

The Hong Kong Story: Just whom is it for?

Time is a continuum in which events occur in irreversible succession from the past to the present to the future. We try to “capture” it in the museum and used it to depict a past that has irrevocably altered outside its walls. Many cities have “living museums” in their midst—that is, the buildings and structures still extant in them. However, in Hong Kong, where change seems to be its identity/destiny, little evidence remains as buildings are torn down and (re)constructed.¹

Much ink has been spilt on constructing, defining, and “solidifying” the Hong Kong identity, particularly post-1997 with its return to China, and the emphasis on closer links with this most populous nation. “The Hong Kong Story” is one such mechanism, a permanent exhibition in the Hong Kong Museum of History. Being a bilingual society where both English and Chinese have equality under the law how does museum texts “frame” this story for the Chinese and the non-Chinese visitor?—are there any differences? This paper sets out to analyze just for whom this story for by comparing and contrasting both the Chinese and English text that accompany the museum exhibits through a combination of pragmatics and critical discourse analysis.

Floating City, Floating Identity

Hong Kong is often described as “a rock floating between two worlds”, the world of far-off colonial Britain and communist China looming from the north. Indeed, a Hong Kong novelist, using Rene Magritte’s surrealist paintings as the basis of a series of musings on the territory calls it a “floating city” quite different from everywhere else:

What is it that enables this floating city to stay so readily in the air? Could it be the gravitational pull between earth and sky? Or could it be the Marionette performance staged by the god of destiny holding numerous strings in his hands? (Xi Xi, 1997).

Up the end of the 1970s, with no political outlet of expression given it by its British masters, Hong Kong was quite happy to concentrate its energies on business pursuits, with questions of “identity” seldom being addressed. But the Sino-British Joint Declaration² in 1984 necessitated a 13-year rethink on culture and identity. During this time many books dealing with the upcoming “transition” to Chinese sovereignty were published.³

¹ For example, along the Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail there are plaques to mark some places that no longer exist.

² In this Declaration, the Governments of the United Kingdom and China agreed that Hong Kong would be restored to the People's Republic of China from 1 July 1997.

³ A few examples: Lamb, H.K. (1984). *A Date with Fate: Hong Kong 1997*; Wong, M. (1984) *1997 and All That: A Tremulous Look into the Future*; Wang Enbao (1995) *Hong Kong and the Politics of Transition*.

Immediately post 1997, life went on very much like before, however, "The real transition has been complex, subtle and profound...this is because the real transition is about identity and not sovereignty" (Yeung, 1998; see also Chan, 2002 for similar arguments).

A recent plan to move a statue of Britain's King George VI from in the local botanical gardens to make way for a statue of Sun Yat-sen caused controversy. The Chairman of the Hong Kong Royal Asiatic Society said in an interview at the time, "This is an attempt to belittle and downgrade the British side of the history of Hong Kong. Now Hong Kong has to develop a new history, new community, a new way forward, but you do that by building, not demolishing" (Grammaticus, 2003).

In his 1998 Policy Address, Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa stated:

*To foster a sense of belonging and identity, we need to promote our heritage, which is a valuable cultural legacy. This involves protection of historical buildings and archaeological sites, some of which are more than 6,000 years old. We will also look to strengthen HK's own unique culture which embodies a successful blend of the best of the East and the West. [Italics added.]*⁴

According to one academic, Hong Kong practices the "politics of disappearance", due to the presence of many binary opposites that "dispel memory, history, and presence" (Abbas, 1998). Hong Kong disappears through the dualities of East and West ("a distinctive blend of East and West"⁵), tradition and modernity, ("...Hong Kong is mixture of.... [the] modern and traditional"⁶).

Indeed, in the past, poised between two colonialities, that of Britain and China, it floated. Its sense of space was not fixed, but shifting being "not so much a place as a space of transit." people thought of themselves as transients and migrants on their way from China to somewhere else (many obtaining foreign passports before 1997, "just in case") (Abbas, 1998). This concept of space in the past served its commercial purposes well, Hong Kong being a "perfect jumping off point to exotic China."⁷

In the last few years Hong Kong has gone through various governmental and tourist "branding" exercises. The latest being the "flowing dragon" which "symbolises a fusion of East and West that characterises Hong Kong. The dragon's smooth, fluid shape imparts a sense of movement and speed, communicating that Hong Kong is forever changing."⁸

However it still boasts of being a "gateway" to China, although now it is a "special part",

⁴ <http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/pa98/english/policy1.htm>

⁵ www.discoverhongkong.com

⁶ www.studyabroad.com/simplehtml/white/Hong_Kong.html

⁷ Ibid

⁸ www.brandhk.gov.hk/

as a “Special Administrative Region” (SAR), and it is still a blend of East and West. Such is its current insecurity that when the recent SARS crisis hit, there was such angst over the name given to the virus.⁹ It is also deathly afraid of becoming “just another Chinese City”. Ninety-eight percent of the population is ethnic Chinese, but history has seen that the Hong Kong Chinese are now culturally and politically quite distinct from the Mainland.¹⁰ Abbas calls them “two peoples separated by a common ethnicity” (Abbas, 1998: 2). The “One Country, Two Systems” style of governance also leads to identity confusion since it is supposed to be a part of China, yet it has special privileges that the Mainland has not.

In just this year alone, there have been many obvious attempts to increase national feelings towards China. There was the patriotism debate by pro-Beijing elements about the need to elect “patriotic” politicians in the recent elections, the visits to Hong Kong of China’s first man in space, Deng Xiaoping’s daughters and the Chinese Olympic team. This is rather ironic since, while Hong Kong seems to become “more Chinese” the mainland is increasingly putting on a more “international” front (Matthews, 2003: 308).

Anchoring the Floating City in the Museum

It was in this context that museum as identity construction came into its own. In the last few years new museums have opened, the Museum of Coastal Defence (August, 2000) and the Heritage Museum (December 2000).¹¹ The Hong Kong Museum of History (MOH) was established in July 1975, but moved to new, modern premises in 1998. The MOH’s mission is

[T]o preserve the cultural heritage of Hong Kong through acquisition, conservation and research of cultural objects, and to promote the public understanding of and interest in the development of Hong Kong and its *unique cultural heritage* through the Museum’s collections, exhibitions and education and outreach activities. (Webpage of the Hong Kong Museum of History, italics added).

“The Hong Kong Story”, too six years to construct, is a “permanent” exhibition which opened in 2001, comprising eight galleries located on two floors. It consists of over 4,000

⁹ “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) sound very much like SAR to Hong Kong’s leaders’ ears. See, Jennifer Eagleton (2004) “SARS: ‘It’s as Bad as We Feared But Dared Not Say: Naming, Managing and Dramatizing the SARS Crisis in Hong Kong”, *English Today*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 37-45.

¹⁰ Previously, Hongkongers looked down at their mainland counterparts, and discriminated against them as new immigrants to Hong Kong. See Frank Ching & Maureen Pao (1999) and Frank Ching (2000) for discussion of this issue.

¹¹ I could not find a “mission statement” on its site, but the HK Tourism Board talks of its exhibition galleries as “treasure houses of the history, culture and arts of early Hong Kong and the nearby South China region.”

exhibits, with graphic panels, dioramas and multimedia programmes, and enhanced with special audio-visual and lighting effects, “to outline the natural environment, folk culture, and historical development of Hong Kong.” However, the curators did have a brief from the government to put more emphasis on certain themes, such as the opium wars, Dr. Sun Yat-sen and the 1997 handover (Leung, 2004). These are all culturally sensitive areas that closely link Hong Kong and Chinese history or which had a certain emotional impact.

The concept of a “permanent” exhibition must be problematic in this postmodern age where hidden aspects of history are continually being unearthed. By “continuing or designed to continue indefinitely without change”¹² it creates a “permanent” view of what Hong Kong is and was, and as we know that is the view of the museum ruling body. Also problematic is the use of the emphatic “the” in “The Hong Kong Story”. Is it a linear, monolithic story that can be easily teased out from all the interconnectedness of the workings of history? Is there only one story?¹³

Arriving in Hong Kong just after the handover, it has been interesting to watch as these Chinese identity “initiatives” by the government and other groups develop. It thus seemed interesting to look at the Chinese and English texts in this exhibition to look for similarities and differences in the message.¹⁴

There are eight galleries in “The Hong Kong Story”:

1. The Natural Environment
2. Prehistoric Hong Kong
3. The Dynasties: from the Han to the Qing
4. Folk Culture in Hong Kong
5. The Opium Wars and the Cessation of Hong Kong
6. Birth and Early Growth of the City
7. The Japanese Occupation
8. Modern Metropolis and the Return of China.

The exhibition preface was looked at in addition to the galleries. Galleries 4 & 7 were omitted for reasons of space. The exhibition preface and the introduction to each gallery served to set the pragmatic “frame” for the audience so these became the focus in

¹² Oxford English Dictionary online: <http://dictionary.oed.com>. All English definitions are taken from this dictionary hereafter.

¹³ However, on the Hong Kong Tourism Board’s website had a “tell your Hong Kong Story” to submit “untold folklore tales to enhance the appeal of tourist attractions and festivals”. They should have this in the exhibition! See http://www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/mustknow/hkstory/hk_stor_kwun.jhtml.

¹⁴ Translation theory and the linguistic differences between Chinese and English are not the focus of this study.

addition to some other random panels in the section. Being in no way a systematic study, this survey merely aims to bring fairly general themes to light.

On studying both the Chinese and English texts, it was discovered that most of the texts corresponded in meaning, but with subtle and pragmatic differences. HongKongers and mainland Chinese, possessing certain inculcated values and lived/separated histories, would read the text in certain ways that the non-Chinese viewer would not, ways that appealed to their sense of Chineseness. That is, Hong Kong has always been a part of China and that it never has been really separated.¹⁵ My impression as a non-Chinese visitor was that the exhibition's constructors wanted to show the same meaning to monolingual readers of English, and that ultimately it was never really "British". One gets the sense that the colonial past was only marginal to Hong Kong's history, while events in China was never marginal in Hong Kong. Indeed, it is remarkable how little the doings of the colonial administration and other foreigners in Hong Kong are shown in this exhibition. The word "colony" is seldom used. The past, to a certain extent has disappeared.

Looking at the divisions, "The Hong Kong Story" seems to focus on establishing its credentials as a longstanding entity, both physically and socially in linkage with China as a whole. The history of people who lived in south China from dynasty to dynasty before the actual entity of Hong Kong is highlighted. It is only from gallery 5 onwards that history moves onto the modern plane. However, Hong Kong has no "real" pre-colonial past unlike other colonies that were a united entity before colonization (Abbas 1998: 2). In 1841 it was ceded to Britain, prior to that it was a series of scattered fishing villages. There are records of human settlement on the island going back to the Song dynasty (960-1279), but the effective history of Hong Kong, in terms to what has shaped the modern location, has effectively been from 1841.

Episodes of the Story

(a) Preface to the Exhibition

The first display board at the exhibition serves as a kind of hypertheme and acts as a guide to how the constructors of the exhibit want to "frame" the entire exhibition.

English: Small as it is in physical terms, HK has evolved with a complex geology, trees, and shrubs, and a long history of human habitation...in less than two centuries HK has *metamorphosed* from a few insignificant fishing villages and farming hamlets to an international metropolis. [I talics added].

¹⁵ This was the comment by my two Chinese companions Alice Leung (M.Phil. student in anthropology) and Lee Kim Hung (Translation Instructor) from The Chinese University of Hong Kong who accompanied me on one visit to the exhibition.

However, although the Chinese word *tuibian*¹⁶ (change quantitatively, transform, transmute) has a similar meaning to “metaphorhosed”, *tui*—itself means “slough off like a snake with its skin”, and perhaps the imagery has an effect on the Chinese reading of the whole text.

This is a constant refrain when discussing Hong Kong’s development—its smallness vs. its relative economic power. It also resonates with Hong Kong’s current self-branding as “Asia’s world city.”¹⁷ While later parts of the exhibition minimizes the distance between Hong Kong and China over millions of years, the “less than two centuries” imply that it is from the time of British rule that Hong Kong has become what it most wants to be: an international metropolis.

The unlikely fact that this is what Hong Kong has become, “compel[s] study and presentation” in English. The literal Chinese is a little different: “...The Hong Kong Story, consisting of 400 million years, was created to satisfy everybody’s ardent needs to know of Hong Kong’s history and culture.” “400 million years of history” is mentioned twice in the Chinese version, but only once—at the end—in the English version. The following addresses the museum-goer.

English: We at the Hong Kong museum of history have spared no pains in creating a permanent exhibition which tells the remarkable story of HK’s growth and development for both *local residents and the many visitors* to the SAR.
[I talics added.]

Perhaps this emphasis on the extent of “actual” Hong Kong history aims to foster a sense of permanence of place and identity in the Hong Kong Chinese. In the Chinese, the inclusive noun *dajia* (everybody) is used. While in theory this could include visitors of any hue, the greater assumption is that only Chinese people can read Chinese, for them going to this exhibition is an educational exercise:

English: The approach aims at presenting these topics in a manner which stimulates interest while imparting information.

Chinese: By making the exhibition both interesting and educational, [we] hope to stimulate the interest of everybody towards HK’s history and culture.

The English preface ends with another emphasis on Hong Kong’s long history:

¹⁶ All Chinese definitions are from the *New Age Chinese-English Dictionary* (2001) Beijing: The Commercial Press.

¹⁷ See the Hong Kong Government website: <http://www.gov.hk/info/sar5/easia.htm>.

English: We invite *visitors* to embark on a journey of discovery of Hong Kong's past spanning a period of 400 million years.

Chinese: We *sincerely* invite *you* to embark on a journey spanning 400 million years of history. [Italics added].

Here "the one that visits" is accorded temporary status, while in the Chinese the polite form of "you" (*nin*) is used, giving Chinese readers "insider status" to the discourse.

Gallery 1: The Natural Environment

In this gallery, we are taken "back to Hong Kong's beginnings and then lead "forward through the dramatic events that has marked her long history." Here it is the dramatic work of nature" of geographical/geological Hong Kong that is emphasized. Although the English and Chinese texts are similar, the Chinese *guifu-shengong*, literally "hewn up rock by rock", has increased significance. Although the Hong Kong of a million years ago was not vaguely like the Hong Kong of today, Chinese readers of the text could liken "hewn up rock by rock" to read like early twentieth-century Hong Kong when people considered themselves as being lifting themselves out of poverty.

English: Hong Kong is situated at the eastern end of the Pearl River Delta region on the South China Seaboard. Archeological evidence reveals that Hong Kong has a long history, *like the rest of China*.

Residents of Hong Kong would perhaps associate "Pearl River Delta" with the current CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Agreement) that aims to link Hong Kong's economy more closely with that of the Pearl River Delta Region.¹⁸ These two things are often collocated together in news reports. In addition the "like the rest of China" in Chinese uses the grammatical link *gen__yiyang* which "means the same as__".

Gallery 2: Prehistoric Hong Kong

In this gallery, archeological evidence is used to infer a whole speculative history related to the ancient Yue people:

English: According to historical records, *the vast area stretching from...to..., was* inhabited by the Yue People during the pre-Qin Period. They comprised many different tribes and had different surnames. The Yue people of

¹⁸ See www.tid.gov.hk/english/cepa. Ceba's aims are: "To strengthen trade and investment cooperation between the Mainland and the Hong Kong SAR and promote development between the two sides."

South China belonged to one of these tribes. They were active in the area from the pre-Qin period and *were known to have created a distinctive regional culture, which contributed greatly to the development of China's ancient civilization.* [I talics added.]

The Chinese text also has this meaning, but it also quotes a phrase from the Han dynasty classic, the *Hanshu* about the many years the Yue spent traveling across and down towards south China. It is obvious what is being implied here. By speculating about these people in a general sense, backed up by quote from an authoritative text of early China, a link is created with the nascent "Hong Kong" that the latter contributed to the development of the mainland, from the early days just as it is doing in the twenty-first century with CEPA and other trade deals.

English: ...Since HK is located in the Pearl River Delta region, and the archaeological artifacts unearthed in HK are similar to those found in the region, it is *highly probable* that the prehistoric inhabitants also belong to the ancient Yue people. *In fact*, Hong Kong and South China share *the same cultural roots, with close links between the two areas throughout the ages.* [I talics added.]

"Highly probable" in English has a similar meaning to *yingshu* (should or ought to "be a part of") however, there is no definite evidence from history that this was the case.¹⁹ The ancient Yue people, other words were a non-Chinese race who immigrated to the area and who later became sinocized.

Gallery 3: Dynasties: From the Han to the Qing

This section details when "real" history began, and the Tang clan, perhaps Hong Kong's largest, moved to the area. The Chinese and English texts are similar:

English: These periods saw significant development in the South China region, with Hong Kong keeping the same pace as the Pearl River Delta. It was in the Song dynasty that the Tang clan settled in the New Territories, followed by more in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Immigration gave Hong Kong's economy a significant boost.

Hong Kong has nearly always been a nation of immigrants, and it was not till the late 1970s that the locally born population started to outnumber immigrants (Pao & Ching, 1999). By paralleling Hong Kong's growth alongside dynastic China, the linkage of identification is established even further, they are migrating but just to another part of China.

¹⁹ Further discussions with Alice Leung and Lee Kim Hung.

Gallery 5: The Opium Wars and the Cessation of Hong Kong

This gallery outlines the Opium Wars, their causes, their course and their consequences. After the defeat in the Opium Wars, China ceded Hong Kong to Britain (1842), an event that proved to be a turning point in the history of the territory. The Chinese and English texts are similar:

English: The Opium War was the watershed of HK's history, demarcating the time when a few scattered fishing villages and rural hamlets... became a British colony with all the *cataclysmic* changes that resulted [Italics added.]

A cataclysm, which can be "a political or social upheaval which sweeps away the old order of things," however has a pragmatic reading of "disaster" at least to this reader. The Chinese expression is *li jin bianquan*, literally "changes never before seen in history". The following shows Chinese resistance to these changes.

English: Even before Britain's *formal take-over* of the New Territories on 16 April 1899, villagers had staged armed protests [Italics added.].

In the Chinese the English "formal takeover" becomes "raise the flag ceremony". While "raising the flag" is a formal symbol of a takeover of sovereignty and could be legitimately translated thusly, burning or desecrating the flag would be seen as a national humiliation and sacrilege. As an aside, in May 1998 the Hong Kong Government launched an "Under the Flag" campaign to "inculcate students with a sense of their Chinese identity" (Pao, 1998).

Gallery 6: Birth and Early Growth of the City

This section also shows developments in Hong Kong's political structure, law, people's livelihood, industry and education. Dr. Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary activities in Hong Kong and the role the territory played in the modern history of China.

Coming after the "cessation" of Hong Kong to Britain, considered a "national humiliation" in China, this could be seen rather ironic that in this exhibition could then depict this period as a birth, the time when the actual city took shape. Apart from showing largely the daily life of the Chinese majority, there is a large focus on Hong Kong's connection to mainland China.

English: Whenever China encountered any natural disasters or foreign threat, local Chinese were eager to contribute by raising funds. The Hong Kong people even launched strikes and protests to *show their patriotism and anti-foreign feelings* when China was attacked by foreign countries. [I talics added.]

In the Chinese, the second sentence is somewhat different.

Chinese: The Hong Kong people even launched strikes and protests *to voice their support* when China was attacked by foreign countries."

"Show their patriotism and anti-foreign feelings" is entirely missing from the Chinese, which seems strange. Perhaps it is good for the non-Chinese to know how sensitive the Chinese were to events on the Mainland

However, Hong Kong was also a centre of "Western learning" that Chinese reformers thought that China needed:

English: HK provided a meeting place of Western culture when the students send abroad by the Manchu government visited Hong Kong....after graduation they were appointed as high officials and served their country with their progressive Western knowledge and information.

Therefore, Hong Kong could be said to have the best of both worlds-Chinese and Western-and use this knowledge to revitalize China.

English: During the Sino-Japanese War the Chinese in Hong Kong were *eager* to help refugees from the mainland in all possible ways. [I talics added.]

In the Chinese, the adverb *tau*, is used for the English word *eager*, and means "to go to saturation, to the extreme, fully, completely). The use of this kind of emphasis is found throughout the exhibition whenever nationalistic-kind of topics such as this one are mentioned.

English: Intellectuals such as Mao Dun and Xia Yan rushed to Hong Kong for *Freedom of Speech* [I talics added.]

Chinese: Mainland intellectuals Mao Dun and Xia Yan fled to Hong Kong and continued to *advocate resisting the Japanese* [I talics added.]

Undoubtedly these Mainland intellectuals gained freedom of speech against the Japanese invaders whilst in Hong Kong, but it is unclear why they just didn't say that they were

resisting the Japanese in the English text.

Following on from this, scholars have recently remarked that the new organizing principle in school textbooks was the way the local Chinese population played an increasing vital role in the development of Hong Kong (Wan, 2004; Matthews, 1998). However this does not necessarily mean that the role of other ethnicities in Hong Kong's development should not be acknowledged. However there is only small area in the display specifically dealing with "The Non-Chinese Population" in this exhibition. While the Chinese and English texts mostly correspond here, the use of the prefix "non" in the title, which is used to express negation, fixed to a noun of condition, *Chineseness* gives the sense "absence or lack of" and "not being" or a "failure to be".

English: Although only a *minority* of the population, these groups [Europeans, Portuguese, Indians, Malays, and other non-Chinese] contributed *disproportionately* to the growth and development of Hong Kong [italics added.]

This is statement, which is similar in the Chinese text, and which refers to the late 1840s, is not incorrect as fact, they did accrue most of the wealth, but the contrasting use of "minority" and "disproportionate" have an antonym-like action on each other that ultimately brings a negative connotation to the mind of the reader. "Disproportionate" meaning unequal or out of proportion links onto the "unequal" treaties realized between China and Britain as a result of the Opium War, which occurred just a few years before. We are not really told why it was disproportionate. This is the same for the "mixed" Chinese and European offspring of early Hong Kong residents:

English: Another group to emerge subsequently was the Eurasians, who tended to *monopolize* clerical posts in the commercial and government sectors, as many of them were bilingual. [I talics added.]

These ethnic communities also participated actively in trading activities during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Gallery 8: Modern Metropolis and the Return of China

The last gallery of "The Hong Kong Story" is in two parts. The first part deals with rapid developments in housing, industry, finance and trade, while the second part concentrates on Sino-British negotiations, the signing of the Joint Declaration and the Handover Ceremony marking the return of sovereignty to China. It shows the "emergence of a commonality shared by the population as a whole" (to quote from the MOH website).

English/Chinese: The decades from 1960 to 1990 witness a number of important events that impacted on the territory's political, social, and economic milieu. Of the many events [typhoons, landslides, fires and stock market crashes], the most significant of all was the signing of the Joint Declaration in 1984 for HK's return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

Two years of diplomatic negotiation ensued, and finally the Chinese and British Governments agreed on the Sino-British Joint Declaration, which was co-signed in Beijing on 19 December 1984.

We do not get a sense of the quite acrimonious political conversations and name-calling during this period in the brief phrase "two years of diplomatic negotiation ensued".

English/Chinese: After 155 years of colonial rule on 1 July 1997...Hong Kong finally returned to the Motherland, thus a new chapter in its history. "The Hong Kong Story" closes with that event, but the story will continue to be written.

Visitors are then given a multimedia, split-screen extravaganza of the handover ceremonies with the lowering of the British and the raising of the Chinese flags. Then an explanation of "one country, two systems", perhaps the greatest dichotomy of Hong Kong's present political status:

English/Chinese: The People's Republic of China will persist with the socialist system; second, both socialism and capitalism should coexist in harmonious condition in a unified China for a reciprocal amelioration and prosperity.

Again Hong Kong is neither one thing nor the other. Perhaps promoting "one patriotism", that is, "one Chinese patriotism", seems to be what this exhibition is all about. While British history was definitely overrepresented in previous colonial times (Mathews 1997: 5), doing the opposite is not necessarily the best way to represent the past. The placing of photographs of Hong Kong's British Governors in a corner next to an exit and beside posters of cigarette girls from the 1920s and 1930s was quite telling to this viewer.

The calligraphy of former Chinese President Jiang Zemin given as a present to Tung Chee Hwa during this time is one of the last things that the exhibition visitor sees. *Xianggang geng hao de mingtian* it says, "Hong Kong has an even better tomorrow." Some would argue whether this was the case given the economic crises, the SARS virus and various other issues that have cropped up since 1997. Perhaps museums should leave a

room for the events to unfold in real time, rather than just at some arbitrary point.

An excerpt from the preamble to the Basic Law, Hong Kong's post 1997 constitution aptly sums up "The Hong Kong Story":

Hong Kong has been part of the territory of China since ancient times; it was occupied by Britain after the Opium War in 1840. On 19 December 1984, the Chinese and British Governments signed the Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong, affirming that the Government of the People's Republic of China will resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong with effect from 1 July 1997, thus fulfilling the long-cherished common aspiration of the Chinese people for the recovery of Hong Kong.²⁰

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²⁰ The full text of the Basic Law can be found at www.info.gov.hk/basic_law/fulltext

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