

Houping. The final chapter details an uprising in Eastern Guizhou in late 1942 and into the first months of 1943, interpreting the local riots as a form of resistance against intrusive state policies.

Using evidence from a wide range of sources that include materials from provincial archives, memoirs, and articles published by magistrates while in the field, Wang convincingly argues that CPS students found the theories of scientific administration taught at the school ill-suited for their post-graduate work as county magistrates in rural China. Instead, they often had to rely on martialling the pre-existing social resources of their assigned locales and reviving cost effective, but distinctly unmodern imperial governance repertoires. A series of anecdotes underscore the tension between CPS students' education and the reality of their work: joss paper doubling as toilet paper in the name of efficiency, for example. In one instance, a young magistrate's bureaucratic reforms drove his entire staff to resign after just one week.

Wang notably valorizes officials who defied their training and revived governance techniques from China's imperial tradition (in fact, some may find his frequently interchangeable use of the terms "pre-modern" "Confucian" and "humanistic" confusing). This is most true in chapter seven, where Wang presents Guo Peishi's "Confucian approach" as a far more effective strategy than that of his more bureaucratic peers. The chapter, however, contains little direct evidence that Guo understood his work in Confucian terms. It does, however, include two lengthy ventriloquized quotations in which Wang imagines what Guo "might argue..." (pp. 244, 253) but does not quote the magistrate's actual words. Such passages suggest that the indigenous "statecraft beyond science" which Wang references in his subtitle and attempts to tease out throughout the book rests on negative assumptions about modern administration that are not always clearly consistent with the words and experiences of the historical subjects. Wang does at one point state that in a hypothetical county with full administrative rationalization, "solving problems and actually getting anything done would become increasingly unimaginable" (p. 285). Though some may question such assumptions about the inevitable failure of the modern administrative state in China, this book nevertheless constitutes a valuable contribution to the study of Chinese local governance, the history of rural areas in China's modernizing project, and the global history of public administration.

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## Covert Colonialism: Governance, Surveillance and Political Culture in British Hong Kong, c. 1966–97

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The belief that the massive rallies that took place in Hong Kong in 2003, 2014 and 2019 were manipulated by the "invisible hands" of anti-communist foreign governments, which incited the "economically motivated but politically apathetic Hong Kong people" (p. 240) to take to the streets and clash with the police, is a prevailing one in Hong Kong. Such a belief echoes the narratives of an earlier generation of sociologists and political scientists who advocated for the view that politics in



colonial Hong Kong were successfully absorbed by effective administration, and therefore that the territory's political culture was characterized by a lack of political activism, general political stability and an absence of political interaction between the state and the public. According to such narratives, Hong Kong's political stability created the conditions for its miraculous economic development after the Second World War. If such narratives are true, however, then how can one explain the remarkable growth of the Hong Kong economy despite the occurrence of significant mass-scale – and sometimes violent – demonstrations in the post-war decades, including, to name just a few, those in 1952 (Tung Tau fire), 1956 (Double-Tenth riots), 1966 (Star Ferry), 1967 (Leftist riots), 1977 (police riots) and 1989 (Tiananmen)? Thanks to Florence Mok's recent book on Hong Kong politics in the last three decades of colonial rule, the widely accepted narratives on Hong Kong's political culture have been empirically and convincingly proved erroneous.

Drawing extensively on under-explored archival materials, the book reveals how “unorthodox mass political activities interact[ed] with the bureaucracy and alter[ed] the existing political establishment and order” of colonial Hong Kong (p. 14). Mok argues not only for the blossoming of multifaceted approaches to political mobilization since the late 1960s but also demonstrates how local political activists collaborated with local and international stakeholders to pressure the colonial Hong Kong government for concessions. More importantly, the book reveals that the colonial government, in the absence of representative democracy, employed a secretive qualitative polling mechanism to monitor – and respond to – growing political activism and the changing direction of public opinion in Hong Kong, a mechanism that the author terms “covert colonialism.” This polling mechanism, first known as Town Talk, and then renamed MOOD (Movement of Opinion Direction), enabled the colonial government to incorporate public opinion into the policymaking process without the democratization of Hong Kong, to which Beijing was strongly opposed. To investigate the way in which political activism in Hong Kong evolved, and was monitored, constructed and handled by senior government officials, Mok usefully analyses six protest movements in colonial Hong Kong as case studies: the early-1970s movement to make Chinese an official language of Hong Kong; the anti-corruption movement of the mid-1970s; the movement to reopen Precious Blood Golden Jubilee Secondary School in the late-1970s; the public outcry against illegal immigrants from mainland China in the 1970s to early 1980s; the movement to gain British nationality in the 1980s; and the controversy over constitutional reforms in the 1990s. Several important features underlie the political activism in Hong Kong during these periods. After the bloody Leftist Riots in 1967, the general public resented violence, vandalism and radicalism in political campaigns. Political activists instead used signature campaigns, sit-ins, peaceful demonstrations, surveys and hunger strikes to attract public attention and support. They formed ad hoc coalitions with other local activists to maximize their resources for political mobilization. Sometimes, such as in the case of the movements to make Chinese an official language, to make the commission against corruption independent of the police force and to have British nationality granted to the people of Hong Kong, campaigners networked with Members of Parliament, the mass media and NGOs in the UK to press the Hong Kong government for reforms.

The colonial government tracked the movement of public opinion among different demographic groups for each of the campaigns, engaged in regular discussions of the campaigns, and tackled and responded to them strategically, as Mok explains by drawing on recently declassified documents. The colonial government also selectively used certain public discourses to advance its goals. Such critical, behind-the-scenes “covert” political communication and interaction between the state and society over potentially explosive societal and political issues have hitherto gone unexamined in scholarship on Hong Kong history and/or politics. Although “[t]he colonial government understood the importance of respecting and responding to public opinion – a way to strengthen its rule and enhance its legitimacy” (p. 77) – it did not heed public demands and follow the direction of public opinion it tracked in all of these cases. The fact that the Hong Kong people were declined any claim to British citizenship when the UK government was negotiating the territory's return

to China demonstrates that “[t]he wider interest of the British government and the state of Sino-British relations outweighed the importance of shifting popular sentiment in the policymaking process” (p. 256). However, it is clear from Mok’s case studies that the increased political transparency and reduced hostility and apprehensiveness towards officialdom during the 1970s made people more willing to stand up for their rights and express their grievances publicly. Against the larger diplomatic context of Governor MacLehose’s attempts to foster civic pride and a sense of belonging among the people of Hong Kong to strengthen the UK’s bargaining power in the forthcoming negotiations with Beijing over the future of Hong Kong, growing political activism prompted the colonial government to become “increasingly responsive to public opinion” (p. 255). Not dissimilar to the situation in other societies, there were always politically conservative groups among the Hong Kong population. Alongside its central argument about the prevalence of political activism, the book also offers a balanced account of the persistence of political conservatism in Hong Kong. In the case of late-colonial Hong Kong, the government’s secretive polling and surveillance exercises revealed that the well-off were likely to support the status quo, whereas the grassroots were generally indifferent to politics unless their jobs and livelihoods were adversely affected. The young were politically active and keen to speak out. The middle class and the educated were politically informed, and yet had little inclination to take to the streets unless their or their children’s interests were directly at stake.

Timely and provocative, Mok’s deeply researched and compellingly argued book is a wake-up call to those politicians and academics who still embrace the erroneous “myth of political apathy and stability in Hong Kong” (p. 257) and fail to understand Hong Kong’s political culture through its ongoing history of political activism. *Covert Colonialism* is essential reading for those interested in Hong Kong history and politics, as well as in the evolving nature of colonial governance and decolonization during the 20th century, the effects of which can still be felt today.

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## Hong Kong Public and Squatter Housing: Geopolitics and Informality, 1963–1985

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*Hong Kong Public and Squatter Housing* explores, through extensive examination of Hong Kong colonial government documents, how the government’s policies towards squatters evolved between the 1960s and the 1980s. As the book’s preface states, “After four decades of failing to end new squatting after the Second World War, and with their numbers climbing to over 750,000 in 1982, the colonial government finally succeeded after 1984” (ix) in solving this problem. This book explores how the colonial government succeeded in this effort, arriving at a solution that appears more haphazard than deliberate, but that nonetheless was effective.

Squatting – occupying an area of land that one does not own or have legal permission to use – bedevilled the postwar Hong Kong government. It tried several approaches to eradicate squatting, including simply destroying the structures and, after 1954, demolition followed by resettlement,