

FAQs – State Papers Online Colonial vs. China and the Modern World: Hong Kong, Britain, and China, 1841–1951



What are the CO 129 series?

- CO 129 War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Hong Kong, Original Correspondence (1841-1951) is held in The National Archives of the UK, and digitised by Gale as [China and the Modern World: Hong Kong, Britain and China, 1841–1951](#) (CAMW-4) and consists of 2,179 files of mainly incoming correspondence to the Colonial Office, i.e. despatches, letters, and reports by Hong Kong governors and other public servants.

What are State Papers Online Colonial?

- [State Papers Online Colonial](#) is a new project that is digitising Colonial Office papers held in The National Archives, UK by broad regions. The first of four Asia-related modules [State Papers Online Colonial: Asia, Part I: Far East, Hong Kong, and Wei-Hai-Wei](#) was released in September 2022. There will be three more Asia related modules released in the coming years. Provisionally these will be: *Part II: Singapore and British Borneo (Singapore and East Malaysia)* in 2023; *Part III: Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements (West Malaysia)* in 2024; *Part IV: Ceylon (Sri Lanka)* in 2025.



Is there any duplication between CO 129 (CAMW-4) and State Papers Online Colonial?

- No. We will not include CO 129 material in State Papers Online Colonial as CO 129 has already been digitised as *China and the Modern World: Hong Kong, Britain and China, 1841–1951*.

How does State Papers Online Colonial complement CO 129 (China and the Modern World: Hong Kong, Britain and China, 1841–1951)?

- *Part I: Far East, Hong Kong, and Wei-Hai-Wei* contains three explicitly Hong Kong related CO series: CO 403 Hong Kong Entry Books; CO 489 Hong Kong Register of Out-letters; and CO 1023 Hong Kong and Pacific Department: Original Correspondence; comprising 262 files. These files nicely complement CO 129 by providing copies or registers of the Colonial Offices' outgoing correspondence to Hong Kong from 1841-1926 (CO 403 and 489) as well as incoming correspondence related to Hong Kong and Pacific Islands from the immediate post-WWII period, 1945-1955.

- In addition to those explicitly Hong Kong related series, there are also nearly 1,000 files from various general Far East related series that contain “Hong Kong” in their file names. These include items from CO 1030: Far Eastern Department and successors: Original Correspondence; CO 537: Colonial Office and predecessors: Confidential Original Correspondence; CO 825: Eastern Original Correspondence; CO 882: Confidential Print Eastern and many others. These can also be found in the product by searching/filtering by Country/Territory = “Hong Kong”.
- For instance the CO 537 Confidential Correspondence includes 370 files on Hong Kong which would not be included in CO 129. Indeed, these files may have originally been among the CO 129 files before being extracted as being too confidential to release with CO 129. CO 1030, Far Eastern Department Original Correspondence, 1941-1967 also contains important documents.
- There are also more than 2,200 files that mention Hong Kong within their text, even though they do not mention Hong Kong explicitly in their series or file names.
- State Papers Online Colonial also contains four CO series (CO 521, 770, 771, 873) related to Wei-Hai-Wei (威海衛), a British leased port territory at the northern tip of Shandong Peninsula, as well as hundreds of files related to the Far East region in general (more than 70% of Part I), including the earliest East India Company correspondence from the 16th century (CO 77), confidential original correspondence (CO 537), confidential print (CO 882), files related to post-WWII reconstruction (CO 865, 975) and many others.
- State Papers Online Colonial will include the annual Colonial Office List, the annual listing of colonial officers in each territory which will be a valuable reference source to understand the CO files.
- All of these files add important historical, geo-political, and economic context to the CO 129 files, and will help researchers to examine British administration of the Hong Kong colony in the context of its complex and dynamic relations with other British possessions and with the broader Far Eastern world.