of Beijing and could perhaps start enough troubles to draw direction


71 Two such articles appeared in the editorial of the Renmin Ribao: “Strike back in Strength again the Instigation of British Imperialism” (3 June 1967); “Let’s Arouse the Crowd and Step up the Resistance Against British Aggression” (5 July 1967).

72 “July 12 marked a turning point. Up to this time the various methods of attack by the communists had been met and contained ... But it was they that had done most of the attacking and they had put considerable strain on the police and on the many public servants and others who had been forced to work long hours in the maintenance of public order. On July 12 the acting Colonial Secretary announced in the Legislative Council that from then on the government was determined to grasp and maintain the initiative.” Hong Kong Report for the year (1967), 13.
intervention from China, the Hong Kong leftists reacted to all these actions by going even further, employing bombs tactics that saw real and faked bombs being placed in public places, often outside government buildings and pro-government facilities, but also done indiscriminately. The bombs planting finally achieved for the leftists what they had not been able to do before – causing widespread fears and chaos. However it also generated much public resentment and anger against them, and quenched the little, if any, sympathy for the leftist cause. The incident at which two toddler sister and brother were killed by a roadside bomb in North Point generated such public outrage that they would be used repeatedly as the solid evidence of leftist atrocities through the remaining months of the riots and long after.

The climax perhaps came when the Hong Kong government closed down 3 leftist newspapers (Xianggang Yebao (The Hong Kong Evening News), Zhengwubao (The Noon News) and Tianfeng Ribao (The Tianfeng Daily)) on August 22 and arrested their senior staffs two days later, after they were spreading rumors about the “sighting” of Chinese gunboats being dispatched to Hong Kong.73 When the news of the government crackdown reached Beijing, more than 1000 rebels rushed, broke through and burnt the British Mission in Beijing in protest. In the heated atmosphere, a group of Hong Kong leftists carried out a murder plot against one of the most vocal critics of the leftist riots, popular radio talk show host Lam Bun (Lin Bin), who started a satire program called Yueba Buneng74 after the failed leftist call for a general strike. On August 24 a few leftists disguised as construction workers, stopped the Volkswagen Beetle Lam was driving on the road, poured gasoline and set it on fire. Lam was seriously burnt during the attack, and died soon in the hospital. His cousin who rode with him that morning was also fatally wounded,

73 The incident began when the leftist newspapers falsely “reported” the spotting of a Chinese gunboat appearing in Hong Kong waters. Fearing widespread disturbance the colonial government quickly closed down the papers on August 20 Jin Yaoru, Xiangjiang Wushilian Yiwang (Hong Kong: Jin Yaoru Memorial Fund (2005), 149-150.
74 The phrase (欲罷不能) is most often used to mean “can’t help but have to continue”. Since the word “ba” is the same as that in “strike” (bagong, 罷工), the word play was used to ridicule the leftists for wanting to strike but weren’t able to.
and would die a few days later. Though the leftists said to have a few more people on their “hit list”\(^75\), the murder of Lam Bun and his cousin was the only successful effort; yet, the result was devastating for the leftists. Calls for “revenge” of the death of Lam Bun echoed throughout the colony, and if nonexistent before, there appeared to have emerged a new united front against the leftist.\(^76\)

If the unrests in May and June had helped the Hong Kong residents to begin to appreciate their city in a renewed way, the violence and lawlessness of July and August had united the residents of Hong Kong. Out of the violence and leftist rhetoric a different picture emerged, as a sense of new identity began to take shape and unite the people of Hong Kong — not against Mainlanders, but against the leftists in Hong Kong. As we have seen in the last section, the leftist organizations had enjoyed a period of prosperity from mid 50s to 1960s, and many of the leftist establishments had enjoyed great successes. The riots, however, pushed many of the leftists to radical and extreme measures. Even though they always claimed to be directing their wrath against British Hong Kong, but actions such as strikes, riots and bomb planting affected the general public as a whole, and increasingly they were seen as hostile against Society as a whole. The result was an alienation of the leftists, and united the rest of the Hong Kong residents against them. As a famous commentator and vocal anti-leftist journalist Wen Renjie\(^77\) would write: “the riots in Hong Kong have truly forced many to reveal themselves — this is good, as it helps us to determine who are our enemies, who are our friends”.\(^78\) Hence, as the riots continued, not only

\(^75\) The list includes famous writer and newspaper publisher Jinyong (金庸), S.Y. Chung (鍾士元) and Administrative Council and Legislative Council member Kan Yuet Keung (簡悅強)。

\(^76\) The death of the toddlers and the assassination of Lam Bun were so notorious that leftist reporter Zhou Yi, writing 40 years after the riot, still feels the need to give them a more positive spin and is hesitant to use the word “murder” but chooses to use the weird expression of the “burning of Lam Bun”, and attempts to blame the death of the toddlers on deliberate framing by the colonial agents or the result of a personal faud (Zhou Yi, Xianggang Zuopai Douzheng Shi (Hong Kong: Liwan Publication, 2002), 300-301).

\(^77\) 萬人傑

did the Hong Kong people began to treasure their home more and more, they were also becoming more united against the common enemy – the leftists, who were often referred to as Zuo Zi (左仔, which is like a “leftist punk”) starting June 1967.

3.4 The Elites fight back

Again, the Hong Kong elites played a visible leadership role during this stage of events. On one hand, many business and political leaders were vocal supporters of tougher punishment against rioters, and especially, against bomb planters. After the bombing death of the Wong siblings in North Point, East Asian Bank Chairman, Legislative Council member and future Trade Development Council chairman Yuet Keung Kan (Jian Yue Qiang) became the leading supporter of bringing back the death penalty, as he spoke to legislators on August 24:

(The bombing death) was an act of wanton murder, and as much it would be condemned in any civilized society, be it here, in London or Peking, and its perpetrators would be punished with the utmost severity of the law.79

Though the option of death penalty was eventually ruled down, but the tough position earned a hardliner reputation for Kan, an CBE order and his place on the leftist “hit list” along with Lam Bun. Similar message was given by another prominent business figure, the Assistant Director of the Commerce and Industry Department J. D. McGregor, who spoke out as a private individual against the “soft” stand of the government:

It says a great deal for the Hong Kong Government that it has permitted, for instance, certain newspapers to go on day after day pouring out seditious material and making damaging accusations against those who oppose the leftists. I personally believe Government has been too tolerant.80

On the other hand, it’s not lost to these leaders that the building up of a dichotomy would be a great opportunity to establish a new sense of identity among the Hong Kong residents, which would help bring stability and prosperity back to the city. Sik-Nin Chau, when speaking at the Hong Kong Management Association annual general meeting on 4 August 1967, would assure the audience that the events of the past three months had changed the outlook of the people and their environment, and firmly believed that Hong Kong would emerge, as always, stronger as a result: “We already see [that] a prouder sense of community and of purpose among our people and a spirit of determination.”

Dhun Ruttonjee, son of an Indian immigrant, Legislative Councilor, prominent social and business figure in Hong Kong, would be more revealing as he renewed his support for the Government’s handling of the disturbances at the Legislative on 4 August 1967:

Eventually it will be realized that the events of recent weeks have paradoxically been the best guarantee of Hong Kong’s continued prosperity that one could have wished for. (These events had) brought about a feeling of cohesion, of belonging, of being a ‘Hong Kongite’ amongst the vast majority of all facets of our population such as has perhaps never been equaled.”

Even though it was not the first time the word “Hong Kongite” was used, as we shall see, it was arguably one of the earliest references to a new group of people — a new people of Hong Kong who shared “a feeling of cohesion, of belonging”. The emergence of a common “enemy” had united the Hong Kong residents in a way Graham could not have foreseen, but it would take a process of articulation to define this newfound cohesiveness among the polymorphous Hong Kong people. Thanks to the Hong Kong Week, the opportunity quite unexpectedly came at the most desirable time, as one of the Hong Kong leading industrialists Susan Yuen would

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81 “Pessimistic View of the Future Not Justified”, *South China Morning Post* (5 August 1967).
82 “New Proposals to Tackle H.K. Problems”, *South China Morning Post* (5 August 1967). (Bold font added by author)
prophetically proclaim on 1 September 1967: “Hong Kong Week commencing October 30 would help Hong Kong people give expression to the sense of community of togetherness.”

83 The Hong Kong Standard (1 September 1967).
4. THE LATE 1967 – THE HONG KONG WEEK AND A NEW IDENTITY

4.1 Changing Nature of the Conflicts

The burning of the British Mission in August 1967 apparently went too far even for Mao, and it marked the beginning of PRC’s foreign policies shifting away from the radical left. Jin Yaoru of Wenhuibao began to find the Hong Kong leftist leadership confused and dejected after the CCRG diverted their attention away from the colony, leaving the struggle “increasingly powerless, increasingly without public support.” The overall picture was actually quite grim for the Hong Kong leftists by September of 1967 – not only had they lost public support and sympathy, the establishment they had carefully built up over the past decade were ruined financially and in morale - the strikes had led to the layoff of many leftist workers, creating a financial and livelihood crisis among leftist supporters. Jin Yaoru remembers how some food merchants would compare the strikes tactics to suicide, saying: “with the way we go on striking – refusing to sell things – will we succeed in starving the White-Skin Pigs, Yellow-Skin Dogs to die? It’s more like swallowing poisons to kill a tiger, and we’ll all die before any of them will!”

A large number of leftist businesses like cinemas and Chinese-goods stores were also hard hit,

84 Possibly seeing a chance to strike back at the CCRG and regain the control of the Foreign Ministry, Zhou Enlai took the matter to Chairman Mao and tied it to Wang Li’s August 7th speech given to the rebels of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which called the rebels to dadao (defeat) Foreign Affairs Minister Chen Yi and take control of the party apparatus. Wang Li’s speech probably wouldn’t make the headlines if not for the burning of the British Mission incident on August 22; after all, Zhou first read of his report on August 8 and did not raise any issues then. But when Zhou decided to use it against Wang Li and the rebels as a whole, he did so with great efficiency and effectiveness. Though Mao thought Wang Li was nothing more than a writer, someone who just “knew how to write some essays, and got (his ego) inflated”, the mess was too big to be ignored. Following the purge of Wang Li and Guan Feng, the rest of the CCRG backed off and Zhou Enlai was allowed to gradually retake control of the Ministry.

85 The news of the purge of Wang and Guan did not reach the Hong Kong Xinhua Agency until some time later. Hence for a time for whatever “cultural revolution instructions” the Hong Kong side requested, the answers were either much delayed, or not hitting the point. Jin Yaoru, Xiangjiang Wushilian Yiwang (Hong Kong: Jin Yaoru Memorial Fund (2005), 188-190.

86 “White-Skin Pigs” and “Yellow-Skin Dogs” were popular leftist allusions to British officers and Chinese “collaborators” during the riots respectively.

87 Jin Yaoru, Xiangjiang Wushilian Yiwang (Hong Kong: Jin Yaoru Memorial Fund (2005), 184.
losing customers and business that they were unable to regain again. A famous example was the decision of smaller leftist newspapers such as Xinwan Bao and Jing Bao to give up money-makers like the horse-racing and dog-racing columns, in the name of discouraging anti-revolutionary behavior and values. The result was a drastic drop in viewership for these papers, while others picked up what they had left out, such as The Eastern Daily (Dongfang Ribao), which went on to become the best-selling local newspaper till today. Before the riots, these leftist establishments achieved such successes that some estimated that they had accumulated up to $10 million in reserves, but the subsidies paid to the leftist workers during the prolonged strikes (and subsequent layoff) had all but depleted it. Facing increasing financial hardship and feeling isolated without Beijing’s support, the Hong Kong leftists were becoming desperate in continuing the struggle after August. But obviously, a new tactical approach was needed.

The result was an about-turn of earlier strategy of struggle and society disruption and an increased emphasis of the love and provision of the “Motherland” beginning in September of 1967. It was good timing to change tactic as China’s exports to Hong Kong began to pick up soon after the start of September. Imports of foods and goods from the Mainland had once plummeted since May, partly because of deliberate disruptive actions carried out by the communists in Guangdong (such as refusing to load truckloads of food and livestock onto the trains heading to Hong Kong⁸⁸), but more importantly it was a result of general fall in productivity of China in the midst of the Cultural Revolution⁹⁹. Only approaching the last quarter of 1967 did the import figure began to recover, and the leftist propaganda abruptly shifted to praising the rich supplies of cheap food and merchandises arriving from the Motherland, abandoning the strategy of disruption. Together with promotional and special discounts at the Chinese products stores, the drive was

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⁹⁹ An article by Huaqiao Ribao points out that the shortage was first attributed to the riots, then the problem with transportation was recognized as well, until it was realized that the general reduction of productivity in China was perhaps the more important reason (*Huaqiao Ribao* [30 October 1967]).
designed to help the leftist stores to win back lost businesses and credibility. It also coincided with the increased supply of drinking water to Hong Kong from China, easing the dire water shortage situation which had at one point limited water usage to one hour every 4 days earlier in the year.

The timing of this change of strategy had inadvertently coincided with the coming of the Hong Kong Week. Sensing the general sentiment in favor of stability and in support of the Week, the Federation of Hong Kong Industries seized the opportunity and began to truly expand the festival to a community affair. An internal report of the Finance Department confirmed this development, as it states:

Since the project (Hong Kong Week) was initiated, however, there has been a spontaneous demand from many organizations, probably partly as a reaction to the disturbances, to expand “Hong Kong Week” into a truly community effort, aimed at demonstrating the community’s desire and ability to work together for the benefit of all.90

The document also reveals how the Federation of Hong Kong Industries moved to encourage the cautious colonial government to play a bigger role in at the Week – from inviting governor David Trench to speak at the opening of the Week, to suggesting that the “government might wish to be associated in a positive way with the community’s efforts by making a contribution of $48,000 towards the expenses of running “Hong Kong Week”, for covering expenses and rentals of government facilities.91 As the struggle for public support intensified, it quite unexpectedly escalated to a higher ideological level, as the slogan “Hong Kongites buy Hong Kong goods” began more and more a common usage, touching off a debate that pushed the Hong Kong people to rethink what this new sense of community identity was all about.

90 HKRS70-1-130, “Heap 76 – Subhead 8, Federation of Hong Kong Industries”, Public Record Office, Hong Kong (20 September 1967).
91 Ibid.
4.2 A Battle of Patriotism

The conflicts of 1967 always had an ideological side of things, even as early as June, as journalist Cen Yi Fei remarked:

“We think the riots that are being orchestrated by the leftists are solely for the purpose of destruction. Although they use “patriotism” and “nationalism” as slogans, and praised their actions as “patriotic” acts, what they have shown are nothing more than “struggling for the purpose of struggling”, and “rioting for the purpose of rioting”, and the people most directly hurt are none other than the Chinese people in Hong Kong. Hence, they are the enemies of the Chinese compatriots in Hong Kong. As Chinese living in Hong Kong, what they have done is definitely nothing patriotic.”92

By playing the “nationalism” card, the leftists had very early on labeled the Hong Kong residents who did not support their actions “unpatriotic”, and the police and government employees “white-skin pigs”, “yellow-skin dogs” (see earlier). Part of this early debate focused on the very definition of “patriotism”, and how the non-leftist Hong Kong Chinese tried to dissociate being patriotic from being fanatical towards the PRC and the Cultural Revolution. A May 17 Editorial of the Undergrad (a journal published by the Hong Kong University students body), labeled “We Want Stability”, clearly spelt it out:

We are Chinese, and we love our country and our fellow compatriots, but a love of our country is not the same as the love of a particular authority; nor is it the loyalty to any political party, nor the fanatic devotion to any leader. A country belongs to all the people, and is not the ‘property’ of any one man or party.93

As the unrests continued and the leftist actions kept drawing public dismay and anger, the government was on one hand enjoying increasing support, on the other being realistic about the development. As Cater would remark years later that “Hong Kong people did not really love the British more, but they loved the leftists and the radicals in the PRC less at that time.”94 So as the sense of belonging and identity began to build up during the worse days of the riots, somewhere in between leftist Chineseness and Britishness was desired – so no wonder when the Federation of Hong Kong Industries unveiled the slogan for the Week as “Hong Kong People buy Hong Kong Goods”95 in June, it would quickly develop into a fresh point of dispute. There is evidence that some similar version of the slogan existed before 1967, but in the context of Hong Kong Week96, the slogan first made its public appearance when the Hong Kong Standard published articles titled “Made-In-HK Goods for HongKongites” and “Sell Hong Kong in HK’ – Manufacturers Urged”97, following the official announcement by Chau Sik-Nin on June 28, when he mentioned about the concept that “where Hong Kong people buy Hong Kong products a community activity is generated”.98 Yet at this early stage the slogan had little more than business meaning in nature, with no evidence suggesting the use of “Hong Kong people” or “HongKongites” to imply a newfound identity or, let alone a newfound nationality. In fact, the government was specifically instructed by London not to provoke the Chinese by any talks of a new Hong Kong nationality.99

By October, however, with a somewhat united front against the leftists, the Week became a showcase of the strength of the Hong Kong community after months of hostilities, chaos and

95 香港人買香港貨
96 Huaqiao Ribao (30 October 1967).
98 HKRS 70-1-297, Public Record Office, Hong Kong
99 Conversation with Dr. Ray Yep, ICAS 2007.
destruction. To the pro-government media the Week should surely be considered as a parade of triumph for the Hong Kong residents, basked in the pride of being part of the new Hong Kong community. As the editorial of *South China Morning Post* would loudly proclaim at the opening of the Week:

(The Hong Kong Week) is an opportunity for Hong Kong to identify itself anew, a chance for a community now more close-knit than ever before to declare to the world that it has survived an ordeal, that it is still as lively and productive a place as ever it was.\(^{100}\)

The same sense of new unity and identity was echoed by the Chinese *Huaqiao Ribao*, at the launching of the Week:

After a series of political riots in the past few months, the entire society has changed tremendously – people’s eyes are generally brightened, and have developed the spirit of mutual helping and mutual encouraging, with a unity previously unseen. Thus the timing of the Hong Kong Week is perfect.\(^{101}\)

During the 7-day event, the theme of the Hong Kong Week would be repeatedly tied to the development and prosperity of the city, the security of the working populace, and the new sense of community pride. Once again the business sector played a big role in setting the tone and contributing to the articulation of such new identity. H. F. Stanley, Executive Director of the Hong Kong Tourist Association, would speak of “now there are signs of evolution of a Hong Kong community and Hong Kong Week will be a good chance for the community to show its pride and pleasure in the achievements of a community life.”\(^{102}\) S.Y. Chung, speaking from a productivity point of view, would urge for stronger community and unity among the government, the business

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101 Cao Shaopei, “Written at the Launching of the Hong Kong Week”, *Huaqiao Ribao* (30 October 1967).
102 “Hong Kong’s Big Chance is Here”, *Hong Kong Standard* (30 October 1967).
sector and the work force. Articles with the title “Hong Kong People buy Hong Kong Products – Let’s work together to bring stability and prosperity to Hong Kong”\(^\text{103}\), “The Hong Kong Week shows its Strength – The Industry and Trade Sectors have Overcome the Difficult Months and enter on a Widening Road”\(^\text{105}\), and “Hong Kong People buy Hong Kong Products – Starting from the Worker Himself. Labor leaders urging workers to support the Hong Kong Weeks, as a strong economy will bring job security”\(^\text{106}\) appeared daily on pro-government as well as other mainstream newspapers. Business leaders also tried to tie this eventual success of self-identity and home market to other social issues, as industrialist Anne Yeung would say:

> The Hong Kong People have strong purchasing power – consider if every one of our 4 million citizens begin buying Hong Kong products, what a boost it would be for our industries! And if Hong Kong is prosper, it will a lot easier to handle other issues, such as solving our social problems, education problems and unemployment problems.\(^\text{107}\)

“Achievement” of the Week was also greatly publicized and sometimes exaggerated, such as the claim that a $104 million-worth US clothing contract formalized during the week – undoubtedly a result after months of negotiation – could be attributed to the “attraction” offered by the Hong Kong Week.\(^\text{108}\) The actual situation was in fact less rosy. According to Cheung Ka Wai, although export figures continued to increase at a rate of about 17% throughout 1967, the tourism industry of Hong Kong was hard hit by the unrests, and large amount of bank deposits were withdrawn, posting a drop of about $243 million when comparing the December 1967

\(^{103}\) “Productivity Movement in HongKong – Key Word for Industry is Export”, *HongKong Standard* (30 October 1967).

\(^{104}\) *Huaqiao Ribao* (30 October 1967).

\(^{105}\) *Xingdao Ribao* (1 November 1967).

\(^{106}\) *Huaqiao Ribao* (1 November 1967).

\(^{107}\) Ibid.

\(^{108}\) *Xingdao Ribao* (4 November 1967).
So the overall economic picture might not be as “little disturbed” as the government or business sectors would claim, nor would the official assessment that there was “no significant disruption in any of the major sectors” be too accurate. Still, Hong Kong certainly was not at the brink of economic destruction, and there was no sign of weakening in terms of British colonial rule, which made the Hong Kong Week “celebration” irritating to the leftists all the more.

4.3 The Identity Clash: Hong Kong versus Motherland

Considering the Hong Kong Week a serious threat to its recent attempt to lure Hong Kong residents back to the “Chinese” camp, the leftists took counter measures and just a day before the official start of the Week, launched its own Mainland Food Festival. Officially named the “Introduction of the Food of Our Great Socialist Motherland”, the food festival would last from October 29 to November 10 – starting a day earlier and lasting 5 days more than the Hong Kong Week. In every aspect the Mainland Food Festival was the perfect competition to the Week: against the slogan “Hong Kong People Use Hong Kong Products”, the festival began with the slogan of “Love Your Motherland, Use Chinese Products”; to counter the colorful banners used to decorate Central during the Week, the leftists put up huge red signs and banners to promote the using of Chinese Products; in order to provide entertainment and activities, the leftists arranged the performance of revolutionary opera Hongdengji (Story of the Red Lantern) to draw crowds away from the fashion shows and various activities offered free during the Hong Kong Week. Though the leftists seemed to have a match to everything offered by the Week, they could hardly draw the attention or the interests of the public, as Chinese goods were no rare


111 愛祖国 用國貨
commodities to the Hong Kong residents, and if not for the leftist riots there would never have been a shortage in the first place, nor a need for a new round of “introduction”. Even if the public were ready to revisit the Chinese Products stores en masse again, there would be little novelty for a cause of celebrations.

More damaging to the food festival and the image of the leftists was the stepping up of the bomb attacks again. Determined to disrupt the Hong Kong Week, a total of 75 bombs (with 15 real ones) were planted on the first day of the Week alone\textsuperscript{112}. Though only 2 persons were injured and there was relatively little disturbance, the real damage was done to the image of the leftist organizations, which for the recent days have tried to promote a more responsible and cooperative image. A return to the bombs tactic showed little had changed. As one commentator argued: “It is commendable that the leftists are organizing a ‘Mainland Food Introduction’ to compete against the “Hong Kong Week”, since after all it is natural to have competition in a free society.... But the planting of bombs at the major interactions on the first day of the “Hong Kong Week” show a total lack of “sportsmanship” – it is like flashing a knife during a boxing match, and no wonder the audience are booing!”\textsuperscript{113}

The emerging sense of a Hong Kong identity – at least against the leftist elements in the community – was most felt by the leftists. As they regressed to the bomb tactic, they tried to reason that the attacks were no longer intended to disrupt society, but to stop the “Anti-China plot” orchestrated by the Hong Kong government. Accordingly to the leftists, the ultimate goal of the Week was to create a breed of “Hong Kong People” who would distinguish themselves from the “Chinese People”, and eventually give birth to a “Hong Kong Nation” separate from China. Articles after articles appeared in the leftist newspapers, claiming to expose the real agenda of the

\textsuperscript{112} Mingbao, 31 October 1967.
Hong Kong Week. One of them titled “The Conspiracy behind the Banners – the British Colonists’ plan for a ‘Hong Kong Nation’”, argues that:

For sure the so-called “Hong Kong Week”, carefully planned by British Hong Kong, was not just an excuse to create a false sense of prosperity. More importantly it aimed to generate public opinions such as “Hong Kong is the Hong Kong belonged to the Hong Kong People”, “The administration of Hong Kong is better than that of a newly founded country”... the evil Hong Kong government is trying to desensitize and fool the Hong Kong Chinese people, and to forever tear Hong Kong away from the domain of China.114

Another editorial asks the question “What is being sold at the Hong Kong Week?”:

(The Hong Kong Week), apparently a commercial event promoting the so-called “Hong Kong Goods”, is actually trying to promote a special concept of the “Hong Kong People”... the Hong Kong government is hard selling the concept of the “Hong Kong People” because they want us to forget that we are Chinese People, and that Hong Kong is part of China. Ultimately they want to separate the flesh and blood relationship between our Hong Kong countrymen and the Mainland, in order to forever tear Hong Kong away from the domain of China, making it a British colony forever! 115

Many of the attacks focused on the alleged hidden agenda of the Hong Kong Week to “create a concept of ‘Hong Kong as an individual political unit’” in the mind of the residents of Hong Kong.116 The leftists were especially sensitive to the use of the phrase “Hong Kong People” – which they sharply distinguished from meaning the people of Hong Kong, but carried the definition of a separate, independent identity, as an article protests that: “It is no big deal to

114 Dagongbao (30 October 1967).
115 Xianggang Shangbao (31 October 1967).
116 Wenhuabao (02 November 1967).
promote the local products, but why keep calling the Chinese people here ‘Hong Kong People’? There is a conspiracy here, just like the Americans are referring to our Taiwanese countrymen as Formosans. The parallel drawn between “Hong Kong People” and “Formosans” are especially revealing, showing how the questions of nationality and identity played a sensitive chord in the mind of the leftists. Leftist political cartoons that appeared during the Hong Kong Week would also echo this nervous sentiment around the relationship between Hong Kong and the “Motherland” (see Figures 4.1 to 4.3).

Figure 4.1 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The figure depicts a personification of the British government dreaming of a Hong Kong nation all the time lying on top of a ticking time bomb.

Figure 4.1 “Dreaming Hard about It” – a British man can be seen resting on the Hong Kong Week logo while dreaming about the “Hong Kong Nation”, without realizing the ticking time bomb underneath him. Xinwanbao (30 Oct. 1967)

Figure 4.2 has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The figure depicts the Hong Kong governor holding up his foot, revealing several groups of people who support him, including spies, traitors and scoundrels.

Figure 4.2 “In Support of the Hong Kong Week” – 3 types of people made up of David Trench’s “Hong Kong People”: scums, collaborators and secret agents. Xinwanbao (01 Nov. 1967)

117 “So this is what ‘Hong Kong Week’ is all about!”, Xianggang Shangbao (31 October 1967).
4.4 Forging the New "Hong Kong People"

So was the leftist claim of a conspiracy theory valid? Was there a hidden agenda to forge a Hong Kong Nation? There is no evidence that the people of Hong Kong began to consider themselves as non-Chinese anytime during the riots, nor is there proof that a process of anti-sinocization went on after the Week and the riots. In fact, the government was so sensitive not to provoke Mainland China that even government officials complained about the "loss of opportunity" to ride on high government support. A good example would be the government's decision to participate in the Chinese Manufacturers' Associations' Exhibition in December 1967 – for the first time ever in 25 years. Though the exhibition took place more than a month after the Hong Kong Week, the government still appeared very inexperienced and ill-prepared for making use of a good publicity opportunity. The government pavilion, focusing on housing and resettlement, would be "very simple and intended to be self-explanatory". In an internal memorandum, the Commissioner for Resettlement D. C. Barty lamented to the Colonial Secretary, saying:
I appreciate that the time factor and limitations on space must have had considerable influence on the design and content of the Government exhibit. Nevertheless, I am perturbed that Government may be losing an opportunity to put across its achievements in housing in a big way. It also seems likely that the housing exhibit will be unbalanced since there is no model available of a resettlement estate and funds were not available early enough for one to be made. 118

The lack of planning and funding was astonishing, especially when we considered that it was the jubilee anniversary of the C.M.A. Exhibition, which concluded a year that had endured months of riots and threats. The picture was far from an orchestrated attempt to forge a “nation” out of the colony by the government, but rather a learning curve to better use different channels to sell its accomplishments to the public, and reconsider some of social priorities. It’s very unlikely that the Hong Kong Week was a completely different story, and part of a big scheme for the government to wrestle Hong Kong from China’s influence. The Hong Kong Week would return as the Hong Kong Festival in 1969, and the evidence of a more committed government involvement will be unmistaken only then.

However, it is believed that the debate regard the Hong Kong identity, and the subsequent articulation revolving around the labels of “Hong Kong People” and “Chinese People”, did cement the sense of a new people emerging – one that cherishes his/her living space, freedom and opportunities in Hong Kong, one that identifies AGAINST destruction and fanatical behavior of the leftists, and one that when pressed to choose between being British or a Chinese living in Hong Kong, chooses to identify himself/herself as one of the Hong Kong People, though not necessarily rejecting his/her Chinese identity either. In short, it was a political identity of independence. By late October many in the literary circle had followed the lead of the business

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sector, kicking into full gear this process of identity articulation. A column article that appeared in *Mingbao* on 30 October 1967 can perhaps best summarize this attempt:

If a Hong Kong Week was held last year or the year before, I think it will hardly be as meaningful as it is being held now. In the past, many people saw Hong Kong as a “springboard” in their lifetime — once they’re over and through, no strings of emotion will be attached. If you talked to them about “Hong Kong People Buy Hong Kong Goods” then, they would laugh at you.

But after what we’ve been through in the past 6 months, the relationship between the Hong Kong residents and this place of land that they live on has changed. Once the feeling that “we’re on the same boat” has emerged, everything looks different now. Even though Hong Kong is not a “country”, the residents have deeply felt the unique pleasantness of this place — which is not the Mainland, Taiwan, or any other South East Asian dwelling places of Chinese can compare ...

The future of Hong Kong is what every Hong Kong resident has cared about, and something we should care more about in the future. “*Hong Kong People*” is no longer a phrase of insult, that’s why we should support the “Hong Kong Week”.\(^{119}\)

Even after the riots, local leaders would continue to encourage the nourishment of such an identity. One such example, again, featured Mr. Dhun Ruttonjee, who pled to the government in the beginning of 1968:

“In Hong Kong last year, we found ourselves more of a community than ever before. The real people of Hong Kong wonderfully, even heroically, made it quite clear just where their loyalties lay; or perhaps, Sir, I would be more accurate to say where their loyalties did not lie ... We have, and have had for some time, a golden opportunity to bond together this wonderful community of ours ... an opportunity to show the people of

\(^{119}\) “Hong Kong Week”, *Mingbao* (30 October 1967). Bold font added by the author.
Hong Kong that it has a government which really cares for the main in the street ... the single most important issue that faces us today ... is a matter of leadership.”

According to Ruttonjee, the “real people of Hong Kong” would from now on be defined differently – not British, not even necessarily Chinese (remember Ruttonjee himself was an East Indian by birth), but those that would plead allegiance to the protection of community harmony and prosperity. As the 1 November 1967 Ming Pao Editorial reads:

In addition to promoting Hong Kong products, another major purpose for the Hong Kong Week is to encourage the Hong Kong residents to love this place of living. As more than half of the Hong Kong residents originally came from the “five lakes and four seas”, they are not the indigenous people. To them, Hong Kong was a sojourning place of refuge, and they had not developed deep affection for this place. But since the beginning of the events in May, all a sudden everyone sensed that the freedom of this place was challenged, and there was a real danger of losing the chance to live here peacefully. Gradually and unknowingly, we have begun to love and care more about Hong Kong. It is no exaggeration if we say the leftists have helped us to love Hong Kong more.

Henceforth, a new Hong Kong identity – a political identity that is beyond Chinese politics – was born. More and more, phrases such as “Hong Kong Chinese” and “Hong Kong residents” would be replaced by simply “Hong Kong People”, and the late 191960s and early 191970s would witness ongoing debate and articulation to give subjective characteristics to this identity, and how different, after all, it is in comparison to “Chinese People”.

121 Editorial, Mingbao, (1 November 1967). Bold font added by the author.
5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Aftermath

"I have once asked myself: 'Am I a Chinese?'"

In a special report published in January of 1970, a group of Hong Kong college students were asked to share about ethnic awareness and sense of belonging. A sense of ambiguity about their identity was prominent. One young writer writes: "I once asked my Chinese teacher: ‘Are Hong Kong People Chinese?’ He answers: ‘It’s hard to say. It all depends on your perspective.’ What? My perspective? What perspective should I hold?" Another asks: "If we say we belong to Hong Kong and not China, then we must ask how we can generate the sense of belonging." One even feels that a sense of identity is nothing more than question of functionality, and is not a matter of value. Similar questions were being asked in other media settings and by other groups of Hong Kong people in late 1960s, and whatever the answers were, there was an air of uncertainty surrounding the identity of the Hong Kong People, and definitely a sense that being Hong Kong was not identical to being Chinese.

The legacy of the Riot and the debate generated throughout the Hong Kong Week has permanently changed the concept of being a "HongKonger". By rejecting the Mainland style of revolution, the Hong Kong People had refused to allow Chinese politics to interfere with their livelihood, but at the same time acquiring a new political identity of independency – that Hong Kong was not an extension of Mainland China, or an all-obedient Colony. This newfound identity of "NOTs" could surely be vague and uncertain, since by far the majority of the Hong Kong

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124 The slogan "Hong Kong People Use Hong Kong Goods" would also be used repeatedly, especially during the annual CMA exhibition by the Hong Kong Federation of Industries the Hong Kong.
People continued to look, speak and recognize themselves as Chinese, though not Mainland Chinese. The following decade would witness the Hong Kong People coming to terms with this new identity, with the help of emerging cultural and social characters that made them “look” and “feel” unique, eventually consolidating the Hong Kong identity as a Chinese ethnic identity recognizable throughout the world.

5.2 The Construction of Cultural Identity

This paper continues to argue that there was a process of conversion from a political identity to a cultural identity in Hong Kong. Though Hong Kong scholars by far recognize the 67 Riot as a watershed of the birth of a Hong Kong awareness, the theory that a cultural identity was born at the same time is ill-founded. This problem of dating the emergence of a Hong Kong cultural identity too early (late 1960s and even early 1970s) becomes obvious if we consider some of the social and cultural indicators suggested by Gordon Mathews as “marks” of the Hong Kong identity — affluence and freedom (of consumption), language (speaking Cantonese instead of Mandarin), and an appreciation of democracy and human rights. In terms of affluence and consumptive strength, many of the major economic breakthroughs experienced by the colony happened in the 191970s, especially late 1970s, including the lifting of the US trade embargo of non-strategic goods to China in 1971-72, the 1978 lifting of a moratorium on the issue of new banking licenses in Hong Kong, and the PRC’s creation of the Special Economic Zones in 1979. The gain in average annual GDP from 1966-72 (14.3%) showed only moderate increase in comparison to that from 1960-65 (11.6%), in contrast to the sharp increase in the later half of

the 1970s (19.7% from 1972-79)\textsuperscript{127}, indicating that the affluence and increased consumptive power was unlikely a direct or immediate outcome of the 1960s riots.

In terms of language, without a doubt Hong Kong has always been a predominantly Cantonese speaking community - a 1961 census revealed that close to 79% of Hong Kong residents would call themselves Cantonese speakers; the percentage climbed to more than 88% when another census was done in 1996.\textsuperscript{128} The colonial government did try to help cement this prominence of the Cantonese language by changing the Hong Kong language policy following the riots in 1967, allowing only Cantonese to be used in the programming of government-run radio stations, replacing programs in various dialects that were popular in the 1960s. However, there is little indication that it was done against Mandarin speaking among the general public\textsuperscript{129}, since there was in fact an ongoing campaign to make the Chinese language the second official language. The campaign was a reaction against the discriminating dominance of English within government operations and it was initiated as early as 1964, even though the government only agreed to give Chinese as equal a status as possible in 1968, following the riots.\textsuperscript{130} A preference of Cantonese over Mandarin in public media was actually nonexistent immediately following the riots. In fact, the opposite might be true as the production of Cantonese movies in Hong Kong fell significantly since the late 1960s all the way to mid 1970s, and only began to exceed the production of Mandarin movies as late as 1977.\textsuperscript{131}


\textsuperscript{128} George Lin, “Hong Kong and the globalization of the Chinese diaspora: a geographical perspective,” *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 43.1 (2002): 74, 82.

\textsuperscript{129} Yang suspects that this was done in order to strength the “monolithic” concept of a single, Cantonese identity of the Hong Kong people. See Yang Cong Rong, “Why is there a lack of Hakka awareness in Hong Kong? A look at the political sociology of identity, judging by the history of language policy.” *Presentation at the Hakka Cultural Scholarship Panel*, National Central University, on 30 October 2002, p.11.


\textsuperscript{131} Zhong Bao Xian, *Xianggang Yingye Bailian* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2004), 240.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Cantonese movies produced (%)</th>
<th>No. of Mandarin movies produced</th>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>35 (29%)</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>22 (21%)</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>28 (29%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>35 (36%)</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>45 (51%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>86 (78%)</td>
<td>23</td>
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A comparison of the numbers of Cantonese films and Mandarin films produced in Hong Kong in the 191970s (an adoption of Zhong Bao Xian, *A Hundred Years of the Film and Television Industries of Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (2004) p.240.)

It appears that the Mandarin language did not go out of style after the riots, but continued to be strong until its rapid decline in popularity in the late 191970s, which has to do with the growing popularity of Cantonese television programs in Hong Kong.

Finally, there is also little evidence to suggest that the Hong Kong Chinese developed a sense of superiority and condescension over their fellow Mainland Chinese immediately after 1967. The rejection of communism in Hong Kong was not necessarily a rejection of communist China or Chinese; in fact, the sympathy of the Hong Kong people quickly shifted against the colonial government following a crack-down of the demonstration against Japan’s occupation of the Diaoyutai Islands in Victoria Park just 4 years later. To the colonial government’s surprise, the public overwhelmingly condemned the government’s use of force against demonstrators at the “July 7 Incident”\(^\text{132}\), revealing that the Hong Kong People still strongly identified themselves as “Chinese” in the face of the a “foreign” enemy such as Japan.\(^\text{133}\)


\(^{133}\) The conflicting manifestation of the “Chineseness” of the Hong Kong people is also mentioned by Gordon Mathews, using the June 4th demonstration against China and the Diaoyutai Islands demonstration on behalf of China as examples, though the latter refers to a much later demonstration in 1996 that resulted in the accidental death of activist David Chan.
One can argue that the kind of cultural identity suggested by Mathews only came to surface around late 1990s, coinciding with the emergence of the cultural indicator of Cheng Can (or simply, A Can), commonly used by the Hong Kong people to refer to the Mainlanders by from the late 1970s to 90s. After experiencing strong economic growth in the second half of 191970s, the Hong Kong People started to realize an increasing gap in living standard in comparison to the Mainlanders, who fell behind miserably because of all the chaos and violence brought by the Cultural Revolution. As a result the Hong Kong people began to culturally distance themselves from the immigrants from north of the border, and constructed a stereotype for all other Chinese people coming from the Mainland — A Can. As a constructed identity, no positive native place or dialect can be attributed to A Can, but only in a negative manner — those who are not from Hong Kong, and those who don’t speak Cantonese (or speak without an accent). Such a definition is confusing, as a large portion of the Hong Kong residents were themselves immigrants to begin with, even as late as the 1970s, and most of them continued to speak with a strong accent (in contrast to the type of Cantonese spoken by the majority of Hong Kong people, the Guangfuhua). Yet as a popular impression, A Can impersonates everything Hong Kong people consider opposite to them — lazy, greedy, ignorant, uncivilized. Made popular by the name of a TV character called Cheng Can in the 1979 show Wangzhongren (The Person in the Snare), A Can is portrayed as such a stereotype Mainlander immigrant. The usage and recognition of the term became so widespread that even mainstream newspapers used A Can on

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134 Cheng Can, more commonly referred to by its abbreviated name, 阿健.
135 A number of studies have focused on the TV character of A Can and how he resembles the “ignorant, uncivilized” Mainlanders, in contrast to the “civilized, smart and modernized” Hong Kong people. Chan and Yeung have given a good summary of the A Can scenario (see Chen Mei Yan and Yang Cong Rong, “Considering the Hong Kong Identity from the Hong Kong indigenous culture”, in Symposium of the Hong Kong Question [The HK-Macau Society of Taiwan, 1994], 1-22).
136 According to a writer, A Can is “a stereotype Mainlander (whether being a legal or illegal immigrant). He is fond of eating but lazy to work, vain, unrealistic, unpractical, and idle all day. He is not down to earth, and don’t understand the meaning of the saying ‘it’s hard to make a living in Xianggang Di’. To sum up – he doesn’t deserve sympathy!” Zhang Jiawen, “The meaning of Cheng Can,” in Fuji Wenhua zai Xianggang, ed. Lui Tai-lok (Hong Kong: Shuguang Books, 1983), 71.
Mainlander immigrants in their articles, which caused quite a stir among scholars regarding the neutrality of newspaper reporting.\textsuperscript{137}

5.3 The Case of Singapore

The birth of the Hong Kong identity revealed yet again the imaginative and constructive nature of the process of identity formation. Rather then arising from outward differences among migrating groups and developing to an ethnic identity that includes elements of history and articulation, the emergence of the Hong Kong People followed a conscious path of political decisions to cultural distinguishing. A similar, though not identical process can be argued for the Singaporeans, who also engaged in an active identity making process beginning with its independence in 1965, after its failed attempt to join the Federation of Malaysia from 1963-1965. As much as Lee Kuan Yew and his PAP (People’s Action Party) government wanted to persuade the people of Singapore that a merge with Malaysia was necessary for the city’s survival in 1963, they would try to convince them that independence was equally viable an option in 1965.\textsuperscript{138} But the situation was tough and the prospect was not good, with Singapore’s Minister of the Interior and Defense Goh Keng Swee describing the new state in 1967 as a “complex, multiracial community with little sense of common history, with a group purpose which is yet to be properly articulated”.\textsuperscript{139} What followed was a vigorous process of national identity construction, an attempt to create a new “breed” of Singaporeans above the recognizable ethnicities of Chinese, Malays, and Indians. Although it was not identical to the political identity witnessed in the development of the Hong Kong, both the HongKongers and Singaporeans were to face the struggle of creating cultural and social distinctiveness to boost their identity claims, and both

would experience the ongoing challenge of maintaining and asserting their identities against their “Chinese” background.

Soon after independence the PAP appointed a Constitution Commission in 1966 to recognize the rights of various racial and linguistic groups, establishing multiracialism “as a social formula to forge a single identity out of the heterogeneous population riven by racial, religious, language and cultural lines”\(^\text{140}\). It is often argued that the PAP leadership’s commitment to racial equality was a major reason for its expulsion from Malaysia.\(^\text{141}\) As a way to create a common identity, the government was keen to encourage the continuation of various religious and cultural practices and festivals, but was determined to curb any one of the races – especially the Chinese, with their huge majority in number – from aspiring to dominance or higher significance. Language was the first touchy issue faced by the PAP. When Singapore became independent in 1965 over 80% of its population spoke Chinese, and many Chinese organizations such as the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI) were keen to hold onto the right of Chinese education. However, President Lee Kuan Yew was determined to grant all 4 major languages – Chinese, Malay, Tamil and English – equal official status, forcing Chinese schools to include other languages in teaching too. Various Chinese dialects were abolished in the mass media, and there was a conscious effort by the government to promote Mandarin as “the language of the Chinese”, rather than the language of Singapore.\(^\text{142}\)

The struggle to create and enforce a Singapore identity that is above races intensified following the start of the Cultural Revolution, with the increasing revolutionary and nationalistic overtones of Chinese foreign policies creating a lot of uneasiness among the Southeast Asian


countries with a considerable portion of Chinese population. Similar to the situation in Hong Kong, a need to disassociate themselves from the book-waving and slogan-shouting “Red” Chinese was felt by the Singaporean Chinese. A very revealing statement made by Lee Kuan Yew in 1967 claimed that “[Singaporeans] may look like Chinese and speak Chinese, they are different.”

Facing also the increasing pressure of “Chinese politics” that threaten to disrupt the multiethnic fabric of Singapore, the government not only legislated to give Singaporeans of different races equal status, but threatened heavy penalties to those who attempted offence. In addition to the more passive approach of legislation, the PAP also actively engaged in the process of identity construction. This government-directed effort to construct a Singapore “nation” and “people”, though considered by many a “relatively shallow and extremely fluid and formative” process given the existence of little common “history” among its inhabitants, went ahead vigorously. One consistent approach has been to invest a lot of resources in staging public celebration of nationalism, most notably through the organization of the National Day parades. Starting with the first parade in 1966, it has never been just a chance for public celebration, but a “display of power and dramatization of hierarchy”.

With themes such as “national pride and confidence in the future” (1966), “rugged and vigorous Singapore” (1967), “youth and ruggedness” (1968), and “work for security and prosperity” (1970), the parade undoubtedly carried an overtone of national pride and security in the early years of independence. According to Laurence Leong, these parades “personify the nation by underscoring values of order, discipline and regimentation, and reassures the populace in the face of anxiety”.

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144 Ibid.
145 Ibid., 218-9.
147 Ibid., 10.
Similar to Hong Kong, this identity building process in Singapore also grew from a political proclamation to cultural characterization as time progressed. PAP would begin advocating the needs to strengthen the national identity through other cultural and artistic means. Minister for Culture Jek Yuen Thong plainly pointed out in 1974 that “literature, music and the fine arts have a significant role to play within the framework of nation building. A truly Singaporean art must reflect values that will serve Singapore in the long run.” Similar statements were made by other government officials, with government MP Tay Boon Too went as far as saying that “the various orchestras, dance troupes and choirs in the National Theatre should be regarded as a cultural army representative of Singapore” The search for a common identity of “Singaporeans” through cultural and ideological means picked up momentum in the 1970s and 1980s, with efforts ranging from the search of a national dress code, national music, national heritage, even to the point of using anti-colonialism. One example is the “Sing Singapore” program commissioned by the Ministry of Communications and Information in 1988, which would produce a collection of “national” songs such as This is my land, We the people of Singapore, We are Singapore, etc. Lyrics such as the following certainly advocate a sense of pride and belonging for the people of Singapore, not just as a nation but a people:

This is my country
This is my flag
This is my future

149 Ibid.
150 “The insistence on transforming everyday heritages to National Heritage is also evident in the treatment of Singapore’s ‘multi-cultural heritage’. While such heritage is said to be expressed in the ‘lifestyles, customs and traditions of the different ethnic communities, thus necessarily recognizing the ordinary and commonplace, the emphasis is on how this heritage “will contribute to the evolution of a composite supra-communal identity”’, Lily Kong, “The Invention of Heritage: Popular Music in Singapore,” Asian Studies Review 23.1 (1999): 10.
151 Such is the argument of some who argue that there has been an “asianization of Singaporeans” happening in this identity forging process. Chua Beng Huat, “Racial-Singaporeans: Absence after the Hyphen,” in Southeast Asian Identities: Culture and the Politics of Representation in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, ed., Joel Kahn. (Singapore: ISEAS, 1998), 39-42.
This is my life
This is my family
These are my friends
We are Singapore Singaporeans
Singapore our homeland
It's here that we belong (We are Singapore. Italics added by the author)\textsuperscript{152}

Other cultural aspects such as Anglophone poems would be used to “imaginatively create national events, by memorializing and enhancing select events which, though historically significant, might not otherwise have gained the same cultural significance”\textsuperscript{153}. Eventually the identity of a Singaporean will be consolidated both politically and culturally, like that of the Hong Kong People, though it remains to be studied if the Hong Kong government has been involving nearly as much as the PAP has in the respective process.

Although Chinese Singaporeans may not necessarily identity themselves also as “Chinese” as the Hong Kong People would, the birth of the “Singaporeans” are in many ways similar to the birth of the HongKongers. Both groups saw the benefits to establish a unique identity outside of the Mainland Chinese system, and both needed to assert their cultural distinctiveness against the overwhelming Chinese culture over a process of identity formation. Beginning with the 67 Riot and the Hong Kong Week, the Hong Kong People would emerge as an ethnicity both ideologically and culturally different from the Mainland Chinese even today, despite the return of the colony under Chinese rule in 1997 and the increasingly blurry, yet definite, line of difference between the two.


\textsuperscript{153} “One obvious example is Singapore’s coming independence on 9 August 1965, after it was expelled from Malaya. While this was clearly a landmark event in the nation’s history, it is arguably the poetic evocation of the emotional charge of that occasion, centred in the poetic persona inspired by the then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, which has invigorated that event and lifted it out from the realm of dusty archival memory.” Robbie Goh, “Imagining the Nation: The Role of Singapore Poetry in English in “Emergent Nationalism,” \textit{The Journal of Commonwealth Literature} 4.2(2006): 27.
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*Sing Tao Evening News (Xingdao Wanbao)* 星島晚報

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### APPENDIX  The Hong Kong Week Program\(^{154}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events</th>
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</table>
| 30 Oct 1967 (Mon) | - Opening Ceremony  
- Exhibitions (books, HK currency, HK historical items, award pictures of the HK past, crafts)  
- Fashion Shows  
- Concerts (light music, orchestra)  
- Sports (mini-football, ten-pin bowling) |
| 31 Oct 1967 (Tue) | - Exhibitions (books, HK currency, HK historical items, award pictures of the HK past, crafts, race cars)  
- Fashion Shows  
- Concerts (pop music, Police Band)  
- Sports (football, boxing, ten-pin bowling) |
| 1 Nov 1967 (Wed)  | - Exhibitions (HK currency, HK historical items, award pictures of the HK past, publications printed and bound in HK, crafts, race cars)  
- Fashion Shows  
- Concerts (light music, leading pop groups)  
- Sports (mini-football, ten-pin bowling) |
| 2 Nov 1967 (Thu)  | - Exhibitions (fashions, crafts, race cars)  
- Fashion Shows, parade of traditional Chinese gowns  
- Concerts (Police Band, light music)  
- Film shows, Cantonese opera  
- Sports (mini-football, ten-pin bowling) |
| 3 Nov 1967 (Fri)  | - Exhibitions (HK currency, HK historical items, award pictures of the HK past, publications printed and bound in HK, crafts, race cars)  
- Fashion Shows  
- Concerts (pop music)  
- Film shows, Variety Show  
- Sports (mini-football, exhibition matches of table tennis and badminton, ten-pin bowling) |
| 4 Nov 1967 (Sat)  | - Exhibitions (HK currency, HK historical items, award pictures of the HK past, publications printed and bound in HK, crafts, race cars)  
- Parade of traditional Chinese gowns  
- Sports (horse racing, hockey) |
| 5 Nov 1967 (Sun)  | - Exhibitions (HK currency, HK historical items, award pictures of the HK past, publications printed and bound in HK, crafts, race cars)  
- Parade of traditional Chinese gowns  
- Concerts (light music)  
- Cantonese Play  
- Sports (cricket, mini-football)  
- Parade of Floats, Dragon & Lion Dances, Torchlight Tableaux |

\(^{154}\) Summarized from the Official Program of the Hong Kong Week, 30 October to 5 November 1967.