Post-colonialism, Sinicization and the Governance of Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong*

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1. Introduction

“The oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors… They have no consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of an oppressed class… The oppressed find in the oppressors their model of ‘manhood.’… The behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor.” -- Paulo Freire (2000: Chapter 1)

Harvard professor Joseph Nye defined soft power as “the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals” (Nye 1990). Ones may associate this with, namely colonialism, Gramsci’s hegemony, or Hardt & Negri’s “empire”. In spite of the return of the territories to the indigenous population after decolonization, as postcolonial scholars (e.g. Fanon 1967, Said 1995) argued, genuine independence, if possible, was far from being achieved. The influences of colonialism and the related issues of assimilation never fade away (India is a good example). While the colonizers did not have power to assimilate the colonized in a total and complete way, their cultural imperialism, albeit never complete and always ambivalent (Bhabha 1994), subtly framed the minds of the colonized, especially the elites, through education, official encounters, media, and above all every kind of consumption practices (dinning, reading, sports, clothing, lifestyle and so on). The colonial legacies crystallized at the deepest level of the once colonized society that could not be easily erased, because colonialism dispossessed the colonized of their own identity, tradition, pride, and self representation. The language, cultural practices, values and tastes, modes of perception, as well as representations of the colonizers continuously haunt the colonized.

The detrimental legacy of colonialism manifests in two ways. In some cases, the colonized elites were assimilated by the colonizers’ culture, when they took power, they still ruled in a way not so different from the colonizers. In other cases, when the colonized elites launched their resistance against the colonizers, nationalism in terms of similarity and unity was articulated to mobilize the mass that was heterogeneous and culturally different. The newly found state inevitably selectively and strategically recruited certain groups of people in its project of modernization and nation-building, while some subaltern groups were consciously or unconsciously left out of the state

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project (Guha and Spivak 1988). From a postcolonial perspective, both cases involve a dominating cultural discourse shaping the very identity of the subordinated through monopolizing their representation. In the former, the colonized elites, who had been civilized by the colonizers’ education, administrative system, political socialization and lifestyle, continued to rule their people in the similar manner as their colonizers. In other words, the colonized elites were merely in a body of the colonized but with a colonizer’s mind. In the latter, on the one hand, the colonized elites were still intellectually struggling with the colonial degenerate racial stereotypes of their people and culture (Said 1995) by searching and building anti-colonial and anti-Eurocentric political knowledge and experiences in which nationalism and socialism were often employed as alternatives. On the other hand, in pursuing a unitary nation as an anti-colonial strategy, the colonized elites, were levelling the whole population, consciously or unconsciously ignoring the class, gender, ethnic, and cultural differences. Consequently, a new form of domination, or internal colonization if you like, was established. This new form of domination manifested itself in two ways:

1. assimilating different subpopulations into the elites’ culture;
2. marginalizing the unassimilated groups by misrepresenting their cultural values and ignoring their contribution to the nation in fighting against colonialism (Guha and Spivak 1988).

In many ex-colonial countries, the abovementioned postcolonial situation is still present in most, if not all, of them. For some newly industrializing economies, like Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong, the colonial legacy is not only cultural, but also demographic. As mentioned before, European colonization brought along with, both voluntary and involuntary, migration of the colonized to other colonies for empire maintenance and expansion. As a result, besides white Europeans, people from other colonies with different races and ethnicities settled with the indigenous population of the host colony. This changed the rather homogenous ethnic demographic makeup of the host colony into a multiethnic one. During the struggles against colonialism, some of these migrated colonized groups might join the fight. After decolonization, native nationalism was always sought to unify the diverse ethnic groups into a single nation-state. Nonetheless, it only ended with exacerbating the ethnic divisions if the ethnic groups were numerically comparable, or with marginalizing the numerically small ethnic groups. The multiracial problems remain a major political issue in these ex-colonies.

The demographic composition of the ex-colonies becomes more complicated as a result of international migration alongside globalization. Although international migration is not a new phenomenon, the current trends and patterns of migration under globalization are different from those of the past (Pries 1999; Portes 2003; Levitt 2001). Castles and Miller (2003: 7-9) employ the term “the age of migration” to denote these new trends and practices of transnational migration: more and more countries are affected by the growing volume of migratory movements. Migratory movements take various forms, like labour migration and refugee or permanent settlement. Migratory chains once started with one type of movement often continue with other forms; migration movements are gendered and become more feminized; and migration has been politicized...
in many advanced countries. In all, migrants, both permanent and temporary, are increasingly integrated with the functioning of the global economy. But are the migrants integrated with their host countries? When globalization and transnational migration continue, more and more countries will have to face multiracial problems. A single-race nation will become a rarity.

Making things even more complicated is the neo-colonialism associated with current trends of globalization. Neoliberal economic globalization, advocated by Western politicians, transnational corporations and Western-dominated international organizations, like the IMF and WTO, establishes a new global economic order that perpetuates the old asymmetric economic North-South relationships. In order to maintain competitiveness and attract Western capital, the indigenous elites and middle classes of the ex-colonies, just like their predecessors in the colonial period, mimic the Westerner, especially the American, in terms of language, business culture, policy and so on. Moreover, since the current form of globalization is basically Western-oriented, if not merely American-centred, the past colonial white-male supremacy and the degenerate, inferior non-white-male stereotypes are permeated and inscribed in the emerging global culture that affects not only the elites and middle classes of the ex-colonies, but also the ordinary people. Consequently, the people of the ex-colonies may increasingly appreciate Western values, admire the West’s material progress, mimic Western cultural practices, and pursue or aspire to a Western lifestyle, while at the same time demeaning their own as less civilized and less advanced. Even worse, they may internalize the white supremacy and negative stereotypes of other groups: pleasing Westerners but discriminating against others. Suffice to say, this neo-colonial form of racism has become more and more assimilating and pervasive.

Against the abovementioned prelude, we will examine the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong and see how colonialism, neo-colonialism and Chinese neo-nationalism are combined differently to create two separate discriminatory and exclusionary mechanisms against the two groups. By Hong Kong’s ethnic minorities, we refer to new immigrants from Mainland China and other non-Chinese inhabitants and immigrants from other countries.

2. Social Exclusion of the Hong Kong Ethnic Minorities

After 150 years of colonization, the colonial discourse of white supremacy and degenerate others has deeply shaped the mindset of Hong Kong people. People with darker skin are shown much less regard than the white Westerners in Hong Kong. Indeed, race and ethnicity mingled with class play an important role in constituting a racist mentality. In the past, the Hong Kong government insisted that Hong Kong did not have any serious racial discrimination problems, and preferred educating the public to legislate the Racial Discrimination Ordinance (RDO hereafter). Indeed, the major reason for the government to deny the existence of racial discrimination is their ignorance of the problem. Before 1999, the government did not collect information, even basic demographic profiles, on Hong Kong’s ethnic minorities. With more and more pressures from local NGOs and international representatives from the UN Human Rights
Committee, the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the government did its first survey on ethnic minorities in 1999 and asked “relevant” questions in its recent population census. In 2002, the government at last set up the Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony and the Race Relations Unit to deal with racial problems. In 2003, the government decided to legislate against racial discrimination and began to consult the public. However, the government still insisted not considering new Chinese immigrants as an ethnic minority and excluded them from the protection against discrimination, despite numerous objections raised by NGOs and scholars (*South China Morning Post, SCMP* hereafter, Feb 11, 2005).

From the issue of the RDO, we can see that the notion of “multicultural” can only be applied to Hong Kong as a descriptive term. It merely implies the existence of diverse ethnic groups. Multiculturalism in term of mutual tolerance and recognition is absent in Hong Kong. Hong Kong ethnic minorities seldom receive the recognition they deserve. Instead, social exclusion, if not outright discrimination, is commonly experienced by them. According to Madanipour, Cars and Allen (1998:22), “Social exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined… create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhood”. In the following, we will show the social exclusion of the non-white ethnic minorities and attempt to explain this phenomenon through Sassen’s social polarization thesis (Sassen, 1991; Lee, Wong and Law, 2007).

Some ethnic minorities in Hong Kong do receive high praise. Hong Kong’s ethnic minority population is bifurcated (Li et al. 1998; Chiu and Lui, 2004). There is a small portion of highly paid migrants or inhabitants that mostly come from advanced countries such as the U.S. and Japan, and a large proportion of lowly paid migrant labour or inhabitants from developing areas like Mainland China, the Philippines, and Thailand. The distribution of ethnic groups and their median monthly income according to their ethnicities is presented in Table 1 in which indicates that non-Chinese groups constitute 5.1% of the total population. However, there are some difficulties in defining Chinese immigrants because Hong Kong is basically a Chinese society and, because of historical reasons, has been separated from China one and a half century. Currently, although Hong Kong has been returned to China, it has been allowed to maintain its borders under the “one country, two systems” arrangement.

This is illustrated by the fact that the Hong Kong government adopted a seven-year criterion to distinguish new Chinese immigrants from earlier ones because under the Immigration Ordinance, one can become a permanent resident after living continuously in Hong Kong for at least seven years. Thus, new Chinese immigrants are defined as “persons from the Mainland having resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years” (PMR hereafter). In 2006, PMRs constituted about 3.2% of the total population.

**Table 1. Ethnic Groups and Median Monthly Income by Ethnicity, 2006**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Median Monthly Income from Main Employment (HK$)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Proportion of Ethnic Minorities in the whole Population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian (other than Chinese)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>112,453</td>
<td>3,370</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>87,840</td>
<td>3,320***</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>20,444</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>11,900</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>13,189</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepalese</td>
<td>15,950</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>11,111</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>4,812</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian</td>
<td>7,851</td>
<td>10,500**</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White***</td>
<td>36,384</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>18,092</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2,172</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>** Total</td>
<td>342,198</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMR (Chinese)*</td>
<td>217,103</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole population</td>
<td>5,864,346</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* PMR is the short form for “Persons from the Mainland having resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years”.
** The monthly median income represents the earnings of the Bangladeshi, Sri-Lankan, and other Asians.
*** The figures refer to the “White” only. Those for the “Black”, no matter Europeans, Americans, Australians or New Zealanders, are included in “Others”.
**** HK$3,480 was Hong Kong’s legalized minimum wage for FDHs before July 2008. We strongly believe the figure in Census simply comes from this take-it-for-granted information but not any study of the reality. According to Chiu and Lee’s rigorous research in 2001 (2006: 264-6), almost a half of Indonesian domestic helpers in Hong Kong receive wage lower than the legalized minimum one, e.g. 41.3% receive HK$2,670 only.

Sources: Hong Kong 2006 Population By-Census Thematic Report - Ethnic Minorities; Hong Kong 2006 Population By-Census Thematic Report - Persons from the Mainland Having Resided in Hong Kong for Less than seven years.

The table shows that income inequality among different ethnic groups. On the one hand, the median incomes of Filipino, Indonesian, Thai, Pakistani, other Asians and new Mainland immigrants are below that of the whole population, while that of Nepalese is about the same. On the other hand, the median incomes of the ethnic groups from advanced countries, especially the Westerners, are way beyond that of the whole population.

population. Moreover, it should be noted that the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department has made a questionable error by classifying Black; Europeans, Americans, Australians and New Zealanders, as “Others”. This actually reflects how white supremacy has been shaping the mentality of Hong Kong government officials even after the decolonization. The huge income difference reflects how class and ethnicity are mingled together: the Westerners are mostly in the upper class, while the South Asian and new immigrants in the lower class. The income polarization between the ethnic groups can be attributed to the effects of the Western-centred globalization.

Sassen (1991) articulates the social polarization thesis to describe how poverty and social inequalities occur in economically advanced global cities. According to the thesis, on one hand, the traditional unionized working class and middle managers in the manufacturing sectors suffer job losses because of deindustrialization, deregulation, and technological rationalization caused by economic restructuring. On the other hand, there is a huge demand for top administrative and professional talents for the booming financial and producer services. In order to serve the consumption needs of top administrators and professionals, a large pool of service workers who suffer from the casualization and informalization of employment relations, such as low pay, and lack of mobility is also created. In addition, the expansion of low-skilled and low-paid jobs attracts a massive influx of migrant workers from less-developed areas. These processes create an hourglass income and occupational structure.

Sassen (2001: 321) further discusses two roles of immigration in the economic restructuring processes of global cities. One, providing labour to both the expanding and declining economic sectors, and two, being active agents in “rehabilitating” the devastated neighbourhoods of the city. With regard to the first aspect, although there are some highly educated immigrants, most immigrants are lowly educated and are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage jobs and casual labour markets. Concerning the second aspect, most low-income immigrants are spatially concentrated in deprived areas and form their own immigrant communities. As a global city develops, it will undergo spatial reorganization through urban redevelopment, infrastructure building, and real estate development. In this spatial restructuring process, a number of areas and neighbourhoods, notably the traditional industrial zones, would be left out due to their lack of profitability and would have a high proportion of abandoned housing and closed stores as people with higher income leave for better living conditions. Since most immigrants cannot afford expensive goods and housing in gentrified or redeveloped areas with luxury housing estates and high-priced shopping arcades, they have to seek living quarters in the “abandoned” areas. Consequently, these areas are kept “alive” by the poor immigrants who create low-cost immigrant-run businesses within the neighbourhoods in order to fulfil their own needs.

Now let us take a closer look to see whether the non-white ethnic minorities are really concentrated in the low-skilled job sectors (labour market exclusion, i.e. denying upward mobility chances) and spatially in the devastated areas (residential segregation). With regard to employment, Chiu and Lui (2004: 1876-84) effectively demonstrate that one of the reasons for the serious income inequality of Hong Kong is the
overrepresentation of migrant workers in low-paid elementary occupations, particularly, as domestic helpers. In fact, according to their estimation, foreign domestic helpers (FDHs hereafter) alone account for at least 55% of the lowest income deciles. In his research of Hong Kong’s Thai migrant workers, Hewison (2004: 328) reports that 78% of his informants were domestic workers, and the rest of them had other working-class occupations in shops (19%), restaurants (8%), and cleaning stores (4%). The highest paid workers were working in restaurants with monthly incomes of between $9,000 and $10,000. Aside from FDHs, it was found that quite a number of Nepalese work in the construction sector. In his survey of Nepalese construction workers, Frost (2004: 373) discovered that 24% of them earn less than $9001 per month, about 9% earn above $15,000, and most of them earn between $9000 and $15000. At first glance, their income level seems comparable to the Hong Kong Chinese. However, nearly 62% of them have to work for more than 60 hours per week, and most of them are casual labourers paid on a daily basis. In their survey of Hong Kong Pakistanis, Ku et al. (2003) predictably found that among their respondents who were employed full-time, 75.2% of them were engaged in an elementary occupation, with 57% as construction workers and 13.2% as security guards. Shockingly, many Pakistani workers are over-worked: about 34.2% of them work for more than 69 hours per week, and 32.5% earn less than $10,000 per month. In addition, most of the surveyed Pakistanis (81.9%) regard employment as the most serious problem they have whilst living in Hong Kong, and 19.0% of them are unemployed.

The situation involving Hong Kong’s non-Chinese immigrants and inhabitants does not tell the whole story of income inequality and occupational segregation because the largest ethnic minority population comes from Mainland China. Indeed, Hong Kong was an immigrant society until those from the second generation of earlier immigrants grew up. Since a massive influx of Mainland Chinese would produce a serious social and political problem, in 1950 the colonial government implemented a quota system to restrict the entry of Chinese citizens. This quota system has continued until this day (Lam and Liu 1998:9). According to Law and Lee (2006), new Chinese immigrants or new arrival families constitute a major proportion of Hong Kong’s impoverished group since new arrival families earn much less than the average Hong Kong family. Other than lower family income, the educational level of the new arrivals is also, on the average, lower than that of the overall Hong Kong population. With regard to employment, new arrivals are mainly concentrated in either the sunset industry (manufacturing) or the low-paid and low-skilled service sector (wholesale, retail, import/export trades, restaurants, and hotels).

As Siu (1999: 220) observes, the disadvantaged labour market position of new arrivals is due to local people’s discrimination against their educational attainments and pre-migration working experiences. This observation is confirmed by Lam and Liu (1998: 104-110). They put forward the assumption that the widening earnings gap between Mainland immigrants and natives is the result of the widening differential in the rate of return to schooling and working experience. They further elucidate that since Mainland immigrants acquire most of their schooling and part of their work experience in China, their education and experience are priced increasingly less as Hong Kong turns into an economy that demands high value-added and knowledge-based skills. Chiu et al. (2005)
also highlights that the labour market situation of Mainland immigrants is deteriorating because of deindustrialization. Since a lot of better-paid services require language skills, local knowledge, and cultural capital that the new arrivals usually lack, the only channel for them to get a better job is in the manufacturing sector. Unfortunately, deindustrialization reduces their chances.

Concerning residential segregation, at first sight, immigrants seem to be scattered all over Hong Kong (see Tables 2a and 2b) without any significant indication of spatial segregation. However, upon closer look, one can still find signs of the concentration of disadvantaged ethnic minority immigrants and inhabitants in poor areas. In 2006, among the 18 District Council districts, the Eastern district (11.0%) had the largest proportion of non-Chinese ethnic minorities, followed by Kowloon City (9.1%), and Central and Western (8.8%) and Yau Tsim Mong (8.8%). As shown in Table 2, all these districts are high-income districts – rank the third, fifth, and second richest. In contrast, Kwun Tong (12%) had the greatest proportion of Chinese immigrants, followed by Yuen Long (10.5%) and Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po (9.6%); all of them are low-income districts – rank the second, fourth, third poorest. There are higher proportions of non-Chinese immigrants in high-income areas because most of the non-Chinese immigrants are live-in domestic helpers from Southeast Asia. Thus, it is not surprising to find them residing in high-income districts.

Table 2. Proportion of Ethnic Minorities and PMRs in the Whole Population, and Monthly Median Domestic Household Income (HK$) by District, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Monthly Median Income, HK$ (Rank, from the poorest)*</th>
<th>% of PMRs (Rank)</th>
<th>% of EMs (Rank)</th>
<th>Filipino, Indonesian and Thai</th>
<th>Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani, and Other South Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sham Shui Po</td>
<td>13,500(1)</td>
<td>9.6(3)</td>
<td>4(9)</td>
<td>5.07(10)</td>
<td>4.63(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwun Tong</td>
<td>14,050(2)</td>
<td>12(1)</td>
<td>4.9(8)</td>
<td>6.37(4)</td>
<td>3.95(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wong Tai Sin</td>
<td>14,050(2)</td>
<td>5.7(6)</td>
<td>2.7(5)</td>
<td>3.80(14)</td>
<td>1.68(16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwai Tsing</td>
<td>14,500(3)</td>
<td>9.6(3)</td>
<td>3.8(11)</td>
<td>4.77(11)</td>
<td>5.15(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuen Long</td>
<td>14,810(4)</td>
<td>10.5(2)</td>
<td>6.2(6)</td>
<td>4.30(12)</td>
<td>11.05(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuen Mun</td>
<td>15,000(5)</td>
<td>6.8(4)</td>
<td>3.6(12)</td>
<td>3.47(16)</td>
<td>5.10(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>16,000(6)</td>
<td>4.4(10)</td>
<td>2(16)</td>
<td>2.40(18)</td>
<td>0.93(17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islands</td>
<td>16,410(7)</td>
<td>3.2(12)</td>
<td>3.2(13)</td>
<td>3.63(15)</td>
<td>5.58(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yau Tsim Mong</td>
<td>17,500(8)</td>
<td>5.8(5)</td>
<td>8.8(3)</td>
<td>5.80(7)</td>
<td>20.20(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai Po</td>
<td>18,000(9)</td>
<td>2.5(14)</td>
<td>3.1(14)</td>
<td>3.40(17)</td>
<td>0.78(18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sha Tin</td>
<td>19,320(10)</td>
<td>5.8(5)</td>
<td>6.6(5)</td>
<td>6.97(3)</td>
<td>3.05(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowloon City</td>
<td>20,000(11)</td>
<td>4.6(9)</td>
<td>9.1(2)</td>
<td>5.73(8)</td>
<td>5.68(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsuen Wan</td>
<td>20,000(11)</td>
<td>3.5(11)</td>
<td>3.9(10)</td>
<td>4.27(13)</td>
<td>2.90(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sai Kung</td>
<td>21,000(12)</td>
<td>4.7(8)</td>
<td>5.3(7)</td>
<td>5.57(9)</td>
<td>3.10(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>21,000(12)</td>
<td>2.4(15)</td>
<td>6.2(6)</td>
<td>5.90(6)</td>
<td>4.55(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>21,705(13)</td>
<td>4.8(7)</td>
<td>11.0(1)</td>
<td>10.13(1)</td>
<td>5.48(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and Western</td>
<td>26,250(14)</td>
<td>2.7(13)</td>
<td>8.8(3)</td>
<td>7.73(2)</td>
<td>7.78(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanchai</td>
<td>27,500(15)</td>
<td>1.4(16)</td>
<td>6.9(4)</td>
<td>6.17(5)</td>
<td>6.40(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PMRs = Persons from the Mainland Having Resided in Hong Kong for Less Than Seven Years. EMs = South and Southeast Asian Non-Chinese Ethnic Minorities.

Apart from the live-in domestic helpers who are mainly women from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand, other South Asian ethnic groups have different residential patterns. In 2006, more than one-fourth of the Nepalese were living in Yuen Long — a lot of Nepalese soldiers, known as Gurkhas, were recruited by the colonial government and thus resided in the military camps located in northern Hong Kong. A quarter of Pakistani reside in Kwun Tong and Kwai Tsing, i.e. the second and third poorest district of Hong Kong. Yau Tsim Mong is the district the largest proportion of South Asians resided. There is the co-ethnic embedded district for their economic actions — running small businesses, as a marketplace, niche in job-search and mobility (e.g. there are many metal and construction material dealers, many South Asians hang around there everyday to wait for freelance jobs and casually called by sub-contractors to work in renovation and construction sites), exchange of information related to profit-making, or elders gaining socio-economic support from co-ethnic members. Meanwhile, the residential pattern for Indians is interesting with 22.6% in Yau Tsim Mong, but with 16.3% in Central & Western, i.e. the second richest district in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2007a). The Indian residential pattern reflects the income inequality within the group. Another piece of information that reflects the spatial segregation of Hong Kong’s ethnic minorities is their trend of internal migration or home moving, especially away from the poor districts. In 2006, only 17.4% moved out of their homes, whilst most stayed put (Census and Statistics Department, 2007a).

In 1991, almost one third of Chinese immigrants lived in either Kowloon City (12.2%), Eastern (11.6%), or Kwun Tong (9.9%), where the first two districts have better living conditions than Kwun Tong. However, in 2001, more than a quarter of Chinese immigrants resided in the poorest districts: Kwun Tong (10.1%), Sham Shui Po (9.7%), and Yau Tsim Mong (8.4%) (Census and Statistics Department, 2002b). Remember that those Chinese immigrants in 1991 were no longer classified as PMRs under the government’s definition because they had lived for more than seven years in Hong Kong. In 2006, the proportion of Chinese immigrants resided in the 3 poorest districts increased to 32.1%, while those resided in Kowloon City and Eastern decreased to 4.6% and 4.8% respectively (Census and Statistics Department, 2007b). Hence, in a broader sense, the poorest districts should have more Chinese immigrants than the figures reflect. To summarize, spatial segregation, though not as serious as that of New York and London (as described by Sassen, 2001) and Chicago (as described by Wilson, 1987, 1996), does occur in Hong Kong.

As mentioned before, social exclusion is a multi-dimensional concept. So far we have seen how ethnicity, race and class are combined together to create labour market and spatial exclusions of the ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong. This is not the end of the story. The non-white Hong Kong ethnic minority groups also experience tremendous spatial discrimination.
cultural exclusion. Despite being a “global city”, the Hong Kong ethnic Chinese are culturally insensitive to non-Western cultures. As reported by Ho (2001:68), the Hong Kong hospital authority serves pork to its Muslim patients! Ku (2006) also demonstrates that Pakistani women encounter great pressures to conform to the dress norms in Hong Kong because ethnic Chinese always look at them strangely and avoid interacting with them when they wear their traditional clothes. Moreover, very few schools allow ethnic minority children to wear their traditional dress, and most of them require children from ethnic minorities to wear the standard school uniform. Instead of simply being culturally insensitive, Ku (2006: 295) argues that it is outright discrimination: “Pakistani women’s traditional dress, in local Hongkongers’ eyes, signifies something ‘backward’ and ‘uncivilized’.

Culture and language are inseparable. The cultural exclusion of ethnic minorities is primarily manifested in the language barriers they encounter when accessing Hong Kong’s public services. Many of them, especially the women, found it difficult to communicate in English or Cantonese and were deprived of basic public services. For example, there is a lack of translators available for members of ethnic minorities being treated in public hospitals, as a result this causes delayed or inappropriate treatments (SCMP Mar 4, 2007). Another prominent example is education. When the parents of children from an ethnic minority try to find primary schools for their children, they have difficulty accessing relevant information because most of it is in Chinese (Loper 2004:8). The same situation occurs in continuing education because most government-funded vocational programs are taught mainly in Chinese. As a result, a vicious cycle may be formed: lacking opportunities in formal and continuing education, “many of these ethnic minorities can only pick up the lowest positions in the job market, as most of their parents already do” (SCMP Jun 25, 2005).

Bogardus (1925) creates a social distance scale to measure the willingness of respondents to accept other races. The scale represents a continuum, from close family relationships to complete physical and geographical separation, on which respondents may place a particular race group within the continuum to measure their social distance toward the race group. In the scale, the highest acceptance level is represented by whether the respondent would marry to a person of particular race. In other words, inter-ethnic marriage can be used as an indicator of acceptance other ethnic groups. Table 3 shows that the inter-ethnic marriage with Chinese percentages of Indian, Nepalese and Pakistani are very low. Most of them have a spouse of the same ethnicity. However, surprisingly, the rates of inter-ethnic marriage with Chinese for Indonesians and Thais are quite high, and for Filipinos reaches 29.2%. Do these figures suggest ethnic Hong Kong Chinese find them more acceptable?

Let us take a look of Filipino first. Among the Filipino population, there is only 50.0% married. Among the married Filipinos, majority of them (86.6%) do not live with their spouse in Hong Kong. Among those 13.4% Filipinos who are living with their spouse in Hong Kong, less than one-third of them marry with Chinese. In other words, the actual number of inter-ethnic marriage with Chinese for Filipinos is not high. The same situation applies to Indonesians, only 45.8% are married. Among the married Indonesians,
A majority of them (91.9%) do not live with their spouse in Hong Kong. In contrast, around 84.9% of married whites are living with their spouse in Hong Kong. More significantly, among them, the rates of inter-ethnic marriage between white and Chinese are range from 28%. Again, the evidence suggests that Hong Kong ethnic Chinese accept the white more than the non-white.

Table 3. Proportion of Now Married Population Living with their Spouse in the Same Household in Hong Kong (%) 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity of Spouse</th>
<th>Same Ethnicity</th>
<th>Different Ethnicity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Other than Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepalese</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td><strong>56.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whole Population</strong></td>
<td><strong>98.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Hong Kong 2006 Population By-Census Thematic Report - Ethnic Minorities Married population
Notes: (1) Excluding 4 018 males of ethnicities belonging to “Other Asian”, “Mixed” and “Others”. Among them, 83.0% were living with their spouse in the same household in Hong Kong.
(2) Figures for both husband and wife being “Chinese” were included in “Same Ethnicity”.
(3) Excluding 6 826 females of ethnicities belonging to “Other Asian”, “Mixed” and “Others”. Among them, 88.2% were living with their spouse in the same household in Hong Kong.
(4) Excluding 10 844 persons of ethnicities belonging to “Other Asian”, “Mixed” and “Others”. Among them, 86.3% were living with their spouse in the same household in Hong Kong.

Social exclusion is only part of the story of the non-white ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. Since the beginning of the new millennium, numerous studies have shown that ethnic minorities in Hong Kong face various forms of racial discrimination on a daily basis (Loper, 2001; Sakhriani, 2002; Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service, 2002; Ku et al., 2003; Hong Kong Christian Service, 2005; Social Work Dept., CUHK, 2005), including employment (Frost, 2004; Hewison, 2004; Lin, 2004; Kam and Wong, 2005; Dept. of Applied Social Studies, CityU of Hong Kong, 2003, 2004), housing (Chan and Ku, 2005), education (Loper, 2004) and provision of social services. In addition to the problems encountered in their search for employment, housing and education, they are prime targets of harassment by the police who subject them to ID checks at will, and they also face rudeness and discriminatory attitudes in their dealings with government departments. The unfair or outright biased treatment of the Hong Kong ethnic minorities by the police and government agencies may be due to racial profiling, which refers to a law enforcement agent relying on race and ethnicity in selecting individuals for routine or spontaneous investigatory activities (Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor and Oxfam Hong Kong, 2004).

For the new Chinese immigrants, their situation is no better than non-white non-Chinese ethnic minorities. A survey conducted by The Hong Kong Psychological Society in 1997 reveals that Hong Kong people consider new migrants from China ignorant, rude, dirty, and greedy, and believe they are introducing evils from the Mainland. The newcomers were also seen as aggravating the territory’s social problems by increasing competition for jobs, houses, and welfare benefits. Hong Kong people showed little sympathy for the Mainlanders’ plight, felt new immigrants deserved the hardships they experienced and would not make much progress even if given more government assistance (cited in SCMP 10 March 1997). As Hong Kong’s economic recession deepened, Hong Kong people’s negative perception towards new arrivals further deteriorated; a 2002 survey showed that, since 2000, the percentage of respondents agreeing that new arrivals were selfish, emotional, greedy, cowardly, annoying, arrogant, isolated, and uncivilized had increased. Such changes were consistent from school students to adult respondents (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2003). According to SoCO’s survey (2001: 10-11), 82% of new, adult, Mainland immigrant respondents believe that they are racially discriminated against by Hong Kong people, being denounced as “parasites” (78.5 percent). According to SoCo’s Survey (2009), 47.2% of Mainland immigrant women respondents believe that they are racially discriminated against by Hong Kong people.

3. Colonialism and Sinicization

From the above empirical evidence, it suffices to say that genuine multiculturalism has never existed in Hong Kong. Instead, racism and social exclusion pervade in Hong Kong society. Non-white and Mainland Chinese are both being racially discriminated and socially excluded. However, the mechanisms that engender racism and social exclusion against the two groups are quite different. In this section, we attempt to analyze how colonialism and Chinese neo-nationalism or Sinicization are combined differently to create two separate discriminatory and exclusionary mechanisms against the two groups.

3.1. The Cultural Assimilation of the Colonized

Similar to other European colonies, the Hong Kong elite was basically assimilated by British culture. McLeod (2000: 19) remarks that

“British Empire did not rule by military and physical force alone. It endured by getting both colonising and colonised people to see their world and themselves in a particular way, internalising the language of Empire as representing the natural, true order of life.” (original emphases)

As Carroll (1999) and Hui (1999) demonstrate, the British ruling of Hong Kong not only depended on military strength, but also upon the collaboration of the Chinese elite who provided support and trading networks for the British to penetrate the Asian markets. In return, the colonized elites enjoyed the blessings of the colonizers: material rewards, status, and privileges.
The more the colonized elites worked on behalf of the colonizers in controlling other colonized subjects, the more the colonized elites started to mimic the British. As Carroll (2004) argues, Hong Kong once established as a British colony, it had attained a special status, as a cultural-historical place, a part of a global British empire, with its distinctive class of colonized bicultural elites. The assimilation of the colonized elites into the colonizers’ culture started in the early 1900s. In 1901, the colonized elites petitioned to the colonizers for “a suitable English School for the education of the children- both boys and girls- of the upper classes of the Chinese resident”. They argued that the majority of Chinese elites had “failed to assimilate to any extent English sympathies and ideas, and are ever backward in responding to the call of public duties”. They further argued that the new school would “not only endow our young men and women with more open minds and greater pubic spirit” but would also “result in the more cordial co-operation of the British and Chinese nations and closer intercourse between them” (quoted in Carroll 2004:521-2). In addition to learning English and mimicking British living styles, the Hong Kong colonized elites actively participated in activities (like contributing to imperial war funds, organizing ceremonies for visiting British royalty and attending imperial trade exhibitions) and helped to construct the Hong Kong economic success story so as to legitimize the colonial rule (Carroll 2004).

After the Wars, Hong Kong experienced rapid industrialization with the help of a mass influx of Chinese refugees. The whole set of structural conditions of the colonial Hong Kong changed. It was questionable as to whether merely relying on the assimilated colonized elites would handle the emerging problems. The cultural assimilation of the general Hong Kong people, especially the middle classes, into the British culture started after the 1966 and 1967 riots which “showed that colonialism failed to provide the new generation a framework for their quest for identity” (Lui and Chiu 1999:106). In the 1970s, numerous social movements with various political demands challenged the colonial rule. These movements precipitated a series of state-building projects aimed at constructing a society that would enhance the colonial state’s legitimacy. “To accommodate the growing demands… the colonial administration recruited the emerging young professionals and executives into the major decision-making bodies to replace the old elites… by increasing the state’s responsiveness to local demands, fighting corruption, broadening the scope of social services, and improving administrative efficiency” (Lui and Chiu 1999:110). By extending its hegemonic power to the general colonized, the colonizers not only successfully transformed the mindset of the ethnic Chinese into a Western-like one, but also turned them from challenging into confirming the colonial rule.

The culturally assimilated colonized Hongkongers internalize the colonialism’s representations and values. The colonial representation of races categorizes people into a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority based upon skin colour. At the top of the hierarchy is the white. The white represents civilized, advanced, elegant, intelligent, and rational, while people of colour signified savage, backward, vulgar, stupid, and irrational (Rwanda is another good example). In 2000, an incident aroused public concern about the racism in Hong Kong. The wife of a British writer Martin Jacques, Harinder Veriah, an Indian-Malaysian working in a Hong Kong law firm, died at Ruttonjee Hospital because of a

lack of medical attention. According to Jacques (2001), his wife died because she was a person of colour. Although after a series of investigations, the authority decided that Veriah died of natural causes and made no reference to the racism claim, the incident spawned intense campaigns against racial discrimination and sparked urgent calls for a law to protect ethnic minorities (SCMP July 10, 2003). The incident effectively demonstrates how deep the colonial ethnic representations are implanted in the colonized Hong Kong Chinese, and shows that racism is so intensely ingrained into Hong Kong's culture. Later, as Jacques (2003) remarks, the Hong Kong ethnic Chinese “consider themselves to be number two in the pecking order and look down upon all other races as inferior”.

3.2. The Subaltern Ethnic Groups in Hong Kong

British colonialism not only culturally assimilated the Hong Kong Chinese, but also brought along a subaltern class of ethnic minority groups to Hong Kong. The non-white Hong Kong ethnic minorities are a subaltern class because their voices were never heard, not until the moment before the handover, and after the Veriah incident. Their contributions to the Hong Kong economy are never recognized in any Hong Kong success stories. As mentioned before, the Hong Kong government never bothered to find out how many ethnic minorities there were in Hong Kong, not until being condemned by international organizations and domestic NGOs. Not long ago, the Hong Kong government still claimed that racism was not an issue. To put it bluntly, non-white ethnic minorities were basically invisible before the mid 1990s.

Despite their invisibility during the 150 years of Hong Kong’s colonial history, non-white ethnic minorities came to Hong Kong at the exact moment the British colonized Hong Kong, and they have contributed a lot to Hong Kong society. Indians, as the colonized, came on the coattails of the British, as sailors, traders, and soldiers. Living in a predominately Chinese society, they have found a niche mainly in security-related occupations, including the military, the police, and other guard services, while others have built successful careers in business and the professions (White 1994). In today’s Hong Kong, the Indian community largely engages in business activities, mainly trading. Most of them look upon Hong Kong as their home and do not see themselves as foreigners (SCMP Dec 16, 1996). Ho (2001:64) also notes, “One distinctive feature of ethnic minority Muslims in Hong Kong is that most of them have been living in Hong Kong for several generations and have acquired the local culture and dialect.” Nepalese, similar to the Indians, also came along with the British army. They have served Hong Kong for more than fifty years as British Gurkha soldiers (FEONA 2000). After the handover, most of the ex-Gurkha went into the private security sector.

Besides those ethnic minorities living in Hong Kong for generations, the non-white ethnic minority workers also contribute a lot to the Hong Kong economy by taking up low-paid jobs. A good example is the foreign domestic helpers (FDH hereafter). From the mid 1970s onwards, Hong Kong’s manufacturing industry was developing rapidly, and the service economy began to grow. More and more women were participating in the labour market because of their elevated educational level and career aspirations (Leung,
particularly, the female labour participation rate rose from 47.5% in 1982 to 51.9% in 2004. The total number of working women was about 897,800 in 1982, and rose to 1,566,300 in 2004 with an increase of 74.5%. As more and more women, especially the middle classes, were able and became eager to work, their household duties needed to be delegated. Thus, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was very common for young couples, after having kids, to have their mothers live with them so that they can serve as caregivers for their children. However, this was not a viable long-term strategy.

The importation of FDHs helped Hong Kong women resolve this dilemma and released them from their domestic responsibilities so that they could pursue their careers. As a result, the proportion of FDHs in the total labour supply rose from 1% in 1982 to 7% in 2001. Moreover, in 2001, it was found that 61% of FDH employer households have two economically active members (likely to be dual-working households) as opposed to the proportion of 32% for non-FDH employer households (HKSAR Government, 2003: 26). However, it is not surprising to find that some public housing households also hire FDHs. One may wonder whether or not these public housing households belong to the middle classes. Indeed, it is not uncommon for traditional male-breadwinner families to employ FDHs, so that the mother can be released from most of the housework and concentrate instead on building up the children’s human, social, and cultural capital. In summation, FDHs help improve the quality of life of the ethnic Chinese Hong Kong families in certain aspects and increase Hong Kong’s productivity by releasing capable women into labour markets.

If Hong Kong’s ethnic minorities contribute so much to Hong Kong, why are they never mentioned, if not celebrated in Hong Kong’s public discourses? As mentioned previously, the colonial ethnic representations are implanted in the mind of the colonized Hong Kong Chinese. If the Chinese recognize the contribution of the ethnic minorities, how could they demonstrate their superiority towards them? Indeed, within the colonialism discourse, it is incomprehensible to think of the role of the ethnic minorities; all the credit for turning Hong Kong from a fishing village, first into an industrialized city, then an Asian world city, would then have to be attributed first to the colonial rule, then to the hardship and flexibility of Hong Kong Chinese. In the mindset of Hong Kong Chinese, Hong Kong, as a modern, cosmopolitan, and urban society exposed to Western acculturation, is much better than the home countries of Hong Kong’s ethnic minorities. If Filipino, Indonesian, Indian, Nepalese, Thai, and Pakistani cannot make their countries as wealthy as Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Chinese may ask, how could they contribute to Hong Kong’s prosperity? From a Foucauldian perspective, the discourse of the Hong Kong success story co-constructed by the colonial authority and the colonized Hong Kong elites makes the question about the contribution of Hong Kong ethnic minorities “unimaginable” and “nonexistent”. This is the reason why Hong Kong ethnic minorities have remained invisible for such a long time.

Not only is the contribution of minorities “unimaginable” and “nonexistent”, so is racism against them, hence hitherto remains undiscoverable and undetected. Wong and Wan’s survey finds that less than 10% of Hong Kong people feel that disharmony exists in daily interaction between different ethnicities, 60% cannot differentiate which ethnic

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groups’ daily habits and thoughts are different to ordinary Hong Kong peoples, and cannot differentiate which ethnic group’s standard of living is poorer than ordinary ones (2001:446). Such “innocence” co-exists with the facts that 67% of South Asian minorities find that they are discriminated against by the local Chinese in various aspects of daily life (Wen Hui Po, 29 Oct. 2005:A21); one-forth of FDHs have been assaulted by their employers (Chiu and Lee, 2006: 266-8); 65% local employers admit new Chinese immigrants were employed mainly due to their lower pay in comparison with locals (Ming Pao, 29 September 1998: A04); and 89% of new Chinese immigrants believe they are racially discriminated against by the general public (SoCO, 2001:10-11).

The ideology of liberalism is prevails in Hong Kong society; people generally believe that one’s success or failure is generated under fair competition, and race or ethnicity does not matter (Wong, 1996). Hong Kong people become more and more preferring market mechanism to distribute wealth and resources, even after severe setbacks due to the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997 (Lau, 2001:156). The government has been superstitious in regards to this cliché for decades – if not actually the socializing agent of it. The government takes great pride in having been in first place for more than a decade in the global league table of economic freedom produced by the Heritage Foundation, and in having been ranked the world’s freest economy for the past 35 years by the Cato Institute. Branding herself as “Asia’s world city”, the government is much concerned with its image and reputation to the outside world, and sometimes seems to edge on paranoia (Latter, 2007:13). Redistributing resources or offering social welfare social services on the ground of ethnicities is untouchable from the government’s perspective. For so many years, ethnic minorities have never been a sub-category of “disadvantaged groups” in the Financial Secretary’s annual budget speech or Chief Executive’s annual policy address. However, still one-fifth of Hong Kong people grumble that there is “favouritism” to ethnic minorities in recent years (Wong & Wan, 2001:450).

3.3. When Colonialism combines with Sinicization

One may ask if Hong Kong ethnic minorities do not receive proper recognition and respect from the ethnic Chinese, why Hong Kong has achieved ethnic harmony for so long until the handover. First of all, Hong Kong ethnic minorities are numerically small and highly heterogeneous. It is difficult for them to become a united force against the majority Hong Kong Chinese. However, this does not mean that no protests, grievances and conflicts happen, especially with the Filipino FDHs. Indeed, ethnic harmony is a matter of degree. Secondly, the colonial government adopted an accommodation-cum-segregation strategy to deal with the ethnic minorities coming along with the British army, i.e. Indians and Nepalese. For the Nepalese, they concentrated and settled in Gurkha bases located in the rural New Territories during the colonial period. Their contacts with the Chinese were minimal. For the Indians, they were mostly assigned jobs in the disciplinary forces (mainly police, military, and correctional services). Because of their small number, actual contact with the Chinese was still small. Moreover, as the British colonized subjects, the colonial government provided sufficient resources to fulfil their needs. For example, as Muslims increased in Hong Kong, the colonial government allocated land to them to build mosques and cemeteries as well as provided Islamic
education services. As a result, the ethnic minority Hong Kong residents were quite satisfied with the colonial government. Third, in dealing with the FDHs, the colonial government adopted strict immigration control to silence potential troublemakers. Although by law people that live and work in Hong Kong for seven years can attain permanent residence, this rule does not apply to FDHs. Moreover, they have to abide by the two-week rule: once they have lost their job, they only have two weeks to find a new job or they must return home. Consequently, if FDHs make trouble and are fired, they have to leave Hong Kong after two weeks. This constitutes a great barrier for FDHs to voice out any grievances.

The 1997 handover marked the end of the colonial rule as well as the beginning of the sinicization process. Ma and Fung (1999:500-1) argue that sovereignty revision involves a process of mediated re-sinicization and nationalization of the Hong Kong identity. By re-sinicization, they refer to “the recollection, reinvention and rediscovery of historical and cultural ties between Hong Kong and China”. Similarly, Lo (2007) uses the term “Mainlandization” to refer the policy changes after the handover. Mainlandization comprises of “the policies of the Hong Kong government to make Hong Kong more politically dependent on Beijing, economically more reliant on the Mainland’s support, socially more patriotic toward the motherland, and legally more reliant on the interpretation of the Basic Law by China’s National People’s Congress”, and put the interest of “one country” ahead of the interest of the “two systems”.

Put in a wider context, Callahan (2003) argues that the Chinese Communist Party authority under renewed its interest in promoting nationalism in the 1990s so as to confront political and economic crises both domestically with the Tiananmen massacre, and globally with the fall of the Soviet Union. The Chinese neo-nationalism employs the discourse of “National Humiliation” to address the problem of imperialism so as to make Chinese people believe that a strong state is needed to save the nation from evil imperialists. This discourse uses modern Chinese history to reassert the connection between nation and state through essentializing Chineseness. This Chinese neo-nationalism was not only aimed at domestic Mainland Chinese, but also at overseas Chinese. The overseas Chinese are drawn into the narrative of “National Humiliation” and portrayed as the victims of the failures of the past Chinese states to counter against the invasion of Western imperialism, but also as patriots. “Chinese identity thus expands, via National Humiliation, from being defined according to citizenship and territoriality to a wider transnational view of the Chinese race.” “Diasporic Chinese are therefore not simply a financial resource for China… (but) used as a symbolic resource for producing Chinese national identity” (Callahan 2003:493). By putting Hong Kong in Callahan’s framework, for us at least, it makes more sense as to why Hong Kong needs to be sinicized. The re-absorption of Hong Kong not only to help China globalize, but also facilitate the spread of Chinese neo-nationalism. As Callahan (2003:492) observes, “Official National Humiliation texts are increasingly co-published in Hong Kong in traditional Chinese characters for overseas distribution.”

With regard to the Hong Kong ethnic minorities, Chinese neo-nationalism creates a problem: how can they be recruited into the narrative of National Humiliation?
According to China’s nationality laws, China does not recognize ethnic minorities as nationals, though they can continue living in Hong Kong. However, if they cannot obtain Chinese nationality, which is a prerequisite for qualifying for an HKSAR passport, some of them may have trouble in travelling to other countries, not to mention being stateless, as Britain has been shrinking the scope of the right of abode (SCMP, Dec 9, 1996). The Chinese authority has softened its attitude and allows ethnic minorities to apply for Chinese nationality. But the government officer reemphasizes, “Naturalization is not a right, but is subject to approval” (SCMP, Dec 15, 2002). In other words, Chinese Nationality Law may not confer nationality on all Hong Kong born ethnic minorities.

Apart from the possible exclusion from gaining citizenship and nationality, sinicization may reverse the previous colonial accommodation policy on ethnic minorities. As Ho (2001:72) discovers, the Muslim ethnic minorities “felt betrayed by the rule of the Chinese when the British regime left. Many affirmative policies for the ethnic minority have gone after the rule of the Chinese-based SAR government.” As mentioned before, the colonial government allocated land to the Muslims to build mosques. However, the SAR government requires the Muslim community to pay HK$10 million for building a mosque in Sheung Shui, while the Heung Yee Kuk, a pro-Beijing organization which represents native Chinese clans in the New Territories, had its land granted for a nominal HK$1,000. These “double standards” make Muslim minorities feel that they are being discriminated against (SCMP, Aug 4, 2001).

Another negative impact of sinicization on Hong Kong ethnic minorities is to implement mother-tongue (i.e. Chinese/Cantonese) teaching in Hong Kong secondary schools. During the colonial period, English was the major medium of instruction. However, in 1998, there was a major policy shift in order to reassert the Chineseness and decolonize the mind of the Hong Kong Chinese. The mother-tongue teaching policy significantly reduces the number of possible secondary schools which poor non-Chinese children could attend. Even worse, most ethnic minority students are always relegated to a handful of low quality schools (Loper 2004). To sum up, sinicization does not remove the colonial biases against ethnic minorities, even though a rebuttal of imperialism is its major theme, nor does it genuinely recognizes and respect them. Instead, it removes the previous colonial accommodating policy. For the ordinary masses in this ex-British-colony, the discourse of “National Humiliation” has not been appealed them effectively yet. A local political scientist believes Hong Kong Chinese’s patriotism to Chinese nation is revealed in sharing national glory only – such as the advancement in aeronautic technology in recent years and Beijing Olympics 2008 – but still far “beyond” the neo-nationalism engineered by the Chinese Communist Party (Hong Kong Economic Journal, 3 May 2008:P4). Rather, Hong Kong people still prioritize some core (or “egocentric”) values, which were nurtured during the colonial age, higher than nationalism, such as free economy and materialistic well-being. Ironically, although these core values are not compatible with the state initiated neo-nationalism, ethnic minorities are still the common casualties of this odd-couple – their citizenship in the city is excluded due to the latter, and their socio-cultural respects are excluded due to the former.

3.4. Empire/Colonialism Strikes Back: New Chinese Immigrants as the Casualties

According to Ma (2000:175), the colonial government consciously adopted “a double alienation policy” in which Hong Kong Chinese “were discouraged from identifying themselves as national subjects of either China or the British Empire”. However, the discourse of colonialism created a new hybrid identity, first for the colonized elites, later for the middle classes, and ultimately for the ordinary Hong Kong Chinese. This hybrid identity comprises partially British, through mimicry, and partially Chinese, derived from indigenous Chinese cultures (plural, because there is no single, unitary Chinese Culture and Hong Kong is an immigrant society). As the Hong Kong society experiences economic takeoff, industrialization, post-industrialization, and finally establishes itself as a global city that plays an important part in Western-centred globalization, the hybrid identity becomes more Western less Chinese, as the temptation of being advanced, civilized and materially well-off is too irresistible. Moreover, as Hong Kong born Chinese grow up, they are immersed in a colonial setting as well as an affluent economic environment. An indigenous Westernized cultural identity emerges. This identity emerges against a backward, authoritarian, and underdeveloped Mainland China. Thus, this peculiar Hong Kong Chinese identity is established with an ambivalent and contradictory relationship towards the Mainland. As Ma and Fung (1999:500) remark, “Hong Kong people identify with traditional Chinese culture in an abstract and detached sense, but, on the other hand, they discriminate against the particular cultural practices which are affiliated with the Communist regime in the mainland.”

It is suffice to say the indigenous Hong Kong identity is created through the differences vis-à-vis the colonizers (against the context of globalization, not only British, but white-Westerners, especially white Americans) and the Mainland Chinese. This peculiar identity is partially engendered from mimicking the colonizers. However, as Bhabha (1994:122) states, “mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal”. In other words, the Hong Kong Chinese can never become white-Westerners, though they repeatedly learn and practise Western culture. So this is very frustrating because Hong Kong has attained the socio-economic status of other Western countries, yet they still feel inferior to their colonizers. Fortunately, there are other Others, besides themselves, to be compared and contrasted. The non-white Hong Kong ethnic groups are one. The other is the Mainland Chinese. By highlighting the differences and similarities between Hong Kong Chinese and Mainland Chinese, their second-ranked within the global hierarchy of race (Jacques 2003) can be reaffirmed. As a result, on the one hand, Ma and Fung (1999:523) find that “Hong Kong people have a historical Chinese identity which is past-oriented and feeds on the pride associated with the ‘great tradition’ of Chinese civilization”. On the other hand, they (1999:500) notice that “in mass media, mainlanders were stigmatized as ‘uncivilized’ outsiders and a ready-made cultural contrast against which modern, cosmopolitan Hongkongers could define themselves.” The Chineseness of the Hong Kong hybrid identity is merely based on the glory past shared with Mainland Chinese (i.e. the similarities); the differences reproduce and reaffirm the superior Westernized side of the hybrid identity so as to compensate the recurring process of disavowal embedded within mimicry. Against this ambivalent and compensatory Hong Kong Chinese identity, it is not surprising that the new Mainland Chinese immigrants are being socially excluded and discriminated against in Hong Kong.
3.5. Globalization, Legitimacy and Sinicization

After the handover, the HKSAR government became the agent for carrying out sinicization. Nonetheless, the government also needed to ensure the global economic status of Hong Kong and its domestic legitimacy. These three forces are not compatible and their conflicts cannot easily be resolved by the government. According to Ma (2000), “There is a popular collective desire to ‘save’ Hong Kong from ‘down grading’ to just one of the many Chinese cities within the nation” involving the loss of Hong Kong’s autonomy and the failure of maintaining Hong Kong’s global city status. As a result, a general resentment against sinicization pervades Hong Kong Chinese, especially the middle classes. This will lead to a legitimation crisis. For example, when the government launched the mother-tongue teaching policy, lots of parents objected strongly fearing that this will lower the English level of their children. More significantly, the command of English signifies the similarities between Hong Kong Chinese and their colonizers, as well as demarcates their differences from Mainland Chinese (Chan 2002). Moreover, this will hamper Hong Kong maintaining its global city status. As a result, the legitimacy of the government was eroded.

In order to maintain a global city status, Hong Kong requires high-skilled labour instead of low-skilled immigrants. An opinion pervades that the government deliberately manufactures the new Mainland Chinese immigrants as the Others and channels the frustration against the government’s sinicization efforts towards the manufactured scapegoat (Law and Lee, 2006:238-9). This strategy is silently approved by the Chinese authority, as reflected by helping the HKSAR government successfully block the immediate entry of the Mainland born children of Hong Kong citizens.

According to the Basic Law, (Hong Kong's constitutional document), Article 24 para 2(3), children of permanent Hong Kong residents have the right of abode (ROA) in the Special Administrative Region. Just after the hand-over ceremony, a number of children of permanent Hong Kong residents who ‘illegally’ stayed in Hong Kong went to the Immigration office to claim their ROA. As a result, on 9 July 1997, the Provisional Legislative Council quickly amended the Immigration Ordinance so that Mainlanders are required to hold One-way Permits, which are issued by the Chinese authorities, before they can exercise their right of abode in Hong Kong. As for children born in the Mainland to the people of Hong Kong, one of their parents must be a Hong Kong permanent resident at the time of the birth. The amendment made a lot of ROA claimants who had 'illegally' re-united with their families confront the fate of repatriation.

After numerous ROA court cases, on 29 January 1999, the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) gave a landmark judgement that these Mainland claimants were eligible for ROA. Nevertheless, the government immediately released an estimated and exaggerated figure of 1.67 million people in China who were eligible for entry, and threatened that if CFA ruling were to be implemented, it would have great negative impacts on Hong Kong’s overall economy, employment, and various social services and facilities, like housing, education, medical and health and welfare services. “In the process of making
Mainlanders threatening ‘Others’, they were portrayed as lazy, unemployable, welfare scrounging parasites feeding on societal resources and a menace to law and order” (Chan 1999). As a result, support and sympathy for the claimants of their right of abode collapsed almost overnight. In May 1999, the SAR government requested an interpretation of certain provisions of the Hong Kong Basic Law from China’s National People’s Congress in order to prevent a flood of mainland children born to Hong Kong people. The ROA issue indicates a state-sponsored social exclusion and discrimination against the new Mainland immigrants.

4. Conclusion: who cares about protective multiculturalism?

According to Heller (1996:37-8), there are two kinds of multiculturalism, protective and offensive. The government should adopt protective multiculturalism, which “defends each culture against discrimination” by the state or by society, “protects the right of all groups to self-articulation and public assembly”, and “defends cultures against assimilation pressures”. In contrast, offensive multiculturalism asserts strong cultural rights and emphasizes the we-ness and solidarity of the members of a cultural group. Heller warns that when offensive multiculturalism is carried out to the extreme, it becomes self-contradictory and leads to segregation and separatism. It becomes self-contradictory “whenever it requires that members of a cultural community absolutely identify with that community”. Nonetheless, Heller adds that sometimes the boundary between protective and offensive multiculturalism is blurred because “protective multiculturalism can also become offensive if its protective function so requires”.

The HKSAR government has already begun integrating multiculturalism into HK’s social policy, e.g. the attempt to promulgate the RDO and the setup of the Race Relations Unit. On the surface, it seems to be a kind of protective multiculturalism. But the question is whether the protective functions of the current policies are sufficient to deter social exclusion against ethnic minorities. Before the government decided to legislate the RDO in 2003, the setup of the Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony and the Race Relations Unit were a kind of “compromises” from the government in order to resist NGOs’ pressure to legalizing RDO. Cyd Ho, a legislative councilor, holds the criticism that there are no representatives from Department of Justice or legal profession as founding members of the Committee, which clearly divulges the government’s reservation and reluctance to advance legal protection to defend ethnic minorities against discrimination, and leaves the Committee as a “decoration” only (Hong Kong Economic Journal, 21 June 2002:P2). The United Nations and NGO’s persistence in advocating legal protection to ethnic minorities caused the government’s reconsideration of the RDO as one of the possibilities of protective multiculturalism, but the principal and necessary blessing that the government sought before examining its realization is commercial leaders’ non-oppositional attitude.2 During the several years of consultation for drafting RDO since 2003, no matter how the United Nations, NGOs and members of the Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony criticized (Hong Kong Economic Journal, 10 January 2008), and in spite of the fact that more than one-third of

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the complaints received by the Race Relations Unit are cases against the government and public agencies, the government and public agencies have been granted immunity by the draft of RDO. The priority of multiculturalism in the government’s agenda is revealed yet again.

Hence, the Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony and the Race Relations Unit are left mainly for organizing activities to enhance multiculturalism harmony at community level. This is one of the approaches which is in line with the advocacy of local NGOs and academics (Kam & Wong, 2005:86; Ku, 2006:300), but not completely. Empowering ethnic minorities in various aspects of social life to defend against social exclusion, such as in employment and education, is also important (Kam & Wong, 2005:86-9; Ku et al., 2008: 236-7). Some of the extraordinarily huge amount of surplus taxes collected by the government as highlighted in the Budget Speech 2008-9, has been allocated to establish district support service centres and educational support for ethnic minorities. These measures are ground-breaking. However, by reviewing the agenda from 2004 to 2007, one would find that the Committee has not been seriously consulted. In order to have adequate protective multiculturalism, some offensive elements may have to be added, though the organizers and mobilizers have to strike a balance not to tilt the movement towards segregation and separatism.

In descriptive terms, Hong Kong is a multicultural society in which there exist different ethnic groups. But in normative terms, Hong Kong is a racist society in which non-white ethnic minorities and new Mainland immigrants are being socially excluded and discriminated against. Despite the various campaigns against ethnic discrimination, the government fails to genuinely cultivate a truly multicultural environment. Given that the Hong Kong Chinese have deeply internalized the colonial representations of the inferiority of ethnic minorities and the HKSAR government deliberately manufactures the new Mainland immigrants as Others, we suspect it is unlikely that multiculturalism can be established in the near future. Moreover, our pessimistic view is also based upon the fact that Hong Kong ethnic minorities are either small in number or lack bargaining power.

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