Hong Kong in the Midst of Colonialism, Collaborative and Critical Nationalism from 1925 to 1930: The Perspective of Lu Xun and the Confucius Revering Movement

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In the late 1920s, cultural nationalism in Hong Kong was imbedded in Confucianism, having been disappointed with the New Culture Movement and Chinese revolutionary nationalism. It also inspired British collaborative colonialism. This study attempts to explain the link between Hong Kong and the Confucius Revering Movement by analysing the essays on Hong Kong of Lu Xun (1881–1936), the father of modern Chinese literature and one of the most important revolutionary thinkers in modern China. The Confucius Revering Movement, which extended from mainland China to the Southeast Asian Chinese community and then to Hong Kong, formed a highly interrelated network of Chinese cultural nationalism associated with Confucianism. However, the movements in these three places had different cultural and political roles in keeping with their own contexts. Collaborative colonialism’s interference with the Confucius Revering Movement is one way to understand Lu Xun’s critical reading of Hong Kong. That is, Hong Kong’s Confucius Revering Movement was seen as an endeavour of the colonial authorities to co-opt Confucianism in order to deal with influences from China. This article argues that Hong Kong’s Confucius Revering Movement should be regarded as one of the main perspectives through which to understand Hong Kong’s educational, cultural and political histories from the 1920s to the

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late 1960s. Lu Xun enables us to see several links. The first link is the one connecting the Confucius Revering Movement in Mainland China, Hong Kong and the Chinese community in Southeast Asia. This leads to the second link, that is, Lim Boen Keng (Lin Wenqing), the leading figure of the Confucius Revering Movement in the Southeast Asian Chinese community who later became the President of Amoy University, where Lu Xun had taught before his first visit to Hong Kong. The third link is the skilful colonial administrator Sir Cecil Clementi, who came to British Malaya in February 1930 to become Governor after being the Governor of Hong Kong. We can observe a network of Chinese critical/resistant and collaborative nationalism from these links.

Keywords: Lu Xun, Hong Kong, Confucius Revering Movement, Cecil Clementi, collaborative colonialism, collaborative nationalism, critical nationalism

INTRODUCTION

BRITISH HONG KONG AS PART OF THE CHINESE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL NETWORK FROM 1925 TO 1930

The Confucius Revering Movement included kongjiao yundong (literally, the Confucian Religious Movement or the Movement of Confucianism as a State Religion), which was advocated by reformist thinker Kang Youwei (1858–1927) in 1900, and which aimed to establish Confucianism as the state religion. The Confucius Revering Movement refers to a social, political and cultural movement using Confucius as a metaphor to promote traditional Chinese culture and education in the Chinese community of colonial Hong Kong from 1925 to the late 1960s. After Kang Youwei’s Confucian Religious Movement failed to attain its goals in mainland China, it successfully reached out to the Chinese community in the Southeast Asia as a movement of overseas Chinese cultural nationalism. Hong Kong was not only part of this network of cultural nationalism related to the kongjiao movement in the Southeast Asian Chinese community but also the end point of this movement until the late 1960s or early 1970s.

Concerning the collaborative ruling structure of colonial power and local Chinese power, I have drawn inspiration from an earlier study (Law 2009). However, since the relationship between colonialism and collaborative nationalism is asymmetrical, a careful analysis of ‘collaborative’ colonialism needs to be undertaken first.

The purpose of viewing Hong Kong from the perspective of Lu Xun is to highlight the overall historical context underlying the use of cultural nationalism by Hong Kong intellectuals and their views on China from 1925 to 1930. Lu Xun’s criticism of Hong Kong Confucians reflected the latter’s desire to maintain the non-revolutionary identity of China based on their scholarship that embraced Confucian sensibilities. This particular scholarship was conducive to the colonial policy of suppressing revolutionary nationalism, and it led to the peculiar conditions of double collaboration, of colonialism in support of cultural nationalism and cultural nationalism in support
of estrangement from revolutionary nationalism. All these emerged from a series of events in a micro-historical context.

This article focuses on the period from 1925 to 1930 because not only did Lu Xun pay three visits to Hong Kong in 1927, but several important events also occurred at that time through which Hong Kong’s social, political and cultural situation could be understood.

The first important event was the Guangdong–Hong Kong General Strike-Boycott from June 1925 to October 1926 that greatly impacted the Anglo–Chinese relationship and Britain’s Hong Kong policies. At its peak, this movement drew around 250,000 Hong Kong protesters and their families back to the Guangdong Delta and paralysed the colony (Chan 1994: 45).2

The second event was the beginning of the Northern Expedition led by Chiang Kai-shek from 1926 to 1928. This expedition aimed to end the Beiyang warlord government that had usurped power in Northern China in the wake of the 1911 Revolution. As the paramount military leader of the Guomindang, Chiang Kai-shek launched a coup d’état on 12 April 1927 to suppress its communist partners in the expedition. This coup d’état signified the ending of Sun Yat-sen’s policy of alliance with the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China and the failure of the so-called ‘Great Revolution’. These two political events in mainland China had an indirect but far-reaching influence on Hong Kong.

Third, Cecil Clementi (1875–1949), a senior British colonial administrator who was fluent in both Mandarin and Cantonese, took office in 1925 as the 17th Governor of Hong Kong in the midst of the challenge posed to British interests in mainland China and Hong Kong by Chinese nationalism. Culturally and politically, great changes occurred in Hong Kong after Clementi’s arrival. The period that this article focuses on precisely overlaps his term of office.

Finally, around this time many imperial scholars of the former Qing court went to Hong Kong to promote Confucianism and Chinese traditional cultural education. Several of these scholars were successful candidates in the highest imperial examinations (jinshi), and others were successful candidates in the provincial examinations (juren). A number of Kang Youwei’s disciples came to Hong Kong to promote the Confucian Religious Movement. One of them was Chen Huanzhang 陳煥章 (1880–1933), who was the leading figure of the entire Confucian Religious Movement in early Republican China. These two streams of scholars formed the main body of Confucius Revering Movement in Hong Kong.

The General Strike-Boycott demonstrated that the Nationalist Government in Guangzhou could easily take advantage of the closeness of geopolitical, geo-economic and social contacts to mobilise nationalism in the two cities of Hong Kong and Guangzhou, to launch anti-imperialist and anti-colonial movements. Tsai Jung Fang has revealed that the colonial government offered help to the rightists of the Guomindang

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2 For the role of the communist-organised student movement in Hong Kong in this strike, refer to Tsai (2001: 125–6).
(KMT) to suppress the CPC after the coup d’état led by Chiang Kai-shek on 12 April 1927, and that this enabled the Hong Kong people to strengthen ‘their identity’ (renting) (Tsai 2001: 161–3).

Clementi took his position as Governor of Hong Kong amid the crisis, and he adjusted and changed the policies for governing the colony. He enthusiastically supported the establishment of the Department of Chinese in Hong Kong University (HKU) in 1927. Founded in 1912, HKU was the only university in Hong Kong back then, and it originally aimed to attract the Britain-friendly young elites on the mainland to study in Hong Kong.3 Initially, Chinese was relegated to no more than a course which could be taken up to the intermediate level only (HKU 1933: 25). However, Clementi actively endorsed the promotion of traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucianism.

The Department of Chinese in HKU had an inseparable and direct link to the Confucius Revering Movement in Hong Kong in the 1920s, and this movement in fact made the programme possible. Indirectly, the outbreak of the General Strike-Boycott made Clementi attempt to institute a type of collaborative colonial rule in association with the local Chinese business and traditional cultural elites. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the Chinese business and cultural elites attempted to promote a type of collaborative nationalism to protect the interests of the Chinese upper class and to support Chinese cultural education for the local Chinese. Thus, ‘collaborative’ colonialism and collaborative nationalism were in collusion to a certain extent. The resulting ‘Non-involvement Policy’ that allowed Hong Kong to develop on its own terms culturally and even economically was a manifestation of such ‘collaborative’ colonialism and was also the result of Clementi’s support. The support stemmed not only from Clementi’s own trained background as a specialist in China studies4 but also from the colonial government’s modification of its approach to governing Hong Kong through a cultural conciliation policy. This policy could be regarded as the result of a new Anglo–Chinese relationship that emerged after the demise of the Guomindang-Communist cooperation in the spring of 1927.

HONG KONG AS A SYMBOL OF CONSERVATISM FOR LU XUN

Lu Xun paid three visits to Hong Kong. According to his diary, the first time was on 16 January 1927 on his way back from Amoy University in Xiamen to Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou to take up the post of professor there. He left Hong Kong

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3 ‘The best British minds which were then concerned with the problem of China and the influence of the British therein believed in the Hong Kong University scheme.’ Quoted from ‘The Evolution of the University’, The University of Hong Kong (1933: Eds. 8).

4 For Clementi’s academic background, refer to the address by the Vice Chancellor of HKU in the ceremony of conferment of the degree of Doctor of Laws to Clementi on 12 January 1926 (Hornell 1926: 241).
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on the 18th. The second time was a special trip to Hong Kong on 18 February 1927. On that night, he gave his first speech entitled ‘Silent China’. He delivered his second speech ‘The same old tune has come to an end’ the next day. His third trip to Hong Kong was on his way to Shanghai via Hong Kong from Guangzhou in September (Lu 2005a: 3, 9, 38). Lu Xun’s second trip to Hong Kong was at the invitation of Zhao Jinsheng 趙今聲, a student of the 1923 batch at HKU (Zhao 1999: 72). According to Zhao Jinsheng, the British imposed tight regulations in Hong Kong after the Guangdong–Hong Kong General Strike-Boycott, and thus he attempted to ‘break down the oppressive atmosphere to arouse the Hong Kong people’s revolutionary enthusiasm’ by inviting Lu Xun to visit Hong Kong in the name of the Daguang newspaper or Ta Kwong Po, 大光報 (ibid.).

Lu Xun’s reading of Hong Kong has many gaps because of the limited materials available. Lu Xun regarded Hong Kong as the symbol of the ‘outmoded’ culture and expressed his dislike of it without mincing words. His essay ‘Silent China: A Talk Given at the Hong Kong YMCA, February 16, 1927’ was Lu Xun’s first speech there and the only one published in Overseas Chinese Daily in Hong Kong. In this essay, Lu Xun said,

Men communicate their thoughts and feelings through writing, yet most of the Chinese nowadays are still unable to express themselves this way. This is not our fault, for our written language is a fearful legacy left us by our forebears. Even after years of effort, it is hard to write. (Lu 1980c: 328)

Lu Xun’s view belongs to the mainstream thinking of Xin Qinnian (La Jeunesse or New Youth), an influential magazine initiated by Chen Duxiu and edited by Chen himself, Hu Shih, Li Dazhao and Lu Xun, among others. This magazine initiated the New Culture Movement and spread the influence of the May Fourth Movement in the 1910s and the 1920s. Nevertheless, this view can be traced back to Les Temps Nouveaux (or New Era, Xin Shiji), a publication of the Chinese radical revolutionary anarchist group based in Paris that started in June 1907. Its editors included Wu Zhihui (吳稚暉), Zhang Jingjiang (張靜江) and Li Shizeng (李石曾). Writing in the vernacular, which was one of the key achievements of the May Fourth Movement, remained unwelcome in Hong Kong at that time, and thus Lu Xun selected this topic to speak on. According to Lu Xun in his speech,

It was because Mr Qian Xuantong was at the same time proposing to abolish Chinese ideographs and to romanize the language. This would have been merely a normal language reform, but when our diehard Chinese heard of it, they thought the end of the world had come and hastily passed the relatively inoffensive literary reform in order to devote all their energies to abusing Qian Xuntong. (Lu 1980c: 331)

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5 All the quotations from Lu Xun’s Lu Xun Quanji (Lu Xun Complete Works) (Lu 2005) are as per my own translations except in certain instances where I have used the translations of Yang and Yang (1980).
Lu Xun was referring to the essay ‘Esperanto’ written by Qian Xuantong (錢玄同), a radical advocate of the vernacular written Chinese in the May Fourth Movement, and published in New Youth on 15 February 1918. According to Qian,

My opinion is that the Chinese written language absolutely does not suit the new era. Not to mention that it is the later and decadent stage of hieroglyphs, it is not sufficient to be regarded as of the same rank as the European alphabetic languages. (Qian 2011: 140)

In attributing Chinese weakness to the Chinese traditional writing system, Qian regarded the script-centric Chinese characters as backward and the phonocentric alphabetic languages as advanced. This perspective was also the view of Xin Shiji, which argued that China should abolish the Chinese script and use Esperanto instead. This can be seen in the essay entitled ‘A Continued Discussion on the Advanced Nature of Esperanto’ by Xing 駱 published in the 36th issue of New Era on 29 February 1908 (Xing 1966: 142). For the Chinese anarchists who advocated the use of Esperanto, their argument was both cosmopolitan and nationalistic. Until the time of New Youth, the advocates of Esperanto and Romanised Chinese held a mixture of internationalism, nationalism and modernist/evolutionist ideology. Eventually, it became the basis for the national language. Lu Xun though had a complicated relationship with evolutionism (Pusey 1998).

The written Chinese vernacular became a central issue for Lu Xun. In his ‘Silent China’, he said,

First our young people must turn China into an articulate country. Speak out boldly, advance fearlessly, with no thought of personal gain, brushing aside the ancients, and expressing your true thoughts. There are only two paths open to us. One is to cling to our classical language and die; the other is to cast out that language and live. (Lu 1980c: 333)

Similarly, in his speech ‘The same old tune has come to an end—a speech at Hong Kong YMCA on February 19, 1927’, Lu Xun also touched on the same theme, saying, ‘It is the same in literature. Both the old and outdated tunes are finished or will soon be finished’ (Lu 2005e: 321). Clearly, the anxiety and bitterness Lu Xun felt, which had always been evident in his speeches, intensified when he entered Hong Kong for a number of reasons.

First of all, Lu Xun saw Hong Kong as backward in terms of the development of written vernacular Chinese. The new school system in China in the early 1920s caused a series of new textbooks to be written in vernacular Chinese. One of them was A Reader for High School National Language (Zhongxue guoyuwen duben) published in 1923 by Shijie Shuju, and it included Lu Xun’s works (Fujii 1997: 73–7). Evidently, these textbooks symbolised the victory of the written Chinese
vernacular over classical Chinese. However, in contrast to the development on the Mainland, Hong Kong’s mainstream written language remained classical Chinese. Lu Xun shared his Hong Kong experience in his ‘On Hong Kong’ (Lüetan xianggang) published on 11 July 1927.

Then they wouldn't allowed my lecture to be published in the newspapers. When it was finally published, much of what I had said was either expurgated or altered. But the content of my lectures are really old hat, and seven or eight years old at that. (Lu 1988: 47)

According to Lu Xun, even what was ‘old hat’ on the mainland seemed dangerous in conservative Hong Kong.

Regarding the new literature, Bei Qian (貝茜) mentioned in her essay ‘The Progress and Prospects of Hong Kong’s New Literary Circle’ on 25 August 1936, that Hong Kong’s new literature only started from 1927 because that was the year that the ‘Chinese national revolution’ rapidly developed and labour movements were triggered by a few ‘tragic cases’ (Bei 1998: 27). Although the new literature became established on the mainland, the new literature in Hong Kong was still in an embryonic stage. Hong Kong seemed to encounter difficulties in promoting the written Chinese vernacular. For example, on 29 April 1927 in The Overseas Chinese Daily, Lü Bo 綠波 echoed Lu Xun’s speech in Hong Kong 2 months earlier in his essay ‘Let Us Break Down the Literati Class Together’. The editor of the newspaper added the following comments to this essay:

This is an argument by Lü Bo, who has wilfully and arbitrarily persisted in breaking through the outlook of old literature. Although his courage should be praised, I think that his opinion is just his own. In my opinion, I advocate the co-existence of literary and written vernacular Chinese, and having a free choice between them is preferable. (Lü 1998: 65–6)

This sentiment could be considered the official stand of the Overseas Chinese Daily.

The most important slogan for the advocates of vernacular Chinese as China’s formal writing system, was ‘no voice’ or wusheng, 無聲. Lu Xun argued the following in his ‘Silent China’: ‘We have men but no voices, and how lonely that is!’ (Lu 1980c: 330).

To Lu Xun, wusheng implied a lack of political subjectivity, and it linguistically represented and was linked to the literary Chinese. Although Lu Xun’s pro-vernacular opinion seemed excessively phonocentric, his opinion stemmed from a political motivation: ‘One of the differences between civilized men and savages is that civilized men have writing to convey their thoughts and feelings to the rest of the world and to posterity’ (Lu 1980c: 329). Lu Xun opined that it was only when the voices from the heart (xinsheng, 心聲) could be conveyed to the masses that China would realise her future, which should be the ultimate goal of the present. Thus, wusheng and xinsheng
were directly interrelated. The voices from the heart negated the evil voices, which were voices that were untruthful, linked to violence, and that suppressed the heartfelt voices. ‘Voice’ was Lu Xun’s key term in his critical essays. For example, early on in his ‘On Breaking the Evil Voices’, in 1908, he said, ‘One owns one’s self only when one’s voice comes from one’s heart. When one has subjectivity, then having the great awareness of the masses will not be far’ (Lu 2005f: 26). Conveying voices from the heart to the masses was, to Lu Xun, important because China’s hopes lay with the masses. Obviously, this was an enlightened stance. The ‘masses’ mentioned by Lu Xun were not composed of atomic homogenous individuals but of different subjective individuals. An individual’s awakening, in contrast to the awakening of the masses, could not be regarded as ‘the great awakening’. The literature based on ‘heartfelt voices’ would definitely have subjectivity and morality; they were not voices of slaves but rather were political.

Lu Xun transposed his anxiety onto the colonial Hong Kong context. He attempted to use ‘silent Hong Kong’ to criticise both the ‘silent’ Hong Kong and China. His critique also stemmed from his impressions of Hong Kong under Clementi’s governance. Lu Xun stated the following in his ‘The same old tune has come to an end’:

Why can we assimilate with the Mongols and the Manchus? This is because their culture is inferior to ours. But if others’ culture is equal to ours or is even more advanced, then the consequence will be quite different. If they are much wiser than us, then we will not integrate with them. Rather, they will take advantage of our rotten culture to rule our rotten nation. Some people do not mind letting the Chinese rot. Now I had been told that some foreign country has come to respect the old Chinese culture. This is not respecting at all but more like taking advantage! (Lu 2005e: 326)

The ‘rotten culture’ mentioned by Lu Xun refers to the Chinese classical learning advocated by Dr. Lai Jixi 賴際熙 (1865–1937), a former member of the Imperial Hanlin Academy and one of the leading Chinese scholars who lived in Hong Kong after the 1911 Revolution and was praised highly by Clementi. Although Lu Xun avoided directly mentioning Clementi, his targeting was rather obvious. Lu Xun had penetrating insight into Clementi’s political intentions after the Guangdong–Hong Kong General Strike-Boycott. With the semi-colonial metropolitan culture of Shanghai as his reference point (i.e., the ‘culture of yangchang’, which refers to the culture of a metropolis infested with foreign colonial adventurers), Lu Xun began his criticism as soon as he arrived in colonial Hong Kong. In his ‘The same old tune has come to an end’, he described Shanghai’s semi-colonial culture:

The most powerful and influential men are foreigners, and near them is a circle of the Chinese merchants and the so-called literati. Outside the circle are Chinese sufferers, namely the Chinese lower class slaves. Supposing the same old tune is still sung in the future, the situation in Shanghai will spread to the whole country; the
sufferers will suffer more and more. Unlike that of the Mongols and the Manchus, the culture of the foreigners nowadays is not at all inferior to ours. (Lu 2005e: 325)

In his remarks, Lu Xun’s ‘old tune’ was the ‘outmoded culture’, and it was represented by literary Chinese (wenyanwen). He said, ‘I really don’t know where Chinese culture is’, continuing, ‘What does the so-called culture matter to today’s people? What are its benefits to today’s people?’ (Lu 2005e: 326). Lu Xun defined ‘culture’ again in terms of its role. That is to say, when culture was not related to people’s liberation, it could not be regarded as ‘culture’. To Lu Xun, in the semi-colonial Shanghai and fully colonial Hong Kong culture, the foreign masters and ‘a circle of the Chinese merchants and the so-called literati’ around the foreign masters formed the ruling class to suppress ‘the lower class Chinese slaves’. Furthermore, Lu Xun radically expanded this master–slave relationship to take in the entire Chinese culture. He bitterly continued his criticism in his ‘The same old tune has come to an end’.

The Chinese culture is the culture of serving the masters at the expense of the people’s suffering. Whether Chinese or foreigner, anyone who praises the Chinese culture is nothing but part of those who consider themselves to be masters. (Lu 2005e: 326)

This was the political motivation that compelled Lu Xun to criticise Clementi severely during his visit to Hong Kong. Lu Xun saw classical learning in the Hong Kong context as echoing the coloniser’s interests. In Lu Xun’s eyes, the formation of the Chinese intellectuals’ political subjectivity collided with this kind of ‘national learning’, and it reinforced the culture of slavishness in classical learning. Lu Xun’s concern focused on the relationship between literature and politics, and how the intellectuals presented their subjectivity in revolting against slavishness through literature.

In another essay, ‘Lüetan xianggang’ (Talking about Hong Kong) on 11 July 1927, Lu Xun discussed the speeches published in Universal Circulating Herald (also translated as Circulating Daily News, Xunhuan Ribao) on 25 June 1927 by Lai Jixi, Zhou Shouchen, Chow Shouson, an influential leader in the local Chinese business community, and Governor Clementi. Quoting a lengthy paragraph of Clementi’s speech, Lu Xun satirised their advocacy of traditional Chinese studies. Clementi mentioned in his speech that if Chinese studies would be instituted at HKU, ‘China and the West will grow closer and more friendly’ (Lu 1988: 51). Clementi also mentioned a magazine called Hanfeng zazhi, which was founded by a group of Chinese students who studied abroad. Inscribed on the cover were four inspiring lines from Wenxuan as follows:

With nostalgia for the past
And meditation upon ancient days
Carry forward the divine spirit of our ancestors
Giving heavenly voice to the grandeur of Han. (Lu 1988: 52)
In ‘Governor Jin’s speech’, Lu Xun ridiculed Clementi’s Chinese name Jin Wentai with the following statement:

This is something I personally experienced during the last years of the reign of the Guangxu emperor of the Qing dynasty when I was studying in Japan. At that time, many of the Chinese students there had revolutionary ideas, though this revolution was in fact a racial one, with the goal of recovering China from Manchu rule and restoring to it its original master. Some of the students were activists, while others ran newspapers, or hand-copied old books, most of which had been banned by the Manchu government and were unavailable in China. The latter included books from the late Ming and early Qing periods, the sort of works that could inspire young people. Eventually, these were compiled in book form and published under the title *Han sheng*, ‘The voices of Han’, since it was a special issue of the magazine *Hubei Student Life*. This book cover had four lines of classical prose on it:

To express our nostalgia of the past  
And meditate upon ancient days  
Carry forward the divine spirit of our ancestors  
Strike up the heavenly voice of Han grandeur

Evidently, this was supposed to remind us of the former greatness of the Han people and allow us to make a comparison with the present: we must ‘recover our ancient treasures’, or to put it more explicitly, the idea was to ‘expel the Manchus’, and by extension, to ‘expel the foreigners’. But twenty years after it was published, it has become a slogan for Hong Kong University’s attempt to preserve Chinese culture and make ‘the relationship between China and the West [will] grow closer and more friendly’. It is hard to imagine these four lines from *Wen Xuan* being quoted by a foreigner. (Lu 1988: 52)

‘To express our nostalgia of the past/And meditate upon ancient days’. 援懷舊之蓄念, 發思古之幽情 was cited from *Literary Anthology* (*Wen Xuan*), which was edited by Xiao Tong (501–531), who was also known as Crown Prince Zhao Ming of Liang. The former two lines were seen in the Han Dynasty historian Ban Gu’s ‘Xidu Fu’ and the latter in his ‘Feng Yanranshan Ming’. *Hubei Student Life* was initially published in January 1903, and its name was changed to *The Voices of Han* in the Fourth Issue (Lu 2005a: 456, editor’s note). The meaning Lu Xun wanted to impart in this context was a criticism of Clementi’s process of abstracting from the original meaning which had been full of fighting spirit. Lu Xun perceived Clementi’s encouragement to be deceitful to Chinese classical learning or ‘national learning’. The revolutionary young men including Lu Xun before the 1911 Revolution yearned for a revolutionary-resistant ‘national learning’, which Lu Xun’s mentor Zhang Taiyan (1868-1936, also known as Zhang Binglin) reinterpreted and attempted to disseminate through *Minbao*, an organ of the anti-Manchu Chinese Revolutionary Alliance or *Tongmenghui* founded by
Sun Yat-sen. Similar to Lu Xun’s statement in his essay, entitled ‘Two or Three Things about Mr. Taiyan’ published on 9 October 1936, the following indirectly expressed his mourning for Zhang Taiyan who had died shortly before: ‘The fighting articles are Taiyan’s greatest and longest achievement’ (Lu 2005d: 567).

Lu Xun’ criticism of conservative Hong Kong had its own basis. In ‘On Hong Kong’, Lu Xun remarked, ‘I offended certain people there [in Hong Kong] because I had made some critical remarks about Chinese culture in my lectures’ (Lu 1988: 48). Referring to the fact that the policemen in Hong Kong frequently conducted body searches, Lu Xun said, ‘It is also difficult to take books into Hong Kong. If you are not careful, they can claim that the books are “dangerous documents”’ (ibid.: 48–9). Lu Xun also mentioned the body searches in his essay entitled ‘On Radicalism’ (Tan jilie) published on 11 September 1927 in the following passage:

I accidentally read some reference materials in Circulating Daily News today. The matter is about a student from Zhixin High School in Guangzhou who passed by Hong Kong. At the Ferry Port of Tsimshatsui, he was stopped by a Chinese policeman No. 157. The policeman searched his luggage and found seven radical books: six books of Xuanchuan dagang (Guidelines for Propaganda) printed by Zhixin School and one copy of Qinduo zhongguoshi (A History of the Invasion and Plunder of China). (Lu 2005b: 497)

Zhixin High School was established in 1921 by Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, in memory of his revolutionary comrade Zhu Zhixin (1885—1920). Lu Xun further said: ‘Later the accused claimed that the books were entrusted by a friend’ and ‘he was given a lenient sentence of a penalty of twenty five dollars’ (Lu 2005b: 498). Lu Xun thus criticised colonial Hong Kong’s conservative and high-handed policy after the General Strike-Boycott. He satirised Clementi and the Chinese elites around him who praised Chinese traditional learning as follows:

It is too ‘radical’ that they have the audacity to use the term ‘invading and plundering’ with respect to our friendly country [Britain], because they have forgotten the kindness that it is ‘preserving our national essence’ for us. But there may be some other words besides ‘invading and plundering’ that the journalist did not dare to write. Our compatriots’ enthusiasm for ‘restoring the ancient’ and our friendly country’s praise for it probably should be a model. (Lu 2005b: 498)

Lu Xun seemed to have used this case to demonstrate how the colonial Hong Kong government attempted to erase the history of British expansionism in China and to explain Clementi’s admiration for traditional Chinese culture by his intention to weaken the criticism of Britain in China.

In another essay entitled ‘Hong Kong Again’ published on 29 July 1927, Lu Xun mentioned how the customs officer of Hong Kong, whom Lu Xun acrimoniously
called the ‘British compatriot’, purposely made things difficult for him under the instruction of a ‘big-nosed white boss’. ‘Though Hong Kong is just one island’, Lu Xun observed towards the end of the essay,

it gives a true picture of many parts of China today and in times to come. At the centre are a few foreign bosses, with some ‘high class Chinese’ under them to praise their virtue, and some slavish patriots to act as their stooges. All the rest are the ‘naïve’ who suffer in silence. (Lu 1980a: 366)

Here, the master–slave relationship once again appeared, and this theme was indeed consistent throughout Lu Xun’s writings. Lu Xun regarded Hong Kong as the epitome of a conservative, that is, a ‘slavish’ China. By ‘slavishness’, he meant slavishness to domestic despotism and foreign colonialism. However, Lu Xun’s criticism does not obviously contradict his openness to foreign culture, as one of his purposes for advocating the exclusive use of the written vernacular Chinese was to facilitate the import of Western culture, especially the Western critical culture. Another purpose was to develop a new critical cultural politics based on subjectivity.

THE CONFUCIANISM MOVEMENT AND COLLABORATIVE NATIONALISM IN LATE 1920S HONG KONG

In his work ‘Silent China: A Talk Given at the Hong Kong YMCA’ published on 16 February 1927, Lu Xun said:

Hong Kong was not like this in the time of Confucius, and we cannot use the old sage’s language to write on Hong Kong. Such phrases as ‘Hong Kong, how great thou art!’ are simply nonsense. (Lu 1980c: 332)

Here, the sentence ‘Hong Kong was not like this in the time of Confucius’ holds a particular meaning. The metaphor of Confucius was linked not only to literary Chinese or Chinese tradition, which was the opposite of writing vernacular Chinese, but also to Hong Kong becoming the place for practicing the Confucius Revering Movement.

In a narrow sense, the Confucian Religious Movement in the early twentieth century was similar to the movement for resistance against Christianity through the imitation of the latter.6 One of Kang Youwei’s adherents, Chen Huanzhang (1880–1933), was

6 As the predominance of Confucianism over other religions (jiao) was diminished along with the overthrow of the monarchical order, the establishment of the Confucian Religion Association (kongjiao hui 孔教會) in 1912 signified that Confucianism had to compete with those jiao that were now categorised as ‘religious’ groups (Chen 1999: ‘Abstract’).
a key personality in the Confucian Religious Movement in mainland China, among the Southeast Asian Chinese community, and in Hong Kong. Earlier in the 1900s, Kang Youwei had visited the Southeast Asian Chinese community to promote his reformist political views and his ideas on the Confucian Religious Movement. In the 1920s, Chen Huanzhang was the most important figure in this movement. Given his frustration in promoting the Confucian Religious Movement in mainland China and his disappointment in the Beiyang warlord government’s conservatism, Chen Huanzhang left China and visited the Chinese community in Southeast Asia to further this movement in that area. He further expanded his activity to Hong Kong in 1928. Another disciple of Kang Youwei was Lu Xiangfu, 卢湘父 (1862–1922), a student of Kang Youwei’s Academy Wanmu Caotang. Lu was also another key personality in the Confucian Religious Movement in Hong Kong and Macao.

The Confucius Revering Movement in Hong Kong was not necessarily influenced directly by the Confucian Religious Movement advocated by Kang Youwei, Chen Huanzhang and others. Even some of the adherents of the Confucius Revering Movement did not agree with the idea of viewing Confucianism as a religion, as this was viewed as imitating Christianity in some sense. Instead, they regarded Confucius as the great thinker who had significantly influenced Chinese culture. However, the Confucius Revering Movement in Hong Kong was similar to the Confucian Religious Movement to a certain extent in terms of its intention of preserving and reviving Confucianism. The term Confucius Revering Movement refers to all the activities of revering and worshipping Confucius from the 1920s to the late 1960s. For the Confucian Religious Movement, Hong Kong was actually its last attempt to survive, while for the Confucius Revering Movement, Hong Kong became another site of hope in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Thereafter some further changes occurred in the nature of cultural nationalism in Hong Kong because of the changes in the social and political environment, both within and outside Hong Kong, from the early 1970s. For an understanding of the Confucius Revering Movement in a broader sense, Shiga Ichiko’s study provides an overview of the Confucius Revering Movement in Hong Kong from the 1920s to 1960s. She includes among the main bodies of the Confucius Revering Movement in Hong Kong in the 1920s neighbourhood associations (jiefang hui), trade guilds, clan associations (zongqin hui), and native place associations (tongxiang hui), among others. The New Asia College founded in 1949 in Hong Kong by Qian Mu, Tang Junyi and other scholars from mainland China are also included (Shiga 2009: 167–73).

Another factor that enabled the Confucius Revering Movement to unfold was the events that followed the 1911 Revolution. A group of Hanlin scholars of the former Qing Imperial Academy and other scholar–officials who were Canton natives moved to Hong Kong one after another in the early 1920s. For example, Lai Jixi, a former member of the Imperial Hanlin Academy, founded Xuehai Shulou (Hok Hoi Library) in 1923, where Confucian classics were taught by the former Hanlin scholars, such
as Zhu Ruzhen 朱汝珍 (1870–1942) and others. Unlike Zhu Ruzhen who actively participated in the Confucian Religious Movement, most of the Hanlin scholars such as Lai Jixi were not necessarily directly linked to it. However, all of them were linked to the Confucius Revering Movement while attempting to revive traditional Chinese learning in the colony.

For example, a glimpse of the Confucius Revering Movement in 1920s Hong Kong could be found from the report ‘The Enthusiasm of Hong Kong People's Celebration of Confucius’s Birthday’ published in Overseas Chinese Daily on 24 September 1927 (Anonym 1998: 66–71). This report introduced the splendour of the occasion of celebrating Confucius’ birthday at the Confucian Sage Society (kongshenghui), Government Vernacular Middle School and other places. It also introduced other local community organisations’ celebrations of Confucius’ birthday, such as the worship sponsored by the Wing On Neighbors’ Association, and the ceremony sponsored by the Nampakhong (Nanbeihang) Association, a traditional local Chinese chamber of commerce. It also mentioned that Alan Eustace Wood, Secretary for Education of British Hong Kong from 1926 to 1933, conducted an inspection tour of these functions to show his commendation. Moreover, the report indicated that all the participants stood up and sang the Qing Yun National Anthem approved by Xu Shichang, the president of the Republic of China (Zheng et al. 1998: 66–7).

These details of the report show the link between the Confucius Revering Movement and nationalism in the context of Hong Kong in the 1920s. However, this nationalism was collaborative. It suggests that the votaries of the Movement exchanged collaboration for the space to build up their national and cultural identity as Chinese in British Hong Kong. Clearly, the ceremonies of Confucius worship played an important role in forming the cultural identity of Hong Kong Chinese. However, this cultural nationalism was not intended to challenge the colonial power due to its collaborative relationship with it. It even enjoyed the colonial power’s understanding and its patronage. In return, it was helpful to the colonial government of Hong Kong, as could be seen in the participation of the Secretary for Education of British Hong Kong during the celebrations on Confucius’ birthday. For the colonisers, it was also considered an opportunity to express their goodwill to the Chinese business leaders and Chinese scholars. This connection was obviously the interactive relationship between ‘collaborative’ colonialism and collaborative nationalism, both of which were inseparable.

Lu Xun’s criticism of the Confucius Revering Movement was evident in his ‘Celebrating the Birthday of the Sage Confucius’ published in Tattler (Yusi) on 26 November 1927. In this, he mentioned the ceremonies of worshipping Confucius in Hong Kong. Directing his satire against the Confucius Society of Hong Kong (Kongseng hui), Lu Xun said at the beginning of the essay,

7 Ou Zhijian (Au Chi Kin) did a pioneering study of this issue (Ou 2008: 99). I have also referred to Li Jianming’s paper (Li 2008: 11).
When the birthday of the most sagacious and greatest master Confucius comes, the respectful celebrations held in Hong Kong are always magnificent. In the North, only our Eastern neighbouring country advocates it, whereas here in Hong Kong the ceremonies are under the leadership of the Governor. Doing things in a down-to-earth manner, he is skilful in teaching and able to provide guidance. The local Chinese also know well to worship our own country’s most sagacious master to preserve the Eastern civilization. This is why they can bring the celebrations to a greater height of development so that they will prevail for a time. This year’s the Sage’s birth (shengdan) is especially lively. The refined scholars, who gather at Taoyuan, wield their writing brush spontaneously to praise our national essence. Every school holds rites and invites the public to visit. When night comes, they will hold a film party or a new drama show as part of this sagacious entertainment. (Lu 2005c: 52)

In his typical style of saying things opposite to what he actually intended to convey, Lu Xun continued by referring to the duilian or antithetical couplet written with Chinese calligraphy and posted at the gate and on the wall in the ceremony at Chaoran School as follows: ‘Now I would like to quote them with respect, and I preach these to the public in the mainland so as to humiliate those who try to overthrow imperialism’ (ibid.). The duilian at Chaoran Boy’s School stated, ‘Down with the rebels and the traitors and defeat red propaganda, which accuses the patriarch, hates the filial, espouses public ownership of properties and wives, and destroys Confucian moral principles and social hierarchy’ (‘打倒賊子亂臣, 免得赤化宣傳, 討父仇孝, 共產公妻, 破壞綱常倫紀’), thus promoting the ideology of anti-Communism. On the other hand, the duilian at the gate of the Chaoran Girls School stated, ‘How could one reiterate the word “freedom” while misunderstanding it and fawning over the trends, as fickle as the way water flows?’ (‘豈可開口自由, 埋口自由, 一味誤會自由, 趨附潮流成水性’)(ibid.). This passage apparently criticises women’s liberation and freedom of love for the younger generation, which were advocated in the New Culture Movement from 1917 to 1921. It also displays the prejudice against women in the male-centric Chinese society, as water was the metaphor for a woman of loose morals. Lu Xun’s additional concern was with Clementi’s collaboration with this conservative Confucius Revering Movement. Clearly, one of the reasons underlying Lu Xun’s criticism of Hong Kong was its reputation of becoming an important place for the Confucius Revering Movement.

Lu Xun’s criticism of the Confucius Revering Movement was also connected to his experience at Amoy (Xiamen) University. As mentioned earlier, Lu Xun’s first visit to Hong Kong was on 16 January 1927 while on his way back from Amoy to Guangzhou. One of the reasons he left Amoy University was his falling out with the President of

8 I would like to thank Gao Jin for her advice on translating this duilian.
Amoy University Lim Boen Keng (Lin Wenqing, 林文慶, 1869–1957). Lim Boen Keng was regarded as an outstanding nationalist leader in the Southeast Asian Chinese community. Lim was inspired by Kang Youwei's Confucian Religion Movement to try and revive respect for Confucius and to integrate the Chinese people culturally and even in a religious sense. However politically, Lim was an advocate of revolution instead of Kang's reformist programme. This could be seen from the fact that Lim became one of the founders of the Singapore branch of Sun Yat-sen's Chinese Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmeng Hui) in 1905 (Williams 1960: 55–6).

The following is an instance of Lim's influence on the Confucius Revering Movement. A group of Chinese in Batavia (present-day Jakarta, Indonesia) established a society called the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan (THHK), or the Association of the Southeast Asian Chinese Community, on 17 March 1900 to promote Confucian thought and conduct and to channel the newly awakened interest in Confucianism into constructive efforts for the Chinese community (Williams 1960: 57). This was one of the Confucian Movements that emerged under the influence of Lim and his colleagues. According to Kwee Tek Hoay, Confucianism in Java also was strengthened through the meeting between Tan Ging Tiong, 譚經廬, a Chinese Indonesian who translated and introduced the Chinese classics to local readers, and Lim Boen Keng in Singapore (Kwee 1969: 6). The THHK aimed at reforming customs to keep to the principles of Confucianism, because the well-educated Chinese elites in Southeast Asia considered that the Chinese people needed to have a religious or a moral system that was pure to use as a guide and a source of improvement in their social lives.

However, Lu Xun did not seem to consider Lim's revival of Confucius in the particular context of the Southeast Asian Chinese community, but viewed it in the context of mainland China. This was not surprising as Lim had by then become the president of Amoy University. Thus, Lu Xun disparaged Lim in his 'A letter written at sea' with the following observation: "The president, Dr. Lim Boon-keng, is a Chinese of British nationality. He is always quoting Confucius and has written a book on Confucianism, the title of which I regret to say I have forgotten" (Lu 1980b: 325).

CONCLUSION

NETWORK OF CRITICAL AND COLLABORATIVE NATIONALISM AND COLONIALISM

In contrast to his highly collaborative attitude towards the Hong Kong Chinese community leaders in promoting Chinese traditional culture, Sir Cecil Clementi firmly suppressed Chinese nationalism in any form as the Governor of Hong Kong
and after becoming the Governor of British Malaya. Two months after Clementi’s assumption of office as Governor of British Malaya in March 1930, he attempted to use the Press Ordinance to prevent all newspapers from publishing items on the Chinese Guomindang (KMT) in Malaya (Yong and McKenna 1990: 60). As C.F. Yong and R.B. McKenna point out in a book on the nationalist movement in British Malaya, the experience of anti-British nationalism both in Hong Kong and Canton under Chinese Communist influence and with KMT participation clearly had a lasting influence on Clementi (ibid.). To counteract the subversive influence of the anti-imperialist and anti-British propaganda of the KMT, Clementi advised that a joint Hong Kong–Malaya area should be established to implement a common strict anti-KMT management programme under himself. Clementi went further and wrote, ‘I respectfully submit that protection of Malaya and Hong Kong against Kuo Min Tang intrigue…must be one of the principal objects of British diplomacy’, in his telegram to the Colonial Office on 5 March 1930 (Clementi 1930; Yong and McKenna 1990: 145).

Before moving to British Malaya, Clementi was among the most fervent Hong Kong governors advocating the annexation of Hong Kong and the New Territories in 1926, and he even suggested incitement of a dispute with China in order to provide the opportunity for it (Wesley-Smith 1998: 156). This was minuted in a secret document of 27 February 1929 (Clementi 1929, cited from Wesley-Smith 1998: 157). Ironically, this was precisely the period when Clementi also enthusiastically advocated promoting ‘Chinese tradition’ among the local Hong Kong Chinese elite.

All these facts provide not only a perspective with which to view Clementi’s thinking on Chinese nationalism and his skilful exploitation of Chinese collaborative nationalism in Hong Kong, but also a means to test and verify Lu Xun’s criticism of Clementi and Hong Kong. Furthermore, we can observe a network of both Chinese critical/resistant nationalism along with collaborative nationalism, as the Guangdong–Hong Kong General Strike-Boycott also demonstrated a network of resistant or critical nationalism.

In Hong Kong, Clementi took advantage of the Chinese cultural and business elites to establish his new colonial politics. However, the local Chinese community leaders, that is, the promoters of the Confucius Revering Movement, also took advantage of Clementi’s new colonial politics to establish their collaborative nationalism. Although the perspective of ‘nationalism’ is important in viewing the history of Hong Kong, and the term ‘critical nationalism’ or ‘resistant nationalism’ does include the notion of ‘class’ to a certain extent, I conclude that the perspective of ‘class’ is also intrinsically necessary in the analysis of the colonial history of Hong Kong. The term ‘critical/resistant nationalism’ implies nationalist acts directed not only against foreign suppressors but also against the dominant class within a nation. In this sense, a nation means the ‘people’ to a certain extent. Furthermore, the term ‘critical nationalism’ also means having a self-critical attitude towards ‘Chinese nationality’ and Chinese tradition, which are typically seen in Lu Xun’s works.
The background to Clementi’s new colonial policy was derived from certain particular circumstances. On the one hand, while the former Manchu rulers of China had nonetheless honoured Confucianism, a new Han Chinese Republic had arisen as a young nation-state whose leaders seemed hostile to Confucianism. Along with this, there was the rise of Chinese commercial power in Hong Kong which Clementi had to accept. Clementi attempted to take advantage of the national and cultural identity of the Chinese elites to encourage collaborative Chinese nationalism, so that he could protect their common interests in Hong Kong. By patronising the former Qing scholars’ promotion of traditional Chinese culture, Clementi attempted to provide a cultural, moral and political alternative to the revolutionary nationalism that had inspired the General Strike (Carrol 2007: 104). Clementi’s appointment of Zhou Shouchen (Chow Shouson), a wealthy businessman and ex-Qing official, as the first Chinese non-official executive member of the Legislative Council in May 1926, was symbolic, as he helped the colonial government to fight the General Strike-Boycott together with Robert Kotewall (羅旭龢), a Eurasian community leader in Hong Kong.

Thus, it can be seen that the term ‘nationalism’ by itself sometimes obscures the class differences within a nation. Undoubtedly, the resistant nationalism of the General Strike-Boycott was the background for Clementi to adopt an appeasing policy towards the Hong Kong Chinese elites. This policy gave rise to the collaborative nationalism on the part of Hong Kong Chinese. Nor did the Chinese collaborators like Chou Shouson view collaborating with the British as betraying China. Because they viewed the Canton government as radical leftists, they considered working with the colonial government in putting down the strike as a sign of not only their loyalty to British Hong Kong but also their Chinese patriotism (Carrol 2007: 102). In this sense, the nationalism of the Hong Kong wealthy businessmen was precisely collaborative with colonialism.

It is necessary to view the former conservative Qing scholars’ anti-Western attitude and their political concerns as stemming from cultural rather than economic reasons. Their perspective was different from that of the wealthy businessmen collaborators such as Chou Shouson who also happened to have a Columbia University education. The British rulers not only rewarded the business collaborators politically—for instance, in appointing Chou Shouson as a non-official executive member of the Legislative Council—but also gave them lucrative business monopolies (Carrol 2007: 18). This, however, was not the concern of cultural conservative nationalists, such as Lai Jixi and Zhu Ruzhen, among others. The collaboration between the conservative scholars and the wealthy businessmen was due to their shared desire to fight revolutionary nationalism during the General Strike-Boycott. At the same time, the cultural conservatives had to rely on the business collaborators’ financial and political power to realise their nationalism.

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10 Carrol has in fact questioned the role of the so-called ‘free trade’ in Hong Kong’s economic development in this period.
goal of promoting the Chinese traditional culture in Hong Kong and fighting against the new culture emerging in China.

Thus, Hong Kong’s mainstream nationalism was a sort of collaborative nationalism. Viewing this collaborative nationalism in Hong Kong’s particular context is important and necessary.

First, as a colony, English language had a privileged and dominant position, and Chinese language was undoubtedly placed in an inferior position with respect to English in British Hong Kong. By contrast, Chinese as the national language shouldered the mission of nation building in mainland China. The Chinese language in colonial Hong Kong was apparently irrelevant to such a mission. However, the promotion of Chinese as a medium of educational instruction and as a way to promote classical Chinese culture was important to the Hong Kong Chinese because it helped to strengthen the Hong Kong Chinese cultural identity and to enhance moral standards, which were major concerns for the collaborative nationalists, especially for the former Qing scholars. There was a correlation between the dominant position of the English language and the position of Christianity as the dominant religion in Hong Kong, and this was evident in the unfolding of Hong Kong’s Confucian Religious Movement.

Second, the government of British Hong Kong lacked the financial means to promote education, and ironically, this limitation has been positively interpreted as a kind of ‘non-intervention policy’ with regard to education. For example, the Hong Kong Education Ordinance 1913 was the first effort of the British authorities to control private schools, and it was directed against the possible spread of Chinese nationalist teachings in schools (Ng 2003: 304–34). Thus, the financial support of the local Chinese businessmen and the professional contribution of the former traditional Qing scholars became important. Especially for the scholars, Hong Kong became an important place for the practice of Confucius’ educational ideal of ‘youjiao wulei’, or ‘making no social distinctions in teaching’. The promotion of literacy through the Confucian Religious Movement outside mainland China by Chen Huanzhang and Lu Xiangfu has not been fully evaluated (Ou 2012: 408). But it can be understood in terms of the Confucian advocates’ awareness of their competition with the Christian churches’ active participation in the public education of Hong Kong using English as the medium of instruction.

The Confucius Revering Movement played a role for the Chinese outside China to foster national consciousness, enhance national identity and carry on the Chinese cultural tradition (Mori 2005: 169–90). As to the Confucian Religious Movement in the Chinese community of Southeast Asia or the Peranakan society, local-born Chinese pursued sinicisation or re-sinicisation under the influence of Kang Youwei (Duara 2009: 162-4). The most successful nationalists in the Chinese community of Southeast Asia were those under Kang’s influence and who had sympathy for reformism (Kwee 1969: 17). Hong Kong was evidently part of this network.
Hong Kong, Macau and the Chinese community in Southeast Asia had different contexts from that of the mainland. The collaboration between the Hong Kong Chinese businessmen and the conservative cultural elites signified that their nationalism sought a kind of via media with the coloniser to promote education for the Hong Kong Chinese with Chinese as the medium of instruction. Individuals such as Fung Pingshan, 馮平山 (1860-1930), who was a wealthy Chinese businessman and a well-known philanthropist in the Chinese community, asked permission from the colonial government in December 1925 to establish the Government Vernacular School. It was later renamed as the Clementi Secondary School in 1951 and is also known by its Chinese name (Hanwen zhongxue), the first government secondary school in Hong Kong that used Chinese as a medium of instruction and that offered a specialisation in literary Chinese. Fung Pingshan was notably also one of the founders of the Confucian Secondary School, which was the predecessor of the Government Vernacular School (Shiga 2009: 164–5). Given the role of the Government Vernacular Secondary School as the predecessor of the Department of Chinese at HKU, the Department of Chinese itself was the tangible result of the Confucius Revering Movement in Hong Kong. Clearly, Clementi and the promoters of the Confucius Revering Movement were using each other for their own ends.

In conclusion, it can be said that Lu Xun had a remarkable insight into Clementi’s ‘collaborative’ colonialism and its inseparable collaborative nationalism. Inevitably, Lu Xun’s criticism of the cultural conservatives in Hong Kong lacked a sympathetic understanding for Hong Kong’s particular context. This was understandable, as Lu Xun was considering the whole ‘silent China’ rather than just the ‘silent Hong Kong’.

The ‘tradition’ that the Confucius Revering Movement attempted to revive or establish was not the concern of the critical or revolutionary ‘national learning’ which was advocated by Zhang Taiyan, Lu Xun’s mentor. The so-called ‘religion’ that had been reenvisioned by Zhang Taiyan was actually secular, that is, revolutionary and filled with political fighting spirit. The national learning promoted in Hong Kong on the other hand was much closer to that of the reformist Kang Youwei’s ‘tradition’.

Ironically, going against Zhang Taiyan’s original intentions, his ‘national learning’ brought about the emergence of a Westernised ‘new culture’ along with its standard bearers Lu Xun, Qian Xuantong and Hu Shi, among others, who were mostly Zhang Taiyan’s disciples but who advocated the total negation of traditional Chinese culture. Zhang’s ‘new’ cultural movement was one based on new interpretations of traditional learning or a revolution based on the restoration of the ancient.11 It stood in contrast with Lu Xun’s anti-traditional New Culture Movement. The new cultural identity that the May Fourth Movement or New Culture Movement attempted to build was

11 Regarding the criticism of the dichotomy of the binary structure of ‘revolution vs. restoration to the ancient’, see Hon (2013).
also nationalistic. As stated earlier, the term ‘nationalism’ inevitably played a role in disguising the differences within a nation, as well as the inflow of Marxism, and the influence of the October Revolution of 1917. However, the political identity—that is, the consciousness of class, anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, etc.—that the Chinese May Fourth nationalism attempted to establish was more dangerous to the ruling powers.

Kang Youwei and Chen Huanzhang’s legacy in the Confucian Religious Movement in Southeast Asia could generally be regarded as the preparation for Hong Kong’s Confucius Revering Movement. In this sense, Hong Kong was the final resting-place for Kang Youwei’s movement. Hong Kong’s Confucius Revering Movement reached its first peak from the early twentieth century to the 1930s and its second peak from the 1950s to the 1960s (Shiga 2009: 162). The relationship between the Cold War and the Confucius Revering Movement remains to be explored. This perspective is important in viewing colonial Hong Kong’s educational, cultural and political histories as a crucial part of modern Chinese history.

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