Immigration Policies, Discourses, and the Politics of Local Belonging in Hong Kong (1950-1980)

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This article shows the trajectory of the discourse of identity in tandem with the history of immigration in Hong Kong between 1950 and 1980. On one hand, international politics, which figured prominently in the refugee question in the 1950s and the 1960s, later gave way to local interests. On the other hand, the colonial government at first adopted a primarily reactive and accommodating position in its policy toward the continual influxes of Chinese immigration, but there was a gradual shift from reactive measures to more deliberate control, planning, and hegemonic discourses over time. The process of identity articulation was being mediated through at least four intersecting discursive developments: the rise of a changing and contested notion of "settled residence," the introduction of the notion of "Hong Kong belonging," an evolving discourse of the "problem of people," and the unfolding of a new hegemonic narrative of economic success.

Keywords: *Immigration history; identity; citizenship; Hong Kong*

Until the 1950s and the 1960s, no Hong Kong identity had yet developed among the people residing in the city. With its large influxes of Chinese immigrants, the city became, at best, a relatively open refugee society (S.-L. Wong, 1988). But by the 1970s, a more distinctive sense of local identity and distinction had emerged. One

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interesting question is, what social and cultural processes had brought about the transition from a refugee identity to a locally rooted Hong Kong identity? Although a full answer is beyond the scope of this article, it makes a start by focusing on the role of immigration policies, practices, and discourses as a set of inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms involved in the making of local identity in Hong Kong between 1950 and 1980.

As we will see, the politics of local belonging emerged as the colonial government introduced and increasingly tightened regulation of Chinese immigration from 1950 to 1980. During the 1950s and the 1960s, there was, at first, a policy of acceptance toward illegal immigrants, which was later shifted to tightened control and then to regularization of the influx. In the 1970s, the government formulated a reach-base policy as a halfway measure between control and inclusion, finally moving toward full control by abolishing that policy in 1980.[1]

Apparently, such policy changes primarily reflected the government's reactive measures against the massive waves of Chinese immigration from China. On another level, the hidden influence of international politics was also at work. In the first decade or so, Britain and the United States had played a critical role in defining the unique refugee status of the Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong. They stressed the immigrants' ethnic uniformity with the local residents, on one hand, and the danger of communism in China, on the other. Such factors prevented both repatriation and onward emigration on a large scale. Then, in 1971, the notion of the "Hong Kong belonger" was introduced in local immigration law, which was, in effect, a by-product of the restructuring of British citizenship in the United Kingdom. Given this dual context of uncontrollable Chinese immigration and international politics, perhaps it cannot be said that the Hong Kong government actively engineered a sense of common identity among the people through immigration policy, unlike what has happened in other settler societies such as the United States (Noiriel, 1996).

Still, immigration provided the site through which external pressures and changes were channeled to become internal issues at the policy, institutional, and discursive levels. The three decades under study indeed saw the government's position change from being reactive and relatively accommodating to increasing regulation and

restriction over Chinese immigration. The shift reflected a simultaneous process of "state building" and "identity making" in the city.

Hong Kong was not a nation-state, but over time, it gradually developed into a quasi-city-state with a distinctive identity. On one hand, the British restructuring of citizenship had indirectly facilitated such a development. On the other hand, continued population and immigration problems called for longer term political solutions on the part of the colonial government. The state-building process was shown not only in the changing immigration policies but also in a host of practices, categories, ideologies, and discourses accompanying them that have figured most prominently since the mid-1960s. These included the regulation of the territorial boundary (via legal and policing mechanisms); the invention of official identity or immigration categories that defined membership; the acquisition of a language of "stateness," appropriated from Britain; the continuation of the ideological formation of liberalism versus communism; and the increasing will to govern and achieve (through social planning, budget control, and economic development). These demonstrated that a process of identity making was also under way, creating a sense of membership, rights, belonging, and difference that carried specific political, symbolic, and ideological contents.

State building and identity making nonetheless were not a one-way process controlled solely by the government; they instead involved a dynamic interplay among government officials, political elites (unofficial legislators—i.e., those drawn from outside the civil service), and the public. Government officials generally took a leading role in formulating immigration policies, defining social problems, creating official identity categories, and configuring a hegemonic narrative of identity. Government proposals or policies might fail to have an impact on popular consciousness, or they might, in some instances, generate tensions with the legislators and the public. Yet sometimes, official discourse and public discourse could converge, as through the lawmaking process, in which the criteria for inclusion and exclusion were being articulated and rearticulated with institutional and cultural implications. In this way, official definitions could become hegemonic in society over time. My analysis will demonstrate that, alongside demographic, socioeconomic, and external changes, the process of identity articulation and rearticulation was being variously mediated

through four intersecting discursive developments at different historical junctures.

There evolved, first, an administrative discourse of the "problem of people"—an integral part of a state-building process—which originated in the 1940s and began to intensify in the 1960s. The phrase "problem of people" was used in official documents, and the idea was variously elaborated to address different kinds of social problems associated with population and immigration and to call for different methods of control, restriction, and planning at different times. Second, there arose a changing and contested notion of "settled residence" as an incipient discourse of local belonging, used both by the government and by the public since the 1960s. The notion, preceded in the 1950s by a general idea of humanitarianism, carried a more specific claim to inclusion attached to Hong Kong; somewhat ironically, it also prefigured a potential basis for distinction and exclusion. During the 1950s and the 1960s, international interests played a critical role in shaping the humanitarian policy of acceptance and integration that was in harmony with local sentiments. Nevertheless, the two ideas—settled residence and the problem of people—also embodied certain tensions between the government and the people over the issues of inclusion and exclusion.

Third, the introduction of the legal category of Hong Kong belonger in 1971 triggered the first political debates within the legislature on membership, belonging, and rights. It was a by-product of the British restructuring of citizenship, but its impacts bore a local imprint in the idea of settled residence, which applied to locals and immigrants. In a very important way, the new category marked a shift from a negative definition toward a positive affirmation of a local identity in law, policy, and politics. It was a government initiative, but unofficial legislators, with the support of the public, played a crucial role in contesting and broadening the meaning of belonging.

Finally, toward the late 1970s, there emerged a new narrative of Hong Kong identity amid an evolving hegemony of economic success. The society was undergoing rapid economic development, with cycles of upturns and downturns; in popular culture, media representations used symbolic images and stereotypes to hammer out the sociocultural differences between Hong Kong people and Chinese immigrants. In the face of continual and increasing Chinese immigration,

legislators and officials labored on long-term policies and development. In this period, international politics, political concerns, and humanitarian principle gave way to local economic considerations. More specifically, the idea of settled residence was reinterpreted through the new hegemonic narrative in such a way that it converged with the discourse of the problem of people, thereby buttressing a policy of complete control against illegal immigrants in 1980. In one sense, it seems indisputable that the policy shifts as well as the rise of a new hegemonic narrative had their objective basis in the contexts of increasing Chinese immigration and a changing economy (Skeldon, 1986). Yet the discourses justifying the policy shifts also entailed an articulation of identity and difference that was mediated through preexisting discourses, established categories, new meanings, and changing interpretations.

In Hong Kong studies, some scholars have located popular culture as an important site for nourishing and articulating a local consciousness (Ma Kit Wai, 1996; Ng Chun Hung, 1998). Some attribute the emergence of a sense of local belonging to demographic changes and social policy changes (Lui Tai Lok, 1997; T. Wong, 1998). Postcolonial critics trace the development of Hong Kong subjectivity by looking at the historical articulation of nationalism, liberalism, and colonialism against the background of the cold war (Ip Iam Chong, 1997). Others attribute it to the colonial state's conscious efforts at community building through civic and ideological engineering in the aftermath of the mass riots in 1966 and 1967 (Turner, 1995). This article does not disagree with these scholars; indeed, in one sense, it may serve only to corroborate their views. Yet in another, more important sense, it will add a hitherto missing piece of the puzzle—namely, the mutual constitution of identity formation and immigration policy making (including laws, practices, and discourses). For one thing, my position does not boil down to any simple, single-factor explanation of identity formation. Identity is a multifaceted issue involving multiple forces and processes working at different levels. Immigration nonetheless constitutes a strategic domain wherein external changes and internal factors (demographic, political, legal, socioeconomic, and cultural) intersect to influence the definitions of identity and the forms of distinction in society.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

In this study, I confine my empirical analysis to the ways in which dominant discourses were articulated and contested within three major institutional sites of decision making and hegemonic formation: international politics (the British and the U.S. governments), the colonial government of Hong Kong, and the local press. For international politics, the study draws evidence from two sources: the Colonial Office (CO) files (1954-1966) and the *Refugee Problem in Hong Kong and Macao* (U.S. Congress, 1962). The former contains important private diplomatic letters and confidential documents of the British state, accessible now that the standard 30-year embargo has expired. The latter is a report of the U.S. Senate committee that held hearings on the refugee issue in the two societies named.

In examining the government of Hong Kong, the study relies primarily on *Hong Kong Hansard: Reports of the Sittings of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong* (1890-1981; hereafter cited as *Hansard*), the *Annual Departmental Report* issued by the Director of Immigration (1961-1977; hereafter, *Report*),[2] and a booklet titled *A Problem of People* (1960). *Hansard* is a record of the local legislative council meetings; it contains all the ordinances as initially proposed, finally legislated, and subsequently amended, with a full record of the legislators' explanations of, rationales for, and debates over the ordinances. The document is also valuable in that it contains the views of both the government and the unofficial members. Although the legislature, because of its undemocratic nature, was then unrepresentative of and unaccountable to the public, the views of unofficial members could be informative in at least two ways. First, where they differed from official positions, they brought to light certain stances opposing the government that might prevail in the community at large—hence the dynamics of negotiation. As some legislative debates demonstrate, they deliberately referred to the opinions of the public to resist state proposals. Second, where they showed consent to official positions, they illustrated the consensual basis of hegemonic formation within the state. The research is supplemented with the *Annual Departmental*

Report and *A Problem of People*.[3] These documents can give us a more fully informed picture of official practices and discourses regarding policy implementation and the government's retrospective accounts as well as its elaborate justifications of policy.

To further show the public's responses to official practices, the study also draws evidence from one English- and two Chinese-language newspapers as secondary sources: the *South China Morning Post*, *Wah Kiu Yat Pao*, and the *Sing Tao Daily.* All three were commercial publications; the two newspapers in Chinese held a middle-to-rightist (anti-Communist or non-Communist) stance, whereas the one in English often showed an allegiance to the colonial government. A mixed method of random sampling and judgmental sampling is used. In the former, I survey *Wah Kiu Yat Pao* and the *South China Morning Post* on the same two days of the week in every week in the 1960s and the 1970s as part of my larger project on hegemonic formation. In the latter, I further supplement my data by surveying the *Sing Tao Daily* in 1971, 1974, and 1980 in the months in which significant amendments were made in immigration laws and policies. My strategy is to look for news items and editorial comments relating to the issue of immigration. Finally, I also refer to other sources, including documentation of public hearings overseas, quotations from the foreign press, and local popular television images, which give glimpses of public sentiments and public representations of identity and difference.

The following discussion is divided into four sections. The first section maps out certain emergent immigration-related discourses before 1950, making it possible to discern later continuities and changes. The second section examines the policies, practices, and discourses regarding illegal immigration in the 1950s and the 1960s. The third section analyzes the politics of local belonging that came into play with the notion of the "Hong Kong belonger" in 1971. The fourth section focuses on the policy shift that reproblematized illegal immigration in 1980, probing the issue of identity formation by showing how the notion of "settled residence" had evolved in conjunction with a new narrative of progress within the broader process of ideology formation in society.

AFFINITY, BORDER, AND THE ORIGIN OF THE "PROBLEM OF PEOPLE" BEFORE 1950

At the outset of colonial rule, the government had followed Britain's footsteps in introducing ordinances of registration, deportation, and banishment as means of disciplinary control over the population. Through legal rhetoric, certain kinds of people were coded as undesirable residents or aliens subject to immigration control: "vagabonds or bad characters without visible means of subsistence" (Registration Ordinance of 1844); "persons who . . . become a source of danger to the peace, order, and good government of the colony" (Banishment Ordinance of 1903); and the "large proportion of the immigrant population which is either incapable of being absorbed into useful occupation for any length of time or has no such desire" (Deportation of Aliens [Amendment] Bill of 1949, *Hansard*, 1948: 286). As we will see, the discursive effect of such legal definitions persisted over time, but they were not yet a practical policy of exclusion aimed against the Chinese immigrants.

On the contrary, before 1950, for more than a century under British colonial rule, it had been "the policy, indeed almost a tradition, to allow freedom of movement to Chinese across the border with China" (*A Problem of People*, 1960: 3-4). In its brief history of immigration, *A Problem of People* (1960) sheds some light on the question of identity: The three grounds it offers in explaining this earlier policy of unrestricted movement suggest both affinities and distinctions among the Chinese populace. Economically, as Hong Kong was the entrepôt for the great market of China, freedom of movement for agents, buyers, and itinerant traders was essential. Socially, the people in Hong Kong and in China were closely connected by cultural and family ties. Politically, Hong Kong was more than prepared to take up the role of refuge: "Hong Kong took pride in her role as a safe and well ordered sanctuary and she welcomed all who sought asylum, on the sole condition that they did not continue whatever struggle they were engaged in from within her borders" (*A Problem of People*, 1960: 4). The account thus constructed an image of territorial fluidity as well as cultural continuity while simultaneously establishing a sense of political distinction between Hong Kong and China.

But the idea of border was in fact a two-edged sword. On one hand, the understanding of Hong Kong as a political refuge could lead to a liberal and inclusionary stance vis-à-vis the immigrants. Until the 1950s and mid-1960s, the continuing strength of this metaphor helped to support a large influx of immigrants and refugees from China.[4] On the other hand, the idea of border also embodied a sense of political distinction from China that called for cautious and stringent measures of control via ordinances regulating immigration and public order. At this point, we need only note that the ideas of affinity and refuge had lent themselves to a general policy of unrestricted movement across the border, while they also laid the basis for a certain degree of caution with regard to particular political elements (these issues will be considered later in more detail).

Still, despite the absence of immigration control over the Chinese, a discourse of the "problem of people" associated with immigration had already emerged before 1950. The discourse owed its birth to dramatic and unexpected increases in the immigrant population, initially as a result of the Japanese invasion of China and the Sino-Japanese War in the late 1930s. Legislative records showed that immigration control was first extended, as an emergency measure, to the Chinese population when the Immigration Control Bill of 1940 was enacted as recommended by the Excess Population Reduction Committee. In practice, the various forms of immigration control imposed by the law did not survive the world war. Yet on the ideological level, its conscious introduction to counteract "social evils" associated with excessive population, such as lawlessness, overcrowding, poverty, and poor hygiene, began a discourse of a "people" problem (*Hansard*, 1941: 48-53).

In sum, before 1950, official documents did not register a sense of local identity, but the divergent discursive elements of tie, bond, border, problem of people, and desirable or undesirable residents were already showing some tensions of affinity and distinction. The Immigration Control Bill of 1949, as well as the introduction of a quota system in 1950, brought about the first turning point in immigration policy: the colonial government's extension of immigration control to "persons of Chinese race." It marked the beginning of a process of increasing regulation of Chinese immigration. Although the

discourses of rights and belonging had not yet emerged, in the trajectory of subsequent immigration policies and discourses, we find an evolving articulation of local identity that still bears on present times. The next sections will chart the course of discursive continuity and changes between 1950 and 1980.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS—ACCEPTANCE, CONTROL, REGULARIZATION, AND "PROBLEM" TALK (1950s-1960s)

After the introduction of the Immigration Control Bill of 1949, massive flows of illegal Chinese migration occurred repeatedly in 1949-1952, 1958-1962, 1967-1973, and 1979-1980, "pushed" by specific developments in China. The colonial government's responses were largely reactive, but institutional and discursive approaches to defining and handling the problem varied over time. Most distinctly, policies shifted from acceptance to tightened control over the (illegal) immigrants in the 1950s and then to regularization of the influx in the 1960s. As a rule, the policy, as well as public sentiment about illegal immigration, reflects a society's bases for inclusion and exclusion.[5] This section, which considers the external pressures of immigration flows and the varied policies and practices, examines three sets of discursive elements bearing on the question of inclusion and exclusion. These are, first, the early principles of humanitarianism and social integration, together with the government's mixed conception of asset and burden amid international politics and local concerns; second, the public pleas that reflected the wider discourse for inclusion based on the ideas of benevolence and "settled residence"; and third, the evolving discourse of the "problem of people" in the context of further social planning by the government.

In the first few years after the bill's passage, the government had adopted a policy of tolerant acceptance toward the immigrants, believing that they would soon return to China (*A Problem of People*, 1960: 16-18). Noting both China's shattered economy and the strains of setting up a new regime, *A Problem of People* stressed that "the immigrants were admitted on humanitarian grounds alone. . . . Hong Kong accepted the burden which they brought with them in the name of humanity" (6-7).[6]

Efforts at control nonetheless intensified when the first massive wave of illegal immigration occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s (with as many as 142,000 people entering during 1959-1962) as the Great Leap Forward and the collectivization movement in agriculture led to widespread starvation in China. Illegal immigration threatened to generate the so-called problem of "black characters in black abodes" (*Hansard*, 1967: 153): That is, declaring their residence illegal would force the immigrants to go underground and resort to illegal means of making a living. Initially, the government scaled up measures against illegal immigration, both repatriating the existing illegal immigrants and curbing new arrivals.[7] It was at this point that a clear legal definition of an illegal immigrant began to develop (C.-K. C. Wong, 1995: 44). In practice, however, such measures were not entirely effective in preventing illegal immigration and in identifying illegal immigrants.

Indeed, the government later adopted a different strategy—regularizing illegal immigrants. Between 1963 and 1967, although the government's stated policy was to repatriate illegal immigrants, its distribution of identity cards to them was highly symbolic of an inclusionary mode of practice. Although the change was, in part, a response to the ineffective exclusionary policy preceding it, its more important political, symbolic, and social significance can be seen in two ways.

In the first place, international interests were at stake that affected local development. The Chinese immigrants arriving after 1949 were mostly refugees, as described in *A Problem of People* (1960) and in the United Nations' report by Dr. Hambro (1955: 24). While the government scaled up control measures against illegal immigration in the late 1950s, it did not resort to emigration but instead aimed at a policy of integration intended to blur the social distinction between refugees and local residents. In September 1960, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported on this policy, and Colonial Secretary Burgess told a legislator that the government was "in effect making a decision to put the word 'refugee' out of the dictionary": "[Refugees] believe that home is somewhere other than where they are now[;] . . . there is clear evidence that the aim of most immigrants is to join their family, clansmen and people of their own race, language and dialect in Hong Kong, and that they do not in many cases desire to go further afield" (CO file 1030/1313, p. 229). Apparently,

this shift in official discourse to a stress on social integration was partly caused by a new realization (borne out by time) that these people wished to stay behind. There was also an international dimension to the change.

On the international front, Britain and the United States had different interests but a common stance toward the issue. Britain endeavored to gain vocal support from other countries for its claim that the new arrivals did not have refugee status. Its motivation was probably fear of what its responsibility for the refugees in Hong Kong would entail: "Her Majesty's Government are unable to accept further groups of refugees for permanent residence in any numbers. If the point is raised the delegation should remind the Committee that Great Britain is an overcrowded island" (CO file 1030/1314, p. 203).[8] As we will see in the next section, Britain at this time was preoccupied with immigration problems at home. For its part, the United States had a strong ideological interest in these developments during the cold war, and it exulted over the mass exodus of refugees from China:

> Since the end of World War II the flow of people has always been to freedom and away from communism. . . . In the long-range battle for the support of mankind, this is certainly compelling evidence that the free world must ultimately prevail. . . . [T]his exodus can become a major political and psychological victory for the West in the conflict with communism. [U.S. Congress, 1962: 3-4]

The U.S. government did not wish to see the refugees repatriated to China. Yet instead of offering refuge to "more than an infinitesimal number of those seeking escape from Red China" (U.S. Congress, 1962: 3), it provided funds and other help for resettlement and social aid in Hong Kong under the Far East refugee program. (Ideological concerns were present domestically as well. For instance, the government of Hong Kong tended to adopt a more liberal stance when China was in political turmoil during the Cultural Revolution that began in 1966.)

At the same time, the British were concerned that the Taiwanese representatives in the United Nations were eager to "make a big issue of the question of Chinese refugees" to embarrass the Beijing government, which would provoke unnecessary complications in the

relationships between Beijing and London (CO file 1030/1314, p. 200). In a confidential exchange, the United States was persuaded by Britain to "fully recogniz[e] that refugees in Hong Kong were in a different category from those elsewhere as they were of the same nationality as the local residents and the aim was to integrate them into the life of the colony."[9] Britain, with the help of the United States, ultimately shot down a resolution (engineered by Taiwan and its allies, and amended by Canada after much bargaining) demanding that the UNHCR expand its jurisdiction over those new Chinese arrivals in Hong Kong. Apparently, the British and U.S. stress on the unique refugee status of the Chinese immigrants helped to push for a policy of social integration in Hong Kong, viewed as a better alternative to either repatriation or massive onward emigration.

In the second place, the idea of social integration was in line with the domestic political and public appeals to the government to absorb illegal immigrants into Hong Kong society. Two quotations, one from an unofficial legislator and the other from a Chinese-language newspaper editorial, illustrate the public's readiness to accept this group of people:

> In such circumstances the maintenance of good order in Hong Kong and prevention of crime would be very difficult. . . . Simultaneously a time limit should be set for those, who have entered and have proper employment for a living, to have the opportunity to apply for registration provided they have the guarantee of their employers or persons of position. If they have not committed any crime within a reasonable time after registration, they should be given identity cards so that they may become lawful residents. This is in the interest of social stability and humanity. [Yu-Chuen Tsu, *Hansard*, 1967: 153]

> [The influx should have been prevented.] But for those who have already come, we hope the government will make life easier for them, take care of them and help them apply for identity cards. This is benevolence outside the law. [*Wah Kiu Yat Pao*, March 25, 1972]

On one hand, both quotations express a humanitarian concern, as they stress "humanity" or "benevolence outside the law." (This concern was limited only to those who had already come.) Such sentiments also accorded with popular opinion, as evidenced by the numbers of

people (many of whom were probably past refugees themselves) obstructing police efforts to repatriate illegal immigrants (Hong Kong, 1962: 212).[10] When Bishop Swanstrom, representing Hong Kong at a U.S. Senate hearing, was asked about the reaction of the local Hong Kong people to the police stopping and turning the refugees back, he replied,

> It was a feeling of desperation and sadness[;] . . . they begged me to try to do something to prevent the Hong Kong authorities from stopping these people come across. Those million refugees in Hong Kong would have absorbed those people just like the Cubans in Florida absorbed their Cuban relatives and friends in the early days. [U.S. Congress, 1962: 38]

On the other hand, proper employment as well as a clean criminal record appeared to be a major consideration in the acceptance of illegal immigrants. This emphasis on maintaining good order was central to what I call the idea of "settled residence" in immigration debates and policy considerations. In this instance, the notion served as a claim to humanitarian inclusion. It is also worth noting that the policy of acceptance in this period, though driven more by political than by economic considerations, did not run afoul of economic interests.[11] Official discourse depicted the immigrants as assets for industrial development, at a time when Hong Kong had to develop its external trade (*A Problem of People*, 1960: 11).

The unofficial legislator's emphasis on employment as a basic criterion for inclusion also resonated with the government's longstanding stress on "visible means of subsistence," "useful occupation," and "honest living," as made plain in the early ordinances on registration, deportation, and banishment. Such a discourse not only bore on the debate on immigration control but also defined the idea of a decent and proper mode of residence among the local people. Thus, by the mid-1960s, as the government was further engaged in economic and social planning, it began to find immigrants a threat to local residents' employment opportunities (*Report*, 1966-1967: 5). Although this concern then had little impact on public discourse, in the 1970s (as we will see later), its deeper discursive effect was to emerge in legislative debates.

Indeed, the discourses in favor of inclusion at the same time registered a concern about the problem of uncontrolled illegal immigration that the government "should have prevented." The problem could cause difficulties in "maintaining good order" and "preventing crime." The problem of illegal immigration was never simply about excessive population; it was often associated with different sorts of social and political concerns and fears. Such concerns and worries were encapsulated in a discourse of the problem of people, which, by the mid-1960s, was elaborated more proactively as a matter of resource control as well as of long-term state economic planning. The idea of welfare expenses and the resource constraints associated with excessive population was diffused in a number of official discourses, and it was clear that immigration control constituted part of the project both of state planning and of state building. For example, the director of immigration and the attorney general, respectively, explained the following:

> I would have thought that the control of immigration was not merely an elementary right of the independent sovereignty of this country, but also a salutary example of economic planning. No nation is bound to import a social problem, and no nation does so. There can be no doubt that the absorptive capacity of any community to take in people from abroad must give rise to social problems. [*Report*, 1966-1967: 4]

> We wish we could allow them to come, but we cannot afford to receive large numbers of immigrants in our overcrowded city and to add to the heavy burdens already placed upon our housing, educational, medical and social welfare facilities. Nevertheless, the government will give further consideration to the position of those persons who have been here for a considerable period, and who have settled down to make an honest living in Hong Kong. [Attorney General D. T. E. Roberts, *Hansard*, 1967: 262]

By the mid-1960s, the emphasis on the rights and the concerns of the sovereign state was clear.

The above discourse by the government showed a problematizing of immigration that was tightly connected to the idea of state control. The continual massive flows of Chinese immigration (as well as the mass riots in 1966 and 1967) were certainly a cause for alarm from the

point of view of good governance. Concomitantly, there developed on the state level an enhanced discourse of stateness, expressing ideas of sovereignty, boundary, planning, and control. To some extent, this reflected the indirect influence of Britain, which, as we will see in the next section, was itself then undergoing state (re)building. But the influence was also direct in obviously borrowed language: When the director of immigration spoke at the Legislative Council meeting, he made it clear that he was quoting from an official report of the House of Commons in Britain that had been released only months earlier. The language, thus appropriated, put Hong Kong squarely on a quasi-state footing.

Moreover, accompanying the state-building process was a political ideology of liberalism on guard against communism. British imperialism had, at the outset, made liberalism into a marker of ideological distinction.[12] During the cold war, it was juxtaposed more specifically against communism in China.[13] To a certain extent, immigration policy was colored with these ideological meanings. Thus, official discourses of the 1960s and the Public Order Bill of 1948 had a common underlying concern—that is, the worry of being threatened by political unrest and crime incited from China. In 1964-1965, the director of immigration explained one of the reasons for excluding immigrants: "They may be criminals or politically undesirable, or members of the large international fraternity of adventurers who live on their wits" (*Report*, 1964-1965: 4). Although the word was never used, *ideology* played a crucial role in colonial governance, as the deportation of a large number of leftist and rightist activists from Hong Kong in the 1950s and the 1960s shows. Another piece of evidence comes from a pro-government English-language newspaper, which associated the influx of immigrants in 1962 with communism: "we are turning ourselves into a Trojan horse by permitting large numbers of refugees to take up residence in Hong Kong. The major influx that took place in 1962 did much to boost the numbers of local Reds and in turn played a significant part in the troubles of 1967" (*South China Morning Post*, July 3, 1971).

In sum, in this period, international interests were critical in shaping the policy of acceptance and integration of the Chinese refugees, a policy that converged with local sentiments. A distinctive discourse of identity or belonging had not yet developed, and the ideas of

benevolence and settled residence justified humanitarian inclusion in the eyes of the government, the legislators, and the public. At the same time, however, such justifications registered a concern about the problem of people. By the mid-1960s, the discourse of the problem of people was elaborated and developed by the state as it called for tighter immigration controls as part of the project of state building.

"HONG KONG BELONGER"—POLITICS OF LOCAL BELONGING IN 1971

In 1971, the government introduced into law the immigration category of the "Hong Kong belonger." The notion, as well as the debate around it, merits special attention because it signified the first official attempt to define the rights to land and the rights to reside in terms of a positive identity category. And although this shift occurred within the larger context of the restructuring of British citizenship, its effects on identity were channeled through local immigration policy. An analysis of this legislation sheds light on four important ways in which it affected identity formation. First, it triggered the first discourse of local belonging among the Chinese. Second, the new definitions contained multiple layers of dichotomous and overlapping meanings as they differentiated between *local* and *immigrant*, *citizenship* and *belonging*, and *British* and *Chinese*. Third, the notion of belonging concealed an ironic aspect of British imperialism that, for the Hong Kong people, carried exclusionary implications, which also explained the timing of the new law. Fourth, it disclosed a dual process of state building and identity making through immigration practices.

The legal notion of belonging was originally a British invention—a paradoxical offshoot of the project of colonialism. In the aftermath of World War II, as many colonies achieved national independence, a large number of nonwhite people flocked into Britain from its former colonies. In this period, Britain was itself being recast as a nation mapped onto a changing territorial scope (Shanahan, 1997). Beginning in the 1960s, a series of immigration bills was enacted whose basic intent was to resolve the problem of overpopulation as well as ethnic migration by restricting the scope of British citizenship.[14] The notion of belonging was introduced in this context, distinguishing

between citizens who were granted right of abode in the United Kingdom and those who were not.

In 1962, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act defined a "United Kingdom belonger" as a person who had definite tangible ties with the United Kingdom on account of either having been born there or having acquired a passport there. In 1968, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act further narrowed the definition by requiring an ancestral link with the United Kingdom. In the Immigration Act of 1971, the notion of "patriality" appeared, giving even more emphasis to the formula of belonging that previous legislation had already made prominent. Its effect was to guarantee that those included were primarily white people. The distinction between patrials and nonpatrials was embodied in the dual or even multiple structure of citizenship, as laid out in the British Nationality Acts; for nonpatrials, the concept of citizenship no longer necessarily carried with it the right to freedom from immigration control.[15] This marked an unusual separation between ideas of nationality and citizenship. Apparently, "Britishness," both political and cultural, was to remain exclusively attributed to the indigenous population of the mother country (Shanahan, 1997). In Martin Barker's (1981) terms, it reflected an ideology of "new racism" that viewed cultural differences as insurmountable. As a result of the several British nationality acts, the Hong Kong population, despite their British nationality, shared the plight of non-British people who were denied the right to move to the United Kingdom.

Obviously, the notion of (British) belonging had both positive and negative (or exclusionary) dimensions. When the idea was transplanted to places outside Britain, the positive definition helped to conceal its exclusionary effects. In Hong Kong, belonging was presented as a positive creation of local legislation to control immigration: "it was thought desirable to include a definition of the phrase 'Hong Kong belonger,' which in fact closely follows the previous definition of a person who was not immigrant, but it has the advantage of saying positively what it means" (Attorney General Roberts, *Hansard*, 1971-1972: 110). Before 1971, the different ordinances on immigration and registration were targeted at control over immigrants without stating residence as a matter of rights among the local-born population.[16] It was not until the Immigration Bill of 1971 that the identity category

"Hong Kong belonger" was introduced in the first attempt to establish in positive terms who was entitled to enter and to reside in the territory.

As an immigration category, "Hong Kong belonger" was differentiated from "Chinese resident" and "resident United Kingdom belonger."[17] While all three categories enjoyed the rights of entry and unconditional stay, only a "Hong Kong belonger" had the right to freedom from removal and deportation. The category both indicated one's place of birth in Hong Kong and denoted one's citizenship in terms of political allegiance to Britain.[18] On its introduction, the term was intensely debated among the Chinese legislators, whose reaction must be understood to fully grasp its cultural and political significance.

Among the local Chinese populace, the distinction between local-born and immigrant had remained largely political and formal, defined by place of birth, political allegiance or citizenship, and the right of abode in the British territories. Internally, differences were not marked culturally or in other substantive ways. In 1971, the government proposed to distinguish only between Hong Kong belonger and immigrant, confining the right to enter to the former.[19] However, legislators, public critics, and local groups protested and contested this meaning of "belonging"; they succeeding in securing the right of entry for Chinese immigrants (without excluding United Kingdom belongers).

The Chinese unofficial members within the legislature strongly favored the residence rights of the Chinese immigrants and proposed that they be assigned to a special category, "Chinese resident." For example, P. C. Woo, contesting the government's position, argued that "belonging" should be understood much more broadly to include Chinese immigrants who had already settled down in Hong Kong and therefore felt they belonged to the place. His speech is worth quoting at length:

> The Oxford English Dictionary says it [i.e., "to belong"] means "to be resident," "connected with," and it gives the meaning of "belong here" as "to live here; be right placed under this heading, etc." This is the meaning which applies to the large numbers of Chinese people at present in Hong Kong, who have now for many years "belonged here" in the normal sense of these words and who indeed cannot, at the present time, belong to anywhere else. . . .

> This matter is very important in the sphere of "closing the gap" between the Government and the people and demonstrating Government's real concern for the *de facto* Chinese residents of Hong Kong. [*Hansard*, 1971-1972: 101-2]

Woo claimed that he was expressing the opinion of the Chinese community, pointing out that "since the first reading of this bill on the 21st July last there have been many adverse comments and criticisms in the press and by local organizations" (*Hansard*, 1971-1972: 101). Another unofficial member, Oswald Cheung, similarly urged, "The privileges to be given to such Chinese residents will, we trust, give widespread public satisfaction, and meet public opinion which has been expressed since the bill was first published" (*Hansard*, 1971-1972: 104). Finally, acknowledging the opinions of the two unofficial legislators and taking into account public opinion—"various representations which had been received from public bodies and comments which had been contained in editorials and in the correspondence columns of newspapers" (Attorney General Roberts, *Hansard*, 1971-1972: 108)—the government made several amendments to the bill, including the addition of a definition of "Chinese resident." The public reception of the final legislation was very positive, as one newspaper editorialized: "This is an important decision, concerning the rights of Chinese residents who constituted the biggest proportion in the local population. With careful considerations, the Department finally reaches a decision that is in line with public opinion. It shows much wisdom" (*Sing Tao Daily*, July 16, 1971).

It was most remarkable that the struggle for political rights had expressed itself as contestation over a cultural sense of belonging, which in turn was transferred into political form as a redefined immigration category—"Chinese resident," a person who was "wholly or partly of Chinese race" and who had been ordinarily resident in Hong Kong for a continuous period of seven or more years. The claim to local belonging was now based on "ethnic affinity" and "settled residence," and it was to be confirmed as a matter of rights rather than benevolence. Moreover, the idea of settled residence was tied to length of habitation, regardless of employment status.

Throughout the debate, notions of local belonging, rights, immigrant, and Chineseness were defined and contested in ways that

showed different layers of dichotomous and overlapping meanings. On one hand, the formal distinction created between Hong Kong belonger and Chinese resident, which rested ultimately on a political distinction based on allegiance to Britain, set locals against immigrants. On the other hand, the distinction remained largely formal rather than substantive because the subjective sense of belonging articulated by the disputants blurred their difference; moreover, the government's amendments gave both categories of people some common, fundamental rights in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, a by-product of using settled residence as a claim to local belonging and rights was a different and new division—one between Chinese residents and immigrants. While members of both groups shared an immigrant rather than local origin, only the former were able to secure certain residence rights. In claims to belonging and basic rights, the more fundamental division would appear to lie between Hong Kong belonger and Chinese resident (of immigrant origin), on the one side, and relatively recent immigrant, on the other. The division nonetheless remained fluid, in that an immigrant who could prove settled residence—that is, residency for seven years—could become a Chinese resident.

In sum, the identity category of Hong Kong belonger was a by-product of the exclusionary immigration and citizenship policy of the British government. It created a group demarcated not only from Chinese residents but also—both politically and culturally—from the British. Yet since the site of exclusion lay far away in the territory of Britain, the people had little immediate sense of exclusion until the transition to Chinese control in the 1980s and the 1990s. Moreover, the discourse of local belonging effectively concealed this paradoxical aspect of British imperialism by relying on positive and absolute terms: *belonging* was defined as a set of political rights and entitlement within the local context that were denied to other categories of people.

Attorney General D. T. E. Roberts referred to the changing immigration policies in Britain to justify local measures to protect state sovereignty:

> First, it has always been accepted that every country has an absolute right to refuse admission and to expel any alien; and to do so completely arbitrarily. . . . [O]ver the past decade we have seen a consistent

> tightening up of the rules concerning entry and stay of Commonwealth citizens into the United Kingdom. I feel sure that honourable Members would agree that we should be failing in our duty to ourselves if we did not see to it that our law enabled Hong Kong to have a similar measure of protection. [*Hansard*, 1970-1971: 784]

Thus, an agent of the colonial state simultaneously asserted the need for security control and repressed the exclusionary impact of British policies on the Hong Kong people. The idea of immigration control was rationalized as part of the state's absolute right to control security. This official discourse of state making ran parallel with the debates on local belonging among the Chinese legislators, giving the term *belonging* two facets as it signified a concomitant process of state building and identity making. Even as the framing of local belonging obscured the fact of external exclusion by the British government, its creation of a new distinction between Hong Kong belonger and Chinese resident led to further contestation, blurring that distinction both subjectively and with regard to local residence rights.

The episode was a significant one that shows how the state, via immigration legislation, unintentionally facilitated talk about, as well as the forging of, a sense of local belonging in society. Legislation served as a means of creating and negotiating the definitions of local identity and rights among the government, legislators, and the public. As a result, dichotomous, overlapping, and fluid distinctions and subdistinctions were created around the notions of local and immigrant, Hong Kong and Chinese, and rights and belonging. (In retrospect, we can see that the precedent set by tying the claim of permanent belonging to seven-year residency still affects Hong Kong today.) Moreover, the local people soon transmuted the notion of "Hong Kong belonger," introduced as a formal immigration category, into a direct, everyday term: "Hong Kong people." For instance, the title of a Chinese editorial simply addressed "Immigration Law and the Rights of 'Hong Kong People'" (*Sing Tao Daily*, July 16, 1971). Thus, an official category, though perhaps not directly forming an identity, could provide a basis for the public to crystallize or forge their negotiated talk of identity. More specifically, as the idea of "settled residence" was contested, it became a claim to belonging and to rights.

At this time, the discourse of local belonging remained thin and generalized, failing to evoke an elaborate narrative of identity. Yet as time went on, the idea of settled residence acquired new and more specific meanings as part of the hegemonic formation of a Hong Kong identity. As we will see, in the second half of the 1970s, it became attached to claims not so much for inclusion and integration as for distinction and exclusion vis-à-vis another category of Chinese immigrant—the illegal immigrant.

*TOWARD A REPROBLEMATIZATION OF "ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION" AND THE HEGEMONIC FORMATION OF IDENTITY IN THE 1970*S

The second half of the 1970s saw the government moving toward a policy of full reproblematization of illegal Chinese immigration. While factors pushing immigration from China remained strong, the international context had changed: Sino-U.S. relations were already showing marked improvement over their chill at the height of the cold war.[20] As the fear of the political threat of Chinese communism decreased, the perceived need for a continued humanitarian policy of accepting Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong also diminished. Locally, the policy of full reproblematization of illegal immigration was carried out through a multitude of legal, coercive, and interventionist activities that empowered the state as the agent policing both sovereign territoriality and the domestic order. The policy went hand in hand with a hegemonic articulation of Hong Kong identity emerging through the interplay of old and new discursive elements. This section analyzes how the changing discourse of the problem of people, the constantly evoked idea of settled residence, and an unfolding narrative of progress and prosperity were interrelated.

In 1974, the government introduced the "reach-base" policy that allowed only illegal immigrants who made it to urban areas to stay.[21] Illegal immigration was increasingly becoming a problem of the state that required special security measures. In October 1980, the issue of illegal immigration finally came to a head. Under the amended Immigration Ordinance, the government changed its long-term approach

by abolishing the reach-base policy. This move toward exclusion was prompted by the wave of illegal immigration from 1978 to 1980 that followed China's economic reform and open-door policy.[22] With that change, state control over both territorial security and the domestic community increased considerably. At the border, illegal immigrants found no way to gain legal residence in Hong Kong; inside the border, they were liable to forced repatriation. Moreover, legislation was enacted to require all adult residents of Hong Kong to carry identity cards or equivalent proof of legal status that must be produced in public places at police request. Since then, the identity card has become a symbol of local identity and legal residence required of people seeking employment and public welfare; coercive measures are applied to those who fail to submit it or who employ someone lacking it.

Accompanying the policy change was a clear shift in discourse concerning illegal immigration, the result of the interplay among preexisting discourses, the new terms used to define the problem, and the changing socioeconomic contexts. As we have seen, by the mid-1960s, as the government became more engaged in economic and social planning, it began to find immigrants a threat to local residents' employment opportunities. It foresaw problems for established residents forced to compete with the immigrants when the economy soured. The government's view was also echoed in the English-language press:

> The flood of refugees across the border is in fact putting intolerable strain on the ambitious plans of the Government to make life better for the Hong Kong man-in-the-street. . . . The survey shows that the immigrants also "break the rice bowls" of many Hongkong workers—because they are prepared to work harder, for longer hours and for less money. [*South China Morning Post*, November 19, 1974]

> Where, it must be asked, do our loyalties lie—to our own people or to the concept of an open door immigration policy and an ensuing economic free-for-all? If we are ever to inculcate a sense of belonging, a local loyalty to Hongkong and ultimately an element of civic pride we shall only do it by showing that our first concern is for those now here. [*South China Morning Post*, November 20, 1974]

Potential immigrants were perceived not only as a socioeconomic threat but also as an obstacle to the cultivation of identity, loyalty, and belonging among "our own people." As the sense of local belonging strengthened over time, this idea of an external threat to the "local" gained increasing prominence in immigration discourse in official, legislative, and public arenas. Previously, when the idea of settled residence was used as a claim to broad inclusion, the notion coexisted uneasily with the discourse of the problem of people. Its reinterpretation in the service of stressing self-protection against some external others brought the two strains into accord.

By the late 1970s, legislators began to represent illegal immigrants one-sidedly as a burden and a possible threat to the existing order. While an economic explanation of policy shifts emphasized the changing employment outlook, the accompanying discourse on immigration issues also suggested an emergent local identity along the subjective dimension within a new narrative framework. It entailed an articulation of specific discursive and emotional codes that could not be simply reduced to a natural outgrowth of economic development. The new narrative included a keen awareness of the community's newly achieved prosperity and stability, an alertness to any threat to its collective achievement in society, a strong sense of Hong Kong identity, a feeling of resentment toward the illegal immigrants for posing such a threat, and, most important, a determined will that Hong Kong succeed economically and politically:

> The number of illegal immigrants from China is alarmingly high. It has not only generated a demand for large public expenditure . . . but also added to the burden on the government as some of the illegal immigrants who fail to make a living would turn eventually to crime, thus constituting a threat to law and order. Of course, the most important point is that these illegal immigrants have relatively low productivity and therefore they cannot contribute much to the various sectors in Hong Kong. [Wong Lam, *Hansard*, 1979-1980: 652]

> Far from being welcomed by our people, the illegal immigrants are now more and more resented as they are seen to be eroding the improvement in standards that the people of Hong Kong have worked so hard to achieve. . . . [T]he people of Hong Kong were so alive to the danger that traditional hospitality was creating, that they had come to

> accept that it must be abandoned despite the personal trouble and inconvenience entailed. [Governor Murray MacLehose, *Hansard*, 1980-1981: 103]

> Hong Kong is set on a course towards becoming a high technology and relatively high wage economy. . . . [I]t is essential that our plans for improvement in housing conditions, education and medical and other services should succeed. To do so we must have a reasonable degree of population control. [Governor MacLehose, *Hansard*, 1979-1980: 9-10]

The government believed that the traditional policy of "hospitality" had to become a thing of the past before it undermined the quality of life that "the people of Hong Kong have worked so hard to achieve." When the economy slowed down, illegal immigrants were perceived to threaten the employment opportunities of the local people, but they would be no more welcome during an economic upturn. For the issues were no longer absorptive capacity and humanitarianism but rather a sense of achievement, a feeling of repugnance, and a desire to ensure further economic development.

Through discourse, the Hong Kong people were constructed as a group of "us" with the same history and aspirations, while illegal immigrants were cast as "them"—as dangerous outsiders. In this way, the discourse around illegal immigrants that helped to legitimate the changing policies simultaneously worked to delineate a strong sense of Hong Kong identity. More specifically, as the government's determination to develop an advanced economy grew, uncontrolled immigration was associated not—as it had been in the 1950s—with poverty, poor hygiene, and overcrowding but with lawbreaking, low productivity, and declining standards of living. There were worries about the quality as well as the size of the potential immigrant population. That is, the problem was not simply an excessive population causing a strain on public resources but also undesirable immigrants making little economic contribution and thereby pulling down the living standard. By the late 1970s, underlying the dominant discourse against illegal immigration was a sense of cultural distinction from the generalized other—namely, "mainlanders." Apparently, locality itself—with all the meanings embodied in it—had become a basis for distinguishing identity among the Hong Kong people.

By this time, the Hong Kong government had begun to take a more determined stance against illegal immigration from China. Accompanying its long-term policy change was the articulation of a new hegemonic narrative of economic prosperity and growth. Officials and elites played a leading role in shaping the new narrative through policies and discourses, and the new policy also enjoyed widespread public support.[23] The implicit idea of difference was suggestive of certain symbolic and discursive processes going on in the society. While the development of a new identity was probably based in part on the changing economy, the identity formation as well as the sense of distinction vis-à-vis China also had more fundamental ideological roots.

During the 1970s, the ideological divide between liberalism and communism remained deep, as the socioeconomic differences between Hong Kong and China widened with their growing disparity in urbanization. Such differences also translated into a sense of cultural distinction.[24] Thus, as the English-language newspaper described massive queues of unregistered immigrants seeking identification cards, it clearly expressed a strong sense of cultural superiority over the people from China:

> The presence of these pathetic people standing with bundles of clothes, surrounded by discarded paper and litter, is a forewarning of the problems we face educating them to become responsible, useful and productive members of Hong Kong society—far from easy after a lifetime in a regimented, disciplined community where self-motivation is discouraged in the interests of filling tasks for the commune, production brigade, factory or work place. [*South China Morning Post*, May 23, 1979]

The communist system was not only understood as a political system but was also associated with economic backwardness and cultural inferiority. Immigrants coming from China had therefore to be educated to become "responsible, useful and productive members of Hong Kong society." Politico-ideological distinctions and socioeconomic differences between Hong Kong and China had become deeply intertwined and could work to reinforce each other. To be sure, the newspaper quoted above represented an elitist, pro-establishment stance, but this image of the "mainlander" as inferior other—backward, pathetic, and unrefined—appeared as well in the symbolic figure "Ah Chan" in

a very popular television program in the early 1980s, indicating the prevalence of this stereotypical representation around that time (Siu, 1986; Ma Kit Wai, 1996).

IMMIGRATION POLICY AND IDENTITY POLITICS: THE LEGACY

This article has analyzed the mutual constitution of immigration policy making and identity formation. It presumes that identity is as much about the formation of community as about the making of boundaries, distinctions, or differentiations among people on the societal and intersocietal levels through discursive and institutional practices.[25] My conceptual argument is threefold. First, immigration often provides the site through which external forces are channeled to become internal issues at the policy, institutional, and discursive levels. Second, official definitions, categories, and classifications may not define an identity in themselves, but their creations can evoke consent, trigger contestation, conceal conflicts, produce lines of distinction that otherwise might not exist, and be transmuted into everyday usage, impinging on identity formation in the process. Third, while identity formation may have its material basis in a changing economy, it is not a direct outgrowth of economic development. Rather, it is often the result of the interplay among preexisting discourses of inclusion and distinction, new hegemonic narratives, and changing social contexts.

Focusing on the foreign states (the U.S. and the British governments), the local government, and the news media as three major institutional sites of decision making and hegemonic formation, my study has shown the trajectory of the discourse of identity in tandem with the history of immigration in Hong Kong between 1950 and 1980. On one hand, international politics, which figured prominently in the refugee question in the 1950s and the 1960s, later gave way to local interests (presumably when outside powers' earlier purposes had been well served). On the other hand, the colonial government at first adopted a primarily reactive and accommodating position in its policy regarding the continual influxes of Chinese immigration, but there was a gradual shift over time to measures of more deliberate control, greater

planning, and hegemonic discourses. Political elites and the public also played a part in contesting and negotiating identity boundaries. As Hong Kong's demography and socioeconomic conditions changed, the process of identity articulation was being mediated through at least four intersecting discursive developments: the rise of a changing and contested notion of "settled residence," the introduction of the notion of "Hong Kong belonging," an evolving discourse of the "problem of people," and the unfolding of a new hegemonic narrative of economic success.

The argument above has traced discursive continuity and change over time. In particular, by the late 1970s, the idea of settled residence, which was initially a claim for nondiscriminatory inclusion, was reinterpreted through a new narrative of identity in such a way that it converged with the discourse of the problem of people to stress self-protection against massive immigration from China. In the 1980s, as the 1997 expiration of Britain's lease of the New Territories was in the public spotlight, such developments made the Hong Kong people increasingly conscious of their local identity vis-à-vis China. The recent right-of-abode saga, which involved the mainland-born children of Hong Kong residents after the handover, was illustrative of such cultural and discursive continuity in society. In 1999, the government redefined and curtailed the right of abode of these people by amending the law and by seeking a reinterpretation of the Basic Law from the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. In the process, the government relied on the prevailing sense of Hong Kong identity and presented a negative stereotype of the mainland-born Chinese (Ku, 2001). As the Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa stressed, "We must not allow these achievements to dissipate or Hong Kong to go downhill in the new millennium" (*South China Morning Post*, May 7, 1999). Remarkably, the rhetoric in the late 1990s was in fact reminiscent of the legislative discourse two decades earlier: "We are not prepared to be submerged. We are not prepared to see hard won improvements in the quality of life whittled away" (*Hansard*, 1980-1981: 111).

The idea of settled residence, with its historically specific connotations, may shed light on one apparent contradiction on the level of policy and discourse in contemporary Hong Kong. On one hand, many residents are of immigrant origin from China, and Chinese

immigrants continue to be admitted; on the other hand, sentiments of prejudice and exclusionary practices against China-born children are widespread in Hong Kong, as was shown in the recent right-of-abode controversy. I suggest that the contradiction is "reconciled" by the creation of two variants of the immigrant category—illegal immigrant and new immigrant—as cases deviating from the norm of settled residence.

Since the late 1970s, with full reproblematization, the notion of "illegality" has assigned immigrants different kinds of negative meanings (for example, threats to law and order) as well as provided justifications for tight immigration control. More recently, the invention of the informal category of "new immigrant" has evoked images of a lazy, dependent, unproductive, and uncompetitive person through various welfare, political, and popular discourses. *New* suggests an element of temporal relativity, always contingent in its boundary. It is a signifier whose meaning is always overdetermined by those already resident or settled immigrants who have succeeded in establishing "precedence" and who thereby can assume cultural authority in deciding who are the Johnny-come-latelies and what makes them not yet local. In other words, it is not the Chinese immigrant per se that is represented as a threat or enemy to the society. The perceived threat lies rather in those who form an illegal presence and those who, though granted legal residence, are labeled as not yet being able to integrate into the society because they lack the necessary cultural resources to be competent Hong Kong people. Such representations are implicated in the changing discourse of the problem of people, which has been reproduced over the past two decades to become the hegemonic discourse on Hong Kong identity today.

Undoubtedly, the issue of Hong Kong identity cannot be reduced to a matter of immigration. Nonetheless, a study of continuity and change in immigration practices and discourses in terms of the creation and negotiation of categories and distinctions, the bases for inclusion and exclusion, and the changing strategies of problematization is highly relevant and informative. At the very least, it can enrich our understanding of the complexity of identity formation in a way that both draws on and goes beyond the simple dichotomous framework of us versus them, or of Hong Kong versus China.

NOTES

1. Under the reach-base policy, those arrested on illegal entry in the border areas were repatriated to China, whereas those who evaded arrest and subsequently entered the urban areas were deemed to have "reached base" and were allowed to stay.

2. A department of immigration independent of the police was set up under the Immigration Service Bill of 1961.

3. The booklet with the same title was first published in 1956 as a chapter in the Hong Kong government's *Annual Report*; it reappeared in the first section of the new edition in 1960, and my research draws heavily on it.

4. Among those who came after World War II, the government distinguished political refugees from economic immigrants: "The increase of population up to 1949 has been called 'economic' immigration. . . . Then came the victory of the communist faction in China and, shortly afterwards, the Korean War. The first event was responsible for the influx of the political refugees" (*A Problem of People*, 1960: 10).

5. For discussion of the question of identity in relation to illegal immigration, see Crick (1995), Freeman (1995), Hartman (1998), Mehan (1997), Coutin (1998), Ngai (1998), and Rosberg (1978).

6. The international principle then dominant was humanitarianism, which established obligations of states toward those defined as refugees that entitled those granted such a status to certain benefits (see Skran, 1995).

7. For example, the Immigration (Control and Offences) Ordinance of 1958 incorporated additional deterrents to illegal immigration. In 1962, a special anti-illegal immigration branch of the police force was formed. The government's policy was to "apprehend as many as possible of those people who seek to enter Hong Kong illegally and to repatriate them to their countries of domicile" (*Report*, 1965-1966: 8).

8. A brief prepared by the Foreign Office for the British delegation at the eighth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner for Refugees (Geneva, October 22, 1962).

9. Letter from British Embassy in Washington to Foreign Office, Whitehall, November 17, 1960 (CO file 1030/1310, p. 52).

10. There were also detailed accounts in the *New York Times* of such attempts by the residents to frustrate police efforts to stem the flow of refugees (see Dial, 1964: 90).

11. Statistics suggest that rapid industrialization enabled a relatively easy absorption of the immigrants into the economy. Vagg (1993) cites England and Rear (1975) to show a trend of decreasing unemployment rates, which fell from about 25% in 1950 and 12.2% in 1954 to only 1.7% in 1961.

12. In Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, liberalism was associated with Englishness and thereby signified a civilized culture (Doyle, 1989; Smith, 1986). The conflicting notions of imperialism and liberalism were mutually intertwined through the paradoxical framework of "liberal imperialism" (Semmel, 1960). Within the colonial state, political discourse in the period before World War II illustrated just such a spirit, which associated liberty with Englishness: that "the Chinese . . . have come here as free men, attracted by liberal institutions, equitable treatment, and the justice of our rule . . . justifies pride in the name of Englishman" (qtd. from Sir William Des Voeux's last dispatch by Attorney General J. H. Kemp, *Hansard*, 1925: 97).

13. Governor Claud Severn remarked on Hong Kong's "propinquity to a district which owing to a long period of war and misgovernment has become a fertile soil for the cultivation of all the worst growths of bolshevism, anarchism and communism" (*Hansard*, 1925: 45).

14. These bills included, for example, the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of 1962 and 1968, the Immigration Act of 1971, and the various British Nationality Acts enacted in the 1970s and the 1980s. For a general review of these bills, see Juss (1993). For their particular relevance to Hong Kong, see Jowett et al. (1995), and Ng Chi-Sum, Lee, and Qu Ayang (1997).

15. In the 1960s, the imperatives of a restrictive United Kingdom immigration policy, first expressed in the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of 1962 and 1968 and then formalized in the Immigration Act of 1971, split citizens of the United Kingdom and colonies status into three classes: those with a right of entry to the United Kingdom (patrials), those with a right of entry to a colony (for example, Hong Kong belongers), and those with no right of entry anywhere (most notably, the East African Asians). This position, set forth as the country prepared to join the European Economic Community, caused some embarrassment to the British government. A 1981 act sought to remove that embarrassment by renaming the categories "British citizen," "British dependent territories citizen," and "British overseas citizen." For detailed accounts, see Jowett et al. (1995) and White (1989).

16. The stated purpose of these ordinances was "to control the entry into, exit from and movement within the Colony of persons not born therein" (*Hansard*, 1949: 14).

17. A further distinction was made between "resident United Kingdom belonger" and "United Kingdom belonger," the former being only those United Kingdom belongers who had ordinarily resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least seven years.

18. In 1971, the category included people who were natural-born or naturalized British subjects in Hong Kong. In 1982, with the enactment of the Immigration (Amendment) Bill, the definition was tightened to include only those who declared their nationality as British. It was replaced with a broader category of "Hong Kong permanent resident" in the Immigration (Amendment) Bill of 1987.

19. Among the immigrants, a United Kingdom belonger who had resided in Hong Kong for at least ten years was to be accorded special standing, protected from removal and deportation.

20. In the late 1960s, U.S. and Chinese political leaders began to work toward improved bilateral relations. In 1971, President Nixon announced that Henry Kissinger, his assistant for national security affairs, had made a secret diplomatic trip to China. In the next year, the president himself visited China, and both sides pledged to work toward the full normalization of diplomatic relations.

21. In the mid-1970s, the flow of illegal immigration increased dramatically, with the average number of illegal immigrants caught in a day jumping from 9.4 in 1970 to 54.3 in 1974 (Lam and Liu, 1998: 13). This influx explains why the government adopted a stricter measure against illegal immigration in 1974.

22. The average daily number of illegal immigrants arrested at the border increased tenfold, from 23 in 1978 to 246 in 1979, and the daily number that evaded capture and reached base increased ninefold over the same year, from 31 to 282 (Lam and Liu, 1998: 13).

23. *Wah Kiu Yat Pao* (October 24, 1980) reported that the new policy had the full support of different sectors in society, and a *Sing Tao Daily* editorial (October 24, 1980) called the policy good.

24. I am drawing here on Bourdieu's idea of cultural distinction, which he discusses in the context of class relations (Bourdieu, 1984).

25. For the idea of identity as boundary, see Hall and du Gay (1998).

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