



## Civil Unrest and Governance in Hong Kong: Law and Order from Historical and Cultural Perspectives

edited by Michael H. K. Ng and John D. Wong, Routledge, 2017, 220 pp.

Norman P. Ho

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Daniel Hourigan *Lecturer in English Literature, University of Southern Queensland*Email: [Daniel.Hourigan@usq.edu.au](mailto:Daniel.Hourigan@usq.edu.au)  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8650-4717>

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*Civil Unrest and Governance in Hong Kong: Law and Order from Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Michael H. K. Ng and John D. Wong, Routledge, 2017, 220 pp.

International journalists and political commentators have paid increasing attention to various social movements in Hong Kong, such as the 2014 Occupy Central movement and growing Hong Kong localism. Such attention, however, has generally been limited to covering actions of individual social movements or actors at specific points in time. However, to reach a better and fuller understanding of social movements in Hong Kong as a whole, what is needed is deep study and contextualization of social movements and actors from legal, political, historical, and cultural perspectives. This impressive edited collection of 11 essays fills the gap and does just that. It provides a legal, cultural, and social history of civil unrest and social movements in Hong Kong over the past two centuries, exploring such history through the changing concepts of law and order. More significantly, this volume challenges various existing conventional narratives about Hong Kong law and politics. For example, it challenges the pre-existing narrative of Hong Kong as a place characterized by political stability, as well as the idea that rule of law was one of the best legacies bequeathed by the British empire. This volume also explores the rhetorical and expressive techniques employed by social movement participants in Hong Kong. Finally, it also has a normative goal, hoping to encourage good governance in Hong Kong through a better understanding of Hong Kong's past social conflicts.

Part I of the book is comprised of essays which largely focus on the history of social movements in Hong Kong. The first three essays arguably share a common theme—they all point out the authoritarian character of British colonial law. They would also be of special interest to scholars working in postcolonialism and law, critical legal studies, as well as historians assessing the British empire. In “Rule of Law in Hong Kong History Demythologized: Student Umbrella Movement of 1919,” Michael H.K. Ng uses the anti-Japanese imperialism student protests in 1919 Hong Kong (and the British colonial government's handling of the protests) to effectively challenge the widely held belief that British common law was a protector of individual liberty in Hong Kong. Rather, as Ng shows through analysis of records from the trials of the student protestors, “the

common-law system of Hong Kong became an accomplice in the pursuit of an authoritarian form of colonial law and order” that was focused on buttressing London’s control of its overseas colonies (23). Christopher Munn’s chapter—“‘Our Best Trump Card’: A Brief History of Deportation in Hong Kong, 1857–1955”—is a history of deportation as a form of legal punishment and relevant colonial in Hong Kong. Munn shows how most deportees were Chinese men and women whose presence was deemed a threat to order in Hong Kong and highlights how the act of deportation was an executive act which provided no due process to the deportee. In “Exclusion as Oppression: A Quest for Extra-Legal Status for Chinese Medicine in Colonial Hong Kong,” Yu Xiu-ling shows how British colonial medical laws “deliberately created and supported” the “inferior status of Chinese medicine” (51) and how transplanted Western medicine “played an important role in marginalizing and even suppressing Chinese medical culture” (57).

The next three chapters in Part I focus on, or are inspired by, the 1967 riots in Hong Kong and/or Hong Kong’s political landscape in the 1970s. In “How the 1967 Riots changed Hong Kong’s Political Landscape, with the Repercussions still felt Today,” Gary Ka-wai Cheung argues that the 1967 riots served as a catalyst for social reform and also strengthened the anti-communist attitudes and positions of Hongkongers and gave the British colonial government an opportunity to inculcate a Hong Kong identity apart from mainland China (63). Lui Tai-lok in “Flying MPs’ and Political Changes in a Colonial Setting: Political Reform under MacLehose’s Governorship of Hong Kong” sets forth the concept of “political opacity” in Hong Kong—which describes how “political change may come from sources other than the colonial state and/or colony’s civil society”—to challenge the established wisdom that Murray MacLehose’s—a popular British governor of Hong Kong in the 1970s—reforms were due to his individual benevolence (77). Rather, Lui complicates the picture by showing the influence and impact of political developments and changes in Britain, including the pressures exerted by certain British MPs who supported various community organizers in Hong Kong (91–92). In his chapter “Between Two Episodes of Social Unrest below Lion Rock—From the 1967 Riots to the 2014 Umbrella Movement,” John D. Wong explains why, in his view, Hongkongers were not as vocal about demanding political reforms when under British rule—in contrast to the post-handover. He examines historical, economic, social, and cultural conditions in the 1970s and compares them to present-day Hong Kong. For example, he argues that after the 1967 riots, the British government implemented certain social reforms that were largely perceived as benevolent, whereas the current government is not winning the public perception battle. Wong also impressively uses empirical economic data as evidence, showing how there was a rise in growth and median monthly income in the post-1967 riots period, whereas from 2001 to 2011 data shows a decline in real income for the average Hong Kong worker.

Wong's ultimate point is that such economic, social, and geopolitical conditions—e.g. the growing purchasing power of mainland Chinese consumers—play a role in explaining the more vocal calls for political reform in the post-handover period as compared to the era of British rule.

Part II of the book is comprised of essays which explore the rhetorical and expressive techniques employed in Hong Kong social movements and, more significantly, what such techniques and their developments can tell us about law, order, identity, and politics in Hong Kong. Albert H.Y. Chen's "Social Movements and the Law: The Case of Hong Kong" provides a superb overview of the various social movements in Hong Kong history and the laws implicated in such social movements. He argues that Western theories on social movements and law are relevant to the Hong Kong context and shows how law has played multiple roles—constraining social movements, utilized as a resource by social movements, and serving as an area of struggle in movements. For readers unfamiliar with social movements in Hong Kong, it may be a good idea to begin with Chen's chapter. In "Civil Disobedience and the Rule of Law," Benny Yiu-ting Tai—one of the founders and key leaders of the Occupy Central movement—unsurprisingly takes on a stronger tone of advocacy in his chapter and attempts to set forth "a theory of civil disobedience and the rule of law which purports that civil disobedience can be justified by the rule of law" (146). Starting from the "thin" conception of the rule of law, Tai attempts to show that the goals of civil disobedience and the rule of law coincide. Given his prominent role in Occupy Central, I was surprised that Tai did not apply his theoretical argument to the Occupy Central movement and show specifically how, in his view, Occupy Central qualifies as a civil disobedience movement justified within a rule of law framework. Agnes Shuk-mei Ku, in "From Civil Disobedience to Institutional Politics—Conflict over the Public Order Ordinance in 2000", uses the dispute over the Public Order Ordinance in Hong Kong in 2000 as a case study to explain and analyze the dialog and intersections among law, discourse, dramaturgy, and politics, arguing that civil autonomy as a concept was complex and contested. Marco Wan's chapter—"The Artwork of Hong Kong's Occupy Central Movement"—examines the cultural significance of some artwork in Occupy Central, ultimately arguing that it is not enough to understand social movements in purely *political* or *legal* terms but must also engage in a study of their *aesthetic* significance. Using examples of artworks created within the Occupy Central encampments, Wan effectively shows that the movement did not have a monolithic, standard notion of itself but rather possessed a "multi-faceted self-conception" (180). In the final chapter—Chu Yiu-Wai's "Who speaks for Lion Rock? Pro-Cantonese Campaign (or lack thereof) in Hong Kong"—Chu queries why there has been "lack of support for the pro-Cantonese campaign" in Hong Kong and criticizes the PMI (Putonghua as a medium of instruction) movement.

The great strength of this edited collection is its interdisciplinarity. The volume contributes to a variety of fields—legal history, political science, legal theory, and Hong Kong political, social, and cultural history, to name a few. As such, scholars from a range of disciplines will find rich material in this book. This volume makes a significant contribution to Hong Kong studies, emphasizing the discrete value of Hong Kong’s social, legal, and cultural history within existing scholarly debates on British colonial rule and the politics, history, and culture of greater China. Finally, given the emotional, polarizing, and political nature of some of the events discussed in the volume—most notably, the Occupy Central movement—the editors should be commended for maintaining as objective a tone as possible throughout the book. Both supporters and opponents of Occupy Central—and related movements in Hong Kong—will find this volume not only useful but balanced and respectful.

Norman P. Ho

*Associate Professor of Law, Peking University School of Transnational Law*

Email: [nph225@nyu.edu](mailto:nph225@nyu.edu)

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