

CHANGING PATTERNS OF CLASS AND STATUS-GROUP STRUGGLES IN HONG KONG: A WORLD-SYSTEMS ANALYSIS*

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There are three dominant patterns of class and status-group struggles in Hong Kong in the twentieth century, namely, strikes in the 1920s, urban riots in the 1960s, and democratic protests in the 1980s and the 1990s. The aim of this paper is to examine the nature, the origins, and the transformation of the above three patterns of class and status-group struggles in Hong Kong from the 1920s to the 1990s. Influenced by Weber's assertion that class is based on narrow economic interests while status group is based on the sharing of honor and style of life in a community, most researchers adopt a strict differentiation between economic classes and status groups, and they take an "either/or" approach to study class and status-group struggles. However, a world-system analysis points to the fluidity and transformation between class and status-group struggles. Using such an insight, this paper shows that strikes, riots, and democratic protests in Hong Kong were expressions of both class and status group, and it was exactly the fusion of these expressions that enabled classes and status groups to become agents and intervene in the historical development of Hong Kong and South China.

INTRODUCTION

There are three dominant patterns of class and status-group struggles in Hong Kong in the twentieth century. In the 1920s, they took the form of *strikes*, such as the Mechanics strike in 1920, the Seamen's strike in 1922, and the Canton-Hong Kong strike during 1925-1926. In the 1950s and 1960s, they took the form of *urban riots*, such as the 1956 riots, the 1966 riots, and the 1967 riots. Since the 1980s, they took the form of *democratic protests*, such as the protest against the Tiananmen Incident in mid-1989 and many smaller scale protests against the Provisional Legislative Council before the hand-over on July 1, 1997.

The aim of this paper is to examine the nature, the origins, and the transformation of the above three patterns of class and status-group struggles in the twentieth century. First, there is the interpretation question. How do we interpret the nature of the above three patterns of struggles? Are strikes and

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riots working class struggles and democratic protests new middle class struggles? Or are they status-group struggles in the forms of ethnic conflict (Chinese against British in Hong Kong), national conflict (the Hong Kong "Leftist" organizations against British colonialism and imperialism) and identity politics (HongKongers protecting the autonomy of the Hong Kong government)?

Then, there are the origin and transformation questions. Why did class and status-group struggles take the form of strikes before World War II? Why did strikes decline when Hong Kong was having very rapid industrialization in the post-war era? Why did social conflict in the 1950s and the 1960s take the form of urban riots instead? Finally, what explains the emergence of democratic protests since the 1980s? How did democratic struggles change during the 1997 handover?

Although there are excellent studies on classes and class struggles (Chan, 1991; Leung, 1996; Scott, 1989; Lui, 1993), there is no attempt to trace the historical transformation of class struggles in the twentieth century and to compare the similarities and differences among different kinds of class struggles. In addition, although Tai-Lok Lui, Thomas Wong, and Wing-Kwong Tsang (Wong and Lui, 1992; Tsang, 1994) have made a significant contribution in bringing class analysis back into Hong Kong studies, they have mostly pursued a "class structure analysis" (So, 1991). Although their studies have shown that class position does make a difference in determining one's social mobility, life chances, and socio-political attitudes, they did not examine how classes have become agencies, engaged in struggles, and intervened in Hong Kong's historical development.

To fill the gap in the literature, this paper will adopt a world-systems analysis to study the changing pattern of class and status-group struggles in Hong Kong in the twentieth century. In the following sections, the paper will first present the world-systems analysis, then it will discuss how such a perspective helps to explain the emergence and transformation of strikes, boycotts, riots, and democratic struggles in Hong Kong.

WORLD-SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

In Immanuel Wallerstein's (1991) formulation, world-systems analysis is a protest against the ways in which social scientific inquiry itself has been structured since its inception in the nineteenth century (So, 1990; So and Chiu, 1995). First, Wallerstein questions the treatment of the state/society as the unit of analysis. He asks: Where and when do entities within which social life occurs exist? Wallerstein insists on taking the large-scale "capital-

ist world-economy" rather than the state/society as the unit of scientific inquiry. For Wallerstein, this is more than a mere semantic substitution; the term "capitalist world-economy" rids us of the central connotation that "society" is linked to the "state," and that the nation-state represents a relatively autonomous society that develops over time.

Second, Wallerstein questions whether academic disciplines can be separated from one another at all. Can the economy, the polity, and the society be conceived to have, even hypothetically, autonomous activity? For instance, as markets are sociopolitical creations, can a true economic price somehow be stripped of its political and social bases? As an alternative, Wallerstein proposes a new historical social science that encourages researchers to examine the interactions between the spheres of economics, politics, and society.

Finally, influenced by the historical method of the French *Annales* school, Wallerstein proposes a long-term historical analysis to perceive social reality as in a state of flux. He points out that "we seek to capture a moving reality in our terminology. We thereby tend to forget that the reality changes as we encapsulate it, and by virtue of that fact."

The above holistic, large-scale, long-term analysis has led Wallerstein to reconceptualize social class as a dynamic process of perpetual re-creation and hence of constant change of form and composition in the world-economy. Thus, Wallerstein (1979: 224) contends that "classes do not have some permanent reality. Rather, they are formed, they consolidate themselves, they disintegrate or disaggregate, and they are re-formed. It is a process of constant movement, and the greatest barrier to understanding their action is reification."

Consequently, for Wallerstein, social class is not an attribute but is always a set of changing relations with other classes in the world-economy, and thus cannot be defined narrowly in the production sphere.¹ In this aspect, Wallerstein (1979: 222) points out that "class analysis loses its power of explanation whenever it moves toward formal models and away from dialectical dynamics. Thus, we wish to analyze here classes as evolving and

¹In this respect, Wallerstein's conception of class is quite similar to E.P. Thompson, who also does not perceive class as a "static category," a "thing," or a "structure." Instead, Thompson (1977:264) formulates class as a historical relationship: "But class is not, as some sociologists would have it, a static category—so many people standing in this or that relation to the means of production—which can be measured in positivist or quantitative terms. Class, in the Marxist tradition, is (or ought to be) a *historical category*, describing *people in relationship over time*, and the ways in which they become conscious of their relationships, separate, unite, enter into struggle, form institutions and transmit values in class ways (italics in original)."

changing structures, wearing ever-changing ideological clothing, in order to see to whose advantage it is at specific points of time to define class membership in particular conceptual terms."

For Wallerstein, class emerges as a result of a group struggling with another group and articulates its interests in class terms.² For instance, Wallerstein (1975: 39) shows that "class" only emerges in the core states (England, United Provinces, and to some extent France) in the sixteenth century. The only social group that emerged at that time as a class was the bourgeoisie, which was becoming conscious of itself as a class. According to Wallerstein, this is because the bourgeoisie perceived that the old aristocracy was no longer relevant as a political and economic force, yet it still maintained its social privileges by using law and custom. The bourgeoisie, therefore, mobilized itself as a class and forced the aristocracy to give up some of its privileges, especially in regard to political and economic power.

Focusing on the historical process of class struggles, Wallerstein makes another contribution to class theory by stressing not only the dynamic process of social class but also the constant interaction between a social class and status group. Wallerstein argues that "the whole line between classes as they are constructed and status-groups of every variety is far more fluid and blurred than the classic presumption of an antinomy between class and status-group has indicated" (Arrighi et al., 1983: 302). Wallerstein (1975: 41) cites an example indicating that the anti-imperialist nationalist struggle between the majority of the population in a periphery and the core capitalists and their local allies is a "mode of *expression* of class interest and class struggle" (*italics in original*). Accordingly, Wallerstein argues that status (ethnic/national/religious) groups and social class are two sets of clothing for the same basic reality, and the history of construction of classes, nations, and ethnic groups is a history of the constant rise and fall of the intensity of these political claims in cultural clothing.

Wallerstein's insights are expressed in his theoretical explanation of why, in the history of the capitalist world-system, the bourgeoisie and proletariat

²Similar to Wallerstein, E. P. Thompson also considers the emergence of classes as inseparable from class struggle. In fact, Thompson (1978: 149) perceives class struggle as a process that occurred prior to class consciousness and class formation: "Classes do not exist as separate entities, look around, find an enemy class, and then start to struggle. On the contrary, people find themselves in a society structured in determined ways (crucially, but not exclusively, in production relations), they experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over those whom they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes, they come to know this discovery as class-consciousness. Class and class-consciousness are always the last, not the first stage in the historical process."

often define their class interests in status-group terms and express their class consciousness in national / ethnic / religious forms. According to Wallerstein (1975: 37), this is because “class represents an antinomy, as a dialectical concept should. On the one hand, class is defined as relationship to the means of production, and hence position in the economic system which is a world-economy. On the other hand a class is a real actor only to the extent that it becomes class-conscious, which means to the extent that it is organized as a political actor. But political actors are located primarily in particular national states. Class is not the one or the other. It is both, and class analysis is only meaningful to the extent that it is placed within a given historical context (*italics in original*).” It is a consequence of this antinomy of class — *an sich* in a world-economy, but *fur sich* in the states — that most expressions of consciousness take a status group form within a state.

In sum, Wallerstein has made significant contributions to the study of class (So and Hikam, 1989; So, 1990, 1996). His holistic, large-scale, and long-term analysis, his focuses on the historical process of class formation and class struggles, and his insights on the dynamic transformation between classes and status groups in the world-economy are certainly well taken.

From such a perspective, Hong Kong should not be treated as a society in itself. Instead, colonial Hong Kong should be seen as a part of Chinese territory interacting with Great Britain in the world-economy. In what follows, this paper will focus on three different roles that Hong Kong has played in the world-economy, namely, as an entrepot before World War II, as an industrial city from the 1950s to the 1970s, and as a global service center since the 1980s. This paper will show that the changing role of colonial Hong Kong in the world-economy and the changing relationship between mainland China and Great Britain in the twentieth century had induced different patterns of class conflict, ethnic cleavages, national struggles, social movements, and identity politics in Hong Kong. To begin with the discussion, let us examine the pattern of class and status-group struggles in the entrepot era.

THE ENTREPOT ERA BEFORE WORLD WAR II

The Strikes in the 1920s and their Interpretations. In the 1920s, Hong Kong became the center of working class struggles. In 1920 there was a Hong Kong Mechanics' Strike involving more than 9,000 workers which demanded an increase of wages. In 1922 there was a Hong Kong Seamen's Strike that was dubbed to be “the first stage of organized national labor

movement in China" (Wales, 1945: 27). The Seamen's Strike lasted fifty days and involved about 50,000 workers. In 1925, there was a Canton-Hong Kong Strike which lasted sixteen months and involved more than 300,000 workers. According to Chesneaux (1968: 295), the Canton-Hong Kong Strike "must undoubtedly be one of the longest strikes in the history of international labor movement, or at least one of the longest on a large scale."

How should we interpret the above strikes in the 1920s? Chan (1991) interprets the above activities as processes of class struggles. The strikes represented the maturation of the Hong Kong laborers into a social class of its own, or a class-for-itself. In the Canton-Hong Kong Strike, for example, workers formed a community, quickly spreading sympathy strikes from one industry to another. We can observe this class solidarity from the following fact: "Seamen, telegraphers, newspaper compositors, tramway workers, and the employees of foreign firms were the first to quit work; they were soon followed, among others, by cargo coolies, night-soil and scavenger coolies in the Sanitary Department, dockyard mechanics, postmen and clerk in the GPO, washermen, hotel workers, and domestic servants" (Lethbridge, 1979: 22). There was also the formation of a new Hong Kong General Union which brought together all the unions that supported the Strike. The General Union raised not just economic issues but also political demands, such as the introduction of labor legislation on minimum wages and workers' insurance as well as freedom of speech and association. At the end of the Canton-Hong Kong Strike, the Union declared that it was aimed "to promote class struggles, to put an end to political oppression, to awaken class consciousness, to further class unity ..." (Chesneaux, 1968: 296). The above activities showed that the Hong Kong laborers had become a class in the 1920s through intervening in the historical development of Hong Kong.

However, the strikes can also be interpreted as national struggles. In the 1922 Seamen's Strike, for example, the issue at first was just bread-and-butter bargaining with the shipping companies. Nevertheless, since most shipping companies were British owned, the Strike gradually shifted to the attack of the discriminatory policy of British capital. When the Hong Kong colonial state later intervened on behalf of British capital, the Strike was intensified to the attack of British colonialism. Later in the 1925 Canton-Hong Kong Strike, the issue of British colonialism had become even more prominent. The political demands of the strikers included the extension of franchises to the Chinese and equality of treatment for Chinese and foreigners. During the strike, many workers were taught lessons on topics such as "What is imperialism?" and "The History of the Imperialist Invasion of China." It was the calling of nationalism that provided a medium to insti-

		Status-Group (Ethnic/National) Boundary	
		Western	Chinese
Class Boundary	Capitalists	<i>British capitalists/ Colonial state</i>	<i>Chinese capitalists</i>
	Workers	<i>Western workers</i>	<i>Chinese workers</i>

FIGURE 1. THE ENTREPOT ERA

gate workers from different industries to support the strikers. Many Hong Kong Chinese merchants donated a large amount of money to the strikers' fund also because of nationalist appeal.

As such, were the strikes class conflict or status-group struggles? Marxists and Weberians always lead researchers astray because they tend to emphasize one label over the other. A world-systems analysis, however, is able to highlight the intricate linkages, interaction, and transformation between class and status-group struggles. The strikes thus can be interpreted as class and national struggles by the Hong Kong Chinese workers against British capitalists and the colonial government (see Figure 1). It was the fusion of these two types of struggles that explain the spread of strike waves in Hong Kong in the 1920s. Without nationalist appeal, low wages and poor working conditions could not, by themselves, explain the formation of the Hong Kong working class. This was because Hong Kong laborers were divided by traditional guilds, which organized along industries or native districts. Many guilds were secret societies engaging in labor contract system for the ship master, and many guild leaders ran gambling halls and opium dens. It thus required the nationalist appeal to overcome the structural barriers of guild and secret society divisions in order for Hong Kong laborers to act as a collective force.

The Origins and Transformation of the Strikes. Apart from pointing out the intricate linkages of class and nationalist struggles, a world-systems analysis also highlights that the origins, the intensification, the success, and the decline of these class and status-group struggles have to be explained by forces beyond the Hong Kong territory.

The Canton-Hong Kong Strike, for example, was an offshoot of the anti-imperialist movement of May 1925, which began in Shanghai and soon spread to other major cities in China, including Canton (Guangzhou). To extend this movement to Chinese compatriots under colonial rule, several

Canton labor leaders were dispatched to Hong Kong to mobilize a strike against British imperialism (Leung, 1996: 141). Nevertheless, many union leaders in Hong Kong expressed doubt as to the feasibility of maintaining a large-scale strike in the face of the intransigence of the colonial government.

The intensification of the Canton-Hong Kong Strike was also a product of outside forces. The Strike was materialized when the minister for labor and finance of Canton assured Hong Kong workers of all possible assistance in their anti-imperialist struggles. Then the strike started in Hong Kong with more than one thousand seamen leaving their jobs on 19 June 1925. The budding struggle was then quickly escalated by a historical incident in Canton: on 23 June 1952, 52 demonstrators in an anti-imperialist protest were killed and 117 seriously wounded by the British and French troops stationed on Shamian Island. It was this shooting incident that prompted many Hong Kong workers to walk out of their jobs and to begin an exodus to Canton. At the height of the strike, more than 300,000 strikers were in Canton.

Moreover, the success of the Canton-Hong Kong strike was a product of Hong Kong's geopolitical position with China in the world-economy. The entrepot economy of Hong Kong was particularly vulnerable to any strike in the shipping industry and to the boycott of Hong Kong trade. During the Canton-Hong Kong Strike, when the Strike Committee declared that they did not allow foreign ships to trade with Canton if their products had passed through Hong Kong, most foreign ships obeyed because they could not afford to lose the South China market. Foreign ships suddenly deserted the Hong Kong harbor and Hong Kong's entrepot trade came to a halt. The cease of the entrepot trade caused the layoff of seamen and transportation workers, the reduction of imports, food shortages, rampant inflation, and panic in Hong Kong. Afraid of the possibility of starvation, many Hong Kong workers, though at first not knowing where to stand on the Strike, were forced to leave Hong Kong to join the strikers in Canton.

Furthermore, when Hong Kong workers went back to Canton, they avoided direct confrontation with the colonial state (Deng, 1979: 47-48). Since the Hong Kong colonial state had no political jurisdiction in Canton, it had little control over the strikers residing in Canton. Repressive methods, such as declaring the unions illegal, arresting the leaders, calling the army to patrol the streets, or even opening fire on strikers, were impossible to use on absent workers. When the colonial state failed to interfere, the Strike Committee in Canton had a free hand in mobilizing the striking workers.

Although the exodus of workers made Hong Kong appear as a deserted city, the Canton-Hong Kong Strike had unintentionally led to a boom in the

Canton economy. This occurred because Hong Kong and Canton were competitors for China's foreign trade since the mid-nineteenth century. In the mid-1920s, political instability caused by the Canton-Hong Kong Strike had diverted entrepot trade from Hong Kong to Canton. Since the Canton economy began to flourish, the Canton government and the Canton merchants had an interest in prolonging the Strike to take over Hong Kong's entrepot trade. With strong support in Canton, the strikers could withstand for a period as long as sixteen months.

Finally, the ending of the Canton-Hong Kong Strike was a result of new political development in China. In March 1926 the Northern Expedition was in active preparation in Canton. To prepare for the battles with the warlords in the North, the Canton government negotiated with the colonial government for a settlement of the strike. The two sides agreed that the Canton government would end the strike if Britain acquiesced in China's imposition of a special consumption tax of 2.5 percent on imports (Leung, 1996: 142). As a result, the Canton government announced that the strike would end officially on 10 October, 1926.

Since the formation of the Hong Kong working class was strongly influenced by the development in mainland China and by Hong Kong's role in the world-economy, the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949 and the shift from an entrepot to an industrial city had drastically transformed the pattern of class and status-group struggles in Hong Kong.

THE INDUSTRIAL CITY ERA FROM THE 1950S TO THE 1970S

The Urban Riots and their Interpretations. In the 1950s and the 1960s, urban riots replaced strikes as the dominant pattern of social conflict in Hong Kong. In 1956, after a staff member of the Resettlement Department removed Guomindang flags in Li Cheng UK resettlement estate on October 10 (the National Day of the Guomindang government), there was a hostile outburst from the residents of the estate. The residents demanded the Department apologize for the incident. Some residents broke into the estate's office and assaulted its staff, and the event escalated into a riot. The rioting lasted until October 16. In the official report, 59 people were dead and 740 had been arrested, mainly for rioting and looting (Leung, 1996: 143; Scott, 1989: 77).

On 4 April 1966, a lone demonstrator went on a hunger strike outside the Star Ferry terminal against an increase in fare by the ferry company. On the following day he was joined by a small crowd of supporters. After the police arrested the hunger striker, a crowd grew to about 400 and protested

that evening with a march through the streets of Kowloon. The demonstration developed into a hostile outburst on the nights of April 6 and 7, when crowd members threw stones at the police and set fire to streetcars and nearby buildings and property. The police made 427 arrests on April 6 and 237 arrests on April 7. Property damage was put at HK\$20 million (Leung, 1996: 144; Scott, 1989: 85-87).

The course of the 1967 riots may be divided into three phases. The first phase began in May, with labor disputes and demonstrations aimed at winning general support, and continued into June with many violent confrontations with the police. The second period, which lasted until August, consisted of work stoppages, attempts to disrupt the economy of Hong Kong and some violent demonstrations and attacks on police. Five police were killed and eleven wounded during an attack of Sha Tau Kok police station by the rioters. Finally, a period of terrorism and bomb attacks continued until December when the violence gradually subsided. A total of 8,074 suspected bombs were found, of which 1,167 were genuine bombs (Scott, 1989: 96-106; Leung, 1996: 145-46).

How should we interpret the above urban riots in 1956, 1966, and 1967? Reading into Scott's (1989: 92) analysis, the urban riots can be labeled as an anomic expression of the class activities of the working class: "The causes of the riots lay in economic and social conditions which were, in turn, a product of the colonial regime's political and class structure. These conditions led to a sense of frustration and alienation that found its outlet in anomic violence and attacks on the police." We can see the class nature of the 1966 riots from the fact that the more serious offenders were younger, earned less money, and worked longer hours than the simple offenders. Among those convicted, the vast majority were young, poorly-educated, poorly-paid, inadequately-housed, over-worked males. The 1967 riots also started with labor disputes in a shipping company, four taxi companies, a textile factory, a cement company and the Hong Kong Artificial Flower Works. Moreover, the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions organized strikes and work stoppages in bus, ferry and taxi companies in June, and they planned a general strike on June 24 (though it was estimated to be only 50 percent effective as far as transport services were concerned).

However, we can also interpret the riots as status-group struggles. The peculiar situation of having both the Beijing government and the Taipei government to claim that they were the sole nation-state of China had created a national division within the Hong Kong working class. The 1956 riots thus can be interpreted as a national struggle between the pro-Taipei working class faction and the pro-Beijing working class faction. At the height of

		Status-Group (National/Ethnic) Boundary		
		Western	Chinese	
Class Boundary	Capitalists	<i>British capitalists/ Colonial state</i>	Pro-CCP <i>Chinese capitalists</i>	Pro-GMD <i>Chinese capitalists</i>
	Workers	<i>Western workers</i>	<i>Chinese workers</i>	<i>Chinese workers</i>

FIGURE 2. THE INDUSTRIAL ERA

the riot on October 11, the pro-Taipei workers in Tsuen Wan attacked buildings housing communist sympathizers, looted or burnt shops and houses that displayed Chinese Communist flags or decorations on October 1st, and demanded factory management fly the Guomindang flag and dismiss all left-wing workers. The 1967 riots, too, had strong nationalist traits. The colonial government was the target of attack, and Hong Kong compatriots were called upon to denounce the “fascist measures” of the colonial government, to be ready anytime to respond to the call of the motherland, and to smash the reactionary rule of British imperialism.

As such, were the riots an expression of class conflict or status-group struggles? Again, the riots had included both class and nationalist traits, and it was the fusion of the two types of struggles that explained the intensity and the duration of the riots in the 1950s and the 1960s (see Figure 2). Without the nationalist appeal, low wages and poor working conditions could not, by themselves, explain the participation of the riots by the Hong Kong workers. In fact, although critics cited terrible working conditions in the colony, immigrant workers themselves perceived improved status compared with previous work conditions in China. To account for this, Lau (1982) suggests a “utilitarian familism” thesis: recent immigrant workers possessed more interest in making money for their families than participating in political activities. The rise of new industries and the corresponding decline of the old ones, such as shipbuilding and docking (which had been the stronghold of working-class solidarity) contributed further to the decline of the capacity to organize large-scale strikes. The predominance of small-scale industrial establishments and high labor mobility posed additional obstacles for working class mobilization (Leung, 1986: 10). In this respect, it required the nationalist appeal to overcome the utilitarian famil-

ism inertia and the fragmented industrial structure in order for the pro-Beijing faction of the working class to act as a collective force.

The Origins and Transformation of the Riots. Apart from highlighting the linkages between class and status-group struggles, a world-systems analysis also explains how forces outside the Hong Kong society had shaped the contour of the riots in the 1950s and the 1960s.

The origins of the 1967 riots, for example, could be traced to the Cultural Revolutions in China. As Scott (1989: 96-97) points out, the militant Red Guards in Beijing perceived the colonies of Hong Kong and Macau an affront that should be removed or at least reduced to the point where their governments submitted to all communist demands. In late 1966, Red Guards in Macau rendered the government virtually impotent. In March 1967, pro-Beijing workers in Hong Kong began to attempt the same thing. "The aim," Governor David Trench remarked, "is to Macau us." It was under such historical context that left-wing unions seized upon the opportunities of labor disputes on May 6 to start anti-colonial struggles.

The intensification of the 1967 riots owed also to forces outside Hong Kong. On March 15, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing released a statement demanding the colonial government to "immediately accept all the just demands put forward by Chinese workers and residents in Hong Kong, immediately stop all fascist measures, immediately set free all the arrested persons; punish the culprits responsible for these sanguinary atrocities, offer apologies to the victims and compensate for all their losses" (Scott, 1989: 100). With the blessing of the Beijing government, Hong Kong unionists quickly organized strikes and work stoppages in June.

Finally, the ending of the 1967 riots was a result of the change of policy of the Beijing government. Young (1981: 168) points out that by the fall of 1967, the Cultural Revolution leaders were intent on going back to a more peaceful relationship with China's neighbors. By late September, China had already ceased its contribution to the strike fund. In early October, the annual contract between China and Hong Kong for the sale of water was renewed. Without the Beijing government's support of the bomb attacks, the leftists in Hong Kong were forced to end the anti-colonial struggles at the end of December.

Since then, Hong Kong has not experienced any more urban riots like those in 1967. This is because Beijing and Britain had established a better relationship than that during the Cultural Revolution, and Beijing would not want the leftists to stir up riots and strikes in Hong Kong (Leung, 1994: 59). In addition, the colonial government had carried out socioeconomic reforms, such as the setting up of a City District Officer Scheme to bridge

the gap between the Government and the community, the enactment of new labor legislation to improve industrial relations, and the expansion of public housing and welfare programs to the workers and the poor. As a result, urban riots subsided and a new pattern of democratic struggles emerged in the 1980s and the 1990s when Hong Kong was transformed from an industrial city to a global service center.

THE SERVICE CENTER ERA IN THE 1980S AND THE 1990S

Democratic Struggles and their Interpretations. Unlike strikes and riots that produced violence for news headlines, democratic struggles in Hong Kong tended to be much less dramatic and more peaceful. Still, there were a couple of incidents that caught media attention and made lasting impressions on the Hong Kong public. In 1989, in voicing their support for the Beijing students in the Tiananmen Square, Hong Kong people took to the streets — 40,000 people braved the winds and rain of Typhoon Brenda on May 20; an estimated one million (about one-sixth of Hong Kong's population) showed up on May 21, and there were many large-scale rallies afterwards. Many protestors wore yellow headbands that said "Support the Beijing Students," or T-shirts scrawled with "Long Live the Democratic Movement" (FEER 1 June, 1989: 17; Roberti, 1994: 251, 254). On June 4, when the news reached Hong Kong that Chinese troops had moved into Tiananmen Square to crush the student movement, an estimated crowd of more than 200,000 Hong Kong people gathered at the Happy Valley Race Course to mourn for the students. They sat for five hours and listened to emotional speeches from the activists in the democracy movement, community leaders, and movie stars. On June 5, there was a run on Chinese banks in Hong Kong as depositors expressing their agony with Beijing closed their accounts. On June 6, cars and buses covered with pro-democracy stickers converged in the commercial area of Mong Kok in the evening. Protestors honked their horns and yelled anti-Beijing slogans. By midnight, traffic was paralyzed (Roberti, 1994: 256-58).

Another wave of democratic struggles took place before the handover. On 11 December 1996, pro-democracy activists scuffled with riot police outside the Hong Kong Convention Centre, where the 400-member Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Selection Committee voted for Chief Executive to rule Hong Kong after 1997. The pro-democracy activists built "a tomb of democracy" outside the building and shouted "oppose the phony election." Lying down on the road, the activists were dragged away and then detained by the police for more than four hours. On 20 December

1996, members of the Democratic Party chanted “oppose the Provisional Legislature, oppose the rubber stamp” outside the local branch of the Xinhua News Agency, China’s de facto consulate in Hong Kong. The pro-democracy activists condemned the Provisional Legislature as illegal and unconstitutional — it was not even mentioned in the Basic Law, which was to serve as Hong Kong’s mini-constitution after 1997 (hknews@ahkcus.org 20 and 22 December 1996). On April 20, 1997, more than 1,000 HongKongers took to the streets on Sunday to protest the curbs on civil liberties that the SAR planned to enforce after the handover. Tung Chee-hwa, who launched the plans in early April, invited the public to submit comments on the changes by the end of April. Nevertheless, protesters called the consultation a sham. Brandishing bright red and green banners, protesters chanted “No to fake consultation” as they marched from Victoria Park to the Central business district. The march was organized by the Hong Kong People’s Alliance for Human Rights, comprising 30 local non-governmental organizations (hknews@ahkcus.org 21 April 1997). On June 1, 1997, the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement organized a demonstration to commemorate the deaths of students in the Tiananmen Incident of June 4th, 1989. The Alliance estimated that 7,000 joined in the demonstration. The protesters carried placards in funeral colors of black and white and shouted slogans demanding that the Chinese government reassess its verdict on the June 4th incident (forum@ahkcus.org 3 June 1997).

How should we interpret the above democratic protests in the 1980s and the 1990s? Scott (1989: 246) sees democratic protests as the struggles of a new middle class. Hong Kong’s upgrading to a global service center produced a more affluent, better-educated, and sizeable new middle class that began to demand a greater role in the governance of the territory. However, the colonial government did not institute democratic reforms to incorporate the new middle class into the political system. As a result, the new middle class waged democratic struggles to express their dissatisfaction with the Hong Kong government and the Beijing government. So (1993: 234-37) also argues that the 1997 transition had threatened the interests and the life style of the new middle class in Hong Kong. College professors and journalists worried about the possible censorship of the Chinese Communist Party; barristers and solicitors worried about the possible erosion of judicial independence; social workers worried about the cutbacks in the state’s spending on welfare; and they all worried that Hong Kong citizens could no longer enjoy the human rights of freedom and liberty after the handover in 1997. Thus, the 1997 event triggered the formation of the new middle class, using democratization as a means to safeguard its interests and life style in Hong

		Status-Group (National/Ethnic) Boundary		
		Western	Hong Kong	Mainland China
Class Boundary	Capitalists	<i>Western capitalists/ Colonial state</i>	<i>Chinese capitalists</i>	<i>Chinese State officials/ Capitalists</i>
	Middle Class	<i>Western middle class</i>	<i>Chinese middle class</i>	<i>Chinese middle class</i>
	Workers	<i>Western workers</i>	<i>Chinese workers</i>	<i>Chinese workers</i>

FIGURE 3. THE SERVICE CENTER ERA

Kong.

However, we can also interpret democratic struggles as identity politics of the Hong Kong people. The Tiananmen Incident consolidated a new Hong Kong ethnic identity vis-a-vis a Chinese national identity. In Lee's (1995: 125) survey in 1990, more than half (56.6 percent) of the respondents regarded themselves as "HongKongers," only 25 percent as "Chinese." In fact, the past fifty years since World War II had seen the gradual shedding of a refugee mentality, the acquisition of a sense of commitment to the territory, and the emergence of a "Hong Kong" ethnic identity. Yet the "HongKonger" identity emerging during the Tiananmen Incident possessed an anti-Beijing component, asserted against a taken-for-granted "Chinese" identity. Lee's survey showed that a tiny portion of the Hong Kong respondent (less than 10 percent) neither trusted the Beijing government nor were prepared to regard "political allegiance with the PRC" as a necessary criterion for defining "Chineseness." Tam's (1996: 9) survey in 1994 also reports that 90 percent of the interviewees felt negatively about the Beijing government, particularly on its supposed lack of rules on law and freedom.

As such, was democratic protest middle class conflict or identity politics (and ethnic struggles)? Again, it is hard to separate the two types of struggles because they interacted and fused with one another (see Figure 3). However, before the emergence of identity politics of the Hong Konger in the 1990s, the leaders of the new middle class had a difficult time in winning democratic struggles. Their demands to institute direct elections in 1988 were defeated; their democratic proposal in early 1989 to revise the

first draft of the Basic Law was not accepted; the democracy movement was in disarray in early 1989. Thus, it was the emergence of identity politics in the early 1990s that revitalized the democracy movement and empowered the democratic leaders to win elections. In Lee's (1993) study, he found that the so-called conservative pro-China forces were defeated in the 1991 elections not because they were less liberal on social and welfare policies than were the democrats, but because they advocated a conciliatory approach to Hong Kong-China relations and were perceived by the electorate as supporters of China's policies. Similarly, Leung's (1993) survey showed that the June Fourth Incident had implanted among the Hong Kong population a pervasive attitude of distrust and defiance toward the Chinese government. Since the new middle class leaders seized this "anti-China" ethnic sentiment in their democratic struggles, they were able to win landslide election in 1991 elections.

The Origins and Transformation of the Democratic Struggles. Besides pointing out the intricate linkages between class and status-group struggles, a world-systems analysis also highlights that the origins, the intensification, and the transformation of democratic struggles owed much to the forces outside the Hong Kong territory.

The genesis of the democracy project, for example, was a product of negotiation politics between the British and the Chinese government over the future of Hong Kong in 1984. Before that time, the Hong Kong new middle class at best could only wage community movements; its leaders had not yet articulated any demand to democratize the colonial government. It was only at the very end of the negotiation process in September 1984 that the British team sneaked into the annex of the Joint Declaration a clause on democratization: "the chief executive ... should be selected by election or through consultations held locally ... The legislature of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be constituted by elections. The executive authorities shall abide by law and shall be accountable to the legislature" (Draft Agreement 1984: Annex I, 1). It was only when the democratic genie was let out of the bottle by the above clause in September 1984 that the middle class was prompted to engage in election and democratic struggles (So, 1999: 79).

As explained above, the intensification of the democratic struggles was also a product of external forces. In the late 1980s, pro-democracy forces were in disarray. The new middle class's populist democracy proposal was defeated, while big businesspeople's corporatist democracy was written into the draft Basic Law. However, the 1989 Tiananmen Incident opened a new era for the democratization of Hong Kong by tearing apart the conserv-

ative triple alliance of Beijing, London, and Hong Kong big business, by unifying political groups into the "United Democrats," and by imposing a democratic discourse on the Hong Kong polity. In the post-Tiananmen era, every political group put a democratic label onto itself to appeal to the democratic sentiment in Hong Kong society. Not only the middle class leaders called themselves "United Democrats," but big businesspeople also adopted the label of "Liberal Democratic Foundation" and were forced to participate in electoral competition. In 1992, the arrival of Governor Patten further promoted a contested democracy in Hong Kong. Patten's last-minute electoral reforms not only intensified Beijing-London conflict, but they also served to threaten the legitimacy of the Basic Law. Beijing declared that the last Legislative Council elected with Patten's electoral reforms would be dissolved, and a provisional Legco would be set up to avoid the legislative vacuum just after the handover on July 1, 1997 (So, 1997). However, the middle class pro-democracy forces charged that the provisional Legco was illegal because the Basic Law never proposed such an institution. The democrats launched a challenge to the provisional Legco in the Hong Kong courts.

Finally, the moderation of democratic struggles before the handover also owed much to external forces. Contrary to the Western media's prediction, the authoritarian transition scenario failed to become real in Hong Kong. No violent political confrontation, no outright political repression, and little political censorship took place in mid-1997. Instead, a democratic compromise was achieved among Beijing, the Hong Kong SAR government, and the middle class's democracy camp during this critical political transition from British to Chinese rule. A reason for the democratic compromise in mid-1997 was that Beijing drastically lowered its opposition to the Democratic Party before the handover. Although Beijing denounced some Democratic Party leaders as subversive and refused to communicate with them, and although Beijing in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Incident even intimated that the Democratic Party would be outlawed after 1997, Beijing suddenly invited democratic leaders to participate in the consultation exercises of the Preparatory Committee, welcomed democratic leaders into the Selection Committee, and assured the democrats that they would be allowed to compete in elections in the post-1997 SAR government. Furthermore, Beijing tolerated political protests in Hong Kong, even when the protests shouted offensive slogans against Beijing leaders. In response, the democrats staged only a peaceful protest during the July 1, 1997 transition. They were also willing to participate in the 1998 elections, although the Provisional Legislature had drastically changed the electoral rules and there

was little possibility that the Democratic Party would gain a majority seat in the post-1997 Legislature. Furthermore, the Democratic Party diluted its anti-Beijing platform. Instead, the Democratic Party emphasized that it would always support Beijing's resumption of Hong Kong sovereignty and it always hoped for Hong Kong's stability and prosperity. The values of "Beijing sovereignty" and "Hong Kong stability and prosperity" thus provided a tactical agreement with Beijing and the Tung government that the Democratic Party could work with them in the post-1997 era (So, 1999).

CONCLUSION

This paper identifies strikes, riots, and democratic protests as the three dominant patterns of class and status-group struggles in Hong Kong in the twentieth century. It argues that a world-systems analysis has helped to interpret the nature of these three patterns of conflict and to explain their origins and transformation.

Influenced by Weber's assertion that class is based on narrow economic interests while status group is based on the sharing of honor and style of life in a community, most researchers adopt a strict differentiation between economic classes and status groups, and they tend to take an "either/or" approach to study class and status group struggles. However, a world-system analysis points to the fluidity and transformation between class and status group struggles. Using such an insight, this paper shows that strikes, riots, and democratic protests in Hong Kong are expressions of **both** class and status group (see Figure 1, 2, 3). It was the fusion of class and status group activities that enabled the working class in the 1920s to overcome the guild and secret society divisions, the pro-communist forces in the 1960s to overcome the constraints of "utilitarian familism" and high labor mobility, and the new middle class in the 1990s to overcome its setbacks in the Basic Law protests to become agencies in challenging the existing political structure in Hong Kong.

A world-systems analysis, moreover, points to the impact of forces outside Hong Kong on class and status-group struggles in the territory. The Canton government, the anti-imperialism protests in Shanghai and Canton, and Hong Kong's entrepot status along the South China coast had significant impact on the emergence, the intensification, and the success of the 1927 Canton-Hong Kong Strikes. The Cultural Revolution leaders in China and their support (or lack of support) of the Leftist unions in Hong Kong led to the rise and the fall of the 1967 riots. Finally, the negotiation between Beijing and London over the future of Hong Kong in 1984, the Tiananmen

Incident in 1989, and the transfer of sovereignty in 1997 help to explain the genesis, the intensification, and the moderation of democratic struggles in Hong Kong.

Highlighting the impact of forces outside Hong Kong, however, does not mean that we should overlook the role of Hong Kong society, economy, and politics in the shaping of class and status-group struggles in Hong Kong. Entrepot economy, industrial city, and global service center produced different configurations of class structure that exercised constraints on how class and status-group struggles could take place. The structure of the colonial state and its institutional linkages with the capitalist class naturally had enormous consequences on the pattern of class and status-group struggles in Hong Kong. Immigrant culture and utilitarian familism of the working class and the cosmopolitan world view of the middle class, needless to stress, are pertinent to the study of any class and status-group conflict. Nevertheless, by highlighting the fluidity of class and status group boundaries and by bringing external forces back in, this paper hopes to open a research frontier that examines how classes and status groups become agents, engage in struggles, and intervene in the historical transformation of Hong Kong, China, and the world-economy.

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