

# The Development of Hong Kong Churches Before 1949: A Macro History (1842-1949)

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This article attempts to review the history of Christianity in Hong Kong between 1842 and 1949 from a macro-history perspective, to highlight the factors that affect and constrain the development of the Christian church.

On the one hand, the writer tries to emphasize how the strategic value of Hong Kong, as a stepping stone to Mainland China, parallels the situation of the Hong Kong Protestant Church. We should read the history of the Hong Kong Church as part of the history of the South China Mission. Obviously, the attractive hope of “Going into China” among various western missionaries inevitably led them to allocate more resources to the Mainland than to Hong Kong. Serving in the Mainland, or at least in Southern China, was much more meaningful than doing so in Hong Kong, because Hong Kong was not part of China.

On the other hand, the writer also aims at focusing on the close relationship between Hong Kong and Southern China, which is illustrated by the highly horizontal mobility between people in these areas, all resulting from economic and political pressures. Hong Kong’s nature as an immigrant society played a decisive role in affecting the development of Christianity in Hong Kong, both positively and negatively.

To conclude, the writer believes that the so-called “Hong Kong Church” with a selfconscious identity in this strict sense did not exist before 1949. Unless we approach the history of this part of the Church under the macro South China-Hong Kong framework, we cannot catch its main attributes or fully understand the whole picture related to China.