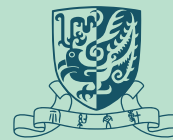


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*The Birth and Growth  
of Academic Sociology  
in Hong Kong*

Rance Pui-leung Lee  
Siu-kai Lau

**Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies**  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Shatin, New Territories  
Hong Kong

**Errata**  
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Page (Line)	Corrections
4 (20)	"founding Chairman" should read "founding Chair Professor".
23 (14)	" <i>Criminologists</i> " should read " <i>The Criminologist</i> ".
24 (30)	"Resources" should read "Resource".
24 (31)	" <i>Resources</i> " should read " <i>Resource</i> ".
26 (6)	" <i>Process</i> " should read " <i>Processes</i> " and the page numbers for the paper are 145-169.
26 (7)	"Japan Institute of Labour" should read "The Japan Institute of Labour".

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Siu-kai Lau

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Shatin, New Territories  
Hong Kong

## About the authors

Rance Pui-leung Lee is Professor of Sociology and Dean of the Faculty of Social Science at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Most of his research publications are in the areas of illness behavior, health care organizations, and social problems in Chinese society. He was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Research Committee on the Sociology of Health, International Sociological Association (1982-90), and has been serving on the editorial boards of several international journals, such as the *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science* (Singapore), *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* (U.S.A.), *International Review of Modern Sociology* (U.S.A.), *Social Science and Medicine* (U.K.), *Health Transition Review* (Australia), and *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* (U.S.A.).

Siu-kai Lau is Professor of Sociology at The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Associate Director of its Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies. He is the author of *Society and Politics in Hong Kong* (1982) and co-author of *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese* (1988), as well as many monographs and journal articles. His main areas of interest are comparative politics, social development and political development of Hong Kong.

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## The Birth and Growth of Academic Sociology in Hong Kong

### Abstract

Sociology as an academic discipline was given birth by scholars from China and the West in the 1950s. As Hong Kong is a liberal society which has been undergoing rapid industrialization and experiencing intensive interplay between Chinese and Western cultural influences, sociology teaching and research have kept growing in the last two decades. There has been an increasing number of professional sociologists teaching in the various academic institutions, offering both undergraduate and post-graduate programs of studies. In research, both the number and the scope of projects have been increasing, although synthetic work of theoretical significance is sorely needed. There has been a shift from qualitative field research to quantitative survey studies, but recent years have seen a gradual revival of field research for generating insights about Chinese culture and social behavior.

Academic sociology in Hong Kong has also kept localizing. Despite the influence of American and British sociology, Hong Kong sociologists generally share the ambition to plant sociology on the Chinese soil, making it both relevant to the development of Chinese society and useful to the advancement of world sociology. To this end, Hong Kong sociologists have developed close collaboration with Chinese sociologists elsewhere. They have also begun to strengthen their ties with other Asia-Pacific sociologists, as the future of Hong Kong lies heavily in its relationships with nearby Asia-Pacific countries.

There are ample opportunities for the development of sociology in Hong Kong. These opportunities are created by a liberal society which permits freedom of academic pursuits and a rapidly industrializing society which experiences intensive interplay between Chinese heritage and Western influence. Indeed, sociology as an academic field has grown robustly in the past two to three decades. Sociologists have also emerged as respectable intellectuals in society.

## History and Social Context

Sociology is undoubtedly a product of the Western civilization. It was transplanted to China at the beginning of the 20th Century and was received by Chinese intellectuals with great enthusiasm.<sup>1</sup> Numerous empirical studies were conducted, resulting in a large number of sociological publications. Most of the writings were in Chinese and were preoccupied with social issues and problems. Ta Chen, Hsiao-tung Fei, Kuang-tan Pan, Pen-wen Sun, Wen-tsao Wu, and C.K. Yang were some of the prominent sociologists. Their works are still respected by academic sociologists and their students in Hong Kong today.

When the Communist regime was instituted in China in 1949, some sociologists migrated to Hong Kong and introduced sociology to college students on a small scale. The initial development of sociology in Hong Kong was slow, but in the last two decades it has become a fast-growing field in both teaching and research. The rapid growth, however, cannot be properly appreciated without understanding its social context.

Hong Kong has been a British colony for about one and a half centuries, but political control on social research and intellectual activities is limited. Moreover, despite the political upheaval in neighboring countries in the post-War period, Hong Kong's own political system has been remarkably stable over many decades.<sup>2</sup> Academic freedom coupled with political stability are favorable breeding grounds for the development of social science in general and sociology in particular.

The growth of sociology in Hong Kong has also been facilitated by social and economic development.<sup>3</sup> Hong Kong is a city with limited space (about one thousand square kilometers). Its total population has grown from about two million to nearly six million over the last 40 years. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's economy has progressed tremendously, making the city one of the greatest commercial-industrial centers in Asia. The rapid population growth coupled with miraculous economic advancement have created a great demand for social scientific information for

comprehending the emerging social problems and for making future plans and actions. No less importantly, the society is capable of allocating more resources to the promotion of social research and the expansion of educational opportunities at all levels.

The expansion of education at the tertiary level deserves special attention. Recent decades and particularly recent years have seen rapid growth in both the number of academic institutions and the size of student enrolment in each institution. This contributes to the growth of a variety of academic disciplines, including sociology.

## Development of Teaching Programs

Sociology courses are currently offered in all of the major universities and colleges in Hong Kong. It is the two publicly-supported universities, viz., the University of Hong Kong and The Chinese University of Hong Kong, which have been playing the leading role in the development of sociology as an academic discipline.

Some historical facts should be mentioned. The immigrant scholars from China to Hong Kong around the year 1949 helped establish several liberal arts colleges, of which the prominent ones were New Asia College, Chung Chi College, United College, and Baptist College. The first teaching program in sociology was introduced by Chung Chi College in 1951, followed by both United College and Baptist College in 1956, and by New Asia College in 1959. Some of the pioneer sociologists from China included C.C. Hu, Tsun Leng, and Shau-lam Wong. A significant development was the merging of Chung Chi College, New Asia College and United College to form The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1963. As a result, the sociology staff and students in these three colleges were integrated into a single department of sociology.

Another significant event was the involvement of C.K. Yang, then Professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh, in the curriculum reform and manpower development of the Chinese University's Department of Sociology. Through Yang's match-

making arrangements, several sociologists (Morris Berkowitz, Jiri Nehnevajsa, Burkart Holzner, and Hiroshi Wagatsuma) from the University of Pittsburgh and a social psychologist (Robert Chin) from Boston University came to teach at the Chinese University, while several Chinese University graduates were sent to Pittsburgh for postgraduate studies in sociology. This helped build up and localize the Department of Sociology at the Chinese University, making it a leading center of sociology teaching and research in Hong Kong. Ambrose Y.C. King and Rance P.L. Lee are two of the local sociologists who have been leading the development of the Department since the middle of the 1970s. Currently, the Department has a total of 19 sociologists, all of whom are Chinese. They offer about 40 courses in sociology, some of which have become popular subjects in the University's general education program.

The University of Hong Kong (founded in 1911) has also been active in the development of sociology. Some sociology courses were offered in the 1950s. Henry J. Lethridge was one of the pioneers. Its Department of Sociology was established in 1967. Keith Hopkins was the founding Chairman. At present, the Department has a total of 12 sociologists, of whom five are Chinese.

On top of the full-fledged undergraduate programs of studies in sociology, the two universities also provide opportunities for studies in sociology at the postgraduate levels, offering M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees. In addition, the University of Hong Kong launched the Master of Social Sciences program in criminology in 1986, in response to the growing awareness of the need for upgrading the qualifications of professional workers in the field.<sup>4</sup>

The third major Department of Sociology is located at the Baptist College. The Department offers undergraduate studies, and has recently started to enrol students at the master's level. A special feature of the Department is its participation, through offering several courses, in the College's interdisciplinary teaching program on China Studies. Presently the Department has a total of 14 sociologists, of whom 12 are Chinese. William T. Liu, an

American sociologist of Chinese origin, has played a key role in the development of the Department.

It should be pointed out that in the above three academic institutions, there are sociologists serving in the other departments or faculties, such as business administration, medicine, and social work. Moreover, there are sociologists teaching in the other institutions of higher learning in Hong Kong. For instance, sociology courses have been introduced by the Lingnan College since 1976. The College established an independent Department of Sociology in 1981 but disbanded it in 1984. Most of the sociology courses are now integrated into a multi-disciplinary teaching program on Social Issues and Policy. The Hong Kong Polytechnic and the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong offer sociology as part of their interdisciplinary Department of Applied Social Studies. The Shue Yan College has maintained a small Department of Sociology for nearly 20 years. In 1988, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology was founded as the third university in Hong Kong. It has recruited six sociologists, offering service courses at the undergraduate level and major studies at the postgraduate level under the School of Humanities and Social Science. William T. Liu has just joined its staff.

It is estimated that at present, there are about 80 sociologists teaching at the tertiary academic institutions in Hong Kong. Most of them have received postgraduate training mainly in the U.S.A., followed by Britain, Canada and Australia.

### Research Development from 1950 to 1980

There was no sociological research in Hong Kong before 1950. Social research was given birth by overseas scholars in the 1950s, and has been undertaken largely by local Chinese scholars since the beginning of 1970s.

Hong Kong is located at the Southeast coast of the Chinese mainland. Part of China before it became a British colony in 1842, it is essentially a Chinese society, as over 98 per cent of the population are Chinese in origin. With its intellectual freedom coupled

with political stability and economic prosperity, Hong Kong represents an ideal place for the study of Chinese social structure and culture in the context of modernization. In comparison with Communist China and even Taiwan and Singapore, the abundance of research opportunities in Hong Kong is unique. As a result, it attracted a number of overseas scholars to come and conduct research in Hong Kong in the 1950s and the 1960s. Most of them were social anthropologists from Britain or America, such as E.N. Anderson, Hugh Baker, Maurice Freedman, Robert G. Groves, James Hayes, Graham Johnson, Cornelius Osgood, Jean Pratt, Jack Potter, Marjorie Topley, Barbara E. Ward and James Watson. They were mainly interested in the study of rural Hong Kong as traditional Chinese society, focusing on such topics as clan and lineage organization, ancestor worship and religious rituals, family and economic life, and diet and health behavior.<sup>5</sup> It is here that some concrete and well-propagated results have been obtained. Their spillover effect upon the development of modern sociology in Hong Kong is limited. Still, as forerunners in social scientific studies in Hong Kong, their collective impact cannot be discounted either.<sup>6</sup>

Special mention should be made of the contribution of Barbara E. Ward and Marjorie Topley. They were social anthropologists from Britain. While Topley contributed numerous insights about traditional religious practices, economic organization and illness behavior in Hong Kong, Ward was well-known for her application of the "conscious models" to the understanding of the social and economic life of Chinese fishermen and factory workers in Hong Kong.<sup>7</sup> Both of them conducted fieldwork in Hong Kong for many years and taught courses for sociology students in local academic institutions. They are highly regarded by both overseas and local scholars.

It should be explained that field methods were extensively used by overseas scholars for the study of Chinese social life in rural communities in the 1950s and the 1960s. Towards the end of 1960s, however, field researchers began to shift attention from rural-agrarian problems to urban-industrial problems, such as the study of factory workers by Barbara E. Ward, the study of family

interaction by William T. Liu, the research on middle class families by Sherry Rosen, the study of folk religion in an urban setting by Morris I. Berkowitz, and the observation of working daughters by Janet W. Salaff.<sup>8</sup>

The establishment of the Universities Service Centre in 1963 should be noted. It provided supporting facilities for overseas scholars to study not only Hong Kong but also China. The Centre collected a wide range of documentary materials; it also helped arrange interviews of immigrants from China. A number of sociologists came and used the Centre's facilities for the study of social life in contemporary China, such as Ezra F. Vogel, William L. Parish, and Martin K. Whyte. In 1988, The Chinese University of Hong Kong took over the Centre from the American Council of Learned Societies. It continues to compile research materials on China, playing a significant role in promoting a better understanding of China's recent developments.

Up until the middle of 1960s, there were very few local sociologists in Hong Kong and they were mostly engaged in teaching rather than research. It was in the middle of 1960s that sociologists at the three constituent Colleges of the Chinese University decided to promote research by setting up their own research centers. The Rural Research Centre at Chung Chi College organized intensive fieldwork in a Chinese village for the purpose of studying how its cultural values and social life were affected by the growth of industrial-urbanism in Hong Kong. The Urban Research Centre at the United College promoted survey research on family life and neighborhood associations in urban Hong Kong. The Sociology Laboratory at New Asia College concentrated on running experimental studies of small group behavior. All of them were small in scale, but they complemented each other by addressing different sociological problems (rural community studies, urban life and problems, and small group dynamics) and by adopting different research strategies (case study, sample survey, and laboratory experiment). Moreover, they shared one common objective, i.e., to provide sociology students with empirical research training under the supervision of teachers. The educational function of these research centers was as significant as, if

not more significant than, the research function. However, they were dismantled at the end of 1960s. As will be mentioned later, their resources were pooled together to form the Social Research Centre.

It was towards the end of 1960s that sociological research in Hong Kong approached the "take-off" stage. Since then, it has been growing at a faster pace and the bulk of studies have been undertaken by local sociologists. A major reason was the expansion of university education. It permitted the recruitment of a large number of relatively young Chinese sociologists who had just completed their postgraduate studies abroad and were eager to launch empirical studies. Meanwhile, the universities began to recognize the importance of research on top of teaching, and the government also began to see a need for supporting research activities in addition to educational programs.

As Hong Kong was undergoing rapid social and economic transformation in the 1960s, a number of social issues and problems began to emerge. In 1965, the government invited Lady Gertrude Williams from Britain to examine the social welfare conditions in Hong Kong. Her report urged the government to start compiling systematic and comprehensive information on which to devise future plans on social services.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, the government allocated a sizable grant for a large-scale sample survey of urban family life in Hong Kong during the period 1966-69. This was a milestone in the history of sociological research in Hong Kong, as a social survey of such magnitude had never been undertaken before. The Chinese University set up the Social Survey Research Centre specifically for undertaking this task. Local sociologists, however, were not involved. Robert E. Mitchell, an American sociologist, was contracted to direct the Centre and to carry out the survey. A large volume of information about family life were collected through personal interviews with structured questionnaires from a random sample of nearly four thousand households in the urban sector of Hong Kong.<sup>10</sup>

During the late 1960s, academic sociologists were mostly interested in urban family life or rural community studies. Since the beginning of 1970s, the increase in number of sociologists made it

more and more feasible for the scope of sociological research to diversify into different directions. A significant event was the formation of the Social Research Centre at the Chinese University at the end of 1969. It was established under the advice of C.K. Yang with the assistance of Burkart Holzner and Jiri Nehnevajsa from the University of Pittsburgh.<sup>11</sup> It replaced the Social Survey Research Centre and collectivized the manpower resources of the aforementioned College-based research units at the Chinese University. The teaching staff in sociology served as the core members of the Centre, but there were also participants from other teaching departments, such as social work, psychology, geography, and economics. The policy was to ensure the integration of teaching and research, and to encourage cooperation of sociologists with other social scientists.

The Social Research Centre promoted a wide range of studies, mostly in the form of sample surveys, on the Hong Kong society. The most notable ones were studies of fertility attitudes and practices, social life and new town development, patterns of hawking activities and their social-economic functions, bureaucratic corruption and its control, high-density living and its effect on health, juvenile crime and its social causes, and Chinese familism and its economic and political implications.<sup>12</sup> There were also some studies on China. The most notable one was the study of the organization of the people's commune and its implication for rural development in contemporary China. A total of nine sociologists, together with one anthropologist and one psychologist, participated in the study, collecting data from both documentary sources and field trips to China during the late 1970s.<sup>13</sup>

The Social Research Centre was a dominant institution of social research in Hong Kong during the 1970s. In 1982, the Centre was integrated with the research units of other social science disciplines to form a larger and more interdisciplinary research organization at the Chinese University; namely, the Institute of Social Studies. It consisted of two research centres: The Centre for Hong Kong Studies and the Centre for Contemporary Asian

Studies. Sociologists played a key role in the development of the Institute, especially in studies on Hong Kong society.

Apart from the Chinese University, sociologists at the other academic institutions, especially the University of Hong Kong, were also increasingly active in research during the 1970s. Sociologists at the University of Hong Kong took up issues such as the social needs and housing conditions of the poor, the social attitudes of young adults, the life-quality of industrial workers, the growth and characteristics of the population, the evolution of traditional Chinese voluntary associations, and the role of the Europeans in the early history of Hong Kong.<sup>14</sup> Most of the studies were in the form of social surveys; Keith Hopkins was instrumental in promoting the conduct of survey research. The Centre of Asian Studies (founded in 1967) at the University of Hong Kong also supported some of the studies.

Roughly speaking, sociological research in Hong Kong was in its pregnancy stage during the 1950s and the early 1960s. Social anthropologists from the West played an important part, using predominantly field research methods. From the middle of 1960s to the end of 1970s, sociological research was at the infancy stage. Local sociologists began to take over the enterprise, using increasingly the sample survey methods.<sup>15</sup> It should be recognized that, albeit the government's generous support to the aforementioned urban family life survey, the bulk of sociological studies were supported by international foundations, such as the Asian Foundation, Ford Foundation, Harvard-Yenching Institute, International Development Research Centre, Lingnan University Board of Trustees, Nuffield Foundation, and Rockefeller Foundation. Since 1980, however, the tendency of these funding bodies to classify Hong Kong as a developed area has made it increasingly difficult for local sociologists to raise funds from these sources.

### Research Trends since 1980

Sociological research in Hong Kong entered the stage of adolescence in the 1980s. It began to flourish. The increase in number of

academic sociologists was one reason. No less importantly, as the economy continued to grow at a rapid pace, the society became increasingly complex. There were increasing demands for research, and there were also increasing resources available for the support of research. The government began to play a more active role in promoting and funding research, including social research. A Research Grants Council was set up under the government's University and Polytechnic Grants Committee for allocating research funds to the academic institutions. This helped to push forward sociological studies in Hong Kong. Recent years saw an increase in both the number and the scale of social research.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, an area of research that has attracted the interest of many sociologists and their students is political culture and political development in Hong Kong.<sup>16</sup> As the sovereignty of Hong Kong will be resumed by China in 1997, there is considerable interest both inside and outside the academic circle about the changes in the political system of Hong Kong. Academic sociologists have initiated studies on such issues as the legal and political attitudes of the Hong Kong Chinese and their participation in political activities, the transfer of power in the decolonization process, the formation and consolidation of political leadership, the emergence and strategies of political groups and parties, and the changing role of civil servants. Political sociology has emerged as a dominant field in Hong Kong.

The study of industrial relations and economic behavior is another popular research area.<sup>17</sup> It is generally recognized that the future of Hong Kong greatly depends upon its economic vitality. Sociologists can hardly avoid addressing such issues in Hong Kong as the motivation for economic pursuit, the social attitudes and job satisfaction of industrial workers, the distribution of labor force and the problem of labor shortage, the adjustment and life quality of alien workers, the strategies of employers in coping with economic restructuring, and the social and political factors in national strategies for economic development. There are also studies to identify the salient characteristics of industrial culture in China.



The family as a basic unit of society has been and is still an area of concern to academic sociologists in Hong Kong.<sup>18</sup> The theoretical interest and research focus, however, have changed. In the early 1970s many sociologists were of the opinion that as a result of industrialization, there had arisen a predominant trend towards the small nuclear family pattern in Hong Kong.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, there were some major studies on the internal structure and processes of the family, such as family values, power differentiation and division of labor, parent-child conflict, and child care and control. In recent years, however, there has emerged increasing emphasis upon the study of the extended network of the family, especially on its contribution to political participation, economic pursuit, and social support of the family members. Increasing attention has also been paid to the study of the changing role of women and the study of the family life cycle.

Another area of growing interest is the study of social class structure and social mobility patterns in Hong Kong.<sup>20</sup> Efforts are being made to construct an SES index to identify the rates and channels of both intra- and inter-generational mobility of different social-economic groups, to assess the extent to which opportunities for mobility are based on achievement rather than ascription, and to investigate the individual experiences of mobility in terms of normative and relational discontinuities. A major focus is on the role of the expanding middle class people, especially about their values and aspirations, and their social and political participation.

Recent years also saw a rising interest in youth behavior and popular culture in Hong Kong. Both the government and the public are increasingly aware of the discontent with various domains of life among the youth. This has led to a series of sociological studies on the youth behavior, especially about their mentalities, school adjustment, leisure patterns, and life satisfaction. There are also studies to identify and to conceptualize the central characteristics of popular culture in Hong Kong, and to study its impact on the social and political orientations of the youth as well as people in the other age categories.<sup>21</sup>

Like many other rapidly industrializing societies, Hong Kong is facing increasing incidence of crime and delinquency. In response to growing concern in the community, academic sociologists in Hong Kong have been compiling data about crime trends and have initiated studies on organized crime, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and the organization of the police force.<sup>22</sup> The Hong Kong Society of Criminology was found in 1984, including academics, judges, lawyers and government officers in the criminal justice system.

Hong Kong has enjoyed a relatively high degree of political stability over many decades. Nevertheless, there were massive riots in 1966-67 and there were a number of industrial actions and social protests particularly in the last decade or so. While sociologists at the University of Hong Kong have launched a series of studies on industrial strikes and student movements,<sup>23</sup> sociologists at the Chinese University have started compiling a database about collective behavior in Hong Kong since the middle of the present century. The data can be used for identifying the trends of collective actions and for identifying their causes, patterns and consequences.

With regard to population studies, fertility behavior was a major focus of research during the 1970s. Since the middle of 1980s, public apprehension about the resumption of the sovereignty over Hong Kong by China in 1997 has led to an increasing trend of emigration particularly among the middle class families. Meanwhile, immigration from China continues and the influx of Vietnamese boat people rises. Both immigration and emigration have become issues of overwhelming concern in Hong Kong today. As a result, academic sociologists have shifted their interest from the study of fertility behavior to the study of migration. They have initiated studies on the patterns of emigration and their social and economic consequences. There are also studies of the social adjustment and economic implication of immigrants to Hong Kong.<sup>24</sup>

Health and medical care constitute another major area of research by academic sociologists and their students in Hong Kong.<sup>25</sup> There have been studies on occupational accidents and

injury, health problems and social support of the elderly, social correlates of psychiatric illness, social and cultural factors in stress management, and the development of primary health care. There has also been a series of studies on the perceptions and utilization of traditional Chinese and modern Western medical care among different social-economic groups. Recently, some sociologists participate in the studies of AIDS, especially about the related beliefs, attitudes and practices of the Hong Kong Chinese.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that a group of sociologists from several academic institutions have jointly formed a Social Indicators Research Team. The aim is to accumulate a set of longitudinal data that will allow for the analysis of social change and the exploration of social issues and problems. Beginning from 1988, there is to be a series of biennial sample surveys focusing on a wide range of subjective social indicators, including such topics as life satisfaction, attitudes towards social problems, housing and social welfare, social stress and mental health, religious beliefs, social inequality and mobility, political attitudes, legal culture, consumption and evaluation of mass communication, work and work values, personal experience and social ideology.<sup>26</sup> To complement these subjective indicators, sociologists at the Chinese University are setting up a Social Information System to compile objective indicators of Hong Kong's social development.

Over the last decade, therefore, social research in Hong Kong has been making continuous progress. A large number of subject-matters have been covered and the quantity of research findings is impressive. The understanding of Chinese culture and social structure in the course of rapid modernization or de-colonization appears to be a major concern underlying the various studies. Looking back, however, there is much room for improvement. As will be discussed later, empirical research borrowing concepts and theories from the West represents the substance of sociology in Hong Kong. Moreover, most sociologists are relatively young and are thus short of maturity in theoretical innovations. Partly because of the dominance of young scholars, the community of sociologists in Hong Kong also suffers from a lack of strong intellectual leadership. As a result, individual sociologists are pretty

much on their own in their quest for theoretical guideposts. Scattered and fragmented studies abound, providing occasional inspirations. Synthetic work of theoretical significance is sorely needed, and coordination of individual research efforts still await the emergence of intellectual "masters."

To add to the woes, sociology in Hong Kong further suffers from the absence of a professional forum or a professional association which can function to chart intellectual fields and to promote intellectual exchanges among sociologists. Up till now, Hong Kong has not had a professional journal specifically for sociology. The Hong Kong Sociological Society was established in 1966 and registered as a member of the International Sociological Association in 1967. However, as the membership at that time was too small to function effectively, the Society became inactive after 1970. In recent years, the number of sociologists have greatly increased. There are voices for revitalizing the Society, but concrete action has yet to be taken.

Nevertheless, over the last one decade, some new organizations for promoting collaborative research have been established by academic institutions. In view of the momentous changes and the growing importance of the Asia-Pacific region, the Chinese University restructured its Institute of Social Studies to form the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies in 1990. Special research emphasis is laid on the role of Hong Kong in the development of the Asia-Pacific region. The University of Hong Kong established the Social Sciences Research Centre in 1990, promoting not only academic studies but also public opinion surveys and other applied studies. The Baptist College set up the Centre for East-West Studies in 1992, planning to encourage intellectual dialogues and empirical studies on Hong Kong in relation to other parts of the world. Moreover, the Universities Service Centre now located at the Chinese University helps to accumulate research materials for both local and overseas scholars to study changes in contemporary China. These various research organizations promise to facilitate social research, but the results have yet to be seen.

Outside the academic community, there are sociologists working for the government or the non-governmental organizations. Attention should be paid to the government's Census and Statistics Department, which employs some sociologists and plays a key role in providing research support to other departments particularly in the areas of questionnaire design, sampling, data processing and interpretation. Among the non-governmental organizations, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service is most active in applied social research. Staffed with some sociologists, it compiles welfare statistics, surveys on social service needs, and evaluates social service programs. Furthermore, numerous marketing research firms in Hong Kong have sociologists on their staff lists.

### Problems and Prospects

As mentioned earlier, an overwhelming majority of Hong Kong sociologists received their postgraduate education in American or British universities. In spite of the increasing use of local materials for classroom instructions in recent years, the bulk of textbooks are still imported from the United States or Britain. Furthermore, Hong Kong sociologists generally choose to publish their research findings in American or British journals. All these facts suggest that Hong Kong sociology has been developing under the shadow of American and British sociology.

Nevertheless, contacts with other Asian sociologists have gradually expanded over the last two decades. Most of the contacts during the 1970s were developed through participation in regional seminars and workshops. Since the middle of 1980s, an increasing number of Hong Kong sociologists have participated in collaborative research projects with their counterparts in China and in the Asia-Pacific region. As regards to collaboration with sociologists and other social scientists in China, there are, for instance, such studies as the interaction between demographic changes and economic development in China, the dynamic aspects of the work ethic and human relations in an industrial

setting, and social stratification patterns in urban areas. It is noteworthy that the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese University has recently collaborated with the Yale University to establish a special research program on South China. It intends to build up research materials and to support research by faculty members and postgraduate students on recent developments in the South China region. Attempts will be made to study the economic collaboration and cultural interaction of South China with Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Hong Kong sociologists also collaborate with other Asian sociologists, especially those in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore. There are, for instance, comparative studies of bureaucratic corruption in Asia, the making of the middle classes in East Asia, the problem of industrial restructuring and labor market adjustment in East and Southeast Asia, and the national strategies for economic development among the four "little dragons" in Asia. Most recently, urban sociologists in Hong Kong and Japan have held a workshop to discuss the possibility of organizing joint studies on problems related to the social integration of heterogeneous populations in Hong Kong and Tokyo.

It is expected that the intellectual contact and research collaboration with sociologists in China and other Asia-Pacific countries will continue to grow in the years ahead. As Hong Kong is an industrial-commercial center in Asia, Hong Kong sociologists generally consider it not only desirable but also necessary to strengthen the intellectual ties with their counterparts in other Asian countries, particularly those in the nearby Asia-Pacific region. It is noteworthy that in recent years there have been active moves among Asian sociologists to establish an association of Asian sociologists. This would help to strengthen the ties between Hong Kong and other Asian sociologists.

It should be admitted that despite the increasing contact and collaboration with other Asian sociologists, dependency on American and British sociology remains a central feature of the development of Hong Kong sociology. Another important feature is the strong emphasis on the study of Chinese culture and social structure. This generally shared research emphasis, coupled with

their American or British training, constitute the integrative elements that make the community of sociologists in Hong Kong a rather homogeneous one. Regardless of the results so far achieved, the common goal of Hong Kong sociologists is to discover and verify general sociological propositions through systematic studies of social life and social development in the context of Hong Kong and China.

The application and verification of sociological ideas from the West in a Chinese setting has its own merits, but what is equally, if not more, important is the development of new concepts and new paradigms consequent upon empirical research on local development. In recent years, it has been gratifying to see that Hong Kong sociologists have expressed growing interest in this direction. Discussion groups have been formed and systematic observations have been attempted to identify the distinctive characteristics of Chinese social behavior. Some results have been achieved.

For instance, Ambrose Y.C. King developed the concept of "administrative absorption of politics" while Siu-kai Lau developed the concept of "utilitarianistic familism" for explaining why political stability can be achieved in Hong Kong, a Chinese society under the British rule.<sup>27</sup> Although Lau's concept also touches on the Chinese economic behavior, Siu-lun Wong modified it and formulated his concept of "entrepreneurial familism" to explain how the Shanghai industrialists actively organize and mobilize their family resources for economic advancement in the competitive and changing environment of Hong Kong.<sup>28</sup> Ming-kwan Lee questioned the applicability of the industrialization and nuclear family thesis to the study of Hong Kong families, proposing that the Chinese families in the industrial colony of Hong Kong are of the nuclear family form in ideology but are predominantly of the modified extended family type in actual practice.<sup>29</sup>

As a challenge to Weber's thesis on Protestant ethic and the rise of capitalism, both Ambrose Y.C. King and Tak-sing Cheung have re-examined the Confucian ethic and explained that its emphasis on self-cultivation and network building could contribute

to the economic modernization of China.<sup>30</sup> In his comparative analysis of the medical care systems in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, Rance P.L. Lee proposed the concept of "hierarchical medical pluralism" suggesting that the dynamic relationships among different medical traditions within a national society in the course of modernization could be studied in terms of their structural superiority (power, prestige and wealth) and functional strength (distribution and utilization).<sup>31</sup> As a result of these various efforts, the Hong Kong sociologists have begun to plant their own tradition of sociology, making their research work relevant to both the local Chinese society and to the development of sociology as a world-wide academic discipline. Gradually, there has emerged a sense of self-confidence among academic sociologists in Hong Kong.<sup>32</sup>

Hong Kong sociologists are not alone in making sociology relevant to Chinese society. Similar movements have occurred in China, Singapore and Taiwan. It is noteworthy that in recent years attempts have been made to bring together Chinese sociologists from different national societies for the purpose of comparing their insights about Chinese social behavior in different social-political contexts and at different stages of economic development.<sup>33</sup> For instance, Hong Kong sociologists have helped to organize three academic conferences for this purpose: the first on "Modernization and Chinese Culture" in 1983, the second on "Chinese Family and its Changes" in 1985, and the third on "Chinese Religious Ethics and Modernization" in 1988.<sup>34</sup> The Fourth conference on "Ideology and Behavior" is being planned to take place in late 1993. The exchange and collaboration among Chinese sociologists from different parts of the world will continue to grow in the coming years. Hopefully, this will help develop a distinctive identity for Chinese sociology.

It should be noted that the dominance of Comtian positivism is another important feature of the Hong Kong sociology. It is generally believed that social phenomena are patterned and that the goal of sociology is to construct a set of law-like propositions amenable to empirical verification. This orientation has been largely due to the influence of sociology in China and America.

Comtian positivism was a central theme of sociology in China in the first half of the present century, resulting in a massive number of social surveys and community studies.<sup>35</sup> The Chinese sociologists immigrating to Hong Kong in the middle of the century carried with them the empirical tradition and passed it on to the younger generation. Moreover, as mentioned before, most sociologists in Hong Kong were trained in American universities which had a long tradition of emphasis on empirical studies.

The scientific conception of sociology has been clearly expressed in both teaching and research programs in Hong Kong. In the instructional programs, strong emphasis has been placed on the training of scientific methods and the conduct of field studies by students. Over the last two decades, sociologists and their students have undertaken numerous studies, of which most are cross-sectional sample surveys. The variable analysis approach, advocated by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and his associates, is the dominant methodological orientation in Hong Kong. Data are collected mainly through questionnaires and interviews,<sup>36</sup> although there have been some significant studies using case study designs and relying on observational methods and historical documents. The availability of computer facilities has led to an increasing use of multivariate statistical techniques. Quantification is a major trend in Hong Kong's sociological research.

Elements of positivism can also be found in the theoretical orientations of Hong Kong sociology. For many years, structural-functionalism in a broad sense has reigned as the dominant paradigm in the sociological community of Hong Kong. The works by such contemporary sociologists as Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, Edward Shils, Lewis Coser, S.N. Eisenstadt, Marion Levy, Neil Smelser and Alvin Gouldner have been widely read. Among the other perspectives, symbolic interactionism and critical theory are well covered in the teaching programs and are of great interest to students. However, their bearing on empirical research in Hong Kong is still marginal.

The dominant form of sociological studies in Hong Kong has shifted from qualitative field research in the earlier period to quantitative survey research since the beginning of 1970s. Of spe-

cial note is that, in the academic community, there has emerged an increasing awareness of the need for indepth field research to identify the salient cultural attitudes and behavior. Sociologists at the Chinese University, for instance, have recently decided to strengthen the training of students in field research. It appears that future years will see a revival of field research in Hong Kong. Moreover, while the Chinese University has established the Department of Anthropology for more than a decade, the Department of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong and the Division of Social Science at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology have planned to expand their anthropology programs. These should help to promote field research in Hong Kong.

As mentioned previously, academic sociologists in Hong Kong are overwhelmingly concerned with objective empirical studies of Chinese social behavior. It should be pointed out that the concern is motivated more by the production of scientific knowledge than by the making of a direct contribution to practical problem-solving. To most academic sociologists in Hong Kong, the reference group is the world-wide professional community rather than the immediate society in which they live and work. Of course, this does not mean that their research work is of no practical value. On the contrary, their conceptual insights and research findings have attracted the attention of decision-makers as well as the general public in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, it is the academic publication rather than the practical contribution that is of major concern to the academic sociologists.

The situation is gradually changing. Even though up till the present moment applied research is outnumbered by basic research, there is increasing pressure to undertake studies with practical implications. A major source of the pressure comes from the rise of social issues and problems in society.

There have emerged numerous social issues and problems in Hong Kong in recent years. Many of them are probably legacies of a disintegrating social fabric, as Hong Kong has been undergoing rapid social and economic changes. There are, however, also other factors, such as the expansion of educational opportunities, the

growing awareness of the concept of human rights, and the increasing number of active political and pressure groups in the community. These factors serve to elevate public awareness of social issues and problems. The salient ones include violent crime, juvenile delinquency, housing shortage, rising cost of living, traffic congestion, environmental pollution, chronic illnesses, labor shortage, emigration of skilled workers, and aging.

For many centuries, the Chinese treasured the value of tolerance to existing conditions. This traditional value is now being replaced by rising social expectations. Recent years have seen various forms of civic actions putting pressure on the government to initiate social reforms and to provide better services. Meanwhile, sociologists are invited to present their views on social issues, to conduct systematic investigations related to social problems, and to give advice on policies and action programs. Willingly or not, academic sociologists can hardly resist the pressure or the temptation to apply their sociological knowledge and skills to cope with the complex issues and problems in society. It is noteworthy that the universities and particularly the polytechnics have come to place emphasis on social impact as a criterion for funding research.

To conclude, sociology as an academic field was given birth by scholars from China and the West in the 1950s. Since then, it has kept growing and kept localizing. It has now come to the stage of adolescence. It has acquired a sense of self-confidence and is actively searching for its own identity. Despite the influence of American and British sociology, Hong Kong sociologists generally share the ambition to plant sociology on the Chinese soil, making it both theoretically and practically relevant to Chinese social life and development in Hong Kong and other societies. It is their conviction that such efforts would also contribute to the development of sociology as a world-wide academic discipline. In a nutshell, the two questions being raised by the Hong Kong sociologists are: What can sociology do for Chinese society? and what can Chinese society do for sociology?<sup>37</sup>

## Notes

1. For a review, see Ambrose Y.C. King, "The Development and Death of Chinese Academic Sociology: A Chapter in the Sociology of Sociology," *Modern Asian Studies*, 12, 1978:37-58.
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13. See Rance P.L. Lee and S.K. Lau, eds. *The People's Commune and Rural Development* (in Chinese). Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1981.
14. See Keith Hopkin, ed. *Hong Kong: The Industrial Colony*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1971; H.J. Lethbridge, *Hong Kong: Stability and Change* (A Collection of Essays). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1978.
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16. See, for instance, Siu-kai Lau, *Society and Politics in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1985; Siu-kai Lau and Hsin-chi Kuan, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1988; Benjamin K.P. Leung, "Power and Politics: A Critical Analysis," pp.13-26 in B.K.P. Leung, ed. *Social Issues in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1990; and Thomas W.P. Wong and T.L. Lui, "From One Brand of Politics to One Brand of Political Culture." Hong Kong: Occasional Paper No.10, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, January 1992.
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  35. King, op. cit., 1978.
  36. While personal interview is the major form, recent years have seen the increasing use of telephone interviews. This is because of the rising cost of personal interviews and of the availability of telephones in nearly every household of Hong Kong.
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## Appendix: Chinese Social Scientists quoted in the paper

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 Cheung, Tak-sing  
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 Chin, Robert  
 Chiu, Stephen W.K.  
 Fei, Hsiao-tung  
 Hu, C.C.  
 King, Ambrose Y.C.  
 Kuan, Hsin-chi  
 Kwan, Alex  
 Kwong, Paul C.K.  
 Lau, Chong-chor  
 Lau, Siu-kai  
 Law, Wing-kin  
 Lee, Ming-kwan  
 Lee, Rance P.L.  
 Leng, Tsun  
 Leung, Benjamin K.P.  
 Liu, William T.  
 Lui, Tai-lok  
 Luk, Bernard H.K.  
 Man, Peter J.L.  
 Ng, Agnes M.C.  
 Ng, Pedro P.T.  
 Pan, Kuang-tan  
 Sun, Pen-wen  
 Tsang, Wing-kwong  
 Wan, Po-san  
 Wen, Chung-I  
 Wong, Fai-ming  
 Wong, Shau-lam  
 Wong, Siu-lun  
 Wong, Thomas W.P.  
 Wu, David Y.H.  
 Wu, Wen-tsao  
 Yang, C.K.  
 Yang, Kuo-shu

區紀勇  
 陳海文  
 陳達  
 張妙清  
 張德勝  
 張越華  
 喬健  
 陳郁立  
 趙永佳  
 費考通  
 胡家健  
 金耀基  
 關信基  
 關銳煊  
 鄭振權  
 劉創楚  
 劉兆佳  
 羅榮健  
 李明堃  
 李沛良  
 冷雋  
 梁啓平  
 劉融  
 呂大樂  
 陸鴻基  
 文直良  
 吳夢珍  
 吳白弢  
 潘光旦  
 孫本文  
 曾榮光  
 尹寶珊  
 文崇一  
 黃暉明  
 黃壽林  
 黃紹倫  
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This report is a review of sociology teaching and research in Hong Kong up to the early 1990s. For a similar review up to the end of 1970s, see Rance P.L. Lee, "Sociology in Hong Kong," *International Review of Modern Sociology*, 17 (Spring), 1987:79-110. For a review dealing specifically with academic research, see Harold Traver, "Social Research in Hong Kong: Past and Present," pp.224-243 in A. Birch, Y.C. Jao and E. Sinn, eds. *Research Materials for Hong Kong Studies*. Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1984.

# 香港社會學的萌芽與發展

李沛良 劉兆佳著

( 中文摘要 )

社會學作為一門學術科目，是由來自中國及西方國家的學者在五十年代締建起來的。香港是一個自由的社會，經歷了急遽的工業化發展及東西文化的相互激盪。在這個有利的環境下，香港的社會學教研工作在過去二十年來取得了長足的進展。在各大專院校任教的專業社會學者的人數有增無已，並且為學生提供了本科及研究院的課程。就社會研究而言，研究的數量及範疇亦在增加之中，但具有理論重要性的成果則仍付闕如。逐漸地，研究的重點由質量性的實地研究轉向數量性的調查研究。不過，近年來的趨勢卻是實地研究的逐步復甦，以求對華人文化及社會行為增進了解。

香港的社會學亦愈趨本地化。儘管英美社會學的影響仍在，但香港的社會學者亦銳志於使社會學植根於本土，使其既能切合中國社會的發展，又能對世界社會學的促進有所建樹。為此之故，香港的社會學者正積極與外地的華人社會學者建立聯繫。由於香港的未來與其鄰近亞太區國家息息相關，所以他們亦開始強化與其他亞太區社會學者的接觸。