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Are Postboxes Cultural Heritage? An Examination of the Debates on British Postboxes in
Post-Colonial Hong Kong

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by

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ABSTRACT

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This research examines in-service vintage British postboxes which were produced during the British Colonial period, bear the British Royal Cyphers, and have become symbols that allow local people to memorialize or disconnect from the past. At the same time, Pro-China leaders in the Hong Kong government have adopted the stance that the removal of these signs of unauthorized heritage is a conspicuous strategy to make the Hong Kong people pro-China Chinese subjects. By dissecting how different interest groups engage with the removal of colonial era postboxes, this thesis argues that stakeholders have different interpretations of the colonial relic because they construe the colonial past and post-colonial social and political circumstances differently. This research is devoted to tracing how and why stakeholders from different perspectives interpret the vintage postboxes in terms of cultural heritage, colonial past, nostalgia, identity, decolonization, and Hong Kong-China relations. Correspondingly, this thesis also suggests that the post-colonial social and political circumstances intensify nostalgia and local identity consciousness among Hong Kong residents and have deepened the conflicts towards the authorities.

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Introduction

Hong Kong was a British Colony (1842-1997) where colonial logos, such as the Royal CIPHER of Reign and Crown of St. Edward, were born on the colonial government's seals, banners, badges and flags that were used to embellish government property, documents and facilities. These logos represented that the sovereignty of this tiny East Asian city belonged to the British Empire. Among them, arguably the most famous and popular is the Armorial Bearings logo that was designed in 1958. It consists of a Royal Lion and Chinese Dragon holding a shield that symbolized the importance of the navy and merchant to Hong Kong. There is also a Royal Lion with the Imperial Crown standing on the top of the Shield and holding a pearl, imagery that indicates the tiny but precious nature of Hong Kong as a colony (Hamilton 1963:37). However, to prepare for the handover, the colonial government removed most of these colonial logos, except for the Royal CIPHER of Reign and the Crown of St. Edward, on the public postboxes along the streets. Thus, the vintage postboxes that are still in-service are remarkable in demonstrating the history, socio-cultural and political transformation of Hong Kong.

Among the in-service, public postboxes in Hong Kong, 5% of them (59) are old cast iron postboxes that were manufactured in the colonial period and still display the British logos – the Royal CIPHER of Reign and the Crown of St. Edward (refer to Figure 1) (Hongkong Post 2015). After Chen Zuor (陳佐洱), the Chairman of the Chinese Association of Hong Kong & Macao Studies, criticized post-colonial Hong Kong identity and its socio-political development in September 2015¹, the Hongkong Post – a

¹ Chen Zuor's speech is translated as follow:

government department that is responsible for postal service – suddenly announced that they were going to cover up all the remaining British symbols from the vintage postboxes in October 2015.

However, the Hongkong Post’s argument that Hong Kong is no longer a British colony was not sufficient to persuade other stakeholders, including the scholars and conservation movement leaders discussed below, in the debate over Hong Kong’s British heritage. In fact, Hong Kong’s postal service is one of the most successful institutions inherited from the one hundred fifty years of the colonial period (1842-1997). Before the innovation of telecommunications, the postal system was the only channel for people to send messages and mail to their families and friends who lived far away.² Just like the slogan of the Hongkong Post – “linking people, delivering business” – the postal service of this city is famous for its efficiency and low price. In addition to the postal service,

“The first ‘-ization’ problem, is that the Hong Kong government and people do not follow the law to decolonize. Instead, they let some things which ought to have been placed in museums to be put on public display, and some (colonial relics and probably nostalgia as well) were even considered doctrine. The second ‘-ization’ trouble is that de-Sinicization – created by colonialists who are now obsolete in the 1980s – returned and is audacious. (The government and people) do not work on decolonization but aim for de-Sinicization have undermined both the ‘One Country’ and ‘Two System.’ This strange phenomenon which deviated from the essence of history led to severe internal exhaustion in Hong Kong. (The government and people) let the grass grow under their feet, which then triggered a great deal of internal and external trouble.”

(第一個「化」的問題，就是沒有依法實施「去殖民化」，讓一些本應放在歷史博物館裡的東西跑出來招搖過市，有的還被奉為「金科玉律」；第二個「化」的問題，就是老殖民主義者在上世紀 80 年代初炮製的「去中國化」，死灰復燃，氣焰囂張。不「去殖民化」反而「去中國化」，使得「一國」之下的「兩制」都受到傷害，這種背離歷史本質的怪現象造成了香港巨大的內耗，歲月蹉跎，引發裡裡外外許多問題。) (Chen 2015)

²The postal service has been used as a means to communicate since 900 B.C. (Esin and Ozcan 2010: 165). However, with the advancement of technological development and the prevalence of mobile phone and internet, the postal service is facing a decrease in market and customers. Furthermore, technological advancements affect the postboxes that are decreasing in number since mail is replaced by phones and internet.

postboxes are essential to the postal system. Amongst the 1148 street in-service postboxes, fifty-nine of them (which is only 5% of the total) still possess the British Royal Cypher and the Crown of St. Edward, the symbols of the British Empire (Hongkong Post 2015). They were produced between the 1910s-1980s when Hong Kong was under British colonial rule. Due to the long history and being the only government property that still contains this colonial remnant, the vintage postboxes draw attention from historians, philatelic collectors, and even conservators. Such experts published books and formed conservation groups to document the history, outlooks, evolution, and locations of the vintage postboxes systematically (Er and Huang 2001, China Philatelic Association 2001, Lee and Wu 2015). Believing these old postboxes have precious historical and cultural significance, historians and conservators argue that the vintage postboxes should be considered part of the cultural heritage of Hong Kong and were scandalized at the Hongkong Post's decision to cover the colonial logos. Moreover, this situation has led to another cultural heritage and political debate in Hong Kong.

This thesis aims to explore the cultural heritage and political debates surrounding the remaining British logos engraved on colonial era postboxes. There are three main stakeholders in this debate: the Hongkong Post and the pro-Beijing camp; the Pan-democratic parties (*fanminzhu pai* 泛民主派); and ordinary Hong Kong people. First, the Hongkong Post and pro-Beijing camp are the two main pro-government entities that believe the Hong Kong government should remove all British logos from the public postboxes. The Hongkong Post is an official department that is responsible for postal service. It is a subordinate department of the Commerce and Economic Development

Bureau, a bureau that is in charge of policy matters on Hong Kong's trades and commerce, as well as of creative industries. All of the officers and mail carriers from the Hongkong Post are civil servants, and the government is responsible for appointing the generals, including the Postmaster General, of this department. In the case of the vintage postboxes, a spokesman for Hongkong Post stated it "considers it inappropriate to display the crown (Crown of St. Edward) and the British royal cypher on vintage postboxes that are still in service, and is looking into ways to update the markings on these boxes"³ (2015). Thus, it is clear that the Hongkong Post is the leading proponent of erasing all British Colonial logos on the postboxes. Also, the Pro-Beijing camp supports the decision made by the Hongkong Post. This establishment (also known as pro-regime lawmakers and pro-Beijing Camp (*qinjianzhi pai* 親建制派)⁴, which is led by The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, supports the government. They argue that the old colonial postboxes should be displayed in museums instead of in the street because Hong Kong is no longer a British colony and the British logos are valueless (Guan 2015).

Another stakeholders group is the "pro-conservation" group which includes scholars, historians, conservators and the pro-democratic politicians. In this study, "pro-

³ The Hong Kong government released a press report on October 9, 2015, stating that, "In response to media enquiries, a spokesman for Hongkong Post today (October 9) said, 'The Government considers it inappropriate to display the crown and the British royal cypher on old posting boxes that are still in service, and is looking into ways to update the markings on these boxes. In parallel, Government is considering the best way to conserve old posting boxes. We will listen to and study the views of stakeholders, and will make an announcement after making a decision.'" (Hongkong Post 2015)

⁴ The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB), Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong (BPA), Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (FTU), Liberal Party and New People's Party are the most influential pro-Beijing political parties in Hong Kong.

conservation” refers to the preserving of public postboxes in their original sites and keeping them in use. In this thesis, stakeholders who want to preserve and display British postboxes in museums are not considered as having a pro-conservation stance because cultural heritage loses part of its meaning and function when placed in a museum. These stakeholders question why the Hongkong Post should erase the colonial relic. They believe that the Hongkong Post’s aim to destroy ‘British heritage’ is a political response to “decolonize Hong Kong” advocated by Chen Zuoer in September 2015 (Hong Kong Free Press 2015). To the pro-conservation groups, the vintage postboxes are a valuable living heritage. They claim that the postboxes still function well and the logos on the boxes do not influence their usage. In contrast, the surviving vintage postboxes represent the long history of postal development and history of Hong Kong, as well as the mixed culture of Hong Kong (Cheng 2015; Mr. Lee 2017, interview). Thus, they insist that vintage postboxes represent cultural heritage and that hiding the British Royal Cypher would impair these heritages. The stakeholders from the pro-conservation side are concerned about the politicization efforts and are educating the public about this problem. For them, the postboxes should not become a political tool; instead, the postboxes should remain part of Hong Kong’s past and are worthy of preserving in their original locations while they maintain their daily postal functions. Moreover, specialists and scholars who study Hong Kong postboxes and postal history also support the pro-conservation side; they are the ones who discovered the historical value of the remaining postboxes.

At last, ordinary Hong Kong residents, who are the everyday users, are also stakeholders, and they have different stances on this issue due to the diverse backgrounds and interests among them. Thus, instead of grouping ordinary people into either the pro-

government side or the pro-conservation side, this study classifies them as an individual group of stakeholders and will study their positions respectively.

This current study aims to tackle this cultural heritage and politics debate and especially to flesh out the view of ordinary citizens by applying anthropological analysis. Using in-depth interviews, newspapers, and transcripts of government meetings and debates, I aim to shed new light on this politically sensitive topic from the perspective of Hong Kong's identity, decolonization, and Hong Kong-China relations.

Research Significance and Methodology

In the post- colonial era today, the former colony – Hong Kong — is experiencing a series of socio-cultural crisis resulting from internal as well as external forces (Wilson, Dick 1990; Chun 1996; Mathews 1996; Chan and Lau 1998; Lü 2007; Kones 2015). First, Hong Kong is the first place and subject of an experiment called the “One Country, Two System” principle; it is questionable whether this system has been riven, especially after the Chinese government negated the significance of the *Sino-British Joint Declaration* (1984) (Keatley 2016; Lau 2017; Ng 2017).

Furthermore, unlike any other states and countries, the identities of Hong Kong people are varied due to different socio-political circumstances as well as Hong Kong's complicated colonial history and relatively short history of being a post-colonial city that began in 1997. According to Joan Henderson, a scholar who studies Hong Kong's cultural heritage and politics, “Hong Kong is configuring a distinctive cultural identity that combines its Chinese and colonial past, current preoccupation and future aspirations”

(2001: 220). The unique identity of Hong Kong people can be explained not only by the city's historical development and rapid social change of the city itself but also by the influence of the Mainland China. With such a dynamic essence, the Hong Kong people's identities are often the focus of scholars who question whether these people considered themselves as "Hong Kong people," "Chinese," or "Hong Kong Chinese." Indeed, its residents' identities have become what Hong Kong scholars study most. Therefore, Hong Kong is an ideal site for scholars who are interested in exploring the relations between politics and cultural identity, post-colonial nostalgia, cultural heritage politics, and identities.

Because of growing and intense socio-political and cultural conflicts in Hong Kong, investigating the Hong Kong identity is never an obsolete endeavor. Correspondingly, the Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong even does quantitative research on this issue every month (Public Opinion Programme 2017). Moreover, after a series of dramatic social movements and political changes in Hong Kong, such as the Umbrella Movement in 2014, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that the *Sino-British Joint Declaration* (1984) "no longer has any realistic meaning" in late June 2017. Six pro-democracy lawmakers have been disqualified by the Hong Kong High Court in mid-July 2017, increasing number of Hong Kong people who question "One Country, Two System"⁵ and Hong Kong-China relations. Thus, it is necessary to

⁵ The "One Country, Two Systems" was a basic principle and policy that was proposed by the Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping, in the 1980s to prepare for the change of the sovereignty of Hong Kong, Macau, and even Taiwan. This principle was adopted by the Constitution of the People's Republic of China in December 1982. As mentioned in the *Sino-British Joint Declaration* signed in 1984, both China and Britain agreed that "The above-stated basic policies of the People's Republic of China regarding Hong Kong and the elaboration of them in Annex I to this Joint Declaration will be stipulated, in a Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, by the National People's Congress

study Hong Kong identities while considering recent issues thoughtfully to present a precise and up-to-date result.

At the same time, this thesis addresses the construction of cultural heritage in Hong Kong by evaluating current discourse and earlier research on the meanings of “cultural heritage” and the ongoing decolonization process. Similar to other places, heritage preservation is tightly bound to current Hong Kong identity and political circumstances. There are only a few scholars focusing the current Hong Kong government’s heritage management policies and practices⁶ since most are interested in the functions of constructing cultural heritage and collective memories by local people and the frictions created by heritage conservation movements between the Hong Kong government and local residents (Cartier 2008; Henderson 2008; Leung 2009; Lu 2009; Ku 2010; Lung 2012; Barber 2013; Yung and Chan 2015; Lu 2016). However, it is important to reconsider the intention of failing to preserve and even destroying cultural heritage, especially those that have significant colonial emblems, beyond the widely-studied framework. With increasing questions about the independence of the Hong Kong political and judicial system from the Chinese government, this research intends to

of the People’s Republic of China, and they will remain unchanged for 50 years” (*Sino-British Joint Declaration* 1984). This declaration announced that Hong Kong can enjoy “One country, two systems, a high degree of autonomy, Hong Kong People ruling Hong Kong” for 50 years after the handover in 1997 (Basic Law Fact Sheet 2013).

⁶ For instance, Maggi Leung (2009) studied three colonial heritage monuments of Hong Kong and argued that the post-colonial Hong Kong government needs to erase the colonial heritage not only because of land shortage but also because the government wanted to uproot local identity that is evoked by certain colonial landmarks. Furthermore, Agnes Ku (2010) studied the preservation project of the Central Police Station Compound. She demonstrated that only the colonial heritage that increases the people’s cohesiveness would be subject to conservation.

expand the studies of cultural heritage to a wider notion, that is, the impact of decolonization and Hong Kong-China relations on heritage conservation.

Furthermore, this thesis also contributes to the study of the world postal system as a communication tool and symbol of imperial power within cultural heritage studies. This study broadens our understanding that postboxes are not only tools for communication but also acceptable repositories of cultural heritage that reveal the history and socio-cultural transformation of a place. Furthermore, the postbox can be understood as a material object embroiled in current controversial debates over identity, monuments, and memories.

My research questions are these: What are the functions and symbolic meanings of public postboxes? Why would the design of public postboxes lead to a conservation and political conflict in Hong Kong? Why do some Hong Kong people consider the British postboxes as a cultural heritage item, while the Hong Kong government doesn't? Why do Hong Kong people in the post-colonial period have an interpretation of cultural heritage that is opposed to the government's? Why does the Hong Kong government ignore the people's opinion? And why is the Hong Kong government intending to remove the colonial logos? How can the socio-political circumstances of Hong Kong and China help to explain it? To answer my questions, this paper covers both quantitative and qualitative data, participant observation, interviews, and content analysis. Participant observation, including both an observing participant (insider) and a participating observer (outsider), is one of the purposed methodologies to observe and understand the groups and their interests comprehensively and objectively (Spradley 1980). The ethnographic findings gathered from sites visits will be a valuable source of information as well.

Moreover, in-depth interviews and content analysis will be conducted. Relevant newspapers, programs, and online presses also reported this controversy and interviewed politicians and citizens with various stands; thus, I will also do content analysis on these reports to supplement my research.

Thesis Organization

The chapters are presented in the following sequence: Chapter 1 highlights earlier research done on Hong Kong's cultural heritage and identities. Chapter 2 examines the development of the postboxes in Hong Kong to provide readers with a basic understanding of the background of this research. Chapter 3 analyzes the symbolic meanings of the British postboxes from the perspectives of different stakeholders to determine the origin of the debate and evaluate the function of British postboxes, which analysis further explains why different stakeholders have various stands and arguments. In the Conclusion, I will examine how people and governments deciphered colonial experience, nostalgia, and current issues in Hong Kong differently and how these differences lead to distinct connotations of and attitudes about colonial cultural heritage. I argue that people use their memories of the "good old days" to escape difficulties in reality. Thus, people tend to define cultural heritage with rich local elements that are different from the government. The Hongkong Post's plan to cover up all the British logos is one of the continuous efforts directed at "decolonizing" Hong Kong. The Hongkong Post denies its purpose because it does not want to provoke localism's ideology or lead to another large-scale social movement.

Chapter 1 Hong Kong as a field of Identity and Cultural Heritage

Studies

Examining the socio-cultural and economic conflicts in Hong Kong in the recent years makes it obvious that the handover of Hong Kong seems to have failed to respond to the majority of Hong Kong residents' expectations that the shift in sovereignty would only bring prosperity to the city. This chapter aims to provide some crucial background knowledge for the cultural heritage debate. It first traces the origin and development of Hong Kong residents' identity. In addition, it provides a detailed definition of "heritage" via evaluating international charters and Hong Kong regulations.

1.1 Hong Kong as a Site for Post-Colonial Research

Hong Kong is an accessible city with a mixed culture and a complex identity and therefore is also a unique field site for Chinese Studies. Before the opening of the People's Republic of China in the late 1970s, Hong Kong and Taiwan were always considered the best locations for scholars to examine Chinese culture and traditions. For instance, scholars such as anthropologist Barbara. E. Ward consciously chose to study Chinese society and economic systems through the stories of the boat people and clans in Hong Kong in before the 1980s (Ward 1965). It should be noted that the closed-door policy of Mainland China was one reason why scholars were forced into Hong Kong. Howbeit, Hong Kong itself is an important site because of its uniqueness regarding history, culture and political transformation.

The colonization and decolonization process in Hong Kong is different from other colonies, which allows the study of this city to expand our notion of colonial research. According to Ackbar Abbas – a scholar who studies Hong Kong culture and identity from the perspectives of globalization and colonization – Hong Kong is unique in two ways. First, in that different from other colonies, its history began after it was ceded to the British in 1842. Such timing indicates that the history of Hong Kong is a “history of colonialism” (1997: 2). Abbas’s position is right that the historical record of Hong Kong was limited before 1842 and it was not well-developed until British colonization. The city’s recent transformation and conflicts are also tightly linked with people who have misgivings about the post-colonial rule. Therefore, the study of Hong Kong can supplement our understanding of the development of colonialism and post-colonialism.

Second, although the majority ethnicity in Hong Kong is Chinese, the culture and politics of the Hong Kong people are distinct from the mainlanders (1997: 2). Abbas described the differentiation as “The Hong Kong person is now a bird of a different feather, perhaps a kind of Maltese Falcon” (2). The contrasts between Hong Kong residents and the Mainland Chinese create countless mutual lapses in trust and understanding (1997: 2). Abbas’s argument helps to explain the disputes between the two groups of people from historical perspectives, yet he has not explained enough in terms of cultural and political differences. Thus, other research must seek a more holistic answer through empirical studies on Hong Kong’s culture and social circumstances.

In addition to the reasons Abbas cites, Hong Kong remains a valuable research site today because of its unique decolonization process that has led to unexpected socio-cultural and political disputes. Hong Kong remained a British colony (1842-1997) until

its sovereignty was transferred to China in 1997; however, the decolonization process in Hong Kong was not at the request of the Hong Kong people in the sense that they wanted to continue being a British colony rather than “return” to China. There was a famous phrase, “horse races go on and night clubs stay open” (馬照跑, 舞照跳) that was popular in the 1980s and 1990s. The phrase created an impression that the majority attitude of Hong Kong people toward handover was that they did not care about the politics as long as they could continue to do what they had been doing after 1997. However, according to a telephone survey done in 1982 on the future of Hong Kong after 1997, among the 998 individuals who were aged 20 or over, 70% wanted to maintain status quo, which means they would like to see Hong Kong remain as a British colony (Reform Club of Hong Kong 1982: 4). Only 4% preferred that Hong Kong be taken back by China and under Chinese administration (Reform Club of Hong Kong 1982: 4). These results also include 22% who believed that the living environment of China was not well liked (there was “no freedom/ many restrictions”), and they “quite like[d] the system here with a slightly higher proportion rating the economic system above the political system” (Reform Club of Hong Kong 1982: 4). This survey suggests that most of the people in Hong Kong, in fact, did not want to decolonize the city but rather wanted to remain as a colony. Nevertheless, the Hong Kong people were not consulted when the *Sino-British Joint Declaration* (1984) was signed by the British and the Chinese government on the change of Hong Kong’s sovereignty. This omission made the people entirely passive during the decolonization process because neither the former colonizer nor the new ruler really cared about them. Such disregard generated more and more mistrust and misunderstanding that in turn widened the gap between the Mainland Chinese and the

Chinese in Hong Kong. These circumstances demonstrate why the Hong Kong people were not at all happy that they were being returned to the “motherland,” questioned the postcolonial government’s rulers, and remained nostalgic for the colonial past through a series of political protests, social movements and cultural heritage preservation movements starting in 2003, which then strengthened the Hong Kong identity. Thus, the study of Hong Kong can enhance our understanding particularly about how local and cultural identity is generated and changed by political circumstances.

1.2 The Dynamic Hong Kong Identities

Cultural identity is another important topic and even the core of Hong Kong studies. Identity is “a person’s knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or group” (Stets and Burke 2000: 225). A social group refers to people “who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category” (Stets and Burke 2000: 225). However, identity is fluid, inter-changeable and subjective (Henderson 2008), so it is necessary to study identity from time to time and investigate the reasons for the changes.

Generally, scholars tend to argue that the Hong Kong identity was not created until the postwar period⁷, especially during the uncertain transition period of Hong Kong

⁷ Although most researchers believed the Hong Kong identity was not formed until the post-war period, there is a scholar who claims that there was already a sense of Hong Kong identity before the First World War. In her research, Kuo Huei-Ying (2015) argues that there was already a unique local identity that was different from Chinese nationalism and Chinese identity among the Chinese bourgeoisies in Hong Kong during the Two World Wars. Kuo claims that the Hong Kong Chinese bourgeoisies wanted to sustain their trade with colonial countries, such as Japan and Britain, which was contradictory to Chinese nationalism at

from 1984 to 1997 (Chan and Lau 1998). Dick Wilson emphasizes that Hong Kong's identity was a "gathering identity" and was formed after the agreement, *Sino-British Joint Declaration* of 1984 (Wilson, cited in Chun 1996: 59). Anthropologist Allen Chun (1996) also holds a similar position that the people in Hong Kong had a sense of "being bound by shared assumptions and values" after the *Sino-British Joint Declaration* (59). Furthermore, Gordon Matthews, an anthropologist, mentions that the identity of Hong Kong is a complex mix of Chineseness and Westernness, which then separates the Hong Kong people from the Chinese people from the Mainland of China (1996). Nevertheless, such mixture also generates a vague Hong Kong identity as there are also some Hong Kong people who question their identity: "I don't know who I am, culturally" (Matthews 1996: 415).

Among the research on Hong Kong identity, sociologist Lü Dale's *Xianggang si dai ren* (*Hong Kong Four Generations* 香港四代人) (2007) is a groundbreaking study that illustrated how different growing and living situations, along with rapidly changing social, political and economic conditions, can lead to the formation of four generations of Hong Kong people who have different identities. The third generation who were born in the late 1960s and 1970s is the group that first created a distinct Hong Kong identity. They no longer have as much social mobility as the second generation. In contrast, they experienced the economic crisis of Hong Kong that threatened their living and future. They watched the 1989 Incident through live TV and are the generation who was touched

the time. Kuo's research in fact can enrich and strengthen Abbas's argument that the Chinese in Hong Kong had not been like the Mainland Chinese since the early colonial era.

and scared by the Incident, thus contributing to their worries about the future of Hong Kong and their weariness of the second generation's forged patriotism. According to Lü, Hong Kong identity was thus created among these people in the 1980s and 1990s. By 1997, the people of Hong Kong already possessed a well-established local identity which marked them "different from other Chinese communities" (Kones 2015: 229).

Furthermore, the fourth generation is the most affluent. However, they are no longer as unrestrained as their parents; nor do they have as much opportunity as their parents. For this reason, this generation loses hope about their future and are unsatisfied with society. Furthermore, they consider themselves as Hong Kong people with a unique Hong Kong identity. Although Lü's research echoes that of other scholars on the origin of Hong Kong identity, and even classifies the various generations and their distinct identities, Lü and other scholars can not explain how and why the fifth generation, who were born after the 1990s and had experienced intensive patriotic education, still has a stronger Hong Kong identity than Chinese identity and even become an important source of recent anti-government movements.

Moreover, researchers must consider the position of the Chinese government on the Hong Kong identity issue because the Chinese government's rule and attitude could always influence the political and social circumstances in Hong Kong. First, the Chinese government does not recognize Hong Kong's colonial history and the shift in Hong Kong identity (Ngo 1999). The Chinese government considers "Hong Kong as a Chinese sovereignty since ancient times" but underestimate the influence of Hong Kong being ceded to the Britain in Qing in 1842. The Chinese government does not recognize the treaties between the Qing and Britain but insists upon their inequality and refuse to accept

them as binding (Ngo 1999: 132-3). Thus, it does not realize that the Hong Kong people might not have as much confidence in becoming part of China, an attitude which then generates a Hong Kong identity that is different from a Chinese identity.

Second, the Chinese government also can not understand what Lü Dale (2007) suggests, which is that different generations of Hong Kong people have an entirely different attitude towards China and Hong Kong. Such differentiation among people lead to various social and political phenomena in Hong Kong and create tension among the Hong Kong people, and the Hong Kong and Chinese governments. For instance, the Umbrella Movement in 2014 is a typical case, revealing various classes and generations among the Hong Kong people as well as that the Hong Kong government have entirely different interpretations of and requests for democracy.

In addition, although the Chinese government admits the existence of a Hong Kong identity, such identity is not the same as the local identity Hong Kong people possessed. The Chinese government uses the terms “Hongkongese,” and “Hong Kong people” to describe and represent the people living in Hong Kong. For instance, when China and Britain were discussing the handover issue, the Chinese government allowed the “Hong Kong people to rule over Hong Kong” (港人治港) after 1997 (Chen 1995: 16). The Chinese government recognizes the Hong Kong people’s identity as a nod to democracy, but at the same time, demands that they be loyal to the Mainland China (Chen 1995: 16-17). The Chinese government’s interpretation of the Hong Kong identity is apparently different from the actual identity of the Hong Kong people. Such discrepancy generates addition disagreement among people and the governments, which

lead to more social disputes. Thus, Hong Kong-China relations is another focus of Hong Kong Studies used to decipher dynamic changes in Hong Kong identity and society. However, recent scholars tend to concentrate on internal factors in Hong Kong but seldom consider the impact of China on the formation of Hong Kong identity. Therefore, it is necessary to discover the cause of Hong Kong identity from the perspective of the recent Chinese government's influence.

In addition to the social and historical transformation, cultural heritage is a major component of identity formation in Hong Kong Studies. Due to the increasing social, political and economic conflicts, cultural heritage and collective memory conservation have been linked with local identities and anti-government forces that have emerged as one of the biggest and most influential social movements in postcolonial Hong Kong era (Lu 2009; Henderson 2008; Yung and Chan 2011; Yung, Lai and Yu 2016).

1.3 Defining Cultural Heritage and Cultural Heritage Studies in Hong Kong

Cultural heritage is one focus of this research. According to *The Burra Charter*, an internationally accepted standard for heritage conservation, heritage is something (place and fabric) with cultural significance that can 'enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences' (Australia ICOMOS 2013: 1). The Australian ICOMOS also announced that the conservation of heritage 'retain[s] the cultural significance of a place' (Australia ICOMOS 2013:3) and passes the history of the sites to the next generation.

However, anthropologist Laurajane Smith (2006: 3) has argued that ‘there is no such thing as “heritage” because cultural heritage is a constructed concept influenced by many factors. In *Uses of Heritage* (2006), Smith argues that heritage is a cultural and social process and an economic and leisure practice. She argues that the *Authorized Heritage Discourse* is constructed by social elite groups to control the way people think and interact in the society and world (Smith 2006). Various anthropologists, sociologists, and architects who study cultural heritage also point out that the meanings of ‘heritage’ for local communities are very different from the interpretations of government and elites (Cheung 1999; Cheung 2003; Henderson 2008; Howard and Ashworth 2011; Lu 2009; Smith 2006; Yung and Chan 2011). Thus, since 2003, conflicts arise that take the form of social movements or community-led conservation movements by local residents to support the preservation of heritage in Hong Kong. Therefore, to understand the nuances of cultural heritage, we must explore the reasons for heritage construction and determine the functions and meanings of the heritage to stakeholders.

The cultural heritage preservation project of Hong Kong began in the 1970s but had limited achievement. The Antiquities and Monuments Office (from now on, AMO), which is an executive arm of the Antiquities Authority of the Hong Kong government, and the *Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance* were established and launched in 1976 to ensure that the best examples of Hong Kong's antiquities and monuments remained under appropriate protection preserve (Antiquities and Monuments Office 2016). According to the *Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance*, four types of heritage classifications exist in Hong Kong. Those ranked highest are “declared monuments,” Graded as 1, 2 and 3 (Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance 1976). Only declared monuments are protected

by these laws. It can be argued, then, that cultural heritage in Hong Kong does not receive enough legal protection.

Moreover, even though the *1999 Policy Address* emphasized preserving heritage in the context of urban development and urban renewal, the government authority does not have enough power to do so. The former Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Mr. Tung Chee-hwa, stated that “it is important to rehabilitate and preserve unique buildings as this not only accords with our objective of sustainable development but also facilitates the retention of the inherent characteristics of different districts, and helps promote tourism. The concept of preserving our heritage should be incorporated into all projects for redeveloping old areas” (Tung 1999:50). Therefore, the Antiquities Advisory Board (from now on, AAB) was founded in 2011 to advise the AMO on whether an item should be declared as a monument or a proposed monument and address any matters relating to antiquities, proposed monuments or monuments. The AAB may also advise the AMO on measures to promote the restoration and conservation of historic buildings and structures. The twenty-three board members of the AAB demonstrate expertise and produce scholarship in various relevant fields, such as archaeology, heritage preservation, and architecture (Antiquities Advisory Board 2017). However, the AAB is only an advisory committee that does not have any political power to enforce the AMO to implement certain heritage preservation practices. Thus, regular cultural heritage conservation is subject to severe limitations regarding the authority’s political power and legal protection.

Even though regulations exist to preserve cultural heritage in Hong Kong, the *Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance* has limited the items that may be eligible for

preservation. According to section 3(1) of the *Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance* (Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance 1976), only a “place, building, site or structure” could be declared as a monument under the Ordinance.⁸ Other items such as vintage postboxes cannot be billed as “heritage” under the preservation of the AMO. In fact, the AAB Secretariat used the Ordinance’s limitations to address a conservator’s concern about the preservation of vintage British postboxes of Hong Kong in 2016 (Lee 2016, personal emails). Also because of this narrow definition of heritage, the old postboxes cannot be preserved under current antiquities laws, and two-thirds of them were removed after 1997⁹.

There is controversy among people and the government on what should be preserved in Hong Kong due to the limitation of the *Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance* and *Authorized Heritage Discourse*; however, heritage conservation did not become a hot topic in Hong Kong after 1997. The Hong Kong people had little sense of belonging to the city and were not interested in heritage because they did not consider Hong Kong as a home but rather just “a place to make a living” before the 1990s (Lu 2009: 259). Thus, to many Hong Kong people, earning money was much more important than heritage preservation. Hence, many monuments that have precious historical, cultural and architectural values were demolished before the handover.

⁸ In the *Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance* (1976) section 3 (1), it states that: “Subject to section 4, the Authority may, after consultation with the Board and with the approval of the Chief Executive, by notice in the Gazette, declare any place, building, site or structure, which the Authority considers to be of public interest by reason of its historical, archaeological or palaeontological significance, to be a monument, historical building or archaeological or palaeontological site or structure.”

⁹ There were 144 out of 800 in-service post boxes that contained the British logos in 1997 after the Hong Kong handover to China. However, only 59 remain currently.

Only after the increasing awareness of local Hong Kong identity in the 1990s did people start to engage with cultural heritage construction and conservation processes. In 2003, the Urban Renewal Authority announced that it would carry out a redevelopment project on Lee Tung Street, known as Wedding Card Street. With the help of scholars and conservators, the local community raised a series of protests and argued that the street represents cultural heritage because of its associations with local marriage customs and the culture of Hong Kong. Although the movement failed, it marked the beginning of the cultural heritage movement in Hong Kong (Lu 2016). In 2006 widespread attention to cultural heritage began across Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government wanted to remove and relocate the Star's Pier and Queen's Pier in 2006 and 2007 for the harbor reclamation project. Hong Kong residents, including conservators, elites, and students, protested strongly against the project and claimed that the piers were part of the collective memory and cultural heritage of the Hong Kong people and should be preserved on-site. To increase public attention and influence the government to change its scheme, participants raised a series of protests, sit-ins, and hunger strikes. These preservation movements also failed, but they marked the biggest cultural heritage movement in Hong Kong that had heightened people's awareness of and attention to cultural heritage preservation, Hong Kong identity, and collective memory. It is also the most studied cultural heritage movement in Hong Kong (Lu 2009; Henderson 2008; Yung, Lai and Yu 2016; Kam 2017). In 2010, the preservation of Wing Lee Street, a remarkable 1950s style Hong Kong residential compound, was a successful locally-led social movement. Part is preserved due to the success of a Wing Lee Street-related Hong Kong film in an international film festival (Yung and Chan 2011). However, urban renewal projects are

prevalent in Hong Kong; thus, negotiations about whether monuments should be preserved as cultural heritage occur frequently.

Previous studies on the cultural heritage movements of Hong Kong still provide hints about the cultural heritage debate. First, cultural heritage construction is tightly linked to identity construction. Most of the people participating in the heritage conservation movement are youngsters and educated people who consider Hong Kong their home (Henderson 2008; Lu 2009) and “want to take more part in sharing their ideas about heritage with government decision-makers” (Cody 2002: 185). Thus, they are concerned about the monuments and items that embody precious historical, cultural and social values and are keen to preserve them as cultural heritage. Anthropologist Tracey Lu’s investigation of various cultural heritage movements shows that people who participate tend to argue that the monuments they want to preserve represent Hong Kong and even the Hong Kong people, thereby constructing a distinct Hong Kong identity (Lu 2009; Lu 2016).

In fact, heritage not only binds people who share the same memories of the places together (Hayden 1995) but also serves various functions and are used by different groups to protect their interests (Cheung 1999; Cheung 2003; Henderson 2008; Howard and Ashworth 2011; Lu 2009; Smith 2006). For instance, during the most remarkable heritage preservation movement that focused on the Queen’s Pier and the Star Pier in 2006, scholars found that people used this heritage conservation movement to protest about socio-economic problems, requests for democracy, and construction of local identity. Additionally, discontent over the Hong Kong government and powerful property owners also led to a rise in heritage conservation movements in Hong Kong (Henderson

2008; Lu 2009). Therefore, considering the substantial requests of stakeholders is necessary during cultural heritage studies.

Moreover, collective memory is another reason people want to preserve certain monuments, such as the Shekkipime Estate, the first public housing estate in Hong Kong (Chiu 2007), as well as the Central Police Station Compound (Ku 2010). In fact, collective memory is widely used as a reason for almost every heritage preservation protest campaign. Among the participants, younger people were the main forces in constructing collective memory. Previous scholars often argued that internal factors in Hong Kong led to various movements, but they seldom considered external factors. Nevertheless, Gérard Henry, an art critic who has been working in both China and Hong Kong art and culture, believes that due to the Beijing government's intention to stir up patriotism in Hong Kong, the younger generation who were born in this city "had discovered the remnants of collective memory. They criticize the older generation for having allowed it to be liquidated" (Henry 2007: 86). Thus, Hong Kong's younger generation has to construct heritage and collective memory to strengthen their sense of a distinct identity and use this heritage to fight against the powerful elder generations. Henry's viewpoint not only supplements other scholars' finding, but his argument also offers a new cause for the preservation movement – an external factor, the Chinese government. Although Henry could not support his argument with either qualitative or quantitative evidence, his point of view may be one factor that needs to be considered because Hong Kong is not an isolated city but always under the Chinese government's influence.

In addition to its purposes and functions, active community participation is also common in Hong Kong's cultural heritage preservation movement. Community engagement is based on real ties or interdependence among economic, social, political or any other historical factors that bind individuals together; community also constructs a social boundary and depends on shared experience and social networks (Day 2006). Community participation in heritage conservation is becoming increasingly prevalent in Hong Kong (Lee 2009) not only because of its various goals but also because of its ties to the clash between urban renewal programs and local community interests. In the case of Wing Lee Street, to preserve the traditional Chinese tenement buildings, local residents, as well as young people and elites who supported the movement, used heritage to symbolize local Hong Kong culture, thus evoking nostalgia for the past and increasing support for their cause. More importantly, they also created visions of their neighborhoods that were at odds with top-down urban renewal projects (Yung and Chan 2011). Tracey Lu (2016) also points out that community-constructed "local district identity" and heritage-constructed "unique Hong Kong local culture" enhance the community's cohesiveness and public support. Although Lu neglects the importance of Hong Kong identity and culture as a distinct culture phenomenon in the post-colonial period, her research enriches our understanding of community participation that local inhabitants and conservators used via mass media propaganda to obtain their political rights. Lu's research also echoes Yung's and Chan's arguments that community participation is crucial to Hong Kong's cultural heritage construction and conservation movements.

On the other hand, local community and government may not always be on opposite sides. For instance, in the case of the valuable local landmark Kom Tong Hall, the local community and the government co-operated to build an educational museum that promoted the centrality of Hong Kong in modern Chinese history and during Sun Yat-sen's revolution (Lu 2009). Thus, the idea that people and government do not have the same stance during cultural heritage construction and conservation processes may not always hold true. It is necessary to consider the positions and needs of the people through an in-depth research method.

Furthermore, previous research on Hong Kong's cultural heritage is limited to monuments and intangible practices and lacks focus on precious items that are easily accessible and inconspicuous yet necessary for our daily life. In fact, according to the *Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance* (1976), only monuments can represent the cultural heritage of Hong Kong; postboxes do not meet the criterion of official discourse. Thus, this study seeks to disclose the value of the vintage postboxes to broaden the understanding of cultural heritage and review current cultural heritage discourse in Hong Kong.

In sum, Hong Kong remains a valuable site for postcolonial studies. The distinct identities of the Hong Kong people should be examined periodically, along with the internal and external factors that affect the formation of local identity. Moreover, the cultural heritage movement is bound up with political goals, identity construction, and socio-economic development. Thus, various stakeholders' interpretations of cultural heritage and its functions also must be considered.

Chapter 2 Postal Systems and Postboxes in the Hong Kong

This chapter illustrates the postal history and development of postboxes in Hong Kong. First, I will provide a brief history of the Hong Kong postal system and track its relation with British colonial rule. Then, I will illustrate the history of postboxes in Hong Kong and how it can reflect the socio-cultural, economic and political development. Next, I will elaborate upon the types and physical characteristics of the postboxes. I will also include ordinary people's impressions of the colonial postboxes through in-depth interviews.

2.1 A Brief History of the Postal System in Hong Kong

The expansion of the postal system is usually accomplished by the expansion of territory and sovereignty (Ewing 1977; Smith 1921), and the formation of the postal system in Hong Kong is also linked to the expansion of the British Empire's sovereignty. Hong Kong was not established until it became a British colony in 1841¹⁰, which indicates the postal system is tightly associated with colonial history and rule.

After Hong Kong was formally ceded to British in 1842, the British Posting Office, The Royal Mail, appointed a manager to deal with the posting affairs in Hong

¹⁰ Before 1841, if people wanted to mail their letters, they had to request foreigners who lived in Hong Kong or sailors to mail them. Because mail was carried by vessels, it was hard to determine the day mail would be received (Er and Huang 2001:38). When the British soldiers first arrived in Hong Kong in 1841, they immediately established the first regular postal system in Central 10 (Proud 1989).

Kong's General Post Office (Xianggang shang ye hui bao 1958: 60). After a formal and regular postal service was set up in Hong Kong, the mail finally could be sent from Hong Kong directly, which improved delivery time.

According to the *Regulations of the Post Office* that was published on 15 April 1842, all the mail arriving in Hong Kong was delivered to the Harbor Master through ships and then sent to the bamboo shed post office. Although the office hours of the post office were irregular due to the shipping schedule, there was no home delivery service; people who were waiting for mail had to come and pick it up themselves (China Philatelic Association 1994a).

2.2 British Postboxes in Hong Kong

A postbox is more than just a necessary postal auxiliary facility; through the study of the postbox, one can explore the economic, political, social, and cultural development of Hong Kong. First, the establishment of a postbox is associated with the economic development of Hong Kong. Although the regular and formal postal system was established right after the British occupied Hong Kong, the first postbox was not set up for 30 years. Before the postbox was set up, those who wanted to send out mail had to visit the General Post Office located in Central (Lee and Wu 2015: 10). However, as Hong Kong became a major trading port and intermediate port for mail sent between China and overseas in the late 19th Century, there was an increasingly commercial and personal demand on the postal service, in particular for the Chinese community. Hence, the Postmaster General decided to place the first

postbox in Hong Kong. Finally, in April 1878, a pillar type postbox was placed in Sheung Wan, a business and residential hub of the Chinese community (Lee and Wu 2015: 11). Through the establishment of the first postbox, we can track the transformation of Hong Kong from a village concentrated on agriculture, fishing and incense making to an international commercial hub and even a bridge for communication between Mainland China and overseas.

However, the first postbox was not that popular due to the mailing culture and habits of the Chinese community. At the time, Chinese preferred weighing and sending mail at post offices rather than buying stamps in advance; therefore, they did not like to use the postbox as expected. Even so, with the increasing population, the Post Office wanted to enhance the postal service in Hong Kong through setting up more post offices and postboxes along the residential hubs where mail was easily collected. Until 1878, there were fourteen postboxes set up on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon (Lee and Wu: 16-19). Through the establishment of the early postboxes, we can identify the popular resident and commercial hubs in Hong Kong. There was also increasing flow of information in the city and improvement of the colony facilities.

Moreover, the look of the postbox had both political and artistic functions. The design of public postboxes in British Hong Kong followed the British standard, symbolizing the rule of the British Empire. The design also demonstrated that the postal system was one of the most efficient representations of colonial government power. The postboxes in Hong Kong can be classified into five main types: pillar postbox, wall box, lamp type postbox, cubical box and special postboxes, such as the

wooden box and iron box; most of them were red and made completely of cast iron before 1997 (China Philatelic Association 2001:16; Lee and Wu 2015). Pillar postboxes were the most common type of postboxes produced before the 1980s. They were made of cast iron and can be classified into three categories: Type A which is a circular shape with a larger diameter; Type B which is also in a circular shape but with a smaller diameter; and the Oval Type. To solve the storage shortage problem of the pillar postboxes, cubical boxes that had a larger capacity were imported from Singapore in the 1980s. Cubical boxes were first made of cast iron as well but later made of glass fiber. Two hooks were placed inside the postboxes to hang the two mail bags that were located underneath the two apertures. In addition to the pillar and cubical postboxes, wall boxes were mostly seen in suburb areas and walls outside post offices. Lamp type postboxes were compact and common in suburban areas as well; however, they were replaced by the small cubical boxes before the handover. (China Philatelic Association 2001: 52-56; Lee and Wu 2015: 60-101)

There were nine essential components to the colonial postboxes as shown in Figure 1 from the top down: the cap, rain shelter, aperture, collection plate, door, Crown of St. Edward, Royal Cipher of Reign, manufacturer's name, and the base. The most important part of the postbox is its aperture. It was intentionally made in different sizes to suit the situation. It was usually inclined upwards to avoid rainfall. The cap was on the top of the postbox and was commonly seen on pillar type postboxes and originally produced for ornamentation. The size of the cap was normally made larger than the main body and thus sheltered the aperture from

rainfall. Each postbox also had a rain shelter on top of the aperture. Just like its name, the rain shelter was used to prevent rain entry. To indicate useful and relevant information, such as the collecting time and postbox number, a collection plate was shown on the postbox's door. Both the Crown of St. Edward and Royal Cipher of Reign were important symbols cast on the postbox's door during manufacture. They served as evidence of the era when that particular postbox was produced. Many of the parts mentioned above, for example, the collection plate, Royal Cipher of Reign and aperture, are placed on the doors (Lee and Wu 2015: 30-33). To distinguish the change of Hong Kong's sovereignty after 1997, the new logo of the Hongkong Post, the "hummingbird," was added. Moreover, each postbox also was printed with its box number.

During the colonial period, all postboxes were decorated with the Royal Cipher of the Reign that symbolized the British rule and legitimized its sovereignty in Hong Kong. Each Royal Cipher of Reign represented the ruling king or queen at the period, so the ciphers would vary from time to time. As shown in Table 1, five types of the Royal Cipher of the Reign can be found on the old in-service postboxes: Queen Victoria, King Edward, King George V and VI, and Queen Elizabeth II (see Table 1). Figure 2 shows the first day of issue released by the Hongkong Post in 2001 to celebrate the 160th anniversary of the Hong Kong Post Office. From this image, we can identify all the postboxes that have been used in Hong Kong. Starting from the left, the first red postbox with 1878-1901 on the bottom is a product in the Queen Victoria Period (1837-1901); the next postbox that was produced during King Edward VII's reign from 1901-1910; the third is a postbox with the Royal Cipher of the Reign of King George V (1910-1936); the

fourth red postbox represents the period of King George VI (1936-1952); while the last red postbox symbolized the last British royal ruler of Hong Kong, Queen Elizabeth II (1952-1997). On the right, there is an image of the green rectangular post box that represents the postal service in the Hong Kong, China since July 1st, 1997.

Before the 1980s, Hong Kong's postboxes were imported from the U.K., but there were also a few locally produced postboxes. Historians Stanley Lee and Kelvin Wu found that the Royal Cipher of King George V, King George VI and some of the Queen Elizabeth II signs were different from those in the U.K., suggesting they were probably manufactured in Hong Kong then imported from Britain. However, this theory is not yet conclusive (Lee and Wu 2015: 137-144).

To prepare for the new Hong Kong government of 1997, most of the designs from the colonial period were altered before 1997. According to a Hong Kong newspaper, *Ming Pao's* report on 10th May 1997, the Hongkong Post used competitive bidding to choose a company to design the new logo for the Hongkong Post and the post office (Ming Po 1997). For example, the color was the first aspect to be changed. The postboxes from the colonial period were painted red, just like the ones used in Britain. Before the handover, the postboxes in Hong Kong were painted green (see Figure 2) (China Philatelic Association 2001:92). According to the Hongkong Post, green symbolized the attitude of the Hongkong Post – active, vivid, and open-minded (China Philatelic Association 2001). Despite the fact that the postboxes of Mainland China were also green in color, the Hongkong Post did not explain whether the new postbox color was meant to replicate the ones in Mainland China. Moreover, there were also some cubical postboxes that were purple and contained only the hummingbird logo of the Hongkong Post. They

worked like lockers in which the postmen could store the mail temporarily (See Figure 3) and were used to reduce the postmen's load safeguard the mail (Lee and Wu 2015: 201).

The Hongkong Post's logo has changed twice since the British logos were removed in April 1996. Still, 144 out of 800 postboxes produced in the Queen Elizabeth II period that contained cast British logos that could not be removed remained in-service after 1997. For the other postboxes, the logos were printed and replaced with the new logo, the letter "P," which stands for the Postal service (China Philatelic Association 2001: 92-6). Later, the Hong Kong Post's logo was altered from "P" to the new hummingbird logo. The "Hummingbird" symbolized "innovation and improvement in our (Hongkong Post's) service delivery to the world" to be "an efficient and reliable postal service at a reasonable price, earning recognition both at home and abroad" (Hongkong Post 2017). The final alteration of the logo was completed in May of 1997 (China Philatelic Association 2001: 92).

As for the retired British postboxes, the Hong Kong Post Office preserved some for exhibition purposes. Some were sent to museums overseas; some were sold through auctions. Also, some were kept as spares for replacing damaged British post boxes that were in service. (Lee and Wu 2015: 188)

In addition to the political and historical functions, postboxes also carry cultural meanings. When I asked my informants¹¹ their impressions of the postboxes, seven out of eight of them said that they thought the pillar type postboxes were charming and looked better than the cubical boxes. Informants A, D, and F all emphasized the postboxes'

¹¹ In order to protect the informants' privacy, all the informants' names used in this thesis were changed.

aesthetic outlook. Informant D even said that “the colonial (pillar) postbox has a very British style. Personally, I think the British style is classic and looks better. When you look at the British style (postbox), you can sense the historical value, which makes it (the postbox) more than just a government service.” And Informant F also believed “the pillar postboxes have ornamented caps, which make them elegant. That (design) is uncommon over the world and is similar to the postboxes I saw in the Britain... I remembered when I saw a pillar postbox with a black ornamented line on the cap somewhere in Hong Kong when I was a child; it is the prettiest postboxes I have ever seen.” It is interesting that all informants emphasized that the pillar postboxes looked better in red than in green. However, when I asked my informants about their memories of the postboxes during the colonial period, only half of them could remember anything. Informants A, C, D, and E stated that they were too young to remember seeing red postboxes in their childhood. Informant B was the only person who was in her 20s and still had a fresh memory of the red cubical box. She can still remember that she was too short to reach the aperture, and her father needed to pick her up to send out the mail. Informants G and H are in their 50s; they could point out the location of the red pillar postboxes that contained the British logos near their home, but these boxes were replaced by cubical boxes following the handover. Therefore, to my informants, the pillar postboxes that were manufactured in the colonial period hold both aesthetic meanings and their memories.

Just as Informants G and H described, postboxes produced in the colonial period were replaced one after the other. Currently, there are 1149 in-service street postboxes in Hong Kong; 59 of them (or 5%) are old cast iron postboxes with British logos (Hong Kong Post 2017). Figure 4 shows a map with the distribution of the remaining old

postboxes in Hong Kong, and Table 3 provides a list of all of the vintage postboxes that are still in-service. Since the colonial period, postboxes in Hong Kong have been distributed according to the population and business activities in a particular area¹². In this map, the purple envelopes represent the old postboxes that are currently in use, while the yellow envelopes signify the locations of the colonial postboxes that have been removed (Hong Kong Vintage Postboxes Association 2017). Through this map, we can identify that most of the colonial postboxes that remain in Hong Kong are located in Kowloon and the New Territories, instead of in Hong Kong Island, the first place in Hong Kong that was ceded to the British. Although evidence for this distribution pattern is lacking, the reasons may include that the postboxes in Hong Kong Island had a longer history; Hong Kong Island had a higher population density than Kowloon and the New Territories; and the postboxes would have a higher depreciation rate than in other regions and need to be replaced more often.

Due to increasing public concern about cultural heritage preservation and even about the old postboxes, a selected number of the colonial postboxes were refurbished by the government. In response to conservators' requests to preserve these postboxes, the Hongkong Post, AMO and the Conservation Office decided to conserve nine old and characteristic postboxes in 2010. A contractor was appointed to repaint the selected postboxes in 2013. After the repairs, the logos and inscriptions on the postboxes looked clear and sharp (Lee and Wu 2015: 182-185). However, it is important to notice that

¹² This map was created by a group of Hong Kong people who are interested in postal history and fascinated by the colonial post boxes. In this map, the purple envelopes represent the old post boxes that are currently in use, while the yellow envelopes signify the locations of the colonial post boxes that have been removed (Hong Kong Vintage Postboxes Association 2017).

although the government is conserving certain old postboxes, the colonial postboxes are still not listed as part of the cultural heritage of Hong Kong. Also, other than the selected postboxes, the remaining fifty postboxes have not received any refurbishment, and the government does not have any plan for conserving them.

In addition to the outlook and location, the distribution of the postboxes can also reflect Hong Kong's social situation. The distance between postboxes in the urban area was not less than four-hundred meters, while the distance between postboxes in the rural area was not less than eight-hundred meters (Lee and Wu 2015: 123). In some busy business areas, such as Central, postboxes were sometimes installed in pairs to facilitate the high volume of mail (China Philatelic Association 2001: 11). Thus, the distribution of the postboxes can, in fact, reveal Hong Kong's population density and land use patterns. Moreover, through the distribution of postboxes, one can also understand the spread of the British Empire's colonial power and its rule in Hong Kong.

In sum, the postal system in Hong Kong is associated with colonial rule. Similar to the postal system, the postboxes produced in the colonial period were also used to symbolize and legitimize the British rule in Hong Kong. The evolution of the postboxes can illustrate the social, cultural, economic and political transformation of Hong Kong. To differentiate the change in Hong Kong's sovereignty, the Hongkong Post needed to alter the look of the colonial postboxes.

Chapter 3 The Symbolic Meanings of the Vintage British Postboxes

The term “postbox” can be referred to as a letter box and postbox in Britain, a mail box in the U.S.A, and postbox and posting box in Hong Kong. In a broad sense, the term “postbox” is a signifier of both the former and current legitimate regimes; it is also used to represent the signified, the physical object that can be produced in different forms in a multitude of colors and shapes designed to facilitate the deposition and storage of letters and parcels.¹³ By dropping in the items, the senders assumed that the postman would eventually collect the items inside the “postbox” and forward them to the addresses that the senders had indicated. Using the “postbox” was free, but people had to pay the postal charge by buying and sticking stamps on the items they wished to send.

Nonetheless, the “vintage postboxes” in Hong Kong are signifiers for more than their functions simply as tools for sending out and collecting mail. This section will demonstrate how “vintage postboxes” can signify “colonial heritage,” “colonial nostalgia,” “anti-government,” “Hong Kong identity,” “search for self,” and “anti-government” from the perspectives of different stakeholders who were interviewed face-to-face by the author in Hong Kong in December 2016 and by phone interviews conducted in the U.S in April and June 2017.

As stated in the Introduction, there are three main stakeholders, the pro-government side, the pro-conservation side, and the daily users of the postal service. The Hong Kong government and pro-Beijing politicians are the two primary camps in the

¹³ The “signified” is an abstract and mental idea that is used to represent the “thing”; the “signifier” is the word or term used to represent the abstract and mental idea (Barthes 1964: 42-46).

pro-government side who believe the Hongkong Post should erase all former signs of the British Empire. The Hong Kong government agents mentioned here include the Hongkong Post as well as the establishmentarians, who are the pro-government and pro-Beijing politicians. The opposing stakeholders are the pro-conservation forces who see the issue entirely differently regarding the meanings of vintage postboxes. In the following sections, I will elaborate upon the meanings of the vintage postboxes for various stakeholders and demonstrate their position through analyzing their interpretation of them.

3.1 The interpretation of the government and pro-government camps

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Hongkong Post, also representative of the Hong Kong government, was the leading force in proposing that the British logo on the vintage postboxes be covered. The Hongkong Post was founded by the colonial government when Hong Kong was occupied by the British in 1841; it was known as the Postal Department and Post Office before the handover in 1997 (Hongkong Post 2017). It is the only government department that is responsible for providing postal service and is a subordinate department of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau. The head of the Hongkong Post is the Postmaster General who is appointed by the Hong Kong government. Regarding the postal facilities, there were 125 post offices in Hong Kong as of December 2016 (Information Services Department 2016). Also, there are 1148 postboxes in Hong Kong; among them, 59 are vintage postboxes that bear the British logos and are still in-service. Unlike the post offices in some countries, the Hongkong

Post does not provide any banking and saving service; it only provides limited bill paying service. The primary function of the Hongkong Post is to provide postal delivery service.

In this controversy, it is obvious that the current government officials saw the British postboxes as relics symbolic of former British colonial power that undercut the current Hong Kong and Chinese governments' prestige rather than merely as postal facilities. Like all the flags, badges and seals in the colonial period, the Crown of St. Edward and the Royal Cipher of the Reign on the postboxes were also designed in the British style, which symbolized the rule and power of the colonizer; thus, all Hong Kong government bureaus and departments wanted to change the badges designed before the handover. For instance, the Government House, which was the official residence of the Governors of Hong Kong, wanted to remove the Armorial Bearings – a representation of Hong Kong as a British colony – on June 30, 1997, the night before the handover. The Hongkong Post, in fact, also removed some of the British logos on the postboxes before the handover. As mentioned by the former Postmaster General in a radio broadcasting interview on October 4th, 2015, “the Hongkong Post believed it was more cost-efficient and practical not to remove all of the vintage postboxes after the handover” (Commercial Radio Hong Kong 2015). Thus, 144 of the vintage postboxes remained in service in Hong Kong even after the handover. Hence, to the Hong Kong government and the Hongkong Post before the handover, British postboxes' practical functions were more important than their political meaning.

However, for officials working in the Hong Kong government and the Hongkong Post today, the significance of the vintage British postboxes has changed. To explain their decision, the officials always used the reason that it was “inappropriate” and

“inopportune” to display the British logos. In addition to the negotiation regarding the display of the Royal Cypher, the Postmaster General also claimed that the former logos needed to be concealed to unify the physical appearance of the postboxes and to decrease the confusion possibly generated among users, even though there was no report of people being confused by the British logos on the postboxes. Nevertheless, it is clear that the government considered the practical function of the postboxes far less important than the symbolic meanings and appearance of the British postboxes.

Importantly, although conservators claimed that the Hongkong Post’s decision to cover the British Royal Cypher was influenced by Chen Zuoer’s speech on September 2015, that was not the case. According to Ms. Claudia Mo, a Pan-democratic lawmaker who had met the Postmaster General, Mrs. Jessie Ting, to discuss the debate, the Hongkong Post’s decision was made in March 2015, which is half year before Chen’s public speech (Ming Po 2015). Thereupon, it is inaccurate to claim that the Hongkong Post’s decision is a political response to Chen’s criticism of Hong Kong. It remains in question how many Hong Kong government departments and high-level administrative officers were involved in the removal of the British logos on the vintage postboxes and the reasons behind their decision. In fact, by referring to the committee meeting among the Postmaster General and the members of the Legislative Council in October 2015, Mrs. Ting stated that the Hongkong Post made its decisions after the private internal meeting(s) among the government departments and officials. It has been suggested that rather than the Hongkong Post alone, higher-level officials in the government made the final decision to erase all former British logos. Mrs. Ting admitted that the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau is one of the departments that made the decision

(Ming Po 2015). However, when the Postmaster General attended a Legislative Council meeting on October 26, 2015, she could not explain why the Hongkong Post suddenly considered the colonial logo “inappropriate” 18 years after the handover.

Besides the Hong Kong government bureau, politicians from the pro-government side also strongly supported the Hongkong Post’s decision. According to newspaper reports from both the pro-government and pan-democratic camps (Apple Daily 2015a; Chen 2015; Guan 2015), the establishmentarians supported the government’s decision and argued that Hong Kong was no longer a British colony; therefore, the British logos should not be displayed along the street. Furthermore, since all other Hong Kong government departments are now labeled with the new logos after the handover of Hong Kong to China, so should all postboxes be labeled. These politicians added that if the government wanted to preserve the vintage postboxes, the best way was to exhibit the postboxes in a museum setting, not on a public street.

3.2 British Postboxes’ meanings to the Conservators

The conservation groups, conservators, and historians are other important stakeholders because they were involved in raising public awareness and educating the public about the value of the British postboxes. To the conservators, the vintage postboxes were more than just postal facilities; they were symbols of a living cultural heritage. They believed the British logos were records of Hong Kong’s history. Moreover, the vintage postboxes had been in place in Hong Kong for over one hundred years, and various important social events and cultural developments were associated

with them. For instance, during a serious and well-known armed robbery in 1985, two policemen were able to save their lives because they hid their bodies behind the cast vintage postboxes that protected them from the bullets. The robbers' bullet trajectory can be found still on the British postbox's body. Moreover, people also had abundant memories of the old postboxes because the British style postboxes were common before the Post Office imported cubical postboxes from Singapore in the 1980s. Therefore, conservators claimed that the vintage postboxes were one of the most accessible examples of Hong Kong's living cultural heritage because they can be found along the streets. They criticized the government for their lack of heritage preservation techniques and disregard for the colonial history (Cheng 2015).

Among the conservation groups, the Hong Kong Vintage Postboxes Association (hereafter, HKVPBA)¹⁴ has played a significant role in starting the conservation movement through cooperation with other conservation groups and the mass media since 2009. It is the most important conservation group conserving vintage postboxes because all the mass media reports on the postboxes and this controversy would interview the leader of the group and reference the group's report. Thus, HKVPBA can be marked as the representative of the conservation group that worked on preserving the vintage postboxes in Hong Kong.

The HKVPBA is a volunteer group formed to track down all of the old postboxes, include them in a database, and inspect the preservation conditions. The objective of this team is to monitor the Hong Kong government's and Hongkong Post's policies towards

¹⁴ In order to protect the informants' privacy, the association's name was changed in this paper.

the conservation and maintenance of the vintage postboxes. The team captain has also created a Google Map page marking all the GPS locations of the 59 vintage postboxes (refer to Figure 4). The team members also carry out annual and random inspections of the vintage public postboxes each year.

To learn about the operation and the position of the group, a phone interview with the leader of HKVPBA was conducted in April 2017. According to the group captain (隊長) and the founder, Mr. Lee, the team was founded in January 2009. Initially, he was interested in the cultural heritage of Hong Kong but had not done anything in preserving it.¹⁵ Only when he accidentally saw a vintage public British postbox in the Kowloon district of Hong Kong was he surprised that a few former British postboxes still existed and were in-service. Later, he discovered there was no comprehensive database covering all of the locations and images of the vintage British postboxes that were still in service.¹⁶ As it turns out, creating a full list of the “in-service” vintage British boxes was not an easy job; the association could not make a complete list of the Hong Kong in-service

¹⁵ Mr. Lee was inspired by the Queen’s Pier Preservation Movement dating back to 2007. He has described the Queen Pier conservation movement as an “awakening” to him, which inspired him to do something to record and preserve the relics of Hong Kong later (Mr. Lee 2017, interview)

¹⁶ The Hongkong Post has a list of the public British postboxes but does not release the locations of these postboxes to the public unless requested in person. Thus, all the maps and databases on the locations of the vintage postboxes were first produced by conservators instead of by the government.

vintage public British postboxes until 2011, and then with the assistance of another local NGO¹⁷.

As of July 2017, the HKVPBA has 99 members, yet only around 30 are actively working on updating the annual surveys. There is no requirement nor prerequisite to join the team; most of the teammates have never met each other. Rather, they communicate through the internet and mobile apps. In fact, once Mr. Lee received images from the people, he would invite them into the group. If they agreed to join, Mr. Lee would ask them to give up the copyright of the images so he would not need to contact the teammates one by one when he needed to provide the pictures to the media for preservation purposes. Each member can create his/her nickname; the team captain creates web pages to record each member's report(s) and the photos they have taken of the vintage post box(es). Among the team members, the youngest is a child who is around ten years old. Mr. Lee believed the child was photographing and recording the vintage postboxes under the guidance of his/ her parents. This in fact also indicates that HKVPBA is an open and easily accessed voluntary group of both conservational and educational interest to the public.

Unlike other local conservation groups or civil societies that have a regular meeting and public activities, the HKVPBA does not have regular meetings or activities. To encourage the teammates' enthusiasm about the vintage postboxes and the team, team captain Mr. Lee thus sets up an annual inspection for the team members to carry out in

¹⁷ The NGO requested a list of vintage British postboxes from the Hongkong Post and later gave the list to the team. However, a complete list of the 59 Hong Kong British vintage postboxes was completed with the help of the HKVPBA and finished in 2011 (Mr. Lee 2017, interview).

the last few months of each year. However, it is important to note that there is no compulsory event for the team, so even the annual inspection is a volunteer project on which teammates are free to work by themselves. At each inspection, the team members photograph the vintage postboxes from different angles and send an evaluation report including the physical circumstances of the postboxes. If further maintenance on the postboxes is needed, such as repainting the oil paint and oxidation, the group leader contacts the Hongkong Post and requests that the government institution follow up. At the end of the year, the leader, Mr. Lee, would finish inspecting all the remaining postboxes alone to complete the annual check.

Besides working on inspection, HKVPBA has worked on vintage postbox conservation since 2010. The first vintage postbox conservation act by the group occurred when a team member found that the Hongkong Post intended to remove a British postbox in the Lamma Island of Hong Kong. Mr. Lee contacted the Hongkong Post to follow up the removal immediately. At first, the Hongkong Post claimed that the vintage postbox was too damaged to restore; thus, it was more cost-efficient to replace the old British post box with a new postbox. The association did not give up but kept pestering the Hongkong Post and AMO till, finally, the Hongkong Post restored the vintage postbox in the Lamma Island and even helped to relay the AMO's concern about preserving nine vintage postboxes. With the success of the first case, the HKVPBA members were encouraged to work on vintage postbox conservation continuously.

The conservators do not see vintage postboxes as "inappropriate" because they assign different meanings to them, and they do not agree with the Hongkong Post's explanation. The team captain, Mr. Lee, criticized the Hongkong Post's argument that

they needed make all of the postboxes appear uniform as unreasonable. He has emphasized that the postboxes, including the vintage postboxes, are already the same in their green color and with the logo of the Hongkong Post, a Hummingbird, on them. So it is absurd for the government to claim that it needs to cover up the British logos to achieve a consistent look for the different types of postboxes. Mr. Lee also added that because the postboxes have various shapes, it is impossible “to achieve a consistent look for various types of post boxes.” Also, the Hongkong Post already gave each postbox an “information card that spells out, inter alia and mail collection time” (Mr. Lee 2015, personal email); Mr. Lee believed such measurement is enough to show consistency on the postboxes. Thus, despite the Hongkong Post’s argument that the British logos make the postboxes inconsistent in appearance, the conservators could not agree with it.

What is more, since the AMO is working on preserving the British postboxes, conservators also question whether the Hongkong Post has consulted AMO. If AMO were notified, is this removal and hiding a violation of the Office’s preservation policies? Although the conservators have asked these questions, the government departments have never answered them directly (Mr. Lee 2017, interview; Mr. Lee 2015, personal email).

To work on postbox conservation comprehensively and raise public concern, the HKVPBA cooperates with other NGOs and has a clear division of labor. The HKVPBA mainly concentrates its efforts on the vintage postbox conservation issue, while other groups of conservators and civil societies work on raising public awareness. For instance, after the Hongkong Post had announced its proposal, Netizens and conservators created a Facebook page, “Preserving Posting Boxes which contain British Royal Cypher,” to express their concern. They also encouraged the Hong Kong people to mail postcards to

the Hongkong Postmaster General on October 9, 2015, the World Post Day, to express their opposition to the Hongkong Post's proposal. Over 500 people joined this activity to express their disappointment to the Hongkong Post (Headline Daily 2015). The Hong Kong History Studies Societies also launched a small-scale march to protest the Hongkong Post's decision and asked the Hongkong Post to preserve all of the in-service British public postboxes. These activities also indicate that the preservation of the vintage postboxes, in fact, gained public attention and support.

3.3 Ordinary People's Interpretations of British Postboxes

Ordinary people's opinions about whether the vintage postboxes should be preserved as part of the "cultural heritage" of Hong Kong vary, according to newspaper reports and my interviews. The news reports and my interviews suggest that the majority of people appreciated the historical and cultural value of the old postboxes. To them, this value, along with the practical function of the old postboxes, are more important than the political meanings generated by the British logos. Therefore, they disagreed with the Hongkong Post's decision.

According to the reports of Hong Kong Economic Journal (2015), Oriental Daily (2015), and Sky Post (2015), many Hong Kong residents found the Hongkong Post's decision unreasonable and questionable. People disagreed with the government because they appreciated the historical and cultural value of the postboxes. They claimed that the British style and logos are common in Hong Kong; many of the roads are named after the British Royal family, and even the most famous harbor, the Victoria Harbor, contains

British colonial elements. More importantly, “(such British elements) [are] part of the Hong Kong culture and style” (Cheung 2015). Moreover, even some people criticize colonial rule; the colonial rule, in fact, did favor the development of the rule of law, an efficient administrative system, and economic state of Hong Kong (Chan 2015).

Therefore, British relics, such as the old postboxes, are part of the Hong Kong people’s life and memory and worth preservation. People also questioned the underlying reasons for the government’s decision. It is interesting that they all doubted that the government was trying to cover up the British logos to decolonize Hong Kong.

In addition to the news report, I have conducted interviews regarding the controversy on the vintage postboxes. My information is based on eight in-depth interviews carried out in December 2016 and June 2017. The informants are natives of Hong Kong. They were selected randomly, but they either lived in or worked in the oldest district of Hong Kong – the Central and Western District. One of the informants is male, and the others are females. Their ages ranged from the 20s to 50s (refer to Table 2).

Among the informants, all had heard of the controversy through newspapers, TV programs and from the Internet. They could explain the controversy as well, indicating that the debate, in fact, aroused public concern because people of different cultural and social backgrounds all knew about it through various media. Regarding my informants, seven out of eight have positive impressions on the old postboxes and consider them charming, good-looking, classic, well-designed and elegant, as mentioned in Chapter Two.

Also, six considered the vintage postboxes as part of the cultural heritage. Their definition of the cultural heritage of Hong Kong was similar; even without prior consultation, they all stated that the cultural heritage of Hong Kong should be something that can reflect the history and culture of Hong Kong and is part of the people's collective memory. To my informants, because of their long history, the vintage postboxes are an important and precious part of Hong Kong's history and culture. The old postboxes themselves also have aesthetic value and have witnessed the social development of Hong Kong. For example, "people used to rely on the postal service. Now, they no longer mail but devote their mind to mobile phones" (Informant G 2016, interview). The informants didn't see the British logos as a problem for the current post-colonial government because the logo "won't generate any sense of restoring the colonial rule" (Informant B 2016, interview). They also thought the best way to preserve the postboxes is to keep them in their original locations and use them. They also questioned why the government should incur unnecessary expenses to do a trivial thing – covering up the British logos. Hence, most people consider the British postboxes to have more significant historical, cultural and practical meanings than political meanings, a position that echoes the conservators' point of view and opposes the government's.

Moreover, people find the government's decision and reasons to cover up the British logos unacceptable because they do not find the British Royal Cypher confusing. In fact, my interviewees added that they usually do not consider the postboxes in depth. For example, when I interviewed Informants A and F, we had a debate about whether the two apertures in the cubical boxes had "domestic mail" and "air mail" labels on them. Informant A insisted that the two apertures referred to two types of mail respectively. In

fact, the two apertures on the cubical boxes do not refer to a different mailing method. Instead, the postmen collected all the mail and classified it later in the Post Offices. This brief exchange suggests that postal users do not think in depth about the physical appearances and details of the postboxes. Even though the vintage postboxes have colonial logos and different shapes, my informants said they recognize the postboxes because of the color and words on them. Thus, it is unreasonable for the government to claim that people are confused by the British logos on the postboxes.

Among the interviewees, two did not consider the vintage postboxes as part of their cultural heritage, and their reasons vary. Informant E believed that the old postbox is an important and good-looking relic but not indicative of cultural heritage because the U.K. has similar postboxes, which fact makes the British postboxes in Hong Kong not that distinctive. However, she did not agree with the government's decision because she considered the practical function of the postboxes more important than the political meanings and believed the Hong Kong government is "too sensitive" about the colonial relics (Informant E 2016, interview). Moreover, Informant H did not think the old postboxes were suggestive of cultural heritage because relics and artifacts are common in Hong Kong. He also added that since people do not use postboxes as often as they did in the past, and the mailing rate is declining, postboxes are no longer as important as they used to be. Therefore, he could not see the particular value of the vintage postboxes and believed it was reasonable to remove some of them. He also emphasized that even though some people want to preserve the British postboxes, it is useless to fight against the government's decision. He also mentioned that Hong Kong is always changing socially

and no longer a colony; thus, the government's action was reasonable to him (Informant H 2016, interview).

Although most of the interviewees found the British postboxes representative of cultural heritage and had heard of the government's proposals, they did not join any of the conservation activities nor march to ask the government to preserve the postboxes. Also, they were not aware that there were some conservation groups that were working on vintage postboxes preservation.

Apart from the distinct viewpoints about the value of the vintage postboxes to the Hong Kong government, my informants' definitions of Hong Kong's cultural heritage varied from the official interpretation as well. When I asked my informants to provide more accurate examples of Hong Kong's cultural heritage, the monuments they listed all have distinctive colonial and local characteristics of Hong Kong. For instance, Informants D and G (2016, interview) said the traditional Tenement House balconies (騎樓) represent cultural heritage because they are in the typical architectural style of Hong Kong during the late 19th Century to 1960s; they all have fond memories of their Tenement House balconies. However, this structure is considered illegal and needs to be removed immediately. Informant A (2016, interview) listed *Dai pai dong* (大牌檔) as representative of the cultural heritage of Hong Kong. *Dai pai dong* was a popular lower-class cuisine in the post-war era but is disappearing due to government restrictions and hygiene problems. Obviously, all of the sites of cultural heritage they listed were popular and well-developed in the "Golden Age" of Hong Kong, when Hong Kong was experiencing rapid economic and social change. Clearly, cultural heritage is a way for

them to associate colonial Hong Kong and the “good old days” with unique Hong Kong culture and style.

My findings suggest that ordinary Hong Kong people do not have the same definition of cultural heritage as the Hong Kong government. According to the *Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance* (1976), only “monuments” and art treasures can be considered part of the cultural heritage of Hong Kong; thus, the AMO has not listed vintage postboxes for preservation. In this case, postboxes can never become an item of cultural heritage unless the government rewrites the laws and regulations. However, ordinary people do not know the *Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance* and have their own definition of cultural heritage. This suggests that ordinary Hong Kong people have a much wider definition of cultural heritage than the government. To the Hong Kong people, anything that is unique to Hong Kong, that represents Hong Kong history and culture, and reflects the collective memory of the people can be part of cultural heritage. They do not know and even do not care about the *Authorized Heritage Discourse*. Instead, most of the items they listed as part of their cultural heritage are not in Hong Kong’s authorized cultural heritage list. This finding may also help to explain why the Hong Kong people and the conservators consider the vintage postboxes part of cultural heritage, but the government does not.

Conclusion: Colonial Cultural Heritage, Nostalgia, Identity and Politics of Hong Kong

In postcolonial Hong Kong, cultural heritage is associated with nostalgia and local identity, and sometimes intensifying disappointment in the government as well. In the British postboxes controversy, Hong Kong people use cultural heritage to remember the glorious colonial past. The younger generation inherits nostalgia from the elder generation as they imagine the past and are keen on preserving the colonial cultural heritage. The Hong Kong government's insistence on removing the colonial relics can be explained in the context of increasing anti-government sentiment and local identity consciousness generated by the colonial cultural heritage. The Hong Kong government wants to continue the decolonization process and uproot colonial relics. Due to the deteriorating Hong Kong-China relationship, people also suspect the Chinese government's influence on Hong Kong's autonomy, deepening the people's distrust of the Hong Kong government.

Cultural Heritage, Nostalgia, and Postcolonial Hong Kong Identity

Nostalgia is a major factor leading to the postcolonial cultural heritage preservation movements. Nostalgic is a "yearning to return to a better time or place can be viewed as representing a disappointment with the present circumstances" (Nosco cited in Smith 2006: 174). It booms when the people are facing national trauma and significant transformation (Hillenbrand 2010: 388). The Hong Kong people's nostalgia erupted after the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. At the same time, nostalgia is always

connected to national, regional, ethnic and religious heritage, and via nostalgia, nationalists use heritage to promote their group identities (Cross 2015: 9). In this way, nationalists justify the positive relation between the increasing nostalgia for the colonial past in Hong Kong and the rise of a Hong Kong identity.

All of my informants expressed their nostalgia for the colonial era. They missed the colonial period because they concluded it was a better time than the post-colonial era. Informants H and G are in their 50s and had experienced the colonial age. Informant H talked about “the good living environment of the past because it was a place boiling with humanity” (2016, interview). And Informant G stated that she loved the time before the handover because she felt that the colonial rule was more organized and well-planned (2016, interview). It is also important to note that five of the informants are of the 90s generation who did not experience the colonial era, so they could only image the living environment during the colonial period. When I asked them why they would conclude that the colonial age was better even though they had not experienced it, they explained that they believed people had more economic and social opportunities in the colonial era; the living burden was much less, and there was no developer-hegemony. Although having never experienced the “good old days,” they heard about them from their parents and media, and then internalized these impressions or memories as their perceptions of the past.

My informants also expressed their disappointment in the current situation in Hong Kong. When I asked my interviewees for their comments on current Hong Kong, they listed many social, economic, cultural and political problems that they considered as obstacles to the Hong Kong people, believing that these problems hinder the development

of Hong Kong. Informant H even expressed her worries about the future of the younger generation, commenting, “how can they afford to buy an apartment in Hong Kong when the price is so high?” (Informant H 2016, interview). Indeed, people from various generations have similar worries about and disappointment in current Hong Kong society and its economy. With increasing economic pressure, more limited social fluidity, and increasing political control, Hong Kong people have a stronger aversion to the current Hong Kong government. They blamed the government for not solving problems, and when problems cannot be solved, people escape the reality through memories of the “good old days.”

Under these circumstances, objects from the colonial period became symbols of the past. All of my informants agreed that the British postboxes made them think of the colonial era because the vintage postboxes were colonial products that bore British logos. For example, informants G and H both pointed out the importance of the postboxes as a medium by which they interacted with friends and even customers. They described the time as when people were “simple” and had a strong bond with each other (Informant G and H 2016, interview), whereas now, people have distant relationships. Also, as mentioned in the previous chapter, my informants tended to describe the monuments and culture that have distinctive colonial and local characteristics which were popular and well-developed in the “Golden Age” of the 1970s and 1980s, in terms of the cultural heritage of Hong Kong. People remembered this colonial cultural heritage because it was a label of the past and that “past” is a symbol of Hong Kong (Kones 2015:242). What the people are missing are the good old days when these cultural heritages were produced and when Hong Kong’s culture and identity were formed.

In addition to nostalgia, my interviews also suggested that young people have a much stronger Hong Kong identity than any other. When I asked my interviewees how they identified themselves, seven out of eight of them said that they considered themselves as Hongkongers rather than Chinese, Chinese in Hong Kong, or Hong Kong Chinese. It is notable that six of my informants are of the 90s and 80s generations, and these generations are the main forces behind the post-colonial social and political movements. My informants explained that they are Hongkongers because they were born and raised in Hong Kong. They considered Hong Kong culture distinct from Chinese culture, commenting, “Hong Kong was a British colony, which make the culture of Hong Kong a mixture of the East and the West” (Informant A 2016, interview) and “Hong Kong is not China” because “even there is Chinese culture in Hong Kong, the general living habits and cultures between Hongkongers and Chinese in the Mainland are not the same” (Informant D 2016, interview). This finding, in fact, coincides with Carol Kones’s explanation that the younger generation is, in particular, lacking identification and any affiliation with China, even though Chinese nation-state identity building is taught in schools to strengthen their identification with the Chinese nation-state (2015: 227). Indeed, the Against Moral & National Education movement in 2012, the Umbrella Movement in 2014-2015, Anti-Parallel Trading Movement in 2015-2016 and the “Fishball Revolution” in 2016 all demonstrated that the Hong Kong people, especially the young people because they were the primary participants, did not trust the Chinese or the current Hong Kong government officials; nor did they want to be included as part of the “Greater China’s nation.” For the younger generations, they are “Hongkongers” separate from the Mainland Chinese.

Even though current research cannot provide a satisfying explanation about why the 90s generation — who had never experienced the colonial era but have experienced intensive patriotic education — have nostalgia for the colonial past and a stronger sense of Hong Kong identity than Chinese identity, my informants' answers can provide a possible answer to us. It is noteworthy that scholars who study Hong Kong identities usually discuss how social, political, economic and political factors led to the formation of Hong Kong identity. They have not noted that family is one important factor. As stated before, the 90s informants said their parents and relatives shared the colonial experience with them and expressed their worries about the younger generation's future. For instance, "my parents said their generation had much more working and promotion opportunity when they were in our age" (Informant E 2016, interview); "everyone said that the housing price was much lower in the past" (Informant C 2016, interview); "we were told that it was the time all people can benefit from the economic boom" (Informant A 2016, interview), and "I was told that it was the time hard work does pay off" (Informant D 2016, interview). Such conversations inform the younger generation. Through their parents and older relatives, the young generation yearns for the glorious past. Therefore, nostalgia can be passed down to from generation to generation.

These influences combined with the increasing dissatisfaction in the current Hong Kong government accelerated the construction of a Hong Kong identity rather than a Chinese identity. Of course, nostalgia does not always relate to anti-government actions. Even though my informants expressed their nostalgia about the colonial period and disclosed their dissatisfaction with the current government, they did not intend to overthrow it. Kones's research on postcolonial nostalgia and identity in Hong Kong also

suggests that the Hong Kong people were expressing deep sadness by "mourning for their disappearing past" in their search for tangible relics in the form of old Hong Kong films, fashion, pop music, literary, art, and historical artifacts (2015: 241). The Hong Kong people's yearning for the good old days, not only because they miss the "past," but also because the "past" is the symbol for Hong Kong (2015:241-2), makes it unfair for the establishmentarians to claim that the British postboxes provoked the people's nostalgia about the colonial period and thus threatened the rule of the current government.

Cultural Heritage and Decolonization

Scholars seem to have concluded that the Hong Kong government tends not to work on cultural heritage preservation because of economic concern (Henderson 2008; Lu 2009; Yung and Chan 2011; Lu 2016). It is true that cultural heritage preservation requires an enormous maintenance fee. However, this conclusion is inaccurate in the case of British postboxes, as extra money is needed to cover up the British logos. For example, in her research on comparing three cultural heritage controversies in Hong Kong, Maggi Leung suggests that the government was trying to uproot the monuments that could provoke the people's search for identity (2009).

In my research, I find that Hong Kong people from all sides believed that the Hongkong Post's decision was linked to the process of decolonization. Decolonization is never a simple process of erasing the past; 'it is a long journey to dismantle what Homi Bhabha calls "the culture of coloniality"' (cited in Law 2009: 258). The colonial government of Hong Kong already worked out several routes toward decolonization

before the handover. Even the Hongkong Post argued that its decision was not an act of decolonization; its supporters, in fact, upheld that Hong Kong needed to be decolonized completely, and covering up the British logos was one of the processes. People who supported the government insisted that all the other government bureaus and departments had removed and changed the British logos. Consequently, the Hongkong Post should remove or cover up the British logos on the vintage postboxes as to respond to the decolonization process that was carried out 20 years ago (Guan 2015). They also put forward the example that the Singapore government had removed all colonial postboxes to support their decision (Yating 2015)¹⁸. Not only did the pro-government camp put forward the point of decolonization, but conservators and ordinary people, such as my informants, also questioned why the Hongkong Post needed to decolonize Hong Kong through removing the colonial logos. Conservators wondered whether the Hongkong Post and the government were using the case of covering the British Royal Cyphers to test the water and see if the Hong Kong people could accept their decolonization process (Kinliu 2015). My informants also thought that it seems groundless to say the British postboxes were “inappropriate” to be displayed; the only explicable reason is that the government wanted to remove all the British relics (Informant G 2016, interview). Thus, even the Hongkong Post denied its decision was a continuation of the decolonization process that happened 20 years ago; people from all sides judged the decision an act of decolonization that erased colonial relics.

¹⁸ In fact, the Singapore government had requested that the Hongkong Post donate a retired British postbox and is displaying it in the Singapore Philatelic Museum (Lee and Wu 2015:196).

Unlike the disagreement about whether removing signs of colonial heritage, such as the Star's Pier and Queen's Pier, is an act of decolonization or not, the removal of the British logos did not generate similar discord. One can say the demolition of the two piers that inspire colonial memories was not an act of decolonization because the surrounding complex is the site where Hong Kong's first wave of social movements occurred (Kam 2018: 119). However, the British postbox is a postal facility that was set up to facilitate postal delivery and symbolize the expansion of the colonial power. The British logos on the postboxes are there to demonstrate the power of the British Royal family and the British Empire, and it is hard to argue that the intention of the Hongkong Post's act was only to unify the postboxes' appearance.

Apparently, postcolonial Hong Kong is undergoing intensified conflict among classes, people, and the government and an increasing sense of Hong Kong identity. Surveys that were done by the University of Hong Kong and my own interviews both show that there are increasing numbers of Hong Kong residents who consider themselves as Hongkonger or Hongkonger in China in recent years, while the number of people who identify themselves as Chinese and Chinese in Hong Kong is decreasing (Public Opinion Programme 2017). These statistics indicate the failure of patriotic education and propaganda in Hong Kong; at the same time, questions about the postcolonial rule prevailed due to various social and cultural conflicts and movements, especially the influence of the largest social movement that requested democracy – the Umbrella Movement (2014). The influence of these movements can be well-proved by the result of the recent elections in Hong Kong. For instance, there were six candidates who put forward a winning referendum on Hong Kong's self-determination in the Legislative

Council Election in September 2016. This result demonstrated that more Hong Kongers began to reconsider the political system after the Umbrella Movement. Although people's nostalgia and political requests do not fundamentally threaten the rule of the Hong Kong government, such sentiment is still popular among young people and Netizens and gave rise to discussions among scholars and various people in Hong Kong. In particular, because nostalgia is rooted in objects (Cross 2015: 11), the government's act of removing the colonial relics was, in fact, a way to "uproot the people's struggle in their identity search and creation" (Leung 2009: 39). Through the covering up and removal of the British logos, the Hong Kong government prevents people from using the symbols to yearn for the past and express their dissatisfaction with the current government.

It also seems that the Hongkong Post did not want to admit the decolonization action because the officials were afraid that it might exacerbate the localism ideology or lead to another large-scale social movement. Numerous social movements and concern groups are working to preserve Hong Kong's cultural heritage movements. The Lee Tung Street preservation movement in 2003 can be considered the starting point of Hong Kong's civic association on cultural heritage activities, while preserving Queen Pier and Star Ferry Pier Movement in 2006 led to the first large-scale social movement requesting cultural heritage conservation in Hong Kong. Thus, undoubtedly, cultural heritage issues can give rise to massive social movements. It is unclear whether the preservation of the British postboxes, which people link to the colonial past, nostalgia, local history and culture, and even Hong Kong identity, could accelerate another large-scale cultural heritage movement like the one in 2006; nevertheless, it is certain that in the post-Umbrella Movement Era, the Hong Kong government does not want to take any risk to

provide room for any potential anti-government forces and elements¹⁹. Thus, the Hongkong Post needed to minimize the negative impact of covering the British Royal Cyphers; refusal to recognize the act of decolonization was one of the best ways to evade potential negative consequences.

Cultural Heritage and the Hong Kong-China Relationship

Through the controversy over the British postboxes, we also detect a deteriorating Hong Kong-China relationship. Hong Kong had never been an isolated city free from Chinese influence, and the Hong Kong people consulted the Chinese government before the handover. The people's confidence in the Hong Kong and the Chinese government is associated with the socio-cultural, political and economic circumstances, and the current political events suggest that the autonomy of Hong Kong, including its cultural heritage policy, may not be as independent as expected.

The Hong Kong people were aware of the Mainland China's influence because Mainland China has affected Hong Kong's political development since the Post-War period, and "the scope of democratization in Hong Kong reflects the political atmosphere of China" (Lo 1997: 301). A Hong Kong political scientist, Lo Shiu-hing, also suggests

¹⁹ Another recent example is that the Hong Kong and the Chinese governments tried to interpret the Basic Law to disqualify two elected pro-independence lawmakers and four elected pro-democracy lawmakers in November 2016 and July 2017 respectively. All of these lawmakers were elected by the Hong Kong people in September 2016. This is the first time the Hong Kong government accused the elected lawmakers of failing to take their oaths. And the National People's Congress issued an interpretation of the Basic Law ahead of the court ruling. This act made the offenses punishable by disqualification (Lau and Chung 2017). These two cases gave rise to the fears that the Hong Kong government was intervening in the separation of powers and that Beijing was threatening the freedom of this city (The Telegraph 2017).

that how much space Hong Kong democrats could enjoy depended on China's political atmosphere (Lo 1997: 301). Thus, the Hong Kong people are always aware of the Chinese government's influence on this city. Moreover, the Hong Kong people already found the Chinese government unacceptable well before the handover because the Mainland Chinese government infringed on human rights and various sensitive political issues (Tse 2014: 191). Thus, the Hong Kong-China relationship was not as good as expected by the Chinese government at the first stage.

Recent events that happened in Hong Kong and China also suggest that people are increasingly worried about the intervention of the Chinese government on Hong Kong's autonomy. Hong Kong is supposed to be under the protection of the Basic Law and "One Country, Two Systems," which allows Hong Kong to have entirely independent political and economic systems than Mainland China and prevents the Mainland government from intervening in Hong Kong's internal affairs. However, Law Wing Sang, a scholar who is studying Hong Kong cultures, already suggests that "post-1997 Hong Kong is still a colony despite that the new masters are Chinese" in 2009 (257), indicating that it is impossible for Hong Kong to be free from the Mainland Chinese government's control. Recently, the Hong Kong and Chinese governments worked together to disqualify six elected lawmakers (Lau and Chung 2017), and the Chinese ministry spokesman also said that the *Joint Declaration* of 1984 "no longer has any realistic meaning" (Lo 2017), all of which increased people's suspicion about the decreasing self-determination of the Hong Kong government. The public opinion surveys that were done by the University of Hong Kong also demonstrates that Hong Kong people had much less confidence in "One Country, Two System" as well (Public Opinion Programme 2017). In July 1997, when

the handover of Hong Kong to China occurred, 63.6% of the informed Hong Kong people said they had confidence in “One Country, Two Systems;” only 18.1% stated that they did not. The Hong Kong people’s confidence in the system reached its climax (77.5%) in April 2008. People's trust in the “One Country, Two Systems” showed a steady decline after 2011. Furthermore, the people’s confidence reached its lowest after the Umbrella Movement broke out in September 2014; then, only 37.6% of the informants had confidence in the system, while 56.3% were not confident. Although people’s confidence in the system increased to 49.1% in June 2017, 43.2% did not have confidence in “One Country, Two Systems.” These findings suggest the Hong Kong people’s distrust of the Chinese government. Some Hong Kong people believe that the Chinese government was controlling governmental policies in Hong Kong. For example, seven out of eight of my informants said that they do not think that the Hongkong Post’s plan was simply unifying the postboxes’ appearance. They believed that the Hongkong Post wanted to cover up the British Royal Cypher because the Chinese government was unhappy with the Hong Kong people for their lack of a sense of belonging to China and their greater sense of local Hong Kong identity. The Hong Kong people thus question whether Hong Kong is enjoying the self-autonomy.

Chen Zuoer’s speech, in fact, indicates that some Chinese officials were dissatisfied with the social, political and cultural situation of Hong Kong. In his speech, Chen pointed out that Hong Kong (probably both the government and the Hong Kong people) had not fulfilled decolonized: they allowed some things that should have been placed in museums to be put on public display, and some are even being considered as doctrine. Chen believed that these occurrences violated the law, though not naming which

law he meant. On the other hand, Hong Kong repeated the de-Sinicization process that the colonizers conducted in the 1980s (Chen 2015). Chen's speech is illogical in the sense that Hong Kong government officials all pointed out that none of the laws in Hong Kong indicated that the government should decolonize Hong Kong. Still, Chen's speech demonstrates that Central government officials did want to let Hong Kong's local identities and colonial cultural heritage go. Chen openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the Hong Kong government when it could not handle the post-colonial Hong Kong social movements and the growing importance of a Hong Kong identity. Chen believed these issues led to the anti-Chinese consciousness in Hong Kong. We cannot tell whether the Chinese government directly influence the Hong Kong government's cultural heritage policies, but as a Chinese official, Chen Zuoer threatened the Hong Kong people, and even Hong Kong government officials and politicians, in his speech. Chen's speech reminded them that Chinese government was "watching" Hong Kong and made people presume the Chinese government was not keeping its promise to allow Hong Kong to be unchanged for 50 years. Chen's speech, along with other Chinese officials' public speeches during the election of the Chief Executive of Hong Kong in 2017, provoke abundant guesswork that decreases the Hong Kong people's confidence in the Chinese government and the "One Country, Two Systems" fundamentally.

Conclusion

This study used vintage British postboxes as a case study. The 59-in-service public British postboxes that contain the British Royal Cypher are at risk because they

may be removed by the Hongkong Post. This situation led to a group of conservators and politicians who worked different ways to preserve the postboxes in their original sites and asked the Hongkong Post to withdraw its plan. This issue represents the various definitions of cultural heritage among the Hong Kong government and the Hong Kong people. The people and the government have different interpretations of nostalgia, the colonial past, decolonization and the influence of the Hong Kong identity. These differences lead to postcolonial social and cultural movements in Hong Kong and intensify the distrust among the Hong Kong people, the Hong Kong government, and the Chinese government.

Appendix 1

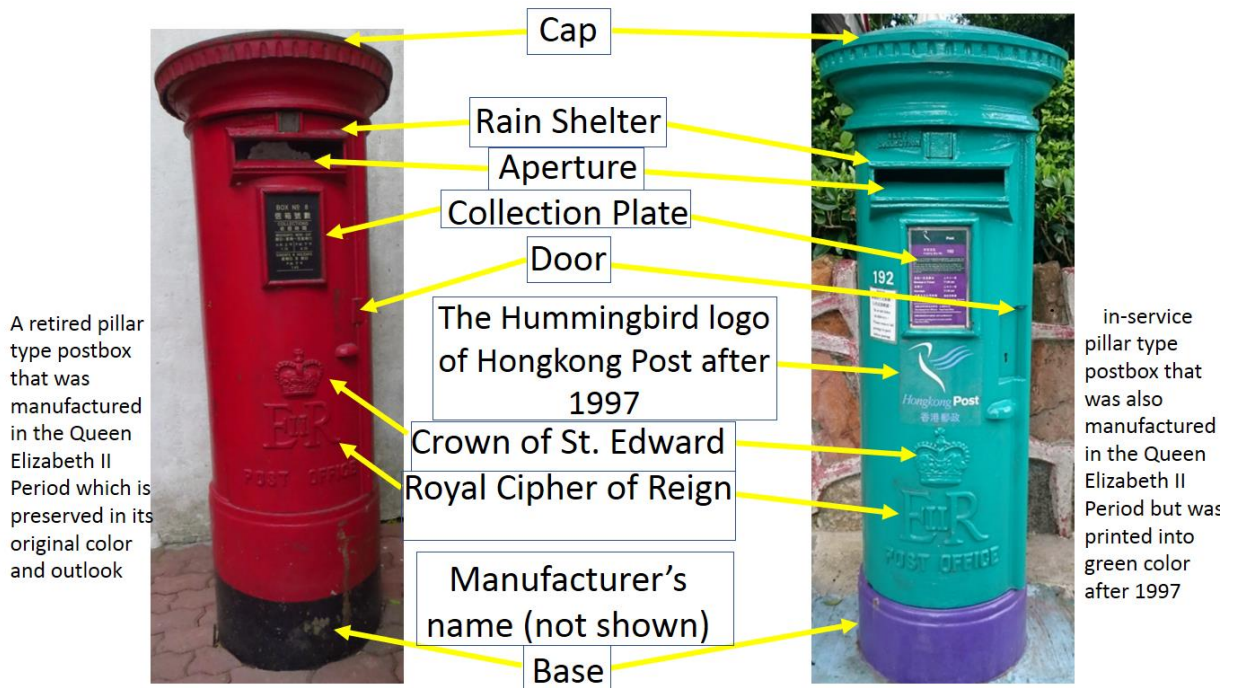


Figure 1: Components of British Postboxes in Hong Kong. Photos taken by author.



Figure 2: 2001, First day of issue, 160th Anniversary of the Hong Kong Post Office, Publisher: Hongkong Post, Hong Kong. Source of Image: Hong Kong Postage Stamps Catalog 2017.



Figure 3: 2011, The purple post boxes of Hong Kong. Source of Image: Apple Daily 2011.



Figure 4: Hong Kong Old Postboxes Map. Source of Image: The Hong Kong Vintage Postboxes Association. 2017.

Appendix 2

Table 1

British Rulers and The Royal Ciphers (Source: Lee and Wu 2015; Source of Image: Hong Kong Postage Stamps Catalog 2017)






Name of Ruler	Ruling Period	Royal Cipher	Image of the Royal Cipher
Queen Victoria	1837-1901	VR	
King Edward VII	1901-1910	ER VII (Latin of Edwardus Rex)	
King George V	1910-1936	GR V	
King George VI	1936-1952	GR VI	
Queen Elizabeth II	1952- present	ER II (Latin of Elizabeth Regina II)	

Table 2

Informants' basic information

Interviewees	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Age	20s	20s	20s	20s	20s	30s	50s	50s
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M
Heard of the issue?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Source: Newspaper and TV programs							
Agree with the Hongkong Post's action?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Is British posting boxes cultural heritage?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No

Table 3

Vintage Post Boxes that are still in-service (Source: Hongkong Post 2017, personal email)

Reference Number	Posting Box Number	Royal Cypher Displayed (The reign represented)	Posting Box Type	Current Location (English)	District (English)
1	192	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Peak Road / Harlech Road	Peak
2	232	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	On Hing House / Hing Wah (II) Estate	Chai Wan
3	239	No royal cypher displayed	Oval	Chater Road / Statue Square, Central	Central
4	245	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Pokfulam Garden, Pokfulam	Pok Fu Lam
5	55	GR V (King George V)	Wall	Cassia Road / Magnolia Road, Yau Yat Tsuen	Kowloon Tong
6	90	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	53 Kwun Tong Road, Kai Tak Mansion	Kwun Tong
7	91	GR V (King George V)	Pillar	22-24 Hong Lee Road, Hong Lee Court, Crocodile Hill	Kwun Tong
8	125	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	168-170 Shanghai Street / Saigon Street, Yau Ma Tei	Yau Ma Tei
9	131	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Boundary Street / La Salle Road, Kowloon Tong	Kowloon Tong
10	181	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	414 Prince Edward Road West / 1C Nam Kok Road, Kowloon City	Kowloon City
11	195	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Dunbar Road / Gullane Road	Mong Kok
12	202	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Ching Fai House, Tsz Ching Estate, Tsz Wan Shan Road	Tsz Wan

13	203	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Wang Fai House, Wang Tau Hom Estate, Fu Mei Street	Wang Tau Hom
14	207	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Chun Fei House, Tin Ma Court / Ma Chai Hang	Chuk Yuen
15	235	GR V (King George V)	Pillar	15 Lei Yue Mun Praya Road	Kwun Tong
16	302	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	15-16 Ho Man Tin Hill Road	Homantin
17	393	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Choi Wan Estate, Mini-bus Stop, Clear Water Bay Road.	Choi Wan
18	409	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Cheung Wo Court, Hip Wo Street / Hiu Kwong Street	Kowloon Tong
19	419	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Chak On Estate Bus Stop	Cheung Sha Wan
20	436	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Cho Kwo Ling Road outside Fire Station	Kwun Tong
21	438	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Bescon Heights, Tai Wo Ping	Cheung Sha Wan
22	9	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Ha Tsuen, Ping Ha Road, Yuen Long	Yuen Long
23	35	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	San Tam Road near San Wai Village Community Office, Yuen Long	Yuen Long
24	38	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	On Lok Tsuen, On Kui Street / Lok Yip Road, Fanling	Fanling
25	66	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Sai Kung Market / Man Yee New Village	Sai Kung
26	94	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Ting Kau Bus Stop at 11-1/2 M	Tsuen Wan

27	96	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Castle Peak Road, Seaview Garden, Tsing Yung Street	Tuen Mun
28	110	GR V (King George V)	Wall	Chung Chi College / Tai Po Road, Bus Stop	Ma On Shan
29	123	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Block 1, Kwai Shing Estate	Kwai Shing
30	145	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Near Tsing Lung Tau Village, Bus Stop, Castle Peak Road	Tsuen Wan
31	149	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Nam Wai / Wo Mei, Bus Stop	Sai Kung
32	154	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Au Tau / Yau Sin Street, Castle Peak Road	Yuen Long
33	162	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Fu On House, Tai Wo Hau Estate	Tai Wo Hau
34	169	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Ngau Tam Mei San Tsuen, Castle Peak Road, San Tin	Yuen Long
35	173	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Deep Bay Road, Ping Ha Road, Lau Fau Shan	Yuen Long
36	228	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Kei Ling Ha, Lo Wai	Sai Kung
37	299	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Sheung Chuk Yuen Tsuen, Bus Stop, San Tin	Yuen Long
38	313	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Princess Margaret Hospital, next to main entrance	Lai Yiu
39	316	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Worldwide Garden, Hung Mui Kuk Road, Chung Pak Road	Shatin
40	336	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Clearwater Bay Road Shaw's Movie	Sai Kung

				Town / Ngan Ying Road	
41	359	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	On Kwok Villa, Tin Ping Road	Sheung Shui
42	369	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Wah Yuen Chuen, Wah King Hill Road	Wah Fung
43	370	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Tai Mong Tsai Road ,Tai Mong Tsai Bus Terminus	Sai Kung
44	382	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Ching Lai Court / Lai King Hill Road Bus Stop.	Lai Chi Kok
45	394	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Tai Chung Hau, Car Park	Sai Kung
46	401	GR V (King George V)	Wall	Ming Shun Tsuen / Tui Min Hoi, Sai Kung	Sai Kung
47	463	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Savanna Garden / Tai Po Kau, Tai Po Road	Tai Po
48	487	GR VI (King George VI)	Pillar	Palm Springs, near Commercial Centre, San Tin (Note: it is a “private posting box” owned by management office of Palm Springs)	Yuen Long
49	-	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Kam Tin Post Office	Yuen Long
50	-	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	San Tin Post Office	Yuen Long
51	-	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Sha Tau Kok Post Office	Sha Tau Kok
52	66	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Cheung Chau Ferry Pier, Cheung Chau	Cheung Chau

53	116	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Pak She San Village, Cheung Chau	Cheung Chau
54	124	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Kwok Man Road / Sun Hing Street, Cheung Chau	Cheung Chau
55	143	GR V (King George V)	Wall	Shek Pik Prison, Lantau Island, outside the parking space	Lantau
56	149	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Wall	Tai O Post Office, Lantau Island	Lantau
57	215	ER II (Queen Elizabeth II)	Pillar	Mui Wo Ferry Pier, Lantau Island	Lantau
58	227	GR VI (King George VI)	Wall	1 School Road, Cheung Chau, outside Cheung Chau Peniel Church	Cheung Chau
59	256	GR V (King George V)	Pillar	Sok Kwn Wan South, Lamma Island, next to Police Post	Lamma Island

Appendix 3

Timeline of Hong Kong and the its Postal System

1839	First Opium War began.
1841	British occupied Hong Kong, British flag first time raised in Hong Kong. The Royal Hong Kong Police Force established.
1842	End of the First Opium War. Hong Kong Island ceded to Britain under Treaty of Nanking. The Royal Mail appointed a manager to deal with the posting affairs of Hong Kong
1844	The first Postmaster General of Hong Kong, Mr. F. Scales, was appointed by The Royal Mail
1846	The colonial government moved the Post Office to a classical Colonial style government building that was fronted by columns, which was at the corner of Queen's Road and Wyndham Street. The round voyage of the mail service between Hong Kong and Europe began.
1855	Second Opium War began.
1857	The first date-stamps was made.
1860	End of the Second Opium War. Kowloon and Stone Cutters' Island of Hong Kong acquired under First Convention of Peking. The Hong Kong Post was independence from the British post service.
1862	First stamp of HK was issued.
1878	The first posting box in Hong Kong was set up.
1889	New Territories of Hong Kong leased from China to Britain for 99 years under Second Convention of Peking.
1907	Kowloon's first post office was built.
1911	The third-generation General post office was relocated at the junction of Pedder Street and Des Voeux Road near Blake Pier and reopened.
1941. 12	Japanese seized Hong Kong; the Marine Police Headquarters was used as a base by the Japanese Navy.
1945	End of the Second World War. Hong Kong was liberated from the Japanese.
1976	The General Office was then moved to the new office at 2 Connaught Place in Central.
1980s	The Hong Kong Post imported Pillar posting box with double apertures, as well as large-capacity from Singapore.
1982	Negotiations opened with China about Hong Kong's status.
1984	Sino-British Joint Agreement signed.

1996	The British logos in all the posting boxes was moved. Posting boxes were reprinted into green.
1997	Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule.
2015	The Hong Kong Post considered it inappropriate to display the crown and the British royal cypher on old posting boxes that are still in service, and was looking into ways to update the markings on these boxes.

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