

Foreword

Hong Kong, as a vibrant city-state which has gone through a transition from a colonial territory to a special administrative region of China, has proved a pertinent site from which to observe and analyse the changing patterns of government and governance in neighbouring countries across Asia. As it happens, the decade following the turn of the millennium has been a fantastic time to study the subject of public governance and democracy, with many interesting developments around the world. The case studies developed in this volume provide valuable insights into this crucial subject in Asia, which remains a fascinating and dynamic region despite the impact of the recent global financial crisis. They highlight the spirit of public governance as the prevention of the abuse of power by public officials and politicians, and the importance of public governance in protecting the public interest.

The initial impetus for this volume came from one editor's enthusiasm for trying to learn from past experiences to make public policy-making and public governance more effective in the region in the future. While serving as Chair of Lingnan University's Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (IHSS), Lok Sang Ho organized an international conference specifically on the 'Lessons from History' in June 2006 and, with this volume in mind, asked a number of regional specialists to present papers at that conference. These papers have, in due course, been revised and updated in the light of comments made at that conference and the unfolding of events since then. We have also directly recruited a number of other paper writers to address particular countries or themes to complement and extend the coverage from the original conference. The contributions to this book are designed to draw some general conclusions about these differing and fluid patterns of governance across the whole region.

The editors would like to thank not only the participants of the original conference, but also all those who have read and, in some cases, re-read drafts of chapters for this volume. We would also like to show our appreciation to the staff of IHSS for their support at the time of the conference and subsequently, with special mention to Felix Tsang and particularly Ms Dorothy Kok, who has been a tower of strength in handling various formatting and organizational tasks. We could not have done this without her.

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Lok Sang Ho and Brian Bridges
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