pleads Hong Kong to "light a lamp while there is even one breath" and remembers the unyielding Lion Rock spirit (199). As a leading scholar and the director of the Hong Kong Studies Program the University of Hong Kong, Chu's book stands as a significant text for the development of an interdisciplinary Hong Kong studies in the inevitable process of transition and in the age of China that is impossible to ignore. To locate Hong Kong amidst a time of change, the people must value their culture with the blessings of the past and venture together toward the future of their city and home.

Screening Communities: Negotiating Narratives of Empire, Nation, and the Cold War in Hong Kong Cinema. By Chang Jingjing. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019. 246 pp. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781349949311.

Reviewed by Mitchell Ma and Mira Chow

Hong Kong cinema has often been lauded as an important symbol of the city's unique identity. Known for its slapstick comedies and kungfu action films from the 1980s and 1990s, Hong Kong cinema gives people the false impression of an apolitical fantasy world. While there is ample research on Hong Kong cinema from the 1970s onward, the period before this time has often been overlooked. *Screening Communities* by Chang Jingjing challenges the apolitical image and addresses this gap by examining the role of Hong Kong cinema in shaping the local community during the 1950s and 1960s, a crucial transitional period in Hong Kong's history which saw its transformation from an entrepot port of trade to an industrialized metropolis.

At the onset of the 1950s, Hong Kong was still recovering from the ashes of war and the population consisted mainly of refugees and recent migrants from mainland China, who have little sense of belonging with the colony. To them, Hong Kong was a temporary shelter

and their loyalty remained with the Chinese nation. As Hong Kong gradually prospered, more people treated the city as a permanent home, leading to the increasing sense of local identity and belonging. Although there was a consensus among scholars that a distinct local Hong Kong identity emerged in the late 1960s, scholars still contend on the how and why of its emergence. In *Screening communities*, Chang moves beyond singular events and examined the reciprocal relationship between Hong Kong cinema and the local identity across time.

Chang interprets Hong Kong cinema as a catalyst for rebranding the Hong Kong identity to one grounded in the local experience. The construction of Hong Kong cinema was deeply enmeshed in socio-political contexts peculiar to Hong Kong as a British colony in China during the Cold War, which evolved through negotiations between the colonial government, film producers and the local audience. Ultimately, *Screening Communities* proposes that the cinema entails more than just narratives and images, but also places and experiences that allow one to introspect the values of the society that consumes it.

The book consists of an introduction, six chapters and a coda. The chapters are grouped into three parts; each part consists of two chapters focused on a specific theme and divided into subtopics. The first part examines the colonial government's stance on film culture. In the first chapter, Chang illustrates how Hong Kong's regulatory bodies do not fit the conventional narrative of the Cold War. She suggests that the colonial regime was reluctant to be engaged in Cold War politics due to the colony's precarious position as a British enclave off the coast of Communist China. As such, keeping a balance of power between competing factions to maintain political and social stability within the colony took priority above all else. This complex balance is best exemplified through the film censorship debates during the September 1965 Press Incident between the colonial government, pro-communist supporters and pro-nationalist sympathizers. Film censorship in Cold War Hong Kong was, in short, more than just a top–down implementation of policies in

society, but an evolving construction of Hong Kong's collective viewing audiences.

Chapter 2 focuses on the "official film" culture of Hong Kong. Chang argues that official films, aside from being tools of propaganda, were more than an indoctrination of information from the regime above, but "a negotiated site where the Hong Kong's community was screened to local and global audiences" (70). The colonial regime used film to display its prestige and efficient governing, although it was acutely aware of its precarious status as colonial rulers when the world was undergoing decolonization. The regime must demonstrate the ability to adapt and transform its relationship with the Hong Kong population, international allies such as the US, and the Communist Chinese regime in a changing time. Although the Hong Kong Film Unit (HKFU), the film production unit during colonial times, continued to be influenced by colonial assumptions that its local audience were unsophisticated and could be easily manipulated, it increasingly considered the receptiveness of its audience when producing and circulating its productions, evident through its effort to promote official films in local neighborhoods and integrating themes and subjects that were familiar to the Chinese majority population. By doing so, the HKFU made its audience an active collaborator in crafting depictions of Hong Kong. Official films, therefore, became an important lens through which to view the gradual transformation of the government's discourse on Hong Kong society and its relationship with its citizens.

Part 2 examines the construction of what Chang refers to as a leftist brand of Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong. In Chapter 3, Chang studies the legacy of the May Fourth Movement in the context of postwar Hong Kong cinema, and points out that following the Chinese Civil War in 1949, Hong Kong gradually replaced Shanghai as a center for Chinese film production because many film workers fled the mainland into Hong Kong. Many of these film workers were influenced by the May Fourth Movement, an intellectual and cultural movement that sought to revitalize the Chinese nation through socio-political

reforms. They believed art should not be divorced from politics, and believed in the power of cinema to educate their audience on Chinese nationalism. While colonial authorities prohibited overt display of politics, these film workers eluded censorship by depoliticizing the May Fourth Spirit and focused on subtler messages such as gender equality and free love, as demonstrated in the Torrents Trilogy 激流三部曲 (1953–1954) based on the May Fourth author Ba Jin's 巴金 work. These films galvanized the audience against values of traditional Chinese culture such as patriarchy and obedience. They avoided being censored by embracing humanism, an important aspect of the May Fourth Movement that did not contradict the colonial regime's stance. By remodeling the May Fourth Spirit for Hong Kong, these film workers constructed a brand of Chinese nationalism through Hong Kong screens that differed from the politicized rhetoric of May Fourth promoted by their counterparts in Taiwan and mainland China.

Chapter 4 focuses on the evolving genre of *lunlipian* (social ethics film 倫理片), common in Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s and promoted values that aligned with the May Fourth Spirit. Chang contends that while the genre seemingly declined in popularity in the mid-1960s, its influence lingered. Specifically, while many new genres such as horror and suspense thrillers came to replace *lunlipian* in the market due to changing tastes and demands of the audience, these emerging genres contained strong elements of social ethics and familial dynamics that were fundamental in *lunlipian* and could constitute as variants of *lunlipian* in their own right. As the definition of the genre shifted over time, Chang argues we cannot precisely pinpoint its rise and fall. Instead, *lunlipian* evolved due to market demands and had a more enduring impact on the Hong Kong cinematic landscape.

The final part of the book examines the rhetoric of citizenship and gendered labor through the silver screen. Chapter 5 explores the role of Nanyang (Southeast Asia) in the construction of postwar Hong Kong identity. Chang

seeks to reconfigure readers' understanding of Nanyang from the 1950s and 1960s not simply as a potential market but also as a trope where rhetoric and discourses of Chinese citizenship and heritage were constructed and reimagined. In these films, narratives of transnational migration often reinforced a paternalistic sense of belonging to the Chinese homeland; for example, Hong Kong was often depicted as the homeland while Nanyang was portrayed as a periphery of Chinese culture that needed to be civilized and modernized. Although Nanyang gradually faded as a trope in the mid-1960s, its ethos remained to represent the Chinese overseas experience and shaped the cinematic projections of identities in postwar Hong Kong. This provided viewers a newfound appreciation for being Chinese in Hong Kong and abroad.

Whilst Chapter 5 looks at the cross-border experience, Chapter 6 examines the local experience through the intersection of gender roles and celebrity culture. During the 1960s, Hong Kong entered a period of rapid industrialization accompanied by high rates of income growth. This led to improving living conditions where roles of gender, class, and family were becoming increasingly fluid and being redefined. Hong Kong's local film industry was quick to exploit this phenomenon by targeting the growing population of young female audiences through making films that celebrated the predicaments and triumphs of young people. Through the on-screen portrayals of the "local family-oriented factory girl" by Connie Chan Po-chu and the "modern stylish teddy girl" by Josephine Siao Fong-fong, the Hong Kong silver screen was able to express a local experience that reflected the struggles of young women from different walks of life. The female audience became engaged and empowered through the self-identification of roles and narratives of struggles and fantasies portrayed by their idols. The cinema became not just a form of entertainment, but a bridge of on-screen experience and the social realities. Here, celebrity culture and youth film intersected, and the appreciation of a local sense of belonging

contributed to the making of Hong Kong as an industrializing and modernizing city.

Screening Communities offers valuable insight into a relatively understudied era for a topic well known to many in Hong Kong. Chang effectively refutes the false impression that Hong Kong cinema during the colonial era was apolitical or unidimensional. Instead, she demonstrates that Hong Kong cinema was highly political and deeply implicated in the formation of a local communal identity during the Cold War. By tracing the production, distribution, and marketing of Hong Kong films, she articulates how Hong Kong cinema was a result of a complex process that involved various parties with different, if not contradicting, viewpoints, concerns and interests. Nonetheless, Hong Kong's particular status as a British colony in China allowed it to elude Cold War politics and construct a distinct screening community. However, the book is not without its shortcomings. For instance, there was little mention of American and Nationalist Chinese influences on Hong Kong cinema. Considering Hong Kong's integral role within the American and Nationalist Chinese's foreign strategies to contain communism, there could be a more detailed discussion on the influence of these powers in buttressing right-leaning studios such as the Shaw Brothers to disseminate messages that aligned with their ideologies. Despite this, the book is clearly written and is a welcome addition to the study of Hong Kong Cinema. Notably, the book should be of interest to readers who wish to understand the formation of Hong Kong identity through the influence of popular culture.