

Recollection of Dr. James Hayes

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Thanks to kind introduction by my friends in Hong Kong, I had the opportunity to study local society in the New Territories of Hong Kong from the time I first met Dr. James Hayes in the late 1970s until the 1990s. This is an extremely important opportunity for my understanding of Hong Kong, Chinese society, overseas Chinese history, and the various networks in local society.

I also met Dr. Hayes several times when I joined the South China Study Group, *Huanan yanjiu-hui* (華南研究會) on field research trips, and I recollect we sometimes stood around at the counter desk for long time talking about his findings from the New Territories in the lobby of the library of University of Hong Kong.

One of the important things I recollect clearly is that in the early 1980s, Dr. Hayes explained about “local loan associations” in local societies and I examined several cases one by one, learning that the activities of “local loan associations” are widespread economic activities of local societies and that the way they operated varies according to the groups of participants, which subsequently led me to consider the functions of the local loan associations in relation to overseas Chinese remittances. It was an important opportunity for me to think about the connection between remittances, investment, and other activities in the local society.

Second point I recollect is the concept of “indigenous” in his discussion. In his writing, Dr. Hayes characterized his perspective on local society by comparing with other scholars in the same period such as John King Fairbank and Hsiao Kung-chuan. In the new preface to his book which was published in 2012 he wrote as follows:

Looking back on the intervening thirty-four years of Hong Kong village studies, there can be little doubt that the period has been one in which much has been added to the corpus of knowledge of what the New Territories and its people were like before their transfer to British rule in 1898. We have been fortunate to work in what, in both geographical and research terms, is a small and united field, but one with a long history and an indigenous society which, through historical circumstance and by its own efforts, was enabled to keep its identity and institutions for much longer than would have been possible had it remained part of China after 1898. (James Hayes, *The Hong Kong Region 1850-1911: Institutions and Leadership in Town and Countryside, with a new introduction*, Hong Kong University Press, 2012, xxiv.)

Citing the discussions of Fairbank and Hsiao Kung-chuan, Dr. Hayes pointed out critically that their research on China’s local regions did not reach down to the substratum of society. He wrote as follows:

Judging from the written and oral record, and from my own observation of their successors at work in the 1950s and 1960s, they had appeared to be competent and resourceful, and all were essentially “non-gentry.” This had led me to question the theorem stated by J. K. Fairbank, Hsiao Kung-

chuan, and other leading historians that imperial China had rested on an alliance between the territorial officials and the local gentry to the degree posited, denying or at least overlooking the capabilities and contributions of local leaders. Whilst fully aware of its general validity, it seemed to me that it required some qualification, and I had therefore suggested that this working alliance, which Professor Fairbank described as a “platform,” might, in practice, have been underpinned by another, lower but larger and—given that it was likely to have been countrywide—no less important platform of local, largely non-gentry, managers at the township, village and small lineage level, whose cooperation and support was equally necessary for the maintenance of law and order in ordinary times. (James Hayes, *The Hong Kong Region 1850-1911*, 2012, xiii.)

Dr. Hayes characterized and emphasized his discussion by referring to the concept of “indigenous,” which enables us to discuss local society from within and from very basic society, with a sort of autonomous self-reproduction by their own.

I myself think that the term “indigenous” is very important for our history studies to find dynamism of local society from within and its own new role in the globalizing world in particular.

I hope Dr. James Hayes, with his gentle smile, also agrees to our renewed emphasis of the importance of research and discussion on the historical concept of indigenous society in this globalizing world.

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Condolences for the Loss of Dr. James Hayes

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I would like to offer my condolences for the loss of Dr. James Hayes.

I am deeply shocked and saddened by this news.

Although I met him only once during my stay for fieldwork in the New Territories of Hong Kong, I

have been learning a lot from his writings since I was a Ph. D. candidate of the University of Tokyo. My studies on rural villages and lineages in Hong Kong depend heavily on his findings and insights. He was such a great person as a researcher and as a mediator between east and west. I will all miss him.