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SOCIAL MOVEMENT AS COGNITIVE PRAXIS: THE CASE OF THE STUDENT AND LABOUR MOVEMENTS IN HONG KONG

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INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The study of social movements has until recently been concerned mainly with their causes, their course of development, and their demise. The major theoretical positions in this regard have been aptly classified by Doug McAdam (1982) into three models: the classical model, the resource mobilization model, and the political process model. The theoretical advancement has proceeded from a focus on social structural defects as the cause of social movements (classical model), to an emphasis on the resources and mobilization potential of challenger groups as the prime determinants of the genesis and development of social movements (resource mobilization model), culminating finally in an approach which perceives social movements as the end product of the confluence of political opportunities, the organizational strength of the challenger groups, and the cognitive liberation of the prospective movement participants (the political process model). I have made the above cursory reference to the three models as the first step in addressing what I conceive to be a hiatus in the study of social movements. Social movements have by and large not been theorized as an innovative process, in which the movement leaders envisage a new ideal, a new way of life, and pursue that vision through collective endeavours. Thus, according to the classical model, social movements are triggered by frustrations and discontents with a malfunctioning social-political system; in short, social movements rise when the aggrieved population's tempers flare. This interpretation of movement participants and movement action as essentially non-rational is eclipsed by another theoretical orientation - the resource mobilization model - which analyses social movements as rational, planned and calculated attempts to wrestle concessions from some established authority. The emphasis in this 'rational' approach is

understandably on the challenger group's resources and its capacity to mobilize resources in manoevering against an established, often much stronger, opponent. In other words, the resource mobilization model sees a social movement as a challenger group's exercise of muscles to safeguard or advance its interests. The political process model goes a step further. It gives theoretical import to a point implicit, but seldom highlighted in the resource mobilization model. Movement leaders give the signals to the prospective participants that the time is right for action. Thus, the political process model is explicating the point that it takes the 'brain' to interpret the environment and send cognitive cues to the 'muscles' for appropriate manoevering. To pursue the metaphor, I would say that social movement theories have advanced from an emphasis on 'tempers' to one on 'muscles and brain'. What has long been lacking is a focus on 'sentiments' and 'aspirations'. For this reason, Eyerman and Jamison's recent book *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach* (1991) can be considered a major contribution in filling the hiatus.

It is tempting to see Eyerman and Jamison's cognitive approach as no more than an elaboration of the concept of cognitive cues in McAdam's political process model (1982). A careful reading suggests, however, that the cognitive approach opens up a new theoretical direction. McAdam's 'cognitive cues' refers to the definition of the political environment as favourable or unfavourable for insurgent collective action. Justifying the importance of cognitive cues for the study of social movements, McAdam writes:

> One of the central problematics of insurgency ... is whether favourable shifts in political opportunities will be defined as such by a large enough group of people to facilitate collective protest. Challengers experience shifting political conditions on a day-to-day basis as a set of 'meaningful' events communicating much about their prospects for successful collective action. (1982: 48).

McAdam's cognitive cues are messages to guide the launching and planning of prospective collective political action. They are part and parcel of the political strategies (the 'brain') which are the defining feature of the political process model. Eyerman and Jamison's cognitive approach goes further, as their following statements indicate:

> Social movements are ... best conceived ... as movements of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities, and even ideals. ... Our approach thus focuses upon the process of articulating a movement identity (cognitive praxis), on the actors taking part in this process (movement intellectuals), and on the contexts of articulation (political cultures and institutions). (1991: 4).

In perceiving social movements as collective creations of social identities and ideals in the contexts of political cultures and institutions, Eyerman and Jamison reconceptualize social movements as innovative or revitalizing visionary processes. In this process, the

movement participants, especially the movement intellectuals, often draw on national or cultural traditions to articulate new identities and ideals. This means that social movements are more than, and hence cannot be understood solely as, planned collective actions to confront an established authority to wrestle concessions and bring about changes. What inspires and motivates a social movement is not necessarily a favourable political opportunity. It can be a commitment to an idea or ideal, or a sentimental attachment to a cherished national or cultural value. In Weberian language, we can say that a social movement is not only rational goal-oriented action; it is often also rational value-oriented or even affectually-oriented action. This is what I meant by 'sentiments' and 'aspirations' in my earlier arguments.

In my view, one main contribution of the cognitive approach is the thesis that our knowledge of what a social movement is about can be advanced by examining the movement within its historical and cultural contexts. While acknowledging that movement organizations and political opportunities are crucial in determining the genesis and development of social movements, we have to bear in mind that social movements are after all collective endeavours to realize certain aspirations or to uphold some cherished values and sentiments, which are rooted in specific historical and cultural contexts. On the international level, these contexts constitute the basis for a comparative study of social movements in diverse societies. In this respect, Eyerman and Jamison observe for instance that 'social movements in the U.S. have been colored by a kind of religious and moral fervor that is largely absent in Europe, where the historical struggle between the "main class antagonists" has been central for the past as well as the contemporary movements' (1991: 37). But the cognitive approach also yields a valuable theoretical orientation in the study of social movements within one social-cultural context. It suggests the need and importance of theorizing social movements as the product of deep-rooted national traditions and prevailing social sentiments. It highlights the fact that it is often such cultural values and social sentiments which give a social movement its character and contents. They are the 'script' of a collective drama; organizational resources and political opportunities are the stage props and facilities.

The present paper is based theoretically on the insights I have derived above from Eyerman and Jamison's cognitive approach. I shall conceptualize social movements as cognitive praxis - a term central to the cognitive approach - which refers to the process of articulating and putting into practice a collective vision or ideal. I shall dwell particularly on the inputs from the historical and cultural contexts into the articulation as well as the truncation and demise of this ideal. My objective is not to dislodge the political process model from its rightful theoretical position, but to show that much understanding about

social movements can be gained by viewing them as value-rational rather than instrumental-rational action.

THE STUDY

I choose the student movement and the labour movement for the present study mainly for the reason that students and labour are two very different social categories who can be expected to have divergent concerns and perspectives. On the whole, students are not burdened with the down-to-earth problems of making a living or of negotiating with management for higher wages and better working conditions. Free from mundane daily concerns, they are more inclined to the pursuit of higher values and ideals. They are, as a cliche puts it, 'the conscience of society'. In contrast, workers can be expected to have relatively more pragmatic and parochial interests and perspectives focusing on work-related matters. My argument for the relevance of inputs from the historical and cultural contexts into social movements would therefore be very much strengthened if I could identify common denominators of historical-cultural significance in the social movements of these two different social categories.

Such common denominators would also give us valuable insights into the collective consciousness; they are an important reflection of the ethos of the community. In other words, this study of the student movement and labour movement as cognitive praxis has two objectives: the primary objective of investigating how the historical and cultural contexts impact on social movements; and the secondary objective of using the movements' ideas and ideals as a reflection of the major concerns and cherished values of society.

My study will cover the post Second World War period of 1946 to the late 1980s. The end of the War was immediately followed by the Civil War in China between the Guomindang (the Nationalist Party) and the Communist Party. The eventual victory of the Communists and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 led to a large influx of refugees from the Mainland to Hong Kong. The attitude of these refugees as well as of the original inhabitants towards Hong Kong was ambivalent. They cherished it as a safe haven. Yet it was also a legacy, a monument of the transgression of Chinese territories by the western imperialist powers. Hence if the 'don't rock the boat' refugee mentality was the main factor contributing to Hong Kong's stability, that mentality was also tinged with undercurrents of nationalism and anti-colonialism. For the Hong Kong Chinese, China under communism thus evoked ambivalent, contradictory feelings and sentiments. Most of them regarded communism with apprehension and even aversion, yet many also took pride in the New China with its bold stand against western capitalist imperialism. It is my contention in this paper that the ambivalence of the Hong Kong Chinese towards the Colony, and their ambivalence towards Communist China, have

been a major underlying feature of the ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese. For most of Hong Kong's post Second World War history, and for most of the Hong Kong Chinese, that ambivalence has tilted in favour of the refugee, anti-communist mentality. Yet the other side of the ambivalence, sentiments of nationalism and anti-colonialism that so often have been eclipsed by Hong Kong's economic prosperity, retained its mobilizing potential for collective action. For reasons stated above, China has remained the main factor for fueling or dampening nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments and the contingent collective actions. In other words, major events and developments in China, and its relation with the west and in particular with Britain, constituted important cognitive cues for collective opposition actions in Hong Kong. The main thrust of my arguments in this paper is that such cognitive cues, which have to be understood in the peculiar political and cultural contexts of Hong Kong, provide us with fresh insights into the genesis, development and nature of the student movement and the labour movement in Hong Kong. To understand these movements as cognitive praxis is to comprehend how the movement participants articulated these cognitive cues and put them into practice.

THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AS COGNITIVE PRAXIS

The Awakening

The student movement in Hong Kong, which involved mainly university students, did not take off until the late 1960s. Commenting on the long period of student non-involvement in social and political activities since the founding of the first university in Hong Kong in 1912, a student leader wrote:

> (The students) had no sense of belonging to Hong Kong, and only adopted the attitude of an indifferent observer on events in China. ... A stagnant, totally uncritical and despondent atmosphere pervaded the whole university campus. Material satisfaction and degenerate personal honour and status were what the students looked for .... (Cheuk 1978: 144).

The impetus of change came, not from within the student body, but from an incident that forced the Hong Kong people, colonizers and colonized alike, to rethink seriously the political status and political future of Hong Kong. This was the 1967 riots[1], which lasted from May till the end of the year and were undoubtedly the most traumatic social-political disruptions in Hong Kong's post-war history. These riots were inspired by the Cultural Revolution in China, which was gathering momentum in early 1967. They began as two minor industrial disputes in April. The left-wing trade unions and communist sympathizers were quick to seize the opportunity to escalate the disputes into a territory-wide confrontation against the colonial government and capitalist enterprises in Hong Kong. The 1967 disturbances with their strong nationalist flavour thus poignantly reminded the Hong Kong people of the uncertainty of Hong Kong's political future. They also awakened the university students from their habitual indifference and silence. At the height of the riots, for instance, the student publication of the University of Hong Kong, the *Undergrad* (13 July issue), published an article with the title 'Has Hong Kong a Future?'. This article, which was just one of many others of a similar nature appearing in student publications and public magazines, exemplified the first change of mood and concern among university students. 'If we accept that it is we who have to decide our future', this article stated, '... we will have to strive to achieve more active participation in politics, we will have to campaign for the allegiance of our youth, ... we need to reform our educational system ...'. At the end of the year, both as a retrospect to the causes of the riots and a prospect for what to do in the future, the *Undergrad* (1 December issue) published an article entitled 'The Riots, Public Opinions, and the Adoption of Chinese as an Official Language'. The article represented one of the first attempts among university students to analyze the 1967 riots in terms of the national and cultural identity of the Hong Kong Chinese, and of the glaring inequality in the community and lack of

communication between the colonial government and the Chinese community. The seeds of student involvement in social-political issues were sown in the political overtones and nationalist sentiments of the 1967 riots.

The seeds came to their first fruition in February 1969, when the students of the University of Hong Kong started the University Reform Movement. Student participation in university administration was the theme of the Reform Movement, and though the students' gains were modest - the most important of which being student representation in the University's Senate Board - the Movement had far-reaching effects. Several months later, around 50 students, mostly from Hong Kong's two universities, staged a two-day sit-in outside a post-secondary college, the Chu Hai College, in protest against the college authorities' dismissal of 12 students who had allegedly attacked the college authorities in student publications. While hardly a significant issue in terms of the number of participants and the duration of the protest, this was the first time university students took to the streets to protest about an issue not directly related to their own university; it was also the first time students of different academic institutions cooperated in protest action. A student movement was in the making.

The High Tide

Issues on campus and in the larger society continued to occupy the students, but the one issue which spurred the burgeoning student movement to its zenith and contoured its development up to the mid-1970s had no direct bearing on the welfare of the indigenous community. This was the claims from both the Chinese Government and the Japanese Government in 1970 to territorial rights over the Tiao Yu Tai Islands.[2] Students in Hong Kong viewed the Japanese claim as a revival of Japanese militarism and this brought back memories of Japan's invasion of China during the Second World War. Nationalist sentiments soared among the Hong Kong students as they marched in protest against Japanese imperialism and in defence of the integrity of Chinese territory. In some of these protest demonstrations, there were clashes between the students and the police in which the police resorted to brutal force against the student protesters. Scenes of students with blood running down their faces and of the police, often headed by British officers, raising their truncheons against the students, side-tracked the protesters' attention to what they now experienced and felt as repression in a colony. Nationalist feelings were already rampant in the Tiao Yu Tai Protest, and these now quickly encompassed anti-colonialism. The Tiao Yu Tai issue faded by May 1972, but nationalist sentiments and their off-shoot anti-colonialism continued to fuel the student movement in the next few

years.

The growth of these sentiments, and hence the development of the student movement, was contingent both on the march of events relating to China and on the students' ambivalence towards the existing regime in China. Events occurring on the international scene helped to foster the students' nationalist dispositions: China's readmission into the United Nations in 1971, President Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972, and China's table-tennis diplomacy in the early 1970s boosted its international status. These developments, in addition to the students' recent experience with colonial repression, contributed at least temporarily to an 'ambivalence bias' in favour of pro-China sentiments. To many of the most committed student activists of the time, Hong Kong's future lay in its reunion with China, and their job was to prepare the Chinese people of Hong Kong for this reunion through educating them about contemporary China. To equip themselves for this mission, university students organized and undertook 'China Tours', and set up China Study Groups for university and post-secondary college students. For the first half of the 1970s, the student movement in Hong Kong had a strong nationalist pro-China flavour. Almost every issue of university student publications during that time contained some introduction to the socialist development in China or reports about happenings in China.

But there was also a group of university student activists who did not identify themselves with the communist regime in China. This other side of the ambivalence had some reservations, and were critical, about China's policies. These students attacked the pro-China students as blindly accepting and following China's directions. The student movement in its heyday was thus ironically split between a pro-China faction and another faction labelled the Social Action Faction.[3] Following China's policy of peaceful co-existence with the western capitalist regimes, the pro-China faction by and large refrained from direct confrontation against the indigenous colonial authorities. They considered their main mission to be socialist education in preparation for reunion with the motherland. The Social Action Faction, on the other hand, took a broad view of nationalism which they did not consider to be necessarily coterminous with following the current regime in China. They expressed their nationalist sentiments in protest actions against the indigenous colonial order. While the two factions pursued their respective missions in the larger society, they also battled with each other on campus to gain control of the student union and student publications. The pro-China faction, however, remained the dominant force within the student movement in the first half of the 1970s. With the pro-socialist China students attempting to purge the allegedly renegade elements within the student body, the student movement was to some extent a miniature copy of the

concurrent Cultural Revolution in mainland China.

It was thus natural that the demise of the Cultural Revolution brought a drastic turn in the development of the student movement in Hong Kong. The death of Chairman Mao and the fall of the Gang of Four in 1976 dealt a fatal blow to the pro-China faction. In identifying with China's policies in the past few years, the pro-China faction had quite naturally associated themselves with the policies of the then dominant political figures, and now the pro-China faction found to their surprise and embarrassment that they had been betting on the wrong horse. They had, so it seemed to most students at the time, unwittingly misled and misguided the student movement in the past. Disgraced and disoriented, and no longer able to justify themselves as leaders of the student movement, they receded from the scene. So from 1976, if there was still a pro-China faction in the universities and post-secondary colleges, they kept a low profile in the political life of the students. But as they had been one of the main carriers of the student movement, with their retreat, the student movement lost much of its drive and momentum. Lacking a well defined long-term objective like that of the pro-China faction, the student movement now became issue-oriented. At the same time, the Social Action Faction gradually disintegrated. It had been, after all, a loosely organized group of students held together through their opposition to a rival faction. A number of social issues, the most important of which was the Golden Jubilee Secondary School Protest Issue of 1978, sustained the momentum of the student movement for a few more years.[4] But since the beginning of the 1980s, the student movement has remained low-key and inconspicuous. Its glorious days were over.

The Eclipse

The 1980s were a time of important changes in Hong Kong. Margaret Thatcher's visit to Beijing in September 1982 and the ensuing Sino-British negotiations turned the attention of the Hong Kong people to the issue of Hong Kong's future. The signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, which confirmed the sovereignty of China over Hong Kong after 1997, ushered in a number of major developments bearing on Hong Kong's future. The preparation for self-government by the Hong Kong people became the predominant concern of the local community. Various social groups in Hong Kong actively expressed their different, often conflicting views about what sort of government would be most appropriate for the post-1997 Hong Kong. The drafting of the Basic Law (which began in 1985 and took almost five years to complete) for the future Hong Kong Special Administrative Region similarly provoked controversies and heated arguments

both within the indigenous community, and between segments of the local population and the Chinese government. Then there came the historic 1989 student protests and pro-democracy movement in China. An estimated two million Hong Kong people took part in march demonstrations in support of the ongoing protest movements on the Mainland. In the aftermath, a pro-democracy movement emerged in Hong Kong with the objectives of providing continuing support to the pro-democracy activists in China and furthering democracy in Hong Kong. Indeed the momentous events of the 1980s would lead one to expect a resurgence of the student movement in Hong Kong.

In fact student activists continued to play an active role in social and political issues throughout the 1980s. In my view, the insignificance of the student movement in the 1980s has to be understood not so much in terms of the organizational strength or the ideological commitment of students as in the socio-political context of Hong Kong at the time. The aforementioned developments in the 1980s had politicized the society. Commenting on this phenomenon, Louie writes:

> The traditionally apathetic Hong Kong people suddenly became very sensitive and alert to politics. A wide spectrum of views and opinions surged. ... New organizations were formed with the clear objective of contributing to the preparation of the territory's future. ... These organizations were collectively called, by the media as well as by themselves, 'groups of political commentary'. ... The 'groups of political commentary' soon gave way to 'groups of political participation'. (1991: 58-59).

Concurrent with this politicization was an upsurge of interest among the Hong Kong Chinese in nascent developments in China - an interest generated by China's economic reforms and open-door policy since 1976. The Hong Kong Chinese acquired substantial knowledge of their motherland as many of them went to the Mainland on sightseeing tours and as the mass media in Hong Kong increased their coverage of events in China. This and the rapidly expanding role of newly formed political groups in indigenous social-political matters meant that the students had lost their pioneering and leading role of the 1970s. On the one hand, their function as the educator on socialist development in China had now become obsolete and superfluous. On the other, their role in local issues had been gradually eclipsed and superceded by the mushrooming political organizations. To the extent that a social movement is identified by its distinctive ideal and the attendant collective action, the student movement's identity was submerged in the sea-change that was sweeping the community in the 1980s. In this respect, a former student leader comments with insight on the eclipse of the student movement:

> The large-scale exhibitions, talks and other activities organized by the students in the 1970s to introduce happenings in China have now lost much of their

significance and value. .... In the major social actions of recent years, the student body has played only a subordinate role in the joint efforts of various pressure groups. The hard truth is: the student body is now no more than just a target for mobilization by other activist groups. (Chan 1987).

In the language of Eyerman and Jamison's cognitive approach, a social movement is a 'cognitive territory'. In the 1980s, the student movement had lost its 'cognitive territory' to larger, stronger forces.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AS COGNITIVE PRAXIS

A Historical Profile

I shall use trade union membership and the level of industrial strikes in constructing a historical profile of the labour movement. Union membership is an indicator of the numerical strength of the labour movement. The level of strikes is a reflection of the willingness and capacity of workers to act collectively to confront and wrestle concessions from management. Strikes are therefore an expression of the unity and political strength of working people, and of their determination to defend and advance their interests and rights. For this reason, strikes are the single most important indication of the strength and nature of the labour movement.

In the following table, I provide the available data on trade union density (i.e. union membership as a percentage of total employees) rather than the absolute number of union members. The number of union members may rise and fall with the expansion and contraction of the labour force. Union density, in taking into account the changing size of the workforce, is hence a more reliable indicator of the strength of the labour movement relative to an existing workforce. The level of strikes, however, is more difficult to measure. It can be gauged by the number of strikes, the duration of strikes (in number of days), or the number of participants in strikes. A composite index, which takes into account all these measures, is the number of working days lost, calculated as follows:

No. of working days lost = No. of strikes x Duration of strikes x No. of strikers
(in a particular period)   (in a particular period)

As in the case of union density, the level of strikes will be expressed as number of working days lost per 1,000 workers in the following table.

Trade Union Density and Level of Industrial Strikes in Hong Kong
1946 - 1989

Year	Union Density	Number of working days lost per 1,000 workers
1946 - 47		2,385
1947 - 48		5,429
1948 - 49		433
1949 - 50		2,814
1950 - 51		48
1951 - 52		566
1952 - 53		2
1953 - 54		1,470
1954 - 55		30
1955 - 56		335
1956 - 57		69
1957 - 58		90
1958 - 59		13
1959 - 60		159
1960 - 61		127
1961 - 62		77
1962 - 63		98
1963 - 64		243
1964 - 65		123
1965 - 66		183
1966 - 67		99
1967 - 68	13.8	-
1968 - 69	13.5	33
1969 - 70	17.4	40
1972 - 73	18.6	77
1973 - 74	21.2	82
1974 - 75	22.0	18
1975	23.9	23
1976	25.2	6
1977	23.8	14

Year	Union Density	Number of working days lost per 1,000 workers
1978	22.6	37
1979	20.7	45
1980	18.5	22
1981	16.1	17
1982	16.4	21
1983	16.1	3
1984	16.1	3
1985	16.1	1
1986	15.7	6
1987	15.7	3
1988	15.7	3
1989	16.6	0.04

Notes

1.   This table has been constructed on the basis on data provided in the Annual Reports of the Labour Department. The Department did not provide information on the 'political' strikes of 1967 - 68, though industrial conflict in that year was at its highest level in post-war Hong Kong.

2.   Data before 1975 cover financial years (1 April - 31 March). Data from 1975 cover calender years.

3.   Data on union density before 1967-68 not available. But according to Joe England's estimate (1979), 1946-50 was a period of union growth, and 1951-69 was a period of union stagnation.

4.   'Workers' refers to employees in registered establishments.

On the basis of the above table and the accompanying footnotes, we can construct the following periodization of the labour movement in Hong Kong:[5]

Periods of union growth	*Periods of union stagnation*
1946 - 50	1951 - 69
1970 - 76	1977 - 89

Periods of high industrial conflict	*Periods of low industrial conflict*
1946 - 50	1951 - 66
1967	1968 - 89

Several features emerge from the analysis so far. First, it is only in the period 1946-50 that union growth coincided with high industrial conflict. The second period of union growth, 1970-76, was a period of low industrial conflict. This suggests that in the Hong Kong case, union growth is not necessarily conducive to the workers' propensity to strike. This also suggests that we need to look for different explanations for the two aspects - trade unionism and industrial strikes - of the labour movement in Hong Kong. This observation is buttressed by the anomaly of 1967, the year of the highest industrial conflict in Hong Kong's post-war history, and yet also a year falling in a period of union stagnation. Then there are the periods of 'coincidence or consistency' between union stagnation and low industrial conflict: 1951-66 and 1978-89.

In the following sections, I shall attempt an explanation of these features and the trend of the labour movement from the perspective of the cognitive approach. I make no claim that this is a comprehensive explanation. My intention is rather to highlight the contributions which the cognitive approach can make to our understanding of this particular Hong Kong case.

1946-50: Union Growth and High Industrial Conflict

The background of the labour movement in the immediate post-war years and indeed in subsequent years was described by Joe England in his seminal work (1989) on industrial relations in Hong Kong:

> ... a by-product of the Japanese occupation (of Hong Kong) was the emergence of a strong Communist influence in immediate post-war Hong Kong .... The chief anti-Japanese guerilla force in Guangdong province during the occupation was a Communist-dominated band .... Many people from Hong Kong slipped out of the colony to join these guerillas and a number in time became convinced Communists. ... (By the end of the war), many returned to Hong Kong and it was these men, dedicated and battle-hardened, who formed the solid core of Hong Kong's Communists in the post-war years. They began to organize the workers ... (England 1989: 109-110)

There were other factors contributing to union growth, but the above is undoubtedly of the most long-lasting significance in Hong Kong's post-war trade union movement. The civil war in China and the advancing success of the Communists consolidated and expanded the group of Communist sympathizers in Hong Kong, culminating in the founding of the pro-Communist Federation of Trade Unions in 1947. At the same time, the anti-Communist, pro-Guomindang forces were mobilizing support in the Colony for their cause. They founded in 1948 the pro-Guomindang Trade Union Council. The competition of these two rival factions for support and membership led to an upsurge of trade unionism. But in respect of strikes, a substantial number was instigated and organized by the left-wing unions, who apparently intended to match the success of the Communists on the Mainland with a similar success in the Colony. The Commissioner of Labour at the time described these strikes as 'labour disputes where politics dominates economics' (Annual Report ending 31 March 1950: 50) and stated that many of the behind-the-scenes advisers in these strikes 'were suspected to have been in close touch as to policy with labour bodies in Canton and on the Chinese mainland generally' (Annual Report 1950: 49). Thus right from the beginning of the post-war period, the labour movement was a cognitive praxis of political orientations which to a large extent were shaped by developments in China and union rivalries in Hong Kong. It was thus natural that the tide of union activism in Hong Kong subsided when China entered into a new phase of development after the turmoil of civil war and revolution.

1951-1966: Union Stagnation and Industrial Peace

This period began in the aftermath of Britain's recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1950 and in the context of a tacit understanding between Britain and China over the status of Hong Kong. It ended at the dawn of the Cultural Revolution. In this decade and a half, the left-wing unions by and large refrained from direct involvement in industrial disputes. Joe England, I think, rightly attributed this to the left-wing unions' 'desire to maintain the economic stability of Hong Kong from which China derived a

substantial proportion of her foreign exchange' (1979: 30). In addition, it was also a time when refugees continued to flood into Hong Kong from across the border. The 'don't rock the boat' refugee mentality was the prevailing climate. The larger objectives of the two rival union factions - the objectives of building a favourable image and consolidating their influence in the community - disposed them to act in consonance with the prevailing mood of the populace. Thus both sides concentrated on providing welfare benefits for union members and, when the opportunity arose, attacked the industrial action of the rival faction as irresponsible and detrimental to the interests of the community. As an illustration, the rhetoric of the two factions in the 1954 strike of left-wing tramway workers is illuminating. The right-wing unions launched their attack:

> We know well that in calling a strike, these people are trying to safeguard the position of a few so-called union leaders and not serving the interests of workers. ... We are determined to stand firm in our dedication to lead the just and free Tramway workers to perform their duties responsibly. We will not take part in any action that for selfish motives would jeopardize the workers' employment. (*Wah Kiu Yat Po*, 10 October 1954 issue).

The left-wing unions responded in a press report:

> In the interests of the public, tramway workers have decided to resume work from today. (*Man Wui Po*, 11 October 1954 issue).

In a situation where the two factions which dominated and controlled the labour movement were pre-occupied with mutual denigration and were apparently guided more by partisan political orientations than by a commitment to safeguard the workers' interests against management, the workers understandably became cynical of trade unionism and recoiled from union activities. But the Cultural Revolution was soon to provoke many of them into an outburst of nationalist sentiments in the many industrial strikes and terrorist acts that made 1967 the most traumatic year in Hong Kong's post-war history.

1967: The Colony in Conflict

In terms of its impact on industrial relations in Hong Kong, the Cultural Revolution is reminiscent of the Communist Revolution of the late 1940s. They both infused labour disputes with a nationalist anti-colonial orientation. It seems that revolutionary fervour on the Mainland inevitably had its repercussions on the colonial capitalist enclave just across the border. The initial episodes - two minor labour disputes in April - of the 1967

disturbances already bore the imprint of that fervour. John Cooper's description of the reaction of the strikers on their arrest by the police provides some evidence:

> As they were led away to police vehicles the arrested men hurled abuse, shouted communist slogans, and a few of their number brandished aloft copies of Mao Tse-tung's quotations ... (1970: 6).

The intervention of the police readily transformed the industrial disputes into a political confrontation against the colonial government and its alleged ally, capitalist management. Originating as a dispute between labour and management, the conflict now rapidly escalated into a territory-wide nationalist anti-colonial struggle. In May, the Federation of Trade Unions and several other left-wing organizations established two struggle committees (the All Trades Struggle Committee and the All Circles Struggle Committee) to 'struggle against Hong Kong British persecution, to strengthen unity, ... to denounce Hong Kong British bloody atrocity ... ' (*Ta Kung Po*, 13 May 1967 issue). The formation of struggle committees was soon followed by a wave of some 18 short strikes in the last week of May. By the beginning of June, a left-wing press in Hong Kong was proclaiming 'a widespread mass movement to oppose national oppression and defend national honour' (*Man Wui Po*, 6 June 1967 issue). Meanwhile, encouragement came from China in the form of an important editorial in the *People's Daily* (3 June 1967 issue) which called upon the Hong Kong compatriots to form a broad revolutionary front and be 'ready at any time to respond to the call of the motherland and smash the reactionary rule of British imperialism'.[6]

The struggle continued with three territory-wide co-ordinated strike actions launched by left-wing trade unions in June. At the height of the struggle, the New China News Agency in Hong Kong proclaimed a total of 500,000 industrial workers on strike, and asserted that 'politically, the arrogance of British colonial rulers in Hong Kong has been deflated and their real nature, that of a paper tiger, has been completely exposed'.[7] These large-scale strike efforts were followed by a number of sporadic strikes in July. By late July, the period of unrest in which industrial action played a prominent role came to a close. Thereafter, the leftists resorted to terrorism and bomb attacks, which increasingly alienated the local community from the pro-Communist groups. The turmoil finally faded by the end of the year amidst signs of improvement in Sino-British relations.[8]

1968-90: Industrial Peace

The level of strikes dropped drastically in the aftermath of the 1967 disturbances. The

declining trend continued with minor fluctuations through the rest of the period. Union membership as reflected in union density, however, exhibited a less consistent trend. It started an upward climb in 1970, but after reaching a zenith in 1976, reversed in a downhill direction. Once again these ups and downs of the labour movement bore a close relationship to major developments in China. China's advancement in international respectability and status, as evidenced by the United States' relaxation of travel and trading restrictions with China in 1969, the resumption of full ambassadorial meetings between the United States and China in 1970, China's entry into the United Nations in 1971, and President Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972, boosted the image and standing of the left-wing trade unions in Hong Kong. Union growth in these few years owed much to the increase in left-wing union membership. As an illuminating aside, it is worth mentioning that this union growth coincided with the economic recession of 1974 and 1975[9], which was one of the worst recessions in Hong Kong's post-war economy. That the level of industrial conflict remained low in these years is a testimony to the fact that in Hong Kong, factors other than union strength and economic hardship are more significant in shaping industrial relations and the direction of the labour movement. Explaining industrial peace in these two years, Joe England observed:

> The left-wing unions as 'transmission belts between the party and the masses' were under instruction from the mainland to maintain a stabilizing influence rather than to protest at workers being made the victims of a capitalist crisis. (1979: 95).

The death of Mao Zedong and the fall of the Gang of Four in 1976, however, had a disruptive impact on left-wing union growth as they had on the pro-China faction of the student movement. Membership in left-wing unions, for instance, dropped from 228,313 in 1979 to 169,647 in 1981, and 168,550 in 1987. This contributed to the fall in union density in the overall industrial workforce. At the same time, China's economic reforms and open-door policy since the late 1970s, and the concomitant expanding capital investments from Hong Kong in China, increased Hong Kong's economic value to China. Indigenous developments in the 1980s in light of Hong Kong's post-1997 status also brought about a profound change in the orientations and policies of the trade unions in Hong Kong. The pro-Taiwan Trade Union Council and its affiliates now realized that to continue in their antagonism against the pro-China Federation of Trade Union would be fighting a lost battle. Union rivalry, in any case, was not congenial to the prevailing concern of the labour community, which was co-operative preparation for the historic transition. The emerging stance of the labour movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s is well represented in a statement from the chairman of the FTU at its 1988 General Meeting:

> We are willing to foster closer unity and co-operation with all workers, trade unions, labour organizations and people from other strata of the society and make common contributions to the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong.[10]

It is evident that with the politicization of the society in the 1980s, the working class were becoming increasingly concerned with defending and advancing its interests in juxtaposition to the claims of other social groups. Trade unionists of different political persuasions were aware of the importance for labour to establish a political niche for themselves in the future Special Administration Region. It seems that the labour movement will be facing a new challenge in the 1990s, as its factions attempt to resolve their differences in order to strengthen the position of the working class, and as its leaders try to maintain the balance between China's interests and the interests of labour in Hong Kong.

CONCLUSION

My theoretical focus in this paper has been on the cognitive dimension of social movements. I have opted for this cognitive approach because most previous theories of social movements, including the influential resource mobilization theory and political process model, were by and large explanations of 'how social movements come about', and not so much explanations of 'what social movements are about'. The theoretical interest, in short, has been on the 'mechanics' rather than the 'meaning' of social movements. Such a theoretical orientation assumes either that people will rebel when they are dissatisfied with an existing social-political order (the classical model), or that they will strike when they think their chances of winning are high (the resource mobilization model and the political process model). What these theories tend to overlook is the possibility that social movements could be sparked off and sustained by sentiments not akin to the rebel's anger or the strategist's rational calculation. These sentiments may be rooted in the larger contexts - in a people's collective history, and in events and developments that evoke memories of that history or that impact on the collective consciousness. To understand social movements, one therefore has to take into account the larger contexts of culture, history, and major ongoing developments. In my above descriptive accounts of the student movement and the labour movement, I have tried to show that these movements to a large extent derived their ideas, values and identities from these larger contexts. I have also tried to demonstrate how these movements changed in nature and significance upon changes in the larger contexts. In both movements, the participants articulated from major ongoing events a meaning which then became the orientation or the ideal of the movement for a period of time. The two movements developed and changed as new meanings were articulated from current events. It is my contention that such changes in the cognitive praxis of the two movements provide the key to understanding their development. For, as Eyerman and Jamison write:

> Social movements express shifts in the consciousness of actors as they are articulated ... in historically situated political and cultural contexts. (1991: 4).

My study also shows that China has been the main source of meanings or cognitive cues for the two social movements in question. This substantiates a point I made in the introductory section about the ambivalence of the Hong Kong Chinese towards the Colony and towards the People's Republic of China. Thus when revolutionary, anti-imperialist and nationalist sentiments soared in China, Hong Kong's colonial status came to the fore in the collective consciousness of the Hong Kong Chinese and triggered off collective actions with a strong nationalist anti-colonial favour. In this sense, the student movement of the early 1970s and the labour movement of the late 1940s and in 1967

were miniature cognitive praxis of the revolution in the motherland. But the other side of the ambivalence also gave rise to a faction within both movements which was opposed to the pro-China faction. If the rivalry between the two factions characterized the student movement in its heyday, it remained the dominant feature of the labour movement until the late 1980s. In both movements, the pro-China faction suffered a major set-back when the Cultural Revolution came to its ignominious end in 1976. When China embarked on a new path of development in 1977, so did the student movement and the labour movement in Hong Kong. When the rhetoric of anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism faded in China, it also subsided in the two movements in Hong Kong. These are the common denominators between the student movement and the labour movements. They reflect, I think, an important aspect of the collective consciousness of the Hong Kong Chinese.

In the 1980s, that collective consciousness was pre-occupied with the issue of 1997. As the Hong Kong Chinese prepared themselves for self-government, the labour movement was carving out for itself a new cognitive territory - the ideal of uniting labour into a solidary political force. The student movement, however, was unable to find its identity when its cognitive territory was taken over by more powerful forces and movements. The student leaders were there; the student organizations were there; and student activism continued. But lacking a unique cognitive territory, the student movement was hardly at all recognizable. This last testimony to the importance of conceptualizing social movement as cognitive praxis also brings my discussion to its conclusion.

NOTES

1. A later section in this paper provides a fuller account of these riots.

2. The Tiao Yu Tai Islands, located near the northeast coast of Taiwan, were originally part of Taiwan Province, but were included in the Okinawa Territory under the mandate of the United States after the Second World War. When the United States Government announced in 1970 its decision to return Okinawa, together with the Tiao Yu Tai Islands, to Japan in May 1972, the Chinese Government protested.

3. In Chinese, this faction was called [社會派] literally meaning Social Faction or Society Faction. I have translated the title to Social Action Faction to reflect the group's orientation. This group was also sometimes referred to as the Liberal Democratic Faction.

4. Some other examples are the Anti-Corruption Campaign of 1973, the Anti-Inflation Campaign of 1973-4, and the protest against the Queen's visit, 1975.

5. This periodization is based on Joe England (1979: 82-83). I have modified and updated the classification for the present discussion.

6. Reported in *Survey of China Mainland Press*, No. 3971 (30 June 1967: 22).

7. Reported in *Survey of China Mainland Press*, No. 3969 (28 June 1967: 18).

8. Historian John D. Young wrote: '...it became apparent that by the fall of 1967, the Cultural Revolution leaders were intent on going back to a more peaceful relationship with China's neighbours ... 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. ...'('China's Role in two Hong

Kong Disturbances: A Scenario For the Future?' Journal of Oriental Studies, Vol.19, No.1, 1981:168).

9.   The annual growth rate of real gross domestic products, which stood at 14 per cent in 1973, dropped to a record low of around 2.5 per cent in 1974 and 1975. Unemployment also rose to very high levels in these recession years. The index of real average daily wages for industrial workers, which stood at 159 in 1973, fell to 141 and 137 in 1974 and 1975 respectively.

10.   Quoted in Joe England (1989: 134).

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《社會行動和意識形態實踐: 香港的學運與工運》

(中文摘要)

一般理論是一些透態去反映香港社會。

社會論論把社會理論社會社會在社會點行通的社會上的重要行通本行動,我們把行行動重要性。

行動常是身動可以看看。

研究社會條件成可。本文試看流和某種意識形態。

都注重和是看看行某種意識形態。

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行和的意識形態的意識形態研究香港。

動社會關係的表態及這學起會的表達。這些學。

的關係。直到換言及這學。

因,直到近來意言和七。

,過動的近言七年。

和,才識工運的關。

表或有,形運六命途的色彩。

左注年打動也六命會行動。

影響親的常左中方。

和運通的當資工運七後的。

共工會七年,也對給九。

了工會七代,帶給九。

削弱派六工會在九。

於親發了十年工會在九。

政中了十年工會工人在。

的制大題。左派的問工人在。

政大。引發七派工人。

制福利革命也。在左七派求工。

大上擊問也。香九七謀求工。

陸受攻的九七地謀求工。

大程相命暴動,七地結工。

中度相福革命,香九七結。

國度攻福革命,九結地。

受互的大大大,九結地。

工運往的人大化和暴。

往工往人化和大八化。

往工會化常八開。

運往的化化十年開始。

工超大正入十年開始。

派此罷正八開始。

往因工常十年開始圍。

右工大八化開圍結。

左派大罷十圍結地。

港超此罷工常入結地。

香往因工正年圍地謀。

香港暴七入文化學領。

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香港引代高文化學導。

的發十年高大化學導。

學運了代峰大運革從日。

大學完此也。

學大保釣運的逐漸走向。

朋學運結走向被壓力。

芽於對動的逐漸被壓力。

生對動完此逐日坡。

十香有流四下新坡。

年港濃主人團。

代社厚的八。

的內為寫十。

中部認到年。

期愛認倒八和。

和國中台給政。

末予和台十治。

期盾中關十年。

和國給香港。

末予和香港代,。

民族社。組。

族社組織。

期民組織取。

期和香港學織取替。

和香港學學運取替了。

七年學運替了。

七前學色彩,而了。

從學運和工運和政治發展有極密
大陸思想和民族觀念的。
我們可以清切看到香港的主流意識形態和
中國的國
家思想和民族觀念的。這意識形態是帶著濃厚的