

## **Hongkongese or Chinese? : The Continuous Questions after the Reversion**

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Since July 1st of 1997, the People's Republic of China government has begun to exercise its sovereignty over Hong Kong. The reversion of Hong Kong has been an event which was most definitely included in the short- to medium-term future scenario of China. Although Deng Xiaoping passed away earlier than what people had expected, Hong Kong has become a Special Administrative Region (hereafter abbreviated to SAR) as it was written in the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

What did the end of British administration bring to Hong Kong? After the reversion Hong Kong has already made a new step in becoming a Special Administrative Region and achieved a high degree of autonomy. However, Hong Kong is expected to settle inside the People's Republic of China (hereafter abbreviated to PRC) domestic framework. Hong Kong will truly become a part of China after fifty years. It is a new trend that PRC has a task of re-integrating Hong Kong. It is the central government of PRC that has to deal with the burden. Hong Kong residents, especially ethnic Chinese citizens, are required to be good nationals of PRC. In fact, Hong Kong people have not been optimistic that continuity will be guaranteed after the reversion. Of interest here is the identity crisis faced by Hong Kong people with the reversion. As long as they reside in Hong Kong SAR, they will be called on to know more about China and foster awareness as Chinese nationals.

First, I would like to look back at the process of the rise of Hong Kong identity. I discuss the facts how the Hong Kong community

developed to be different from that of mainland China. After that, I try to trace out the process in which the Hong Kong identity was asserted. The phenomenon could not be found clearly until the 1980's. Finally, I will summarize the result of telephone polls concerning the Hong Kong identity. There was a fluctuation concerning the Hong Kong identity. In order to explain the fluctuation, I will make an analysis on the second Protect Diaoyutai movement.

## 1. The Formation of a Hong Kong Society

The term of "Hong Kong identity" may raise a question, such as 'when was a Hong Kong identity created?' or 'Does it really exist?' Many articles argued that it was created in the post-war period.<sup>1</sup> Hong Kong had been a part of China in the actual context, though it was under British rule since 1842. In the administrative context, Hong Kong was separated from the Qing dynasty, then the Republic of China. However, Hong Kong's *raison d'être* lay on being a springboard for China, so that Chinese could travel from Guangdong Province to Hong Kong, or Macau without passport control. The Treaty of Nanking secured free travel between Guangdong Province and Hong Kong. In fact, Hong Kong absorbed a young working labour force from the beginning. In 1845, there were 23,817 people, among which 19,201 were male.

The following facts suggested to us that Hong Kong was strongly tied with China economically and politically. In the pre-war period, there was a common commercial phenomenon in the Pearl River Delta. When a merchant became considerably wealthy, the merchant tended to open three shops. One was in Guangzhou, the others were respectively in Hong Kong and Macau. For those merchants, Hong Kong was perceived as a part of their business arena. A Hong Kong

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Siu, Helen, 'Remade in Hong Kong: Weaving into the Chinese Cultural Tapestry' in *Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China*, edited by Liu, Tao Tao and Faure, David, Hong Kong University Press, 1996.

identity was difficult to find. On the contrary, it was easy to point out the expression of the Chinese identity in Hong Kong. During 1920's, there were two strikes that strongly inspired Chinese nationalism. One was the Hong Kong seamen's strike in 1922, and the other Guangdong-Hong Kong general strike in 1926. Especially during the latter incident, the workers returned to mainland China and were supported economically by the Chinese Nationalist Party.

A change occurred when the People's Republic of China was established in mainland China. At the very beginning, as there was no passport control for Chinese, Hong Kong received a great influx of newcomers from the mainland.<sup>2</sup> In 1947 and 1948, 1.8 million people lived in Hong Kong. In 1950, Hong Kong received 339,689 arrivals and its population reached 2,237,000. Faced with a tremendous immigration tide, from that point on, travel control started. In 1950, there was an agreement between China and Hong Kong. The agreement established that the quota system should be applied to the immigrants from mainland China.<sup>3</sup> At first, the quota was applied only to Chinese residents outside Guangdong Province. Later the special treatment toward Guangdong Province dwellers was cancelled. Furthermore, the newcomers showed very different attitudes to the territory compared to the pre-war period. They did not return to their hometowns but rather settled in Hong Kong. It is pointed out that there were many Chinese Nationalist Party supporters, such as soldiers, government officials, and intellectuals in the immigrants.<sup>4</sup> They were reluctant or even feared to return to their original homes in the mainland.

My interviewees, with whom my interviews were conducted in March 1999, expressed it in a more direct way. One interviewee was born in Taishan County. He was an only child. His father was a stereotyped overseas Chinese, who spent most of his time in the

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<sup>2</sup> Lam, Kit-Chun and Liu, Pak-Wai, *Yimin yu xianggang jingji* (Immigrants and Hong Kong economy), Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1988, p.13.

<sup>3</sup> From an interview in March, 1999 at the Immigration Department of Hong Kong.

<sup>4</sup> Sawada, Yukari, "Chugoku no yakuwari (China's role)" in *Ajia no kessetsu-ten* (Hong Kong, a hub in Asia) edited by Kojima, Reiitsu, Institute of Developing Economies, 1990, pp.256-257. Originally in Szpanik, Edward, *The Economic Growth of Hong Kong*, Oxford University Press, 1958, p.155.

United States as a coolie and managed to marry in his fifties. His father had passed away before 1949 and the family was left with two members, my interviewee and his mother. Because she had some property accumulated through her husband's efforts, she was terrified that the Liberation Army would come. During the fall of 1949, one of his uncles dared to visit his village and took him to Hong Kong. Later he heard that his mother committed suicide in the village. He hated the Communist Party because it destroyed his family and at the same time he was scared of the Communist Party. He was afraid that he might be killed if he came back to the village. From that time on, he never thought about returning to the village until the 1980's. Another interviewee shared the same feeling. Her husband fled to Hong Kong in 1949 by the last ship from Shantau to Hong Kong. She was left in the village with her mother-in-law. She had to wait for seven years for the reunion with her husband. She had also been afraid of the Communist Party, explaining the reason of not returning to the home village. She would be killed when the villagers found her in the village again.

At the same time, the international situation made it difficult for Hong Kong to maintain its traditional economic role towards mainland China. Hong Kong was forced to change its economic structure drastically. The delegation of the Chinese voluntary army to the Korean War angered the United States and evoked China's isolation from the western world. Exports to China drastically fell.<sup>5</sup> Exports were 1.6 billion HK dollars in 1951, but dropped to 520 million HK dollars in 1952. In the 1960's, exports totalled around 100 million HK dollars at most. Hong Kong had to transform itself from an *entrepot* to China into the industrial processing centre for the world market. In this circumstance, Peking took a flexible policy toward Hong Kong. China understood Hong Kong's uniqueness and tried to make best of it. This led to a significant result that no troop was sent for the liberation from the British rule.

Thus, Hong Kong began to weave a historical tapestry different from China, both the People's Republic of China and the Republic

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<sup>5</sup> *Hong Kong Annual Report*, 1858, pp.5-7.

of China. Hong Kong has gradually changed its characteristics during the post-war period. Originally Hong Kong was a temporary residence for accumulating money, but it has turned to be a home for people. In the industrialization process, social integration has progressed in the territory of Hong Kong and people accumulated experiences in Hong Kong. Traditional immigration was called chain migration. It was carried through kinship or regional networks. Those who settled in these places, that is the old timers, asked people to come from their original places either by kinship or regional networks. The old timers helped the newcomers to get accustomed to the new environment. However, the influx was so great that the chain migration was not carried on.

The housing estate symbolises the new experience. The newcomers lived in wooden houses as squatters. The poor facilities often caused fire accidents in 1953-54. In 1953, there was a big fire in Shek Kip Mei and 58,000 people lost their homes.<sup>6</sup> The year 1954 was a memorable year for Hong Kong housing policy. The government started constructing housing estates in order to keep social stability, and partly to make better use of the land occupied by squatters. Social integration had progressed in the territory of Hong Kong. Inside public housing in the early period, people shared wash rooms, shower rooms, kitchens, and laundries. The Cantonese dialect, which is a language for the majority of the society, came to be used by the dwellers. That means the Cantonese dialect was spread as a *lingua franca* in Hong Kong.

More drastic changes occurred to the second generation. The newcomers were still young when they fled from mainland China. They soon began to raise their families in Hong Kong. As time passed, those who were born in Hong Kong became the majority of people in Hong Kong. The Cantonese dialect had become a *lingua franca*. Children born in Hong Kong had adapted a different style of education whose emphasis was on English. To the second generation, Hong Kong was their home. They did not have direct life experience in the mainland. Their capability in English was

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<sup>6</sup> Hong Kong Housing Authority, *The First Million*, n.a., p.33.

important whenever they were upward bound. The parents tended to send their children to the schools whose medium of instruction was English. As a result, the percentage of students enrolled at the schools whose medium of instructions was Chinese, fell from 38.9% in 1960 to 10.3% in 1984.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, since the late 1960's, a Hong Kong-based popular culture began to grow up through television and cinema.

By the time Hong Kong re-encountered China in the early 1980's, Hong Kong established a unique system, unlike that of China. A laissez-faire policy had been the strongest characteristic of the Hong Kong system. Hong Kong was well known for its free port, low tariffs, and low taxes. The Hong Kong government had stressed the importance of the market mechanism, and had limited its role to providing public assets and avoiding market failures. Regarding the political system, Xu Jiatun, former director of the Hong Kong branch of Xinhua News Agency has pointed out the colonial dictatorship of Governor, the advisory political system run by the elite, and the excellent civil service system as being features of the Hong Kong administration in his memoir (*Xu Jiatun Xianggang huiyilu* [Xu Jiatun's Hong Kong Memoir], Taiwan, hianhe Publisher, 1993, Vol.1, pp.180-183). On the other hand, the civil service which was characteristically elitist, has proved highly effective for the administration. Various advisory committees were established for each government branch and department, and prominent figures from society were appointed as committee members. The aim was to absorb the views of Hong Kong people through committee members and resolve complaints through administrative measures.

## 2. The Rise of Hong Kong Identity

How was the Hong Kong identity asserted? As a result of the existence of its own system, was Hong Kong successful in creating

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<sup>7</sup> Fung, Yee-wang, "Education" in *Hong Kong in Transition*, edited by Cheng, Joseph Y.S., Oxford University Press, 1986, p.317.

its identity? An identity is not expressed by people simply by their uniqueness. In other words, people may identify themselves when they found it more profitable or necessary to do so. In such occasions, they try to create a boundary between “we” and “they.” Here, we may trace the process of the rise of the Hong Kong identity.

The first signal may be found in the time of the 1967 riot which started from the industrial conflicts in May 1967 and developed into a general strike. It was one of the most likely occasions for the liberation of Hong Kong by the PRC. However, the riot forced the people to question where their loyalties would lie. In the turmoil, people began to support the Hong Kong government and showed that they did not welcome becoming any part of the Cultural Revolution. ‘In fact, the pessimist proved wrong. It was the Kaifongs and other Chinese associations, of all types and levels of importance in the community, that rallied to the government and provided the moral backing that enabled it to fight back, with public support.’<sup>8</sup> Thus, people first chose the Hong Kong government as their government, rejected liberation by the PRC, and supported the policy to recover the stability of society.

The next signal came quickly after the 1967 riot. The young generation launched a student movement. Just after the 1967 riot, a campaign asserting ‘Chinese for the official language’ was launched by university students. For them, the fact that the Chinese language was not adapted as an official language created a big inconvenience in Hong Kong whose majority were Chinese people. On the surface, the movement seemed nationalistic. However it was rooted deeply in the Hong Kong society. The movement was a kind of social improvement. The reality that the official language was English was accepted by the activists. They pointed out that adapting Chinese as an official language would strengthen the belongingness toward Hong Kong among the citizens and be helpful to the stability of Hong Kong. Furthermore, it might make people feel much more familiar with the government. It would also be important for the

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<sup>8</sup> Hayes, James, *Teachers and Friends*, Hong Kong University Press, 1996, p.110.

smooth cooperation between the two. As a result, the pro-China camp did not show their sympathy toward the movement.

However, the Hong Kong identity did not seem to be accepted widely by the public. In 1970-71 the Protect Diaoyutai movement was successful in mobilizing ordinary students. At the same time it was a beginning of the split of the student movement. One group stressed that they should recognize the PRC more deeply and showed heavy pro-China support. The other emphasized the importance of social improvement. Both factions became radical and lost the support from the ordinary students. By the mid 1970's, the student movement declined.

In fact, there was a clear background. The protests and industrial strikes were an increasing trend in the late 1960's.<sup>9</sup> The 1966 census showed these characteristics. In 1966, those who were born in Hong Kong occupied 53.8% of total population. This represented the rise of post-war period generation. Secondly, Hong Kong was a young society; 41.3% of total population were younger than 15. Thirdly, only 20.0% of total population had a good command at English despite being a British colony.

This represents that there was not enough communication between the government and the governed. For the Hong Kong natives, Hong Kong was their home. They were permanent residents and did not intend to return to the motherland. Gradually, the new generation accumulated social discontent toward the government. Although Hong Kong was successful for its industrialization by the 1960's, people could not enjoy the fruits of the economic growth. Hong Kong was a society where people had to pay from the cradle to the grave.

The beginning of the Open Door Policy, which is the third step, first observed in the 1980's, brought a change in the identity issue. The policy restored communication between Hong Kong and China. This clarified the Hong Kong identity. The trade between China and Hong Kong had quickly recovered and many factories moved to the

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<sup>9</sup> Lui, Tai Lok and Gong, Qisheng, *Chengshi zongheng: Xianggang jumin yundong ji chengshi zhengzhi yanjiu* (social protests and its urban politics), Hong Kong: Wide Angle Press, 1985, pp.61-63.



mainland because of cheap labour and abundant land. Due to that, the interaction with the mainland increased. It became usual that businesspeople crossed the border and visited their factories in China. In downtown Hong Kong, mainland businesspeople were visible. Of course, the emerging 1997 issue changed the circumstance completely. Especially after the Joint Declaration, the future of Hong Kong was decided in the hands of the PRC and UK government. From July 1st of 1997, the PRC would resume its sovereignty over Hong Kong. Hong Kong would become a Special Administrative Region. Thus, Hong Kong's destiny came to be combined tightly together with that of PRC. Hong Kong residents had to accept their fates as PRC citizens.

Here, the Hong Kong identity, which makes people identify themselves as Hongkongese, would come to be widely accepted by the mainstream of the Hong Kong society. 'Hongkongese' means 'we, those who feel a certain special belonging to Hong Kong, and not to PRC', or 'we, those who are different from mainlanders'. This trend is even observed in the term 'Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong' (「港人治港」) of Deng Xiaoping. The word 'Hongkongese' (港人) has also frequently appeared in the magazines since the 1980's.

Furthermore, in the 1980's there was a big change concerning people's legal identities. The control has been divided into two parts since 1950. One is related to the legal immigrants from the mainland. The other is related to the illegal immigrants also from the mainland. Concerning the former, Hong Kong and the PRC had reached an agreement on a quota which remained valid. According to the PRC, Hong Kong has always been a part of Chinese territory and free travel should be ensured to Chinese nationals. However, the PRC also considered the density of population in Hong Kong and would control the number of one-way permit issued to go to Hong Kong. Hong Kong, on the other hand, would accept all those who held one-way permits. Concerning the latter, Hong Kong government had adopted a generous policy.<sup>10</sup> Until 1974, every

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<sup>10</sup> See note 2: Lam and Liu, *op.cit.*, pp.15-19.

illegal immigrant was allowed to stay in Hong Kong once he or she crossed the Sino-British border. From 1974, the government started a reached base policy. The illegal immigrants were sent back to the mainland if they were arrested before reaching the town or getting contact with their relatives or friends. In 1980, the Hong Kong government abolished the previous immigration control policy. The generous policy was abolished because of the massive influx of newcomers from mainland China and Vietnam since the late 1970's. Since then, all illegal immigrants were destined to be sent back to the mainland. Only those who left the PRC with the proper procedures were accepted by the Hong Kong society.

Ironically, at the same time, the British government changed the Nationality Act in 1981. The government came to distinguish those who were born in the UK and those who were born in overseas dependent territories, that is, in the colonies. Before the amendment, the Hong Kong born could have the same passports as those who were born in UK. However, the new act separated the British nationality into three categories. The first two categories bear relevance with Hong Kong. One is the full citizenship that would be given to those who were born in the UK. Those eligible can live and work in UK at any time without special permission. On the other hand, those who were born in overseas territories outside the UK came to be counted to have British Dependent Territories citizenship. This basically places a limitation on the right of abode in the UK, although in the pre-1980 period, the right of abode has already been limited to those who were born in the UK.

On the contrary, the Basic Law of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region gave a wider concept of nationality to the Hong Kong people.<sup>11</sup> The ethnic Chinese were considered to be eligible for the PRC citizenship and to be issued SAR passports. Among the ethnic Chinese, whether they were born in Hong Kong or outside Hong Kong, which were mainly from the mainland, made no difference on their eligibility for a SAR passport. In other words,

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<sup>11</sup> *The Basic Law of The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of The People's Republic of China (with cross reference to the Sino-British Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong)*, Hong Kong government, pp.23-24.

this integrated three different travel documents into one: The British Dependent Territories Citizen Passport, later the British Nationals (Overseas) passport, and the Certificate of Identity.

At the same time, Article 24 of the Basic Law gave a new concept toward the definition of residency in Hong Kong. The permanent residents of the Hong Kong SAR shall be classified into five categories: (1) Chinese citizens born in Hong Kong before or after the establishment of the HKSAR; (2) Chinese citizens who have ordinarily resided in Hong Kong for a continuous period of not less than seven years before or after the establishment of the HKSAR; (3) Persons of Chinese nationality born outside to Hong Kong residents listed in categories (1) and (2); (4) Persons not of Chinese nationality who have entered Hong Kong with valid travel documents, have ordinarily resided in Hong Kong for a continuous period of not less than seven years and have taken Hong Kong as their place of permanent residence before or after the establishment of the HKSAR; (5) persons under 21 years of age born in Hong Kong of those residents listed in category (4) before or after the establishment of HKSAR.

Among these, category (3) evoked a new issue in Hong Kong. It implies that if either one or both of the parents have the right of abode to Hong Kong, their children shall be given the same right of abode. According to this, the parents who have children and their spouses on the mainland, would want their families to live together in Hong Kong. This was a delightful notice for thousands of separated families. Hong Kong has a long history of these families ever since the birth of the British administration. Hong Kong was a place for temporary living. People returned to their home after they accumulated enough wealth. As mentioned before, there was a great influx of people from the mainland China around 1949 and some of them left their families back in the mainland. During the time when a tide of newcomers occurred because of natural disasters in the mainland, people in Hong Kong even waited at the border to see if any of their family members had arrived. Among the newcomers, there were many male arrivals. Many of those male arrivals went back to the mainland to search for wives. Since the reached-base

policy was abandoned in 1980, it became very difficult, almost impossible, to bring the rest of their families from mainland China. The family members in Hong Kong, especially those who found their wives in the mainland, had to apply for their wives and children, and wait in a long queue for permission to enter Hong Kong. The selection was often criticized as unfair. As a result, it left a large number of the separated families.

Here, we may encounter the fourth step, that is the handover of Hong Kong. How will the mainstream society flow after the handover? Did the Hongkongese identity tend to be weakened or be strengthened?

### **3. A Fluctuation of Hong Kong Identity**

How can we trace the rise of the Hong Kong identity?

Here is a series of telephone surveys relating to the Hong Kong identity. I have no intention to state that the polls will explain everything. The data obtained here originated from those who were willing to answer. The data cannot represent those who refused to respond. Each questionnaire was not designed in the same format. Some may also argue that thoughtful persons require a long time to think, and thus are unable to answer with a definition of identity in a small frame of time. However, a series of polls can tell us the trend, in other words, the changes that are occurring. As the fourth step was tremendous in the post-war history of Hong Kong, I think it is worth while to trace the change in the polls before and after the reunification.

In the telephone surveys, Hong Kong identity was measured by asking ‘What are you, Hongkongese, Chinese, or both Hongkongese and Chinese?’ As the surveys use Cantonese, the *lingua franca* of Hong Kong, they deal mainly with the ethnic Chinese residents. However, in the ethnic Chinese dominated society, a considerable number of Indian and Pakistan citizens are present. Many of them were born in Hong Kong and have a good command of Cantonese,

like the former Secretary for Transport H.H.T. Barma. These telephone surveys might have included such people as respondents.

The first data came from the questionnaires done by Lau Siu-kai (see Table 1). The main figure tells us that these respondents chose Hongkongese identity rather than Chinese identity. In the 1985 survey and the 1988 survey, the respondents were asked to choose either Hongkongese or Chinese for their primary identity. In both surveys, approximate 60% of the respondents chose the Hongkongese identity as their primary identity. Approximate 5% of the respondents answered "Don't know/No Answer." We may be able to come to the conclusion that the Hongkongese identity was felt stronger than the Chinese identity in the late 1980's.

Lau added an answer of "Both Hongkongese and Chinese" from the 1990 survey, and that of "Neither Hongkongese nor Chinese" from the 1988 survey. By adding the answer "Both Hongkongese and Chinese," it may reflect the difficulty which Lau confronted during past questionnaires. A considerable amount of respondents might have hesitated to choose one identity out of two options. Lau must have understood that it would be natural to have another new option to the respondents. By adding the answer of "Neither Hongkongese nor Chinese," it may reflect the existence of ethnic minority mentioned above.

The 1990, 1991, and 1992 surveys showed similarities. The Hongkongese identity tended to decrease, while the dual identity tended to increase. The Chinese identity remained unchanged with a little fluctuation. During 1990 and 1992, which was not long after the June 4th Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, the shock caused by the June 4th had not cured completely in Hong Kong. It was also during this period, emigrants to overseas hit the highest record. The percentage of Hongkongese identity decreased from 63.6% in 1988 to 57.2% in 1990. However, considering the structure of the Hongkongese identity in 1990, it is found that the Hongkongese identity had been strengthened. In the 1988 survey and 1990 survey it is observed that the respondents who took the Chinese identity for their primary identity remained around 25%. In the 1990 survey, the total sum of the Hongkongese identity (57.2%) and the dual identity

(12.1%) was 69.3%, which is a little lower than that of Hongkongese identity in 1988 survey. At the same time the Chinese identity decreased by 2.4%. From the figures, we may speculate that the Hongkongese identity in 1988 survey dispersed into two in the 1990 survey, Hongkongese identity and dual identity. During 1990 and 1992, the total sum of the Hongkongese identity and the dual identity were unchanged, remaining around 70%. In fact, the Hongkongese identity showed a higher number than that in 1988.

Since 1993 the figures started to fluctuate. The total sum of the Hongkongese identity and the dual identity varies between 63.4% in 1993 to 72.5% in 1995. The Hongkongese identity seems to have settled around 50%, while the Chinese identity maintained above 30% in two out of three surveys. Comparing with the early 1990's, the Hongkongese identity seems unable to rise above 60%, while the Chinese identity turned out to be less than 25%. In the long run, the Hongkongese identity still enjoyed a higher figure than that of the Chinese identity. However, the Hongkongese identity seems to be decreasing, while the Chinese identity shows a rising trend. However, from the 1996 survey, the popularity for being Hongkongese began to fluctuate. In the 1996(a) survey, the popularity for being Hongkongese was the lowest record as 25.0%. In 1996(b) survey, the popularity for being Hongkongese again rose to 63.0%. Again in the 1997 survey, it dropped again to 38.3%. The 1998 survey showed the same trend as the 1997 survey.

More striking data was obtained from the surveys conducted by myself with collaboration with Robert Chung (see Table 2). The result was striking to me, because it was the first time to see that more respondents chose the Chinese identity rather than Hongkongese identity. In the 1997 survey, the Hongkongese identity occupied 38.5%, while the Chinese identity occupied 49.0%. The respondents who chose "Both Hongkongese and Chinese" occupied only approximate 10%. That means the total sum of the Hongkongese identity and the dual identity occupied less than half of the respondents. In the 1998 survey, the Hongkongese identity occupied 43.1%, while the Chinese identity occupied 46.2%. The respondents who chose "Both Hongkongese and Chinese" occupied

less than 10%. The total sum of the Hongkongese identity and the dual identity occupied more than half of the respondents, but far below from that of the 1993 survey. Comparing with Lau's surveys, in these two surveys, the respondents were divided clearly into two. They showed signs of less hesitation in choosing one identity out of three options.

Should we think that the Hongkongese identity has started an decreasing trend after the reunion with China? On the contrary, was the Chinese identity among the Hong Kong residents strengthened?

At this moment, I cannot agree with both trends. My answer is that people in Hong Kong are now experiencing the process of trial and error in search of a new identity under the sovereignty of People's Republic of China.

Here is an interesting data concerning Hong Kong people's view toward the mainland China. The first data comes from people's trust toward three separate governments, Hong Kong government, PRC government and British government (see Table 3). The June 4th incident damaged the trust for the three governments in general. However the following development of trust was different.

Of course the PRC government suffered a sharp increase of distrust among Hong Kong people. For example, the sum of 'Distrust very much' and 'Distrust' exceeds the 60%. In 1990's, the PRC government has succeeded in acquiring more trust again with its rapid and vast economic development. The sum of 'Distrust very much' and 'Distrust' tend to decrease in number. On the other hand, people tend to give a question mark toward the accountability of British administration after the June 4th. The British government could not recover the previous degree of trust. The sum of 'Distrust very much' and 'Distrust' increased from 29.5% in 1988 to 40.9% in 1996. Among three governments, Hong Kong government enjoys the highest degree of trust. In the 1990 survey, the sum of 'Trust very much' and 'Trust' maintained more than 50%. The 1993 survey shows that Hong Kong government has recovered the trust which they had in the pre-June 4th incident period.

Even after the 1997 reversion, the Chinese government got less popularity than that of the British government. Among three, the

Hong Kong government, later turned into the Special Administrative Region government were most trusted by the respondents.

Hence, it is difficult deny the stubborn strength of Hongkongese identity. Another data from Robert Chung may support this idea. He repeated surveys concerning about Hongkongese identity (see Table 4). The design of questionnaires is different from that of Lau and me. He opened five options to the question asking, "what are you?" The options are Hong Kong Citizen, Chinese Citizen, Chinese Citizen in Hong Kong, Hong Kong Citizen in China, Neither of any. The interviewers must have told the options in Cantonese, such as Heung Gong Yan (literally means Hongkongese), Jung Gwok Yan (literally means Chinese), Heung Gong di Jung Gwok Yan (literally means Chinese in Hong Kong), Jung Gwok di Heung Gong Yan (literally means Hongkongese in China). The result was also shocking to me. While 49.2% of the respondents identified themselves as Chinese in my 1997 survey, only 18.6% of the respondents took Chinese as their primary identity. The total sum of Chinese identity and dual identity in my 1997 survey were equivalent to the total sum of Chinese Citizen identity, Chinese Citizen in Hong Kong identity and Hong Kong Citizen in China identity. This means that some people who answer, "I am Chinese" in my survey might choose the dual identity in Chung's survey.

Furthermore, a question asking 'Do you feel proud of becoming a national citizen of China?' may be understood as one indicator of measuring the Chineseness felt by Hong Kong residents (see Table 5). On July 1st of 1997, 46.6% of respondents answered "Yes" and 45.7% of respondents said "No." It is surprising that on July 8th of 1998, those who answered "Yes" sharply decreased to 31.1%. On the contrary, those who answered "No" increased to 62.5%. After that, the trend has kept unchanged. Identity index also shows how the Hongkongese identity is strong among the respondents. According to Chung, he also launched a series of surveys asking the respondents "how do you scale your Chineseness/Hongkongeseness from 0-10?" It is noticeable that the Hongkongeseness always exceeded the Chineseness.

However, the polls gave us an ambivalent element in Hong Kong



people's view toward the mainland China (see Table 6). They seem to have a relatively small trust toward the PRC government and show little pride in becoming a PRC national. At the same time, they seem to take on negative attitude toward Taiwan's independence and Tibet's independence. Those who answered "No" always have exceeded those who answered, "Yes". The affirmative answer tends to increase in number. On the other hand, more people also have come to agree with the unity of China.

How should we come to the conclusion? The Hongkongese identity seems not to be contradicted with being Chinese if we look at the last data representing the ambivalence in Hong Kong people. As many argued, it is because of the split of the meaning of being Chinese into two, which is the cultural identity and political identity, among the people in Hong Kong. Both identities repeat overlapping and dividing. I would like to come to a cautious conclusion that people are now searching how to draw the line again between the cultural identity and political identity or is at a loss whether they should coincide both identities with each other.

#### **4. The Factors that Strengthens the Chinese Identity**

Around the time of 1997 reversion, one remarkable event happened. That was the Diaoyutai islands (or Senkaku Islands) defense movement in the summer of 1996, often interpreted as a symbol of the changing identity of Hong Kong right before the reversion. I believe that this phenomenon worthwhile to be analysed more carefully.

The protest started with the Japanese right-wing organization, the Japan Youth Federation, who built a lighthouse on the Senkaku Islands on July 14, 1996. In Hong Kong, the Diaoyutai Islands defense movement was strengthened by the visit of Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda to Hong Kong in August 1996. On August 28 1996, Foreign Minister Ikeda reportedly refused to meet with those people who sought for compensation of military currency issued during the

Japanese occupation in World War II and sought for confirmation of Chinese sovereignty of the Diaoyutai Islands.

In September of 1996, the conflict over the Diaoyutai Islands issue heated up. Leading up to the 65th anniversary of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria on September 18, a demonstration was staged in support of the Diaoyutai Islands defense movement, in which 10,000 people participated on September 15. On September 26, an activist approached the Senkaku Islands on a chartered freighter, the "Protector of Diaoyutai Islands," attempted to swim in the waters surrounding the island to symbolize his support for Chinese sovereignty and was accidentally drowned. The drowned man was David Chan Yuk-cheung of the Alliance of Worldwide Chinese Protection of the Diaoyutai Islands. The red five-star flag was draped over Chan's body, and on September 29, 30,000 attended a mourning ceremony held in his honor. On October 7, as if to carry on the spirit of Chan, activists from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan gathered together near the Senkaku Island. Although the Maritime Safety Agency patrol boat attempted to prevent the protesters to land on the main island, the protesters succeeded to raise the flags of China and Taiwan on the island. However, this landing incident was the climax and the movement died down. After the death of Chan, China suppressed demonstrators which criticize the Diaoyutai Islands issue. On October 16, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen made comments that intended to restrain the media activities in post-1997 Hong Kong during an interview with the Asian Wall Street Journal.

An interesting fact was that the period of the second Protect Diaoyutai movement coincides with the beginning of the fluctuation of Hongkongese identity. Did Hong Kong people intensify their "Chineseness" because of the Protect Diaoyutai movement?

In order to understand why the movement was intensified, we must consider the strategic use of the Diaoyutai Islands defense movement by the political parties of Hong Kong. The Diaoyutai Islands defense movement was not a dangerous issue, which can be seen from Foreign Minister Qian's comments. It was assumed that criticism of China would become a problem in post-1997 Hong Kong. Qian has criticized the Hong Kong media, saying that,

although it is free to express any critical arguments as they wish after the return, this does not include spreading rumors and lies<sup>12</sup>. According to Qian, as Hong Kong is to be administered under the "one country, two systems" formula, it must not interfere with the Mainland affairs. Moreover, conducting a mourning ceremony for the victims of the Tiananmen Square incident was thought not to be acceptable in post-1997 Hong Kong. The Diaoyutai Islands defense movement is different from other political protests. It is a patriotic issue fighting over sovereignty rights. As long as China wants the allegiance of Hong Kong people, who are now in charge of autonomy of SAR government, to the Chinese central government, it would be difficult for China to criticize Hong Kong democrats for supporting the Diaoyutai Islands defense movement. During the protests, the Chinese stance against Japan appeared to be weak; these caused indirect criticisms toward China government. Of course, the leading force of the democrats, the Democratic Party, might consider the usefulness to make use of various political opportunities as the party's advantage especially during the elections.

At the same time, we have to be more cautious about defining the Diaoyutai defense movement as a patriotic movement. It is because the movement had also anti-Japan elements. Hong Kong people have harsh views concerning with the Japan's wartime responsibilities. Many Hong Kong people suffered during the Japanese occupation and Sino-Japanese war, and, of course, received no compensation of military currency. Compared to the Spratley Islands (Nansha Islands), there is a stronger local support following for territorial sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands (see Table 7). This can be attributed to the attitude of Hong Kong People toward Japan.

Among six governments of China, British, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the United States and Japan, the result of survey regarding to the likeness of the above six regions showed that it is only Japan and Taiwan that the unfavourable exceeds the favourable. When we compare Japan and the United States case, the rates for 'Don't know'

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<sup>12</sup> *Asian Wall Street Journal*, October 17, 1996.

and 'Hard to say' for the United States is bigger than that for Japan. Generally speaking, Japan suffer less popularity among the respondents.<sup>13</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

As a result of these facts, a question arises: Is it a signal that feelings for China have increased with regard to the 1997 reversion? Again, I hesitate to come to a conclusion in a hurry. People in Hong Kong are now experiencing the process of trial and error in search of a new identity under the sovereignty of People's Republic of China. After 1997, the life of Hong Kong people did not greatly differ from the pre-1997 period. They are now on the way to another fifty years to be completed.

It may be true that a political issue may sometimes strengthen the identity. However, the second Protect Diaoyutai movement represents, every political issue has various aspects to observe. Since an identity is defined by drawing line between "we" and "they," we have to be careful to know who "they" are.

One possible interpretation toward the ambivalence of Hong Kong identity was given by Lau Siu-kai.<sup>14</sup> According to Lau, Hongkongness has two types of belongingness toward China: culturally and politically belongingness towards China. We must pay attention to the fact that the belongingness towards Hong Kong will not be affected by the belongingness toward China either as a cultural or as a political entity. Hong Kong people tend to think of Hong Kong as a part of China. As the people of other regions in China also have their own regionalism, the belongingness toward Hong Kong is also considered as a kind of regionalism. Therefore, Hong Kong regionalism does not differ from Chinese nationalism for itself. That is the reason why Lau often pointed that Hong Kong

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<sup>13</sup> The data was obtained from my telephone poll conducted in 1997 and 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Lau, Siu-kai, "Honkon no Koudo jichi to Chugoku (Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and China)" (an interview), *Chugoku 21*, Vol.4 (September 1998), p.21.

regionalism includes a patriotism feeling toward China. People consider mainland China sometimes as being equal to the PRC government, in other times as being equal to the motherland, which is a cultural entity similar to the Middle Kingdom. As a result, the PRC government sometimes is understood as the Middle Kingdom itself. Hong Kong people tend to think at the territories of PRC government as that of the Middle Kingdom and refuse to divide the kingdom into pieces.

Moreover, there existed an issue on the right of abode. Those who were children of Hong Kong citizens rushed to Hong Kong territories. This event forced the SAR government to amend the immigration ordinance, which defined that those who crossed the border without going through the proper procedure would be repatriated by force. The parents of these children were not satisfied with the amendment and decided to appeal for court. In January 29 of 1999, the Court of Final Appeal reached the decision that the children who were born outside of Hong Kong, but whose parents were Hong Kong citizens would be entitled to the right of abode in the HKSAR. Comparing to prior administrative decisions, this judgement was too far favourable to the accused.<sup>15</sup> It allowed two additional categories of persons to be eligible to the right of abode: (1) those children who were not born out of wedlock, and whose mother do not have the right of abode to Hong Kong; and (2) those children whose parents did not have the right of abode in Hong Kong at the time of children's birth, but subsequently acquired such right. In the long run, this rule of CFA would broaden the ways to become a Hong Kong citizen. According to the HKSAR government, the number of people who are eligible to settle in Hong Kong would be 1,670,000, which is one quarter of the current total population. The general public worried that such an increase in Hong Kong's population would cause serious shortage of housing and schools and an increase of unemployment rate. As a result, the telephone polls showed that the majority of people supported a new tactic of government, asking the Standing Committee of the National

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<sup>15</sup> *Ming Pao Daily*, January 30, 1999.

People's Congress to interpret the relevant provisions of the Basic Law on the right of abode. On June 26<sup>th</sup>, the Standing Committee announced a new interpretation that the right of abode would not be entitled to the persons of category (2). Those who are eligible to the right of abode reduced to 270,000.

Although the number decreased sharply, it is clear that Hong Kong society will have to receive more immigrants who were born on the mainland comparing with the pre-1997 period. It means that Hong Kong will have more first generation who have direct experience in the mainland China. Those new immigrants will make the problem of Hongkongese identity more complicated. Those who consider themselves as Hongkongese seem to start thinking again how they should draw the line between "we" and "they".

Table 1 Identities of the Hong Kong Chinese residents (%)

	Hongkongese	Chinese	Both	Neither	Don't know /No Answer
1985	59.5	36.2	–	–	4.3
1989	63.6	28.8	–	2.0	5.6
1990	57.2	26.4	12.1	1.0	3.4
1991	56.6	25.4	14.2	1.2	2.4
1992	49.3	27.0	21.1	0.7	1.9
1993	53.3	32.7	10.1	1.6	2.4
1994	56.5	24.2	16.0	0.5	2.8
1995	50.2	30.9	15.4	1.2	2.2

Notes: Lau, Siu-kai, *Hongkongese or Chinese: The Problem of Identity on the Eve of Resumption of Chinese Sovereignty over Hong Kong*, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 1997, p.5.

Table 2 Identities of the Hong Kong Chinese residents (%)

	Hongkongese	Chinese	Both	Neither	Don't know /No Answer
1997	38.2	49.2	10.0	–	4.3
1998	43.1	46.2	8.6	0.4	1.7

Notes: Data obtained from the telephone polls conducted by the author with collaboration of Robert T.Y.Chung of Social Sciences Research centre of the University of Hong Kong.

Table 3 People's Trust in Hong Kong, Chinese, British government (%)

Hong Kong government	1988	1990	1993	1994	1995	1996
Trust Very much	3.4	2.6	8.9	6.7	7.5	7.3
Trust	45.1	40.3	45.8	40.5	40.9	50.3
Half-half	27.5	35.9	16.9	23.3	22.2	23.2
Distrust	17.3	14.6	17.6	19.2	19.1	12.3
Distrust very much	0.9	0.5	3.8	3.6	3.6	2.0
Don't know/No answer	5.7	6.1	7.1	8.4	6.8	5.0
Chinese government	1988	1990	1993	1994	1995	1996
Trust Very much	1.4	0.3	2.8	2.2	2.6	2.4
Trust	19.6	9.7	21.1	17.0	19.1	22.3
Half-half	23.3	18.5	17.3	21.5	19.4	23.8
Distrust	37.1	47.4	34.2	37.0	36.6	33.1

Distrust very much	6.7	15.1	15.0	13.9	12.5	10.1
Don't know/No answer	11.9	8.9	9.6	8.4	9.9	8.4
British government	1988	1990	1993	1994	1995	1996
Trust Very much	1.4	3.1	2.8	1.9	2.4	1.6
Trust	29.0	35.1	24.7	20.5	22.8	25.7
Half-half	26.9	33.6	19.4	23.4	21.3	23.4
Distrust	25.3	17.7	30.7	33.5	32.3	31.7
Distrust very much	4.2	0.3	12.8	12.3	11.3	9.2
Don't know/No answer	13.2	10.3	9.5	8.3	9.9	8.3

Notes: Data on the year of 1988 was obtained from Lau, Siu-kai=Kuan, Hsin-chi=Wan, Po-san, "Political Attitudes" in Lau, Siu-kai=Lee, Ming-kwan=Wan, Po-san=Wong, Siu-lun (eds.), *Indicators of Social Development: Hong Kong 1988*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1991, p.199. Data on the year of 1990 was obtained from Lau, Siu-kai, "Political Attitudes" in Lau, Siu-kai=Lee, Ming-kwan=Wan, Po-san=Wong, Siu-lun (eds.), *Indicators of Social Development: Hong Kong 1990*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1992, p.138. Data on the year 1993-96 are average figures. Data on the year 1993-94 was obtained from Chung, Robert. T.Y., "Public Opinions in the late Transition Period", in Cheng, Joseph Y.S.=Lo, Sonny S.H. (eds.) *From Colony to the SAR: Hong Kong's Challenges Ahead*, Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press, 1995, p.499. Data on the year 1996-96 was obtained from the Social Sciences Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong.

Table 4 Identities of the Hong Kong Chinese residents (%)

	Hongkongese Citizen	Hongkongese Citizen in China	Chinese Citizen	Chinese Citizen in Hong Kong	Neither	Don't know /No answer
Aug-1997	34.9	24.8	20.1	18.6	0.4	1.3
Sep-1997	36.2	24.2	20.3	17.5	0.2	1.6
Oct-1997	36.6	22.6	20.1	17.5	0.2	3.0
Dec-1997	35.8	22.9	18.9	18.2	0.2	3.9
Jun-1998	34.2	18.6	18.7	24.8	0.2	3.4
Aug-1998	29.7	25.2	19.6	22.0	0.2	3.2
Sep-1998	39.4	22.9	15.5	20.6	0.4	1.2
Dec-1998	40.7	22.3	15.1	17.2	0.6	4.2
Feb-1998	41.0	20.9	15.3	17.6	1.2	3.9

Notes: Data owes to the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong.



Table 5 Identity Index

	Aug-97	Sep-97	Oct-97	Dec-97	Jun-98	Aug-98	Sep-98	Dec-98	Feb-99
Hongkong									
Citizen	8.0	8.1	8.0	7.8	7.6	7.6	7.7	7.7	7.5
Chinese									
Citizen	7.5	7.4	7.3	7.0	7.1	7.1	7.2	7.2	7.1

Notes: Data owes to the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong.

Table 6 People's View on the Taiwan and Tibet Issues (%)

	Independence of Taiwan			Independence of Tibet		
	Yes	No	Don't know /No answer	Yes	No	Don't know /No answer
1993	32.1	52.1	15.8	24.0	51.4	24.6
1994	34.2	48.7	17.1	22.2	48.0	29.8
1995	29.1	51.6	19.3	18.4	54.6	27.1
1996	23.6	60.5	15.9	18.4	54.6	27.1
1997	21.1	59.8	19.2	15.1	54.7	30.2
1998	21.8	58.0	20.3	17.3	52.0	30.8
	Reunification of Taiwan and Mainland			Whether Taiwan should rejoin the UN		
	Yes	No	Don't know /No answer	Yes	No	Don't know /No answer
1993	41.6	41.7	16.7	52.1	26.0	21.9
1994	34.9	46.7	18.4	48.1	28.6	23.5
1995	39.2	43.2	17.6	40.3	34.4	25.3
1996	47.5	37.9	14.6	38.6	39.4	22.0
1997	38.3	44.6	17.1	34.4	40.2	25.5
1998	35.6	44.0	20.5	33.7	37.9	28.4

Notes: *POP Express*, No.26, January 1999, pp.13-14.

Table 7 Attitude of Hong Kong Residents Toward Japan

#### General Attitude Toward Japan

##### (1) Sino-Japanese War

Do not believe Japan was responsible

35.7%

Believe Japan was responsible	53.6%
Don't know/Hard to say	10.7%
(2) Japanese Apology for War	
Believe Japan should apologize	83.5%
Do not believe Japan should apologize	7.3%
Don't know/Hard to say	10.7%
(3) Japanese Compensation for War	
Believe Japan should provide compensation	69.7%
Do not believe Japan should provide compensation	12.6%
Don't know/Hard to say	10.7%
(4) Japanese products with the Sino-Japanese War	
Being considered during purchase	17.6%
Not considered during purchase	76.5%
Have never purchased	2.3%
Don't know/Hard to say	3.6%

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#### Spratley Islands (Nansha Islands) Issue

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(1) Sovereignty of Nansha Islands	
Possession of China	27.1%
Possession of Taiwan	0.6%
Possession of China and Taiwan	4.4%
Joint possession of China (including Taiwan) and other countries	4.6%
Possession of countries other than China	1.8%
Not sure	48.7%
Undecided	12.7%
(2) Method of resolving the Nansha Islands sovereignty issue	
Negotiation	59.5%
Military action	5.1%
Delay the issue	1.6%
Don't know/Hard to say	33.8%
(3) Position if China and the Philippines were at war over Nansha Islands sovereignty	
Support China	63.2%
Support the Philippines	1.2%
Remain Neutral	20.4%
Depends on situation	5.4%
Don't know/Hard to say	9.8%
(4) Employment of Filipina maids if China and the Philippines were at war	
Should employ	33.7%
Should not employ	23.5%
Don't know/Hard to say	42.8%

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#### Senkaku Islands (Diaoyu Island) Issue

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(1) Sovereignty of Diaoyu Island	
Possession of China	82.4%

Possession of Taiwan	1.1%
Possession of China and Taiwan	3.3%
Possession of Japan	0.5%
Not sure	12.1%
Others	0.6%
(2) Method of resolving the Diaoyu Island sovereignty issue	
Negotiation/peaceful means	60.0%
Delay the issue	1.1%
Military action	14.6%
Other approaches	8.2%
Don't know/Hard to say	6.1%
(3) Position if China and Japan were at war over Diaoyu Island sovereignty	
Support China	89.0%
Remain Neutral	1.7%
Won't support either side	2.7%
Depends on situation	2.4%
Don't know/Hard to say	4.2%
(4) Position regarding a boycott of Japanese products if Japan were at war with China	
Support	58.1%
Don't support	28.0%
Don't know/Hard to say	13.9%
(5) Attitude of Chinese government toward the 1996 protests	
Appropriate	23.5%
Weak	64.2%
Don't know/Hard to say	12.3%
(6) Attitude of Taiwan government toward the 1996 protests	
Appropriate	41.3%
Weak	41.4%
Don't know/Hard to say	17.3%
(7) Support for the action of the alliance led by Tsang Kin-shing to dismantle the Japanese lighthouse	
For	46.9%
Neutral	6.8%
Against	35.5%
No opinion	5.5%
Don't know/Hard to say	5.3%

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Notes: Data from the University of Hong Kong Social Sciences Research Center for General Attitude Toward Japan and the Nansha Islands Issue (Robert Chung Ting-yiu in charge of survey, May 1995); *POP Express*, September 1996 edition (vol.1, No.1) for the Senkaku Islands Issue.