to local surveys, the number of people who identified themselves as "Hong-Kongese" was twice as much as those who identified themselves as Chinese in 1997; since then, only a slight increase in the latter has occurred (see Lo 2007: 214). This "Hong-Kongese" identity is even stronger in the younger generations (The University of Hong Kong 2006). This Hong Kong indigenous identity is more problematic than celebrative from Beijing's point of view. According to research, those who identified themselves as "Hong-Kongese," compared with those who identified themselves as Chinese, are less positive about the practice of "One Country, Two Systems" (T. K. Wong and Wan 2007: 97). In other words, the indigenous identity as Hong-Kongese and the larger national identity correlate differently to political orientation. To Beijing, political identification is a prerequisite of patriotism; nevertheless, this is what the Hong Kong indigenous identity is resisting. The more Hong Kong people are identified with the mainland culturally and politically, the more their indigenous identity dilutes. Thus, the indigenous identity of Hong Kong could be functioning as a dialectical force that counteracts mainlandization and recolonization.

An Exegetical Study of Exodus 2:1—4:18

The narrative of Moses' birth, early life, and commission contains frequent recurrences of identity/identification motifs. The ambivalence and ambiguity of Moses' ethnicity and his hybridity are ubiquitous in Exod. 2:1-22. Moses' Hebrew identity is set forth as his "primordial" identity. His ethnic and social identification with the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt and his nostalgic sentiments during his sojourning years in Midian underscore this primordial identity, which is subsequently complicated by the disintegration of his ethnic and social identification with the Hebrews. This loss of identification recurs in the commission narrative (3:1—4:17) but eventually resolves in 4:18, where Moses acknowledges the Hebrews as his "brothers" (cf. 2:11). Without the resumption of ethnic and social identification with the Hebrews, Moses would not be able to take up the role as YHWH's delivering agent to the enslaved Hebrews. However, I argue that YHWH's insistence on choosing Moses as delivering agent is based on the irreplaceability of Moses' hybridity. While Moses' ethnic and social identification with the Hebrews is an imperative for his future vocation, it is not a prerequisite for his election. Otherwise,

YHWH would not have to persuade him to identify with the Hebrews. In other words, what qualifies Moses to be a delivering agent is primarily his hybridity rather than his ethnic and social identification with the Hebrews.

Moses' Ethnic and Social Identification with the Hebrews in Exodus 2:1-22

The commission narrative presupposes the birth narrative (Kratz 2005: 285).[7] It cannot be fully comprehended without the characterization of Moses provided in Exod. 2:1-22. The birth narrative serves to establish Moses' Hebrew identity as his primordial identity. This identity is subsequently complicated by the incorporation of Egyptian and Midianite elements through his experiences as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter and the son-in-law of the Midianite priest Jethro. The passage also reflects his struggle to obtain a sense of ethnic identification and social solidarity with the enslaved Hebrews, which eventually paves the way toward a final resolution of identity struggle in the commission narrative.

There are several points in 2:1–15a in which Moses' primordial identity as a Hebrew is emphasized. First, his parents' Levite lineage is stressed (v. 1) to prove that Moses is a Levite, a Hebrew by birth. Second, Moses' Hebrew roots are further stressed through the immediate response of his noble rescuer, Pharaoh's daughter, upon her encounter with Moses. She says, "This must be one of the Hebrews' children" (v. 6). Third, there is a greater emphasis on Moses' primordial identity as a Hebrew in vv. 7-10. The particularity in Moses' adoption by Pharaoh's daughter is that his natural mother becomes his wet nurse, which enables Moses to be placed under his natural mother's tutelage. He will thus be nurtured in a Hebrew way without being separated from his natural family, presumably, before he is weaned (Childs 1965: 111–15). This period is essential for Moses' recognition of his Hebrew roots and his future social identification with the Hebrews, especially with the predicament of their enslavement. This part of his memory could be assumed to have been engraved on his heart, even upon his return to the royal court to be educated in an Egyptian way. The identity motif is further elevated with the giving of a Hebrew name to him by an Egyptian princess.

7. Many scholars concur that Exod. 3:1—4:18 is a late insertion (Noth 1972: 30 n103 and 198–203; Schmid 2006: 39; Blum 2006: 91).

Though "Moses" could be understood as an Egyptian name, meaning "son" or "child" (Hughes 1997: 15–16; Nohrnberg 1995: 135), it is the Hebrew meaning, "the one who draws forth" or "the one who saves," that appeals to the audience. The Egyptian meaning is not evident in the narrative. Finally, the narrative describes Moses' going back to "his brothers" (v. 11) after he has grown up, indicating that Moses is cognizant of his own Hebrew roots. Moreover, his two interventions in the bullying of a Hebrew by an Egyptian and the "physical fight" between two Hebrews confirm that he can identify with the enslaved Hebrews ethnically and socially, even though this identification has been hidden. 2:1-15a repeatedly accentuates Moses' primordial identity as a Hebrew in spite of the circumstances of his upbringing.

Egyptian and Midianite Influences on Moses' Ethnic Identification

Moses' Hebrew identity begins to disintegrate through a series of events that contribute to the (trans)formation of his ethnicity. Reared in the Egyptian court, Moses lives a privileged and affluent life that marks a tremendous contrast to the enslaved Hebrews. While Egyptians see him as a Hebrew (2:6), both the Hebrews and Midianites recognize him as an Egyptian (vv. 14–19). Although the narrative does not directly tell us that Moses' Hebrew "brothers" recognize him as an Egyptian, this could be inferred from the direct speech made by one of the quarrelling Hebrews at the scene in which Moses appears to interrogate their motive for fighting. One of them says, "Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" (v. 14a). The direct speech indicates that the enslaved Hebrew recognizes Moses as one of the Egyptian oppressors by matching Moses' tone of voice to the dominating voice of the ruling class ("ruler and judge") and his killing act to their coercive behavior (perhaps also by the Egyptian garb he wears). So far in the exodus story, only the Egyptians are described as oppressors and murderers. What might be identified as an act of deliverance by Moses is perceived as an act of oppression by "his brothers"—a clear gap between Moses' view of himself and others' view of him. In the enslaved Hebrews' eyes, Moses' attitudes are impetuous, coercive, and dominating. Such attitudes are consistent with the characterization of the Egyptians in the narrative. In short, the narrative gives an impression that, in his upbringing, Moses has absorbed customs, values, and attitudes that define Egyptianness.

The challenge and distrust of "his brothers" eventually lead to the disintegration of Moses' ethnic and social identification with the Hebrews. Moses is afraid to be challenged and distrusted again when YHWH calls him to be a deliverer of the Hebrews (4:1). The rescue scenes in 2:11-15 are ironic. Not only do Moses' interventions signify his ethnic discrepancies with the Hebrews, these events also turn him into one of the oppressed, pursued by Pharaoh, and set him on his sojourn in Midian.[8]

Nostalgic sentiments are present during Moses' sojourning experience in Midian, even though he has willingly stayed and formed a family there. On the surface, it could be said that Moses' Midianite experience is more pleasant than his Egyptian experience. In contrast to the distrust and estrangement shown to him by the Hebrews and Egyptians, he is received with trust and hospitality and adopted as a son-in-law by the Midianite priest Jethro. In the folkloristic love-scene at the well, Moses not only meets his future wife, Zipporah, he is also recognized as a rescuer, a vocational identity that is denied by his Hebrew brothers in Egypt. Moses' Midianite sojourn has added another meaning to his identity: born as a Hebrew slave and raised as an Egyptian prince, now he has become a Midianite shepherd.

Moses' life in "metropolitan" Egypt has been one marked with agitation and conflicts, and his new life in bucolic Midian is, in contrast, characterized by serenity and stability. Once again, the narrator provides no additional comments on the effect of this migration on Moses. However, 2:22 hints at Moses' relatively weak identification with the Midianites. Even though he has settled willingly and formed a family of his own, he still names his son "Gershom," a name closely resembling the Hebrew words *ger sham*, "a sojourner there" (cf. Propp 1989: 174; Fox 1986: 21). The name reflects Moses' rootlessness and bitterness in his sojourning experience, whether it is in Midian or in Egypt. There is a sense of nostalgia in the naming of his son, despite the ambiguity and indefiniteness of where his "home" might be. The Midianite journey provides a liminal stage for Moses, giving him a space to contemplate his life events, paving the way for the next episode of his life. The experience is life-transforming and it adds to Moses' already ambiguous identity a third ethnic constituent—Midianiteness.

8. The vacillation between the roles of the oppressed and the oppressor is observable even at the beginning of the exodus story. There is no need to wait until the Conquest.

The complexity and ambiguity of Moses' ethnic, cultural, and social identity is describable with the postcolonial term "hybridity." His identity is a blend of three inextricable cultural constituents—Hebrewness, Egyptianness, and Midianiteness—but is never completely absorbed by any one of these constituents. Thus, his hybridity is "less than one and triple."[9] Which of the three is more prominent in Moses' ethnic, cultural, and social identification? Does the narrative portray Moses' hybridity as a liability or an asset? To answer these questions, the reading must go on to the commission narrative in 3:1—4:18.

The Commission of Moses, His Ethnic Identification, and His Hybridity

Exod. 3:1—4:18 constitutes a literary unit. On the surface structure of the commission, there are two rivaling voices in contest. One belongs to God and the other to Moses. In a nutshell, the voice of God is one that represents the collective welfare of an ethnic group, namely the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt. This God identified himself as a faithful clan God (3:6, 13, 15, 16, 18; 4:5), and yet the mighty creator of humankind (3:11), who takes heed of the affliction of his people, the Hebrews, and remembers his promise to their ancestors (3:6–8). This God takes the initiative to appear to Moses in a form of fire in a burning bush. God comes to call Moses to be his human agent in his liberation plan (3:9–10, 16–18). In contrast to the voice of God, Moses' voice is one that focuses on personal interests. He fails to identify with the enslaved Hebrews, and refuses to take part in God's liberation plan. Moses in the commission narrative also appears to be weak and vulnerable. These character traits of Moses can only be comprehensible in the light of his birth and early-life narratives.

God's voice, which emphasizes collective welfare and in-group values, appears to be the normative and evaluative point of view in the commission narrative. It is the dominant ideology in the narrative. Moses' voice, which is preoccupied with personal interests, represents a subjugated ideology whose challenges to the dominant ideology are immediately relegated to the position of inferiority and powerlessness. Constantly debilitated by the argumentative force of God's voice, all of Moses' objections are rebutted by the dominant voice. The commission narrative is powerful in adhering to the

9. This expression is a modification of P. Childs and R. J. P. Williams's "less than one and double" (1997: 133–37).

collectivistic ideologies represented by the dominant voice and suppressing ideologies of the subjugated that might pose threat to the dominant ones.

The purpose of YHWH's grand entrance in Exodus 3 is to call Moses to be his human agent. In the narrative, the theophany not only establishes Moses' prophetic office and provides signs that make his authority believable to the Israelites, but also re-establishes Moses' ethnic identification with the Hebrews. From Moses' responses, we can trace a few changes of his psychological state. First of all, Moses' second question to YHWH, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (3:11), certainly carries a sense of hesitancy and inferiority in taking up the perceived strenuous task of liberation (cf. 4:10-13). Moses' continuous refusal and his last response, "my Lord, please send someone else" (4:13), and YHWH's eventual anger on his refusal (4:14), reflect Moses' sense of inferiority rather than his humility, as some commentators interpreted (Sailhamer 1992: 245).

Furthermore, Moses' refusal to YHWH's call, out of his misgivings of Israelites' unbelieving and his own ineloquence (4:1, 10), is a consequence of a series of personal experiences. He was rejected once by the Hebrews, who challenged and doubted his authority by saying "Who made you a ruler and judge over us?" (2:14), which explains his distrust of the Hebrews. As for his ineloquence, this is probably no pretext. Since he has been educated as an Egyptian, it comes as no surprise that communication with the Hebrews might be a problem. From YHWH's response and assurance to Moses, "Who has made man's mouth?" (4:11a; ESV) and "I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak" (4:12), it does not seem that Moses' ineloquence is an excuse. Because of Moses' doubt and fear, YHWH has to repeatedly assure Moses of his presence with him, "I will be with you" (3:12; cf. 3:14; 4:12, 15).

After what happened in Egypt, namely his experience as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter and his interventions in the social conflicts involving the Hebrews, Moses appears to be a different person. In the commission narrative, the impetuous Moses is no longer seen; instead, we have a hesitant Moses. The Moses who identified himself as a rescuer of the oppressed, whether for his enslaved brothers or the bullied shepherdesses, seems to be unable to identify with the Hebrews. Note that in the conversation between God and Moses, instead of calling the Hebrews his "brothers" (2:11), Moses has been all along referring to them by the detached appellation "Israelites."

Moreover, instead of calling YHWH "the God of *our* fathers" in the presence of the Israelites, he addresses God as "the God of *your* fathers" (3:13). The appellation is a sign of distancing, an inability to identify with the Hebrews as he used to. Only after the commission account can Moses restore his identification with the Hebrews and resume calling them his "brothers" (4:18). From Moses' response to YHWH's call in 4:1, we see that he has lost his trust in the Hebrews and he foresees their unbelieving in his prophetic call. This could be interpreted as a psychological aftermath of being rejected by the group that a person once identified with.

After Moses' series of objections to YHWH's call, YHWH finally makes a concession to Moses by appointing Aaron, "his brother the Levite," as an interpreter for him (4:16). YHWH's concession implies YHWH's insistence on calling Moses. After YHWH's repeated reassurance and Moses' persistent resistance, YHWH does not give up but insists on calling Moses, who does not wish to be called. In YHWH's final response to Moses, he even promises Moses that Aaron will be to him "a mouth" and he will be to Aaron "as God" (4:16). It is clear that Moses' prominence as the number-one agent of God is irreplaceable. Even though Moses has not asked for such a great honor, YHWH's assurance leaves Moses with no room for refusal. The narrative ends with YHWH closing the dialogue and an ambiguity in Moses' response to the divine commission. He never gives an affirmative "Yes"; rather, he passively acquiesces to his commission upon returning to Midian. In the epilogue of the narrative (4:18), he asks for Jethro's permission: "Please let me go back to my kindred [brothers] in Egypt and see whether they are still living." Moses has finally come to identify the Hebrews as his "brothers." He has restored his ethnic identification and social solidarity with the Hebrews. This identification is crucial, since without it Moses would not be fit to be their leader and delivering agent and, most important of all, he would not take up this challenging job. Moreover, the statement implies that he only wishes to make a visit rather than carry out God's deliverance plan. At the end, Moses neither refuses nor willingly accepts the commission explicitly. This leaves the readers room to ponder and interpret the last move of Moses. In other words, the story ends without a definite resolution. Instead, the suspense invites readers to make the decision for Moses.

Without identifying with the Hebrews, Moses would not be qualified for leadership. In the entire commission narrative, Moses has kept the distance

from the Hebrews by calling them "Israelites." What contributes to his sudden change of attitude to the Hebrews at the end of the narrative? What persuades him to call the Hebrews "my brothers"? What happened during their conversation that could prompt Moses' identification with the Hebrews? From the beginning of their dialogue, God identifies himself as the ancestral god of the Hebrews (3:6, 13, 15, 16, 18; 4:5). The repeated invocation of the names of the three personages Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (3:6, 13, 16; 4:5) not only suggests God's identification with the Hebrews, but also functions as an invitation to Moses to recover his Hebrew roots. Moreover, God also identifies the Hebrews as his own people and acknowledges their affliction. The only two incidents in the commissioning story where the infinitive absolute is used for emphatic purpose, namely 3:7 and 16 (respectively *ra'oh ra'iti*, "I have [indeed] seen"; and *paqod paqadti*, "I have [indeed] visited [them]." In both instances the root is repeated twice, the first time in the infinitive form), heighten God's commiseration with the suffering Hebrews. God does not just perceive or hear their affliction, but God has also *visited* (*paqadti*) them in their affliction. In other words, God has been placing himself as one among the sufferers and experienced the suffering too. It could be interpreted that God persuades Moses to identify with the Hebrews through God's exemplary identification with them in their suffering. If God identifies with the Hebrews, how could Moses not? In other words, the persuasion is effected by a kind of God-rhetoric: what is demanded is also enacted by God.

Another point of interest about the commission narrative lies in God's insistence to call a person who does not wish to be called. From a narrative perspective, it may be argued that the hero's peculiar birth situation has already destined his future role as an appointed deliverer. It is precisely because of his vocation that he was put in the royal court and educated as an Egyptian and then placed in the wilderness, which sharpened his rough edges. Born as a Hebrew slave, raised as an Egyptian prince, and sojourned as a Midianite shepherd, his diverse experiences enriched his life and shaped his transcultural perspective. While these diverse experiences of living a life in camouflage have become a cause of his identity struggle and created his sense of rootlessness, these experiences also shaped his hybridity. His diverse experiences make him a highly receptive person who is able to absorb every goodness and wisdom of the Hebrew, Egyptian, and Midianite (cf. Acts 7:22). Only this hybridity qualifies him as a leader who can stand up against the

Egyptian king; guide a group of disarrayed, fearful, impatient, and impulsive Hebrews with a history of enslavement (Exod. 14–18, 32); and co-opt Jethro, the Midianite priest, as his political and administrative consultant (Exod. 18). Hence, Moses' hybridity is both a liability and an asset to him. Since his hybridity is incomparable and carefully described by the author, I would say that there is no replacement for Moses, leaving God with no other choice but to persuade Moses to consent.

As I have delineated, there is a recurrence of the identity/identification motif in Exod. 2:1—4:18 and the story advocates ethnic identification and social solidarity with one's "primordial" group. Nevertheless, by calling a highly and peerlessly hybrid person to be a leader of the Hebrews, "primordial" identity is undermined by hybridity. To quote R. S. Sugirtharajah in his advocacy of the concept of hybridity as an analytical tool, "The postcolonial concept of hybridity . . . will challenge and resist fictitious notions of cultural purity and authenticity claimed for biblical cultures" (2003: 109). To put it in an oversimplified way, identity per se is always complex, multiple, impure, ambiguous, ambivalent, and unstable. Any attempt to portray its singularity is nothing but a fabrication.

Reading Exodus 2:1—4:18 with Resistance in Post-Handover Hong Kong: Recovering of One's "Authentic Roots"?

After the handover of Hong Kong to the PRC, the governments of the PRC and HKSAR employed various means to nourish Hong Kong people's nationalistic sentiments and breed their identification with the mainland. The underlying assumption is that the more Hong Kong people identify with the mainland, the easier it is for the PRC to maintain control over HKSAR, to debilitate the local oppositional and resistant forces, and to absorb Hong Kong to the collective will of the PRC. This process is what used to be called assimilation, a process devised by the colonizer to eliminate the colonial other. In the case of the HKSAR, as favorable conditions are forged for those who identify themselves more with the mainland, those who hold a stronger indigenous identity or those who find more affinities with the West, especially in terms of political ideals, are treated as the "colonial other" that need to be eliminated. Their voices are suppressed and silenced when they do not align with the dominant voice.