

MASTER'S THESIS

Five years of "mischievous activity": a study of Governor Hennessy's policies towards the Chinese in Hong Kong, 1877-1882

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Five Years of "Mischievous Activity": A Study of Governor
Hennessy's Policies towards the Chinese in Hong Kong,
1877-1882

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ABSTRACT

Sir John Pope Hennessy, the eighth governor of Hong Kong, distinguished himself from his predecessors by introducing various humanitarian and anti-racial reforms in the colony. Hennessy maintained that the Chinese in Hong Kong who contributed ninety per cent of the tax income of the colonial government had been unfairly treated. The economic ascendancy of Chinese merchants as a social class in Hong Kong which began in the 1860s also convinced him that the opinions of the Chinese could no longer be ignored. The Chinese regarded Hennessy as their "Number One Good Friend". However, both the Colonial Office in London and the British merchants in Hong Kong questioned the desirability of carrying out such reforms in Hong Kong, a colony with "peculiar circumstances." Though Hennessy's policies had been described by the Colonial Office as "mischievous activity", they were eventually approved by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the head of the Colonial Office. This thesis attempts to illustrate Hennessy's governorship and to give account on the approval from the Colonial Office for his reforms. As both the Chinese and European communities had voiced their opinions to the Colonial Office regarding Hennessy's administration, the impact of the voices from these two racial sections on the Colonial Office is examined.

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