

Studies of Japanese Society and Culture: Sociology and Cognate Disciplines in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This paper reviews the studies of Japanese society and culture undertaken by Hong Kong-based sociologists and scholars in related disciplines. It presents information on research projects funded by the Research Grants Council, Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) journal articles, authored and edited books, book chapters, non-SSCI and non-A&HCI journal articles, as well as master and doctoral theses written by scholars and graduate students associated with Hong Kong's major universities. It is found that the main topics of research are Japan's capitalist development and corporate growth, meanings and social ramifications of traditional and popular culture, education, gender, and marriage, as well as aspects of work and employment, whereas the major research methods include document analysis, ethnography, and in-depth interviews. The limited amount of research and the preoccupation with economic development and popular culture reflect in part Hong Kong's unique political conditions and the government's indifference to the pursuit of social and political policy analysis. In recent years, the growth of academic exchanges between scholars in Hong Kong, Japan, and other East Asian regions and the heightened emphasis by university administrators on academic research will hopefully bring about advancements in such academic endeavors.

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to review the study of Japanese society and culture by sociologists and scholars in related disciplines based in Hong Kong, focusing in particular on the period between the 1990s and 2010. This paper was originally charged with the responsibility of reviewing sociological studies of Japan in Hong Kong. However, in part because of the porous disciplinary boundary of sociology, and in part

because of the relative scarcity of mainstream sociological studies of Japan in Hong Kong, this essay will broaden its scope and examine the sociological, anthropological, and sociologically informed cultural and media studies.¹

The following will endeavor to layout the historical linkages between Japan and Hong Kong, which provides in part an explanation of the substantive focus of the available researches. It will then move on to outline the institutional setup for Japanese studies in Hong Kong. An overview of the existing researches and a more in-depth examination of their substantive questions, methodological approaches, and key arguments of some of the studies will be made. The concluding section will identify the problems and explore the prospects of Japanese studies in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong and Japan: political and economic linkages

To make sense of the direction and volume of research on Japanese society in Hong Kong, it would be helpful to start by highlighting a few basic ‘facts’ and statistics. A most important occurrence that linked Hong Kong with Japan in the modern era was the occupation of Hong Kong by the Japanese military government for over 44 months around the end of the Second World War (that is between December 1941 and August 1945). The experience left much bitter feeling among the older generation of Hong Kong Chinese. Memory of the occupation and, more generally, that of Japan’s invasion of China have been awakened by incidents such as disputes over the territorial rights of the Diaoyu Islands and the Ministry of Education’s approval of revised history textbooks, which in turn provoked protests and petitions among segments of the Hong Kong population.

However, Hong Kong is a curiously ‘apolitical’ society. In the first place, despite difficult relationships between Japan and Hong Kong, the level of their economic and cultural exchanges has only increased over the years. In 2008, Japan was Hong Kong’s third largest trading partner – sixth largest market for domestic exports, third largest market for re-exports, and second largest source of imports (HKTID, 2010). In the same year, 494 Japanese firms chose to set up regional offices and 238 set up regional headquarters in Hong Kong (HKCSD, 2010). Just as important, Hong Kong people have been consuming Japanese popular culture since the 1970s. TV dramas such as ‘The Sign is V’, ‘Long Vacation’, and many others have charmed generations of Hong Kong viewers. The same could be said of films, animations, popular music, and fashion. Japan has also become a favorite destination for travel and, in 2010, 466,000 Hong Kong

¹ In so delimiting the boundary, this paper will cover a broad spectrum of researches that examine economic, political, and cultural phenomena. However, it will only deal with those making reference to social relations, social structure, and culture. Hence, research on management strategies will not be reviewed here unless it examines factors of culture and social structure, and the same could be said of those cultural analyses that centre on textual analysis alone.

tourists visited Japan, contributing 5.85% of the total visitors to the country in the same period² (JTM, 2011).

In the second place, Hong Kong is also ‘apolitical’ in the sense that the territory has been regarded by its administrators as a theatre of economic accumulation alone. Matters of international relations are to be removed from the jurisdiction of the local government, and entrusted to either the British government or, after 1997, the central government in Beijing (cf. Bridges, 2003; Mathews, 2001). Furthermore, most Hong Kong people were willing to fall back on their own resources to tackle their needs. This ‘apolitical’ characteristic has rendered it unnecessary for the government to engage proactively in social and economic policy-making. As a result, the government has not been eager to support research into international affairs and social-political practices of its neighboring countries. Only in the 1990s, when the completely new idea of university education dawned on the Hong Kong government, was the university funding authority paid greater attention and given more support to undertake academic research.

Taken together, the study of Japan in Hong Kong had a late start and, even since the 1990s, it has not been guided by strategic or policy concerns. Instead, research questions have been pursued according to the interests of individual researchers, which generally focus on the economic achievements or cultural phenomena of Japan – issues that have all along captured the attention of the Hong Kong community.

Japanese studies in Hong Kong: an institutional overview

The attempt to provide an institutional overview of Japanese studies in Hong Kong turned out to be less straightforward than it appeared. In the first place, not all scholars researching Japan are based in departments of Japanese Studies. Rather, they have been affiliated with a variety of departments and research centers. In the second place, universities in Hong Kong have for a long time adopted a global approach in their recruitments. As a result, Japanese experts working in Hong Kong might be Americans, Britons, Danish, Japanese, Korean, or Swedish, with varying periods of residency in the territory. In other words, unlike the cases of China and Korea, Japanese experts to be reviewed in the coming section might not be Hong Kong Chinese at all.

While bearing these two points in mind, it remains helpful to undertake an overview of institutional setups for Japanese studies. At the time of writing in 2010, Hong Kong has a total of seven publicly funded universities, a privately funded one, and a few other publicly or privately funded institutes of higher education. Among the seven publicly funded universities, only two of them, namely the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), run Departments of Japanese Studies that offer major programs at the undergraduate level. According to information disclosed by the webpage of the Department of Japanese Studies at HKU,

² Among the tourists originating from Asia, the number from Hong Kong was only behind those from Korea, Taiwan, and China. Indeed, the figure compared favourably with the number of tourists from the entire USA, which stood at 673,300 in 2010 (JMT, 2011).

the Department was founded in 1985, though it had been offering language courses much earlier. Similarly, the Department of Japanese Studies at CUHK was formally launched in 1991, reorganized from the 'Japanese Studies Section' of the university's Language Center, which had been offering trainings in the Japanese language since 1967. Of the remaining five publicly funded universities, four offer courses on Japanese language, Japanese culture, and even programs of minor studies at the undergraduate level either through their language centers or through their Chinese and/or translations departments (Table 1). In other words, it would not be unfair to say that language is the starting point for all universities in Hong Kong to offer courses on Japan.

Focusing further on the two Departments of Japanese Studies that offer major programs at the undergraduate level, it is notable that over 200 students at HKU majored in Japanese Studies in year 2003. By the standard in Hong Kong, the size is substantial. Seeking to account for the program's popularity,³ the Department of Japanese Studies at HKU stated that:

To Hong Kong, Japanese companies are important investors, and, to job hunters, they are also important employers. Japanese companies offer jobs to thousands of new university graduates every year. University graduates have come to understand that knowledge of the Japanese language is a must for them to win in the keen job competition. (HKU, 2010)

This statement, which emphasizes the utilitarian nature of Hong Kong students' interest in Japanese studies and the centrality of language training in the program, certainly captures the origin of, and a major reason for, the spread of Japanese studies in Hong Kong. In time, other aspects of Japanese studies have been introduced. The Department points out in addition that 'The Department offers a series of courses on Japanese business, education, popular culture, women, literature, Sino-Japanese relations, anthropology of Japan, comparative and applied linguistics, contemporary Japanese society and culture and so on' (HKU, 2010). Similarly, the Department of Japanese Studies at CUHK also suggests that their program 'explores Japan through multiple disciplinary fields including anthropology, cultural history, film studies, international relations, linguistics, popular culture studies and sociology' (CUHK, 2010).

As noted before, not all scholars that have researched Japan are based in departments of Japanese Studies within universities in Hong Kong. A few of them can be found in the anthropology department and political science departments. Instead of reviewing their institutional setups, the following will turn to examine the studies that have been undertaken in relation to the Japanese society.

³ In September 2003, apart from the 200 students majoring in Japanese studies, more than 1,200 students from different faculties of the University applied to enroll in one of the Japanese language courses offered by the Department (HKU, 2010).

Table 1. Publicly funded universities in Hong Kong that offer Japanese studies courses, 2010

	HKU ¹	CUHK	HKUST	CityU	PolyU	HKBU	LingnanU
Name of the Department	Department of Japanese Studies	Department of Japanese Studies	Nil	Department of Chinese, Translation & Linguistics	Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies	Language Center (foreign language)	Center for English and Additional Languages
Programs offered	Major and minor programs	Major and minor programs	N/A	Minor programs	Language courses	Language courses	Language courses
Year established	1985	1987	N/A	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Teaching and research staff (N)	20 (full-time and part-time, excluding honorary appointment)	16	0	8	1	4 (part-time)	Not known

Notes:

¹ The universities referred to in this table are the University of Hong Kong (HKU), Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), City University of Hong Kong (CityU), Polytechnic University of Hong Kong (PolyU), Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), and Lingnan University (LingnanU).

Sources:

Chinese University of Hong Kong, Department of Japanese Studies (2010), 'About us', Official Webpage <http://www5.cuhk.edu.hk/jas/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=96&Itemid=117> accessed August 11, 2010.

City University of Hong Kong, Department of Chinese, Translation and Linguistics (2010), 'People', Official webpage <http://ctl.cityu.edu.hk/People/Peop_peopleProfile.asp?peop_rkcl=1&peop_StfID=458> accessed August 11, 2010.

Hong Kong Baptist University, Language Center (2010), 'Staff', Official Webpage <http://lc.hkbu.edu.hk/staff_academic_foreign.php> accessed August 11, 2010.

Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies (2010), 'Our Staff', Official Webpage <<http://www.cbs.polyu.edu.hk/staffs/Matsumoto-Masum.php>> accessed August 11, 2010.

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Division of Humanities (2010), 'Academic Staff', Official Webpage <<http://www.ust.hk/~webhuma/faculty/facu.html>> accessed August 11, 2010.

Lingnan University, Center for English and Additional Languages (2010), 'Staff', Official Webpage <<http://www.ln.edu.hk/ceal/>> accessed August 17, 2010.

University of Hong Kong, Department of Japanese Studies (2010), 'Staff', Official Webpage <<http://www.hku.hk/japanese/>> accessed August 11, 2010.

The study of Japanese society and culture: sociology and related disciplines

Following the example of universities in the United States and Europe, institutes of higher education in Hong Kong have placed increasing weight on academic research as a yardstick to measure the competitiveness of their academic staff. In addition to regular reviews by individual universities, the University Grants Committee (UGC) has undertaken, at irregular intervals, the Research Assessment Exercise since 1996. Recognizing the importance of academic research, the Research Grants Council (RGC) was also formed in 1991 to provide funding on a competitive basis.

Although researchers have become more active in Hong Kong, and there are a number of local publishers, there does not appear to be many books or academic journals dedicated to the publication of research on Japanese studies.⁴ In the eyes of local academic institutions, international publishers and international refereed journals tend to carry higher prestige than local ones. Not surprisingly, local researchers endeavor to 'internationalize' their publications where possible.

The following will examine four data sources in order to itemize the research on Japan undertaken by Hong Kong-based scholars. First, because the three main 'research universities' in Hong Kong have got the lion's share of postgraduate research students, the review will start by examining the 'thesis catalogues' of these universities in order to ascertain the extent/substance of interest on Japan among Hong Kong postgraduate students. Second, to understand the more 'important' studies of Japan undertaken by researchers based in Hong Kong, the paper will then examine research projects funded by the Research Grants Council (1991–2010). Third, a search of the ISI Web of Science⁵ (1994–2010) will be undertaken, as papers published by 'social sciences citation index (SSCI)' and 'arts and humanities citation index (A&HCI)' journals are generally considered to be of higher prestige and greater value. Finally, an effort will be made to survey books, book chapters, and non-SSCI and non-A&HCI journal articles on Japan published by Hong Kong-based researchers.

Research and publication: an overview of theses, research fund, books, and articles

Master and doctoral theses. A search of the 'thesis' catalogue of the Chinese University of Hong Kong library with the keyword 'Japan' between 1991 and 2010 comes up with 33 theses. Most of them are in the fields of management and finance, a few in international relations, and some in natural sciences. Only four are studies of

⁴ Some Japan-related educational institutions in Hong Kong have sponsored a few publications, but they do not appear to be regular book series.

⁵ The primary databases for the ISI Web of Science include (1) the Social Science Citation Index [SSCI] (1994–2010) and (2) the Arts and Humanities Citation Index [A&HCI] (2001–2010). The ranking of academic journals is a controversial matter. However, it is believed by many university administrators that journals included in the SSCI and A&HCI, and ranked by the ISI, are those published regularly and of higher prestige.

Japan from the sociological and related perspectives, with two on the overseas Japanese communities and two on Japanese culture or popular culture (see Appendix I). A similar search of the University of Hong Kong library comes up with 29 theses, with some in the fields of finance and business, and a few in public administration and public policy. About ten can be classified as sociology and related studies. Among them, five focus on challenges to Japanese working women, whether at home or at work, two on popular culture, one on religious practice, one on culture, and one on business networks (Appendix I).

Projects funded by the research grants council (RGC). As mentioned above, the Research Grants Council is a statutory body established by the Hong Kong government in 1991 to fund basic, and later on, policy research. Its budget has expanded and its approach has become more aggressive over time. Between 1991 and 2010, 1,826 projects in the category of 'Humanities, Social Sciences, and Business Studies' were funded (UGC, 2010).⁶ Among these, no more than 17 are concerned with Japan (Appendix II). Whereas ten of these projects address issues of business administration and two examine politics and international relations; no more than five projects are comparative studies that are concerned with aspects of culture, gender and marriage, and stratification in Japan.

Books, book chapters and international refereed journal articles. In a way similar to research funding examined above, the total number of publications on Japan written by Hong Kong-based scholars is rather limited. A search of the ISI Web of Science with the keyword 'Japan' in the SSCI and A&HCI databases between 1994 and 2010 has come up with a total of 228 journal articles.⁷ Among them, only 18 are substantive essays (rather than book reviews) that can be considered to fall within the discipline of sociology and the related ones of anthropology and cultural studies (Appendix III).

However, apart from these SSCI and A&HCI journals, research findings on Japan by Hong Kong-based scholars have also been published as books, book chapters, and non-SSCI or non-A&HCI academic journals. An effort has therefore been made to search the list of publications of scholars teaching presently at departments of Japanese studies, anthropology, and sociology in major universities in Hong Kong. The search has come up with more publications, including 18 authored or edited books as well as 65 book chapters or non-SSCI and non-A&HCI journal articles⁸ (Appendix III).

⁶ A total of 12,053 projects have been funded by the RGC between 1991 and 2010. Of these, 1,826 are in the category of 'Humanities, Social Sciences, and Business Studies'. Owing to administrative changes over the years, a certain senior researcher at the RGC suggested that I should search the database by using the following keywords: 'Social Studies', 'Arts and Languages', 'Education', and 'Business Studies'.

⁷ The search was undertaken on 15 August 2010. Apart from the keyword 'Japan', the search was also delimited to those authors with address in 'Hong Kong'.

⁸ The resultant list as presented here is controversial. First, the author only browsed websites of departments with scholars doing researches 'related' to sociology. This involved the making of judgments that could be arbitrary. Second, websites are edited and updated according to the interests and resources of individual departments. They may not have the latest information or would have omitted

Taken together, a wide variety of sociology and sociology-related topics on Japan have been examined by scholars based in Hong Kong. Broadly speaking, they include studies of (1) Japan's capitalist development and growth of individual business corporations, (2) a variety of cultural phenomena, including advertisements, films, pop music, TV drama, food, heritage, and tourism, and their social implications, (3) the intellectual dimension of culture, including the specificities of studying anthropology, philosophy, and other academic disciplines in Japan, (4) the educational system, (5) inter-racial marriages, (6) the gender aspect of work and employment, (7) the work ethics of particular professions, and (8) social problems and social welfare provisions (Appendix III).

As can be observed from Appendix III, the lion's share of publications on Japan concerns culture and popular culture, focusing in particular on their social ramifications, such as globalization, representation of gender, effects on identity formation, and impacts on lifestyles and worldviews. In turn, the second most studied topic concerns Japan's capitalist development and corporate growth, examining them from the perspectives of the world system and culture.

*The study of Japanese society and culture: questions, concepts, methods*⁹

Having provided a broad overview, this section will examine more closely some of the key questions addressed, theoretical and methodological approaches adopted, and arguments proposed. Space limit has prevented a thorough review of all the researches; only the more prevalent topics will be reviewed below.

Capitalist development and corporate growth. The miraculous economic development of Japan has intrigued scholars worldwide; researchers in Hong Kong are no exception. So and Chiu (1996), for example, have approached the matter from the macroscopic perspective. They examine the massive development of Japan as part of the East Asian system, which in their analysis consists also of China, Taiwan, and the two Koreas. Borrowing the 'world-system' perspective pioneered by Immanuel Wallerstein and relying on the historical-comparative method, they have analyzed the importance of the geo-political context and its interaction with Confucianism, the state, and market forces.

But it has been more common for Hong Kong-based scholars to examine Japan's economic growth from the microscopic angle of corporate growth and management

publications from an earlier era. A better way would be to consult the annual reports on research and publications furnished by each university in the last 20 years. However, such a search would be formidable, some of the publications could be missing, and the result would still be inconclusive.

⁹ Despite my willingness to provide a comprehensive review of all the studies mentioned under the categories of 'capitalist development and corporate growth' and 'culture and value: traditional and popular' highlighted in Appendix III, I have not been able to do so. There are two reasons. First, I am ashamed to report that I do not read Japanese, and therefore cannot review those works published in the language. Second, some of the publications are not collected by libraries in Hong Kong, and so I do not have the opportunity to read them.

strategies. Wong (1999), Refsing *et al.* (2003), Nakano and Wong (2005), and Nakano (2009), for instance, have relied on the analysis of historical documents as well as the use of ethnography and in-depth interviews to study the emergence, institutionalization, and popularization of Yaohan in Hong Kong, on the one hand, and the growth of the Shun Hing Group, which has served as Matsushita's sole agent for National (later Panasonic) electrical products since the 1950s, on the other hand. Focusing more directly on corporations in Japan, Mathews (2004) and Davison *et al.* (2009) have also relied on in-depth interviews and the survey method, respectively, to examine the views on work and employment of Japan's younger generation as well as those of the information technology professionals.

A variety of themes has been explored by these studies, and globalization is one of them. For Nakano (2009) and Refsing *et al.* (2003), Matsushita's global success in marketing its National rice cookers and other electrical products was facilitated in part by Shun Hing Group's effort to render them more suitable to the needs and aesthetics of the Hong Kong people (i.e. glocalization). Being the earliest importer of large items like refrigerators, Shun Hing also helped to improve the packaging of and logistics for the export of such products. The procedure (localization and indeed logistics), once tested out and established in Hong Kong, was used by Matsushita for markets in other parts of the world.

Business network is a second idea that has been given some attention. Relying on arguments proposed by sinologists, Nakano (2009) highlights how business networks cultivated by the Chinese throughout the world have made possible the export of National products to Southeast Asia. Employees of Matsushita, for instance, recalled how they were surprised to find rice cookers in the Philippines and radios in Indonesia even before their company had records of such exports. According to Refsing *et al.* (2003), rice cookers were exported from Osaka to Hong Kong, Manila, and the rest of Southeast Asia, whereas FM radios were exported from Osaka to Hong Kong, Jakarta, and then the rest of Southeast Asia.

The notion of trust has also been explored to some extent by these studies. Again relying on the works of sinologists, Nakano (2009) has documented how personal trust (*vis-à-vis* institutional trust) has facilitated the forging of business relationships between the Matsushita Group and Shun Hing Group. Importantly, although the Chairman of the Matsushita Group refused at the outset to give William Mong a written contract for his sole agency in Hong Kong, the relationship has been upheld for over 50 years. Similarly, William Mong later turned down the invitation by Sony's Chairman to serve as the company's sole agent in Hong Kong, despite the prospect of great profit.

Linked to the matter of corporate growth are the issues of Japan's unique management strategies. Wong's (1999) research on Yaohan in Hong Kong, for instance, has reexamined critically the so-called three sacred measures of life-time employment – seniority wage/promotion system, and enterprise union – as well as Japan's alleged consensual society and the monolithic individual. He introduces the idea of power, and documents 'how the methods of organizing work, ranking, remuneration, and

promotion all contribute to foster the social and economic dependence of [Yaohan's] employees on the company, as well as the dependence on their supervisors' (1999: 8). Among other things, he examines the dual personnel system and some Japanese-only activities to understand the exercise of coercive and hegemonic power, and their 'naturalization' under the cover of ethnicity. His research has also led him to examine the issues of gender and marital status, and the ways they have mediated managerial control and identity formation among the employees (Wong, 1997, 2001). Focusing on the change of management strategies within Japan, Mathews (2004) has drawn upon in-depth interviews to explore the impacts exerted by the decline of lifetime employment on the country's younger generation.

Finally, stories of the Shun Hing Group and Yaohan have also been read from the angle of the rise of the middle class in Hong Kong. Importantly, if a rice cooker was considered a luxury for most Hong Kong families in the 1950s, advertisements, trial installation, and free courses offered by the Shun Hing Group have played a major part in rendering the rice cooker, microwave, refrigerator, television set, and washing machine necessities in present day Hong Kong, thus defining the 'middle-class' way of life (Refsing *et al.*, 2003). Similarly, although there is no lack of luxurious department stores in Hong Kong, Yaohan's business strategy allowed the lower middle class in Hong Kong to have a taste of shopping at a department store, which filled an important gap in Hong Kong (Wong, 1999, 2006).

Popular culture. Compared with Japan's capitalist development and corporate growth, the spread of Japan's popular culture to Hong Kong has captured even more academic interest. Lee (1998, 1999) and Ogawa (2001, 2004) have both sought to understand the popularization of Japan's pop music in Hong Kong. While Lee (1999) has adopted a broadly historical approach and relied on the analysis of secondary studies to provide an overview, Ogawa (2004) has in addition undertaken a case study of the Tetsuya Komuro (TK) band, using ethnography and interviews, to ascertain the gap between the creation of Japanese music and its reception in Hong Kong.

In turn, the dissemination of Japanese television dramas in Hong Kong has been studied by Nakano (2002) and Fung (2007). Nakano (2002) has relied upon document analysis and interviews to study the diffusion of television dramas designed for Japan's younger generation to Hong Kong and China. In turn, Fung (2007) has used a combination of textual analysis of three Japanese and three Hong Kong TV dramas, a telephone survey of 533 interviewees, and 20 in-depth interviews to study what he calls 'homologies' in Hong Kong and Japanese television soap operas.

Finally, the popularization of Japanese films in Hong Kong, and the mutual influences between Japanese films and the film industry and their Hong Kong counterparts have also been examined (H. Lee, 2006; P. Lee, 2006; Yau, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008a, 2009b, 2010a; Yeh and Davis, 2002). Relying on document analysis, H. Lee (2006) has provided a historical overview of the screening of Japanese 'artistic' films between 1962 and 2002 in Hong Kong, highlighting the roles of magazines, arts

centers, and other institutions in the films' dissemination. Yau, in her decade-long study, has relied on the analysis of primary documents (Chinese and Japanese), interviews with filmmakers and scholars, and textual analysis to examine facets of interactions between the film industries in Japan and Hong Kong, as well as dimensions of cultural representation in the Japanese movies.

A variety of themes has been addressed by the fore-mentioned studies. In the first place, some scholars have made valuable contributions by providing historical surveys or reexamining controversial historical issues. Lee (1999) has primarily documented in stages the rise and decline in the reception of Japanese pop music in Hong Kong from the 1960s to the 1980s. The same kind of stage-by-stage overview of the dissemination of cover and original versions of Japanese pop songs from the 1950s to the 1990s has also been made by Ogawa (2004). Yau's (2003, 2005, 2008a) studies of the musical and action movies in Japan and Hong Kong have likewise documented their exchanges from the 1940s to the 1990s, highlighting variations in the reception of Japanese movies in Hong Kong and vice versa, mutual influences in terms of artistic styles, and exchanges of personnel, including directors, technicians, composers, and movie stars. More significantly, Yau's doctoral thesis, which has been revised and published in Japanese, Chinese, and English, started by documenting the controversial history of Japan's efforts in the 1930s and 1940s to create a 'Greater East Asian cinema' and the resultant collaborations between Japan, China, and Hong Kong (Yau, 2007, 2009b). In her view, such collaborations laid the foundation for further exchanges between the film industries of Hong Kong and Japan in the post-war years.

The second theme explored by these studies concerns the changes in Hong Kong's social and demographic structures, configurations of its cultural industries, and the reception of Japanese films and pop music. Yau (2005), for instance, has attributed the rise of 'new style *wuxia pian*' (i.e. swordsmen's movies with 'heavy stylistic influence from Japanese *chanbara*') in part to the fact that, by the late 1960s, the post-war Hong Kong generation had reached young adulthood and replaced the older generation to constitute the big movie-goers. Similarly, Lee (1999) has noted the importance of Hong Kong's economic take-off in the 1970s and the emergence of a younger generation with disposable income for the rise of an audience with ears for Japanese or Japan-influenced popular music. In a slightly different way, Ogawa (2004: 150) has noted that despite Hong Kong's small and intensely competitive popular music market, which requires 'hits every three months' in order to tap into the global Chinese market, the local record industry lacks the productive capacity and has been dominated by foreign record companies more interested in short-term gains than investing in creative innovation. This has generated the industry's interest in music pieces produced in Japan. In all three cases, Japanese popular culture has been sought out actively by Hong Kong's consumers and producers.

A third and related theme that emerges is the notion of globalization. Nakano (2002) has critically evaluated the idea of 'cultural imperialism' by making observations similar to those advanced by Lee (1999), Ogawa (2004), and Yau (2005). In her view, the

flow of Japanese television dramas to Hong Kong has not been initiated by producers in Tokyo, but by ‘unforeseen consumers’ and ‘unauthorized intermediaries’ in Hong Kong (Nakano, 2002: 229; see also Ng, 2006). Specifically, just as most TV programs in Hong Kong had targeted the main audience, that is women over 40 years old, and ignored the younger generation, the latter found resonance in J-dramas that addressed frustrations and hardships encountered by youngsters in Japan. Facilitated by the technology of producing VCDs cheaply and fueled by information provided by local newspapers and magazines, J-dramas circulated speedily in Hong Kong.

The theme of globalization has also been investigated from the angle of the complex mediation of meanings at the global, regional, and national levels. Relying on textual analysis of television dramas produced in Japan and Hong Kong, Fung (2007) has found remarkable similarities in the ‘narratives, plots, and relations’ as well as homologies in (and fine differences between) the ideologies of gender roles, marriage, city relations, as well as love and consumption thus portrayed. Instead of seeing the ‘reappearance or regeneration of Japanese episodes’ and the homologies of ideologies as indications of cultural imperialism or copycat behavior, he believes they could have occurred naturally. They suggest not only the strong influence of Japanese culture over Hong Kong, but also Hong Kong’s cultural proximity with Japan and distance from the West. Above all, he believes the ‘regenerated text’ could also ‘transform into other meanings with new uses and take on political roles in the indigenous culture’ of Hong Kong (Fung, 2007: 272).

The complex mediation of meanings has also been examined by Ogawa (2001, 2004) even though he has not used the terms ‘localization’ and ‘hybridization’ explicitly. Focusing on the flow of Japanese popular music to Hong Kong, he suggests that there exist considerable gaps between the images of Japanese singers and music originally portrayed and those perceived in Hong Kong. Apart from wide differences between the tones and structures of Japanese and Cantonese, the short-term profit orientation of Hong Kong record companies also dampened their concern with ‘whether the image of cover song and singer correlates with the image of the original singer and song’ (Ogawa, 2004: 152).¹⁰

Finally, although this essay cannot provide more details, it has to be mentioned that researchers have also relied on textual analysis of Japan’s popular culture to understand the portrayal of gender roles and identities of the self (L. Nakano, 2001; Yau, 2008b, 2009a, 2010b).

‘Traditional’ culture: meanings and social ramifications. Apart from popular culture, Hong Kong-based sociologists and anthropologists have also paid attention to Japan’s traditional culture. Two of the most prominent topics are the changing impacts of traditional culture on self-identity (Mathews, 1996a, 1996b) and the ‘Ainu’ culture

¹⁰ Ogawa (2004: 152) writes that ‘Sometimes the original lyrics that describe the feeling of a macho man are changed to words describing the broken heart of a woman.’

(Cheung, 1996, 2000, 2003, 2008; Ogawa, 1998, 1999; Refsing, 1996, 2000). Most of these studies have relied on either the ethnographic method or the analysis of first-hand or secondary historical documents.

In the first place, Mathews (1996a, 1996b) has compared the ‘meanings of life’ for the Japanese and Americans, analyzing their changes over time and examining how they have been shaped by the culture as well as social and institutional structures of the two societies. While agreeing that the *ikigai* of most Japanese conform to their cultural prescriptions – namely the overriding importance of the group over self, and the importance of work/family for men and family/children for women – the *ikigai* of contemporary Japanese also tend to change with a person’s life course, focusing increasingly on the individual self as the ‘social role’ attributed to an individual subsides with old age and retirement.

However, among the elements of Japan’s ‘traditional’ culture, the ‘Ainu’ culture has attracted more extensive attention among the Hong Kong-based scholars. Importantly, Refsing (1996, 2000) has edited a number of books on their language, religion, folklore, and history as recorded by various early European travelers. In addition, she has also sought to understand the issue of ethnicity by examining why Europeans have continued to classify the ‘Ainu’ as ‘white’ people even after they have classified the Japanese and Chinese as ‘yellow’ (Refsing, 2003). The issue of ethnicity has been picked up by Ogawa (1999), who studies the revival of interest in the Ainu culture around the mid-1990s. Through a detailed ethnographic study of the actions, beliefs, and interests of the leaders and followers of the ‘Ainu culture revival movement’, including different generations of ethnic Ainu people and ethnic Japanese, he tries to explain why the Ainu culture revival movement could gain such widespread support in a country that has always prided itself as a single-ethnic society.

Though also concerned with the Ainu culture, Cheung (2003, 2008) has focused on its changes over time. He has examined the transition of the Ainu culture, as it has been shaped by the changing requirements for Japan’s state formation since the Tokugawa Shogunate (including the manipulation of ethnic identity for the purpose of boundary maintenance, racialization, land expropriation, etc.), the promotion of ethnic tourism in the 1950s, the effort to enact the Ainu New Law since 1984, and indeed Japan’s internationalization.

Conclusion

Hong Kong, as a British colony before 1997 and a special administrative region of the People’s Republic of China after, has until recent years few needs for social and political policy-making. Universities in the territory have also shown no more than moderate concern with academic research before the early 1990s. As a result, not only has the study of Japanese society and culture in Hong Kong a slack beginning, it also tends to be driven by the interests of individual scholars and the ‘ambiance’ of the Hong Kong society more generally.

The above has already provided an overview of the existing sociological and sociology-related studies of Japanese society and culture, highlighting their questions, methods, and major arguments. Suffice to mention at this point that the great interest shown by individual scholars on Japan's culture, on the one hand, and the country's miraculous economic development and corporate growth, on the other hand, coincides with the concern and popular imagination of the Hong Kong people. Hong Kong's unique political conditions and the absence of a state-directed research program also explain why a substantial number of existing studies have either been comparative research wherein Japan makes up no more than one of the cases, or inquiries that analyze Japan with a view to locating its relevance to Hong Kong.

It would be hard to predict the future direction of sociology and sociology-related research of Japan in Hong Kong. There will continue to be a lack of government directions, yet there are reasons to hope for an advancement of such studies. On the one hand, the University Grants Committee and all university administrators have given more emphasis to academic research. Not only have there been gradual increases in funding support, research performance has also played an increasing role in the evaluation of individual scholars. On the other hand, there are signs of more extensive exchanges among scholars in the East Asian region. Just as researchers from Hong Kong have taken part in conferences/workshops held in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and elsewhere, the reverse has also occurred. Individual scholars from different East Asian societies have also engaged in collaborative studies. With these institutional changes, there are reasons to hope for advancements in both the quantity and quality of Japanese research in Hong Kong.

About the author

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To include all references listed in the appendices would be prohibitive, therefore only those references referred to in the text are listed below. Readers interested in a complete list of references may contact the author.

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Appendix I: *Master and doctoral theses submitted to the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1991–2010*

Year	Name	Title	Degree	Univ.
2007	Iu, Yiu	Japanese Voice goes Global and Local: Globalization and Localization of the Japanese Seiyu Culture in Hong Kong	M.Phil.	CUHK
2006	Fang, Minyu	Case Study of Hong Kong Teenage Girls' Reading Japanese Romance Comics	M.Phil.	CUHK
2004	Ma, Yajun	'Little Japan' in Hongkou: The Japanese Community in Shanghai, 1895–1932	M.Phil.	CUHK
2004	Kwong, Wai-yan	A Comparative Study of Consumption Behavior between Mainland Travelers and Japanese Travelers in Hong Kong	MA	HKU
2004	Wong, Kam-fong	Temporary Work in Japan and Hong Kong: The Situation of Female Workers	M.Phil.	HKU
2002	Nishi, Mariko	The Social Organization of Family Work: Restructuring Family Work in Japanese Expatriate Families with Maids in Hong Kong	Ph.D.	CUHK
2002	Tam, Pui-yim	Japanese Popular Culture in Hong Kong: Case Studies of Youth Consumption of Cute Products and Fashions	M.Phil.	HKU
1999	Cheung, Nga-yan	Dilemma of Working Mothers in Hong Kong and Japan: Career and Family, 1945–1990s	MA	HKU
1999	Tang, Sau-man	A Comparative Study of the Status of Women in the Family: Japan and Hong Kong	MA	HKU
1998	Lau, Sum-yin	Escape, Exploration and Pursuit: Japanese Women Working in Hong Kong	M.Phil.	HKU
1997	Lau, Po-wah	Japanese Business Networks: Hong Kong Case Studies	MBA	HKU
1996	Wong, Kam Bill	Can Japanese Culture Explain Low Crime Rate?	MSS	HKU
1993	Tennant-Ogawa, Ella	Cosmological Practices in Hong Kong and Japan Today: A Comparative Study of Indigenous Taoist and Shinto Beliefs and Practices	MA	HKU
1991	Chwang, Lam-ying	Working Women in Japan and Hong Kong	MA	HKU

Appendix II: *Research projects related to Japan in the categories of 'Humanities, Social Sciences, and Business Studies' funded by the Research Grants Council, University Grants Committee, Hong Kong, 1991–2010*

Year	Name	Project title	Institution
2010	Jacobs, Katrien	Gothic Lolita Unchained: The Appropriation of Japanese Animation Narratives and Gender Discourses in Chinese Digital Media Contexts	CityU
2010	Teo, Victor Ee Leong	The Prospects and Challenges of Japan's 'Normalization': A Case Study of Japanese Diplomatic Activities in the Middle East from 1991 to 2009	HKU
2009	Wong, S. K. Raymond	Social Stratification and Mobility in East Asia: A Comparative Study of China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan	HKUST
2008	Sing, Ming	Public Support for Democracy in East Asia	HKUST
2002	Chen, Ziguang	Exploring the Relationships among HRM, Manufacturing Strategy, and Organizational Performance: A Comparative Study of Hong Kong, US, Japanese, and Chinese State-owned Manufacturing Firms in Mainland China	CityU
2002	Nakano, Lynne	Delayed or Indefinitely Postponed Marriage in Japan and Hong Kong: A Study of Never Married Women and Changing Social Values	CUHK
2002	Ng, Wai Ming	Japanese Elements in Hong Kong Entertainment Industry: A Historical and Ethnographic Survey	CUHK
2002	So, W. M. Raymond	Expropriation, Economic Performance and Corporate Governance: Evidence from Japan	CUHK
2001	Taylor, W. K. Bill	Japanese Multinationals and Supply Chain Control Strategies in Japan and China	CityU
2000	Yi, Cheong Heon	Ownership Structure and Income Smoothing: Evidence from Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan	PolyU
1999	Goyal, Vidhan K.	Asset Valuations, Liquidity And Investment: Evidence from Japan	HKUST
1999	Makino, Shigefumi	Technology Sourcing through FDI: The Case of Asian Multinationals in the US, UK, and Japan	CUHK
1998	Makino, Shigefumi	Joint Venture Ownership Structure and Performance: Japanese Joint Ventures in China	CUHK
1997	Tjosvold, Dean	Japanese Management In Hong Kong And China: Studies In Management Transfer	LingnanU
1996	Mathews, Gordon	Selves in the Cultural Supermarket: An Investigation into the Cultural Identities of Japanese Artists, American Religious Seekers, and Hong Kong Intellectuals	CUHK
1996	Taylor, W. K. Bill	Japanese Multinationals in China: Globalization of Strategic Control in Personnel and Production	CityU
1993	Wei, K. C. John	Volatility, price changes and volume spillover effects from the U.S. and Japanese stock markets to the Hong Kong and Taiwanese markets	HKUST

Source: UGC (University Grants Committee) (2010), 'General Research Fund: Funded Projects', <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/grf/fund/fund.htm> (accessed 18 September 2010).

Appendix III: *Sociology and sociology-related publications on Japan by scholars based in Hong Kong, 1994–2010*

Topic	Books	Journal Articles (SSCI and A&HCI)	Journal Articles (non-SSCI and non-A&HCI) and Book Chapters
Capitalist development and corporate growth: structure and culture	Y. Nakano, 2009; Y. Nakano and Wong, 2005; Refsing, Nakano and Wong, 2003; Wong, 1999a	So and Chiu, 1996	Y. Nakano, 2004, 2006; Wong, 1997a, 1998, 1999b, 2001b, 2006c
Culture (incl. advertisement, film, pop music, TV drama, food, heritage, tourism): globalization, gender, self-identity, lifestyle, worldviews	Hara, Chan and Wong, 1999; Ho, 2010; Lee, 2006; Mathews, 1996c; Mathews and White, 2004; L. Nakano, 2005; Refsing, 1996, 1998a, 2000a, 2002; Yau, 2007a, 2009b, 2010a	Cheung, 2003; Fung, 2007; Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Mathews, 1996a; Moeran, 1996; L. Nakano, 2000; Yeh and Davis, 2002	Cheung, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010; Cheung and Mitsuo, 2000; Lee, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; H. Lee, 2006; Mathews, 1996b, 2001, 2002, 2004a; L. Nakano, 2001; L. Nakano and Wagatsuma, 2003; Y. Nakano, 2002, 2007; Y. Nanako and Wu, 2002, 2003; Ng, 2006; Ogawa, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2004; Refsing, 2000c, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Wong and Lai, 2001; Yau, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2008f, 2009a, 2009c, 2009d, 2010b, 2010c

Culture (intellectual)	Wong and Hendry, 2006	Chew, 2005; Hayhoe, 1998	Mathews, 2004b, 2008; Wong, 2006a, 2006b
Education		Cave, 2001, 2004	
Gender, marriage, and family			Refsing, 1995, 1998b, 2000b
Social problems and social welfare: culture and social capital		Chan, Cheung, Peng, 2004; Levy, Ashman, Slade, 2009; V. Wong, 2009	
Work and employment: gender		Huen, 2007; Taylor, 2006	Wong, 1997b, 2001a
Work and employment: work ethics		Davison <i>et al.</i> , 2009	
