

DOCTORAL THESIS

From civic pride to cultural reproduction: the two city halls of hong kong, 1869-1962

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ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to offer an alternative reading of the socio-cultural history of Hong Kong – a dependent Crown Colony acquired during the second British Empire - by examining the two City Halls *qua* civic centres and the construction of colonial identity produced by the British Hong Kong Government and colonial elites. In this account, concepts and ideas concerning urban landscape and configurations, civic pride, autonomy, European identity, colonial civic architecture, and the practices of colonial urban planning will be elucidated through the immediacy of the two City Halls - the two particular architectural responses of their respective times. In the attempt to decipher the trajectory of the civilising mission of the British Empire and provide a different perspective with regard to civic materialism, the thesis will deploy a historical approach by studying and prioritising first hand materials in the Public Record Office of Hong Kong, special attention will be paid to non-published archives and private correspondence. What made the study of the two city halls peculiar is that it is a rare but emerging subject in the global context, one that deserves an in-depth interrogation. The architecture and spatial practices are not only products of their contemporary milieu, but also a reflection of the autonomy and civic identity of the Hong Kong Government and her civilising mission from the 1860s to 1960s.

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