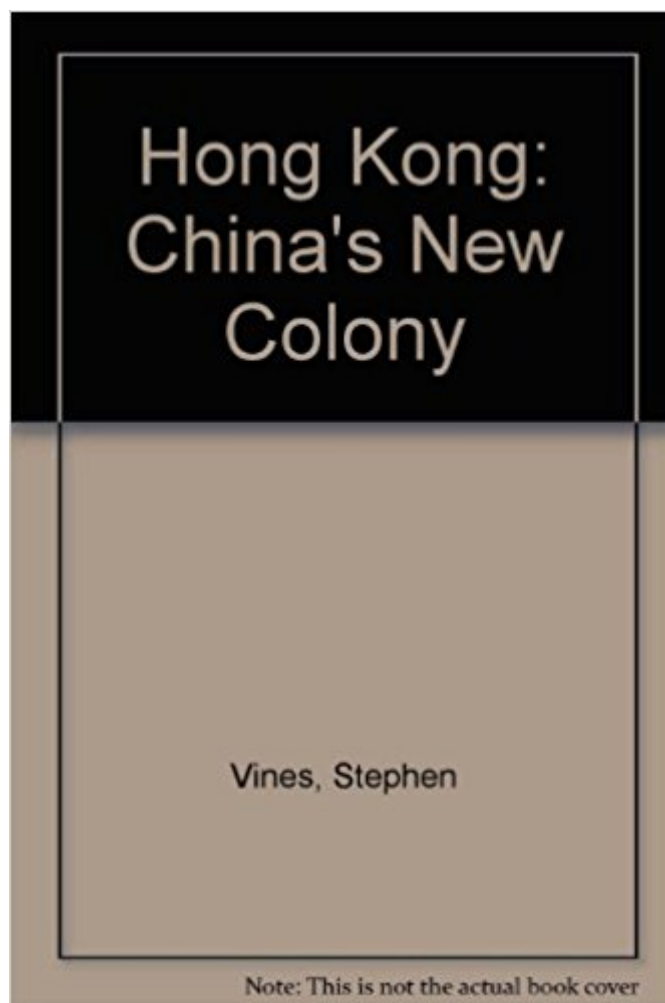


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Hong Kong: China's New Colony



Synopsis

Hong Kong tells the inside story of how the former British colony came under Chinese rule and how supposedly Communist China is coming to terms with presiding over what has been one of the world's most vibrant capitalist societies. '

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Stephen Vines claims that Hong Kong: China's New Colony is unconventional, as "a personal account of living through" the transition. True enough, as the writing is anything but objective. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to dismiss this writing simply because of its bias, because it is also a very informative look at significant events and issues leading up to, and surrounding, the handover of Hong Kong to China. The book claims to have a central theme of China's desire to acquire a colony (and hence the title), but I think a more accurate constant theme would be that the potential and likelihood of the Chinese Communist Party to crash the party that is Hong Kong. Throughout the book, the Chinese government is depicted in a thoroughly negative light, making it clear that Vines has little trust for the Chinese government to properly handle the SAR, and dislike for the current regime. This is fine, but it occasionally comes close to obscuring the information the book is presenting. The flow of the book can be a little jumpy at times, with little logical progression of the chapters. The author often jumps from politics, to economy, back to politics, etc. Clearly the focus of the book is on both the politics and economics of the handover, but it may have been clearer if they were dealt with on their own terms. Despite some drawbacks, the book deeply explores many key elements in Hong Kong and how the handover affects them. It is in these

explorations that this work really shines. It effectively paints a picture of the complications and backgrounds of some of the major issues that cause concern to the people and businesses of the region. One note of annoyance, Vines is inconsistent with the phonetic transcription of key figures and places. Mao Zedong is most early transcribed as "Mao Tse-Tung" (alongside "Lin Biao", which is transcribed in a different system, p.61) but thereafter always re-referred to as "Mao Zedong". Additionally, the PRC capital is always referred to as "Peking", which is markedly anachronistic in an age where "Beijing" is the standard transcription. For names of individuals who personally transcribe otherwise, it's acceptable, but not for more recognised entities for which another form (i.e. Pinyin) is now standard. The book is thoroughly pessimistic, but interesting well enough. For those who have an interest in learning more about some of the issues concerning the Hong Kong handover, or even looking for an introduction to the event, *Hong Kong: China's New Colony* is a good place to start.

This book covers the first year of Chinese rule in Hong Kong, by the reporter Steve Vines, whose articles on Hong Kong for the English paper the Independent were one of the few largely fearless sources of information for Hong Kong residents like myself during the 1990's, in the increasingly paranoid world of pre-handover Hong Kong (the local papers were terrible). Vines pulls a few punches this time around (he now has business interests in Hong Kong), but there is a lot of fascinating information on the place for those of us who left with or soon after the British. For those visiting for the first time (or simply from the armchair), this book will make a good follow up to the usual Hong Kong classics: Jan Morris' *Hong Kong*, Austin Coates' *Myself a Mandarin*, Bo Yang's *The Ugly Chinaman*, Timothy Mo's *The Monkey King*, and Paul Theroux's *Kowloon Tong* - all great for an understanding of Hong Kong (including the bits Hong Kong doesn't like to talk about).

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