

These tales of secret passion, stigmatized as “unhealthy” and excised in anthologies edited by Chinese intellectuals for the general reader, often end with catastrophic consequences such as death, quite contrary to the mainstream Chinese love stories with a happily-ever-after conclusion. Here McLaren provides a very convincing analysis, showing us how these songs celebrate the delights of love while lamenting the dead.

The story of “Shen Seventh Brother” and “Hua Mountain Lifter” discussed in chapters three and six both carry political implications, but in different ways. “Shen Seventh Brother” describes Shen as the local hero who brought the knowledge of rice cultivation to the Lake Tai region in ancient times, challenging the official discourse that it was Prince Tai Bo (heir to Emperor Tai of the Zhou Dynasty) from the north who brought sedentary civilization to the “primitive” south in the 11th century BC. As to “Hua Mountain Lifter,” a story of a bandit-rebel who leads an uprising during the anti-rent campaigns of the later imperial era, it encodes community memories of rent resistance movements going back to the Ming period. While examining the meanings of specific folk epics, this book also discusses how the longer form of narrative songs developed under the local influence of song competitions and amateur song troupes and within the broader context of the commercialization of the economy, the growth of market towns, and burgeoning popular market for printed texts (chapter two).

With its lucid writing style and the diverse topics treated, this book can be used for college courses on Chinese and comparative literature, Chinese social history, Chinese cultural studies, Chinese gender studies and folklore studies. It should also appeal to general readers interested in world literature and folk culture.

doi:10.1017/S0305741023000590

## Hong Kong Takes Flight: Commercial Aviation and the Making of a Global Hub, 1930s–1998

John D. Wong. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022. 339 pp.  
\$60.00; £52.95; €54.95 (hbk). ISBN 9780674278264

Florence Mok

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore  
Email: [florence.mok@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:florence.mok@ntu.edu.sg)

While there is extensive scholarly work that examines the development of commercial aviation as a global phenomenon that led to increased mobility in the West, there are relatively fewer studies with a geographical focus on Asia, and most of these tend to emphasize the successes of the major companies. Hong Kong, a major nexus of commercial aviation, connecting the city not only with other regional hubs in East and Southeast Asia, but also with cities in Europe and North America, has so far been under-explored. John D. Wong’s *Hong Kong Takes Flight: Commercial Aviation and the Making of Global Hub, 1930s–1998* makes an original contribution to the existing literature by exploring how Hong Kong evolved into a commercial aviation global hub amid widespread decolonization, the advent of the Cold War, increased metropole–periphery tensions and domestic changes. Through analysing how Hong Kong’s historical development and its commercial aviation industry influenced each other’s development paths, Wong convincingly argues that the city’s development into a regional and global hub was “not preordained” (p. 7) and that such an outcome was

only achieved against considerable odds. For example, changing geopolitics, such as the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, "dimmed prospects of connections with mainland China" (p. 17), leading to merely the expansion of Kai Tak Airport rather than the construction of a new airport. Policymakers, businesses and local players, driven by their own interests, constantly negotiated over the cost-sharing of aviation infrastructures in Hong Kong, at times leading to tensions and conflicts, and thus affecting the pace and scope of infrastructural expansions. The Cold War also meant that flight routes had to be arranged based on contemporary political contours until at least the late 1970s, when tensions between the capitalist bloc and China eased and a more pragmatic regime emerged on the mainland.

Wong's book starts in 1930, when the colony was initially struggling to establish a foothold in the industry, and ends in 1998, when the old Kai Tak Airport was replaced by Chek Lap Kok Airport. The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter one examines how technological advancement encouraged the development of the commercial aviation industry but also how geopolitical dynamics severed it – pointing out that Hong Kong only became a hub after "overcoming numerous obstacles" (p. 57). Chapter two studies how the emergence of the PRC led the British authorities to abandon their plan to build a new airport and to expand Kai Tak instead. As air traffic routes now had to avoid China, the British connected Hong Kong with its other colonial ports, such as Malaya and Singapore, and with countries in the Pacific such as Taiwan, Japan and the US. This in turn created "a corridor that ran on the periphery of mainland China" (p. 100). These connections reveal that Hong Kong remained important for Britain in consolidating its regional power. Chapter three explores how Cathay Pacific became Hong Kong's main local carrier and how the brand's identity-construction process was closely linked to geopolitics. From the demilitarization of flight attendants' uniforms in the post-war period and the creation of a *cheongsam*-inspired uniform that symbolized Chinese identity, to the new designer-brand suits that celebrated cosmopolitanism, this chapter shows how Cathay Pacific's development as a company was inseparable from Hong Kong's internal development – notably industrialization – and external changes. Chapter four analyses how Kai Tak Airport was upgraded and describes the numerous obstacles this process faced, notably the London–Hong Kong tensions over the financing of the runway project. While colonial bureaucrats were keen to upgrade civil aviation infrastructures and have more control over traffic rights, London did not always share the same interests. Yet, due to Britain's waning imperial power and Hong Kong being increasingly self-reliant financially, London's control over the colony became "precarious" (p. 189). Chapter five investigates how Cathay Pacific became a "powerful commercial aviation operator with flights radiating from the commanding base of Hong Kong's robust economy" (p. 18). The company's growth was made possible not only due to economic trends across the globe, but also because of changing geopolitics and the availability of new technologies. Lastly, chapter six documents how shifting political development affected Cathay Pacific's growth. With the handover approaching and British interests in Hong Kong becoming potentially unsustainable, Cathay had to rebrand itself. Its workforce's profile was altered to increase the representation of Hong Kong, and "red capital" was accepted from Chinese enterprises that were connected to Beijing. Such changes before 1997, in particular the inclusion of investors with a different political background, "stretched the shareholder base beyond its comfortable social network" (p. 182).

Methodologically, Wong employs a wide range of empirical evidence. Meticulously analysing and utilizing official and unofficial records in Hong Kong, Britain, the US, Australia, Taiwan and Singapore, Wong looks at how Hong Kong's internal development and the commercial aviation industry's structure and institutions affected each other, and why the city ultimately became a metropolis, playing a leading economic role in the modern world. This comprehensive data located across the world echoes the theme of this book, demonstrating the linkages between the commercial aviation industry in Hong Kong, the territory's growth and global networks.

*Hong Kong Takes Flight* certainly provides a solid foundation for scholars who are interested in infrastructure and business history. However, as Wong has shown, the aviation history of Hong

Kong and Cathay Pacific is closely linked to the history of the British empire, decolonization and the Cold War. Rather than oversimplifying the process with “globalization,” it was the unpredictable ways in which changing global dynamics interacted with shifting regional geopolitics and domestic developments that turned Hong Kong into a global nexus and aviation hub. This book therefore makes important contributions to our understanding of history and will be of great interest to audiences within and beyond academia.

doi:10.1017/S0305741023000450

## The Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier

Benno Weiner. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020. 312 pp. \$45.95 (hbk). ISBN 9781501749391

Dáša Pejchar Mortensen

Davidson College, Davidson, NC, USA  
Email: [damortensen@davidson.edu](mailto:damortensen@ davidson.edu)

Benno Weiner’s *The Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier* is a detailed and powerful account of how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) attempted to incorporate Tibetans living in Amdo into the newly created Chinese socialist nation-state in the 1950s. The book focuses on Zeku (Tibetan: Tsékhok), an administrative unit that the CCP carved out of the Amdo grasslands south of Repgong and labelled a Tibetan Autonomous County in 1953. Weiner raises two central questions in his book: “How have [Chinese] state representatives tried to integrate Tibetan regions into the modern Chinese nation, and why has this project been less than successful?” (p. 3). In addressing these questions, Weiner employs the historical anthropologist Uradyn Bulag’s theory of sub-imperialism, in which the modern state taps “into the heritage of the former empire’s techniques of rule in the service of nationalism” (*Collaborative Nationalism: The Politics of Friendship on China’s Mongolian Frontier*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2010, 61). Weiner maintains that the CCP utilized the United Front (*tongyi zhanxian*) – a strategy designed to turn enemies into friends by bringing non-Party members into the political process – in order to “‘gradually’, ‘voluntarily’, and ‘organically’ bridge the gap between empire and nation” (p. 4).

In the early 1950s, most Party cadres in Qinghai Province were Han Chinese and they lacked detailed knowledge of the social, economic, religious and geographic conditions in Zeku. To build local networks, win over the support of the local people, and “lead Tibetans and other minority nationalities of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau on a gradual and voluntary path toward nationality unity and socialist transformation,” the Party recruited indigenous religious and secular leaders into a “patriotic United Front” (p. 21). The Party’s sub-imperial practice of allying with indigenous elites was a temporary compromise designed to expand the Party’s know-how and influence in the region. By using the tactics of consultation and persuasion, the Party intended to transform the political consciousness of the local indigenous leaders, while paving the way for future socialist reforms. Yet, United Front gradualism and pragmatism existed in constant tension with CCP leaders’ revolutionary impatience. In the increasingly radical atmosphere of 1958, revolutionary impatience won out, and Qinghai provincial leaders ordered pastoral areas to be rapidly collectivized. Weiner asserts that the Amdo rebellion of 1958, which was only suppressed through the mobilization of state violence, reveals the extent to which the Party failed to convince Amdo Tibetans of their membership