

## **State and Society: An Historical Description and Explanation of Student Movements in the Prewar Hong Kong**

**Dr Steven Hung**

Department of Social Sciences  
The Hong Kong Institute of Education

### **Abstract**

*The significance of student social movements in the Hong Kong prewar history has to be addressed. The paper goes to discuss student political or social movements at many paramount moments in the history of contemporary Hong Kong. The analysis of the scenario of Hong Kong student social movements should be put on more or different orientations of understanding. It is because, in the context of this contemporary Chinese history which represented the periods of starting from Opium Wars until 1941, many states or political and commercial blocs acted or played their different roles in Hong Kong. Many perspectives of description or explanation would be helpful for having more exact understanding of Hong Kong issues at the past and the present.*

### ***Introduction: the Statement of the Problem***

The aim of this paper is to analyze the contents of student movement in Hong Kong. Historical events have their reasons in these one hundred years from 1841 to 1941. The revisiting of Hong Kong society is necessary to re-define our understanding and explanation of Hong Kong student movements in the historical context. The work of this task force is begun by considering the relation of states and students. If these were political issues, I would like to devote most of my attention to events that challenged the way Hong Kong or China was being ruled. Student movements are the issues of critical social problems demanding investigation and action by the rulers in Hong Kong. Mass protest in Hong Kong must be analyzed in relation to crisis in the British Hong Kong government.

The main coverage is politics. They are what the modern states were taking effects for students of Hong Kong, what types of students political or social movements there were, and why they would take these actions. It is required to understand, describe and explain the relations of state and society, by the interaction of social movements of the prewar period in Hong Kong. It is interesting to see what the content of student movements were. Then we can have more understanding about what kind of people these youths were, how they saw their role in society and state.

I would like to capture this historical meaningfulness of these 100 years' history. Nowadays, student social movements vary widely in subject, success and size. Student activities take many forms, from harmonious social learning services helping society building to the other extremely of counter-government political actions opposing governmental or national ruling. What today's Hong Kong happened is hardly understandable. There are new student movements which have made changes in Hong Kong. Conflicts are increasing day by day obviously. High quality student movements are observable but they are always challenged by pro-Beijing groups without rational reasons. Its participation in the civil rights movement could be unlawful and illegal in the prewar Hong Kong. Protest can act as an interruption to the process of schooling. (Adams 1991, p.4) Any protest did not reflect idealism expressed in direct action but their resort to tactics of confrontation could be explained by referring to patriotic nationalism and counteracting imperialism.

### ***Concepts: The Application of State and Civil Society***

State and society are the terms hardly definable or no consensus on the meanings or on how relations between them could be understood. Generally speaking, a state is an organized society living under the government. A sovereign state is represented by the government that has supreme authority. Some states are subject to external sovereignty where ultimate power lies in another state, i.e., Hong Kong. Today, the modern nation-state obviously is the predominant form of state which people are subject to.

The recent meaning of society can be a collection of individuals composing a community or living under the organization and government. Within a given society, political regimes often exaggerate the violence of those challenging established institutions. However, civil society is seen as a social sphere. It is used to be a wide range of independent organizations, groups and association that are differed from state. They come together to advance their common interests through collective action.

Student movements are student activities in the political and social senses. It is work by students to call for political, economic, social or environmental change. Sometime, political participation is the intention or effect of influencing government policy. The avocational sentiments may be revolutionary and fall into anti-governmental political actions opposing state rulings. The way of improvement can be reformative or revolutionary where the former requires policy change and the later requires exactly pushing down the regime.

Certain cultural forms and values are likely to be hegemonic. These traditional values and forms of behavior serve as blinders that limit students' view of what is possible. Social movements express shifts in the consciousness of student actors as they are articulated in historically situated contexts. Student protests can take various forms: verbal criticism; written criticism; petitions; picketing; marches; nonviolent confrontations; nonviolent law breaking; obscene language; rock-throwing; milling; wild running; looting; burning; guerrilla warfare. Some of these forms are violent, others are not, others are hard to classify. (Skolnick 1968, p.5)

Five characteristics of a protest are interruption of schooling, temporariness, a group of pupil acting together, with purpose of expressing a grievance or of achieving change in their circumstances. (Adams 1991, p.4) Most protests by pupils are relatively short live in character. (Adams 1991, p.5) Most protests contain the instrument element of a demand for change in some respect of the education or schooling of pupils. (Adams 1991, p.5) They are resistant to dominant values, represents an express of protest. (Adams 1991, p.5) Demonstrations and revolutionary uprising are the most subversive and counter-hegemonic of acts of political activities. The hunger striker or the attempted suicide may be engaging in protest. (Adams 1991, p.5)

British Hong Kong refers to Hong Kong under British administration. In the period of the study from 1841 to 1941, China was ruled by the Ching government in the first seventy years and the British gained land in a series of unequal treaties. They acquired Hong Kong Island in 1822, Kowloon in 1860, and leased the New Territories in 1898. These made up the whole of Hong Kong. The other thirty years is after the establishment of the Republic of China. China fell into chaos because of the domination of powers by numerous warlords and not being unified. The Warlord Era, from 1912 to 1928, was ended by the successfulness of the Nationalist Northern Expedition. Hereafter, the nationalist government had to deal with power struggles, such as, the challenges of warlord coalitions, the communist riots and the Japanese invasion. So, the diplomatic relations were built between Hong Kong and the Ching government in the first seventy years and changed to complicated positions in the next thirty years. Student movements during this period cannot be classified as well. It needs detailed explanation of what exactly happened to student social movements in the history of Hong Kong.

### ***Method: Historical Analysis by Conceptual Mediation***

To understand social movements, we have to take into account the context of culture and history. Students articulated from major ongoing events a meaning which became the orientation or the ideal of the movement for a period of time. It was generally concluded that the student movements in Hong Kong did not take off until the late 1960s. I do not agree this as the Hong Kong student's political activities started much earlier. This paper is to find out the pictures of student movements from the starting of the colony to the prewar Hong Kong. The period was a hundred years from 1841 to 1941. Hong Kong student movements can be placed within an interpretive framework. The emphasis was put more upon tracing the relationship between student activities and political parties or upon analyzing the attractions of specific ideologies. It seeks to make sense of the past through the historical analysis of materials it leaves behind. Historical analysis is used as a strategy for establishing a context against which a contemporary study of student movements is set.

The other emphasis was put upon locating student movements or protests with the context of their social milieu and the dynamic revolutionary political culture of which they were part. (Wasserstrom 1991, p.9) Hong Kong students can be treated as part of a unified national political culture. The beliefs and actions of students were shaped in many ways by the political and cultural peculiarities of Hong Kong.

With the finding of student movements in Hong Kong, we want to have an account of the historical significance of social movements occurred during this period. In the context of Chinese history, it is in the period from the Opium War until the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong.

### ***Content of Study: The Historical Account of Student Movements***

Recently, the public were attracted by the post-90s student protests against the introduction of Moral and Nation Education into Hong Kong schooling system which the subject would be planned to be a compulsory subject taught by schools of basic education stages. Their momentum was kept under the democratization movements of Hong Kong constitutional reform nowadays. The world can wonder why such students taking parts so active politically that they are “lessons in dissent”. Or they are exactly under aged to participate in politics. It triggers our society to reflect about the issues of student social movements in Hong Kong which are under what influences and which situations are so effectual that students take such active parts in our political or social activities.

The sovereignty of Hong Kong can be classified simply which were the British Colony from January 1841 to June 1997<sup>1</sup> and the Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China started from 1 July 1997. But the external factors were exerted forces on Hong Kong that they were given by many nation states or political blocs in the whole historical context. That is to say that there cannot be confined with the simple or idealized state and society relationship to tell about student social movements in the history of Hong Kong.

The goals of this paper have been to investigate the political activities of young people and to begin to recognize strategies for mobilizing them. The youth possessed fewer recognition that contributed to participation and were less political aware than adults. However, it was not true in the history of Hong Kong. They were active sometimes. The historical observation intends to find the reality of student social movements in Hong Kong from 1841 to 1941.

### **1. Making clear the Path of Chinese Nationalization and Starting of Student Movements in Hong Kong**

Being governed by the Ching government for almost more than 200 years, Chinese nationalism was not commonly acknowledged. The Late Ching Emperors was in state of instability. The subsequent defeat led foreign powers to establish a foothold in the five treaty ports. After the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-95, the crisis of authorities was deepened by external powers and people’s confidence. For an example, the Treaty of Nanking ended the Opium War on 29 August 1842. Interesting enough, the Article 9 showed the Chinese subjects if they worked for the Britain, could be protected from punishment. The content of the article was:

The Emperor of China agrees to publish and promulgate, under his Imperial sign manual and seal, a full and entire amnesty and act of indemnity to all subjects of China, on account of their having resided under, or having had dealings and intercourse with, or having entered the service of Her Britannic Majesty, or of Her Majesty’s officers; and His Imperial Majesty further engages to release all Chinese subjects who may be at this moment in confinement for similar reasons.

At that moment, most of Chinese people in Hong Kong were single men and employed by labour contractors. They did not care for nationalism and Chinese national identity was not commonly signified. We could see again that a corps of 2000 coolies served as porters to the Anglo-French expedition against China in 1858.

The Ching government established the walled Kowloon City but the city and Guangzhou (former Canton) were attacked by the Tiandihui (Heaven and Earth Society) in 1854 during the Taiping Rebellion. The benefit of upheaval brought to Hong Kong its first considerable influx of rich Chinese. The rising and well-connected firms were based in Hong Kong and they built up social and financial networks among Chinese to leading international cities. Basically, when the British occupied Hong Kong Island in January 1841, there were merely 2000 inhabitants and we could not find any student social movements until the revolutionary movement of Sun Yat-sen in the 1890s. In fact, Yung Wing was a pupil at the Morrison School of the Mission Education Society in Hong Kong from 1842 to 1847. After his graduation from Yale College in 1854 he actively took himself for the contribution of Chinese society, helped to develop armaments industry and successfully proposed sending students overseas.

---

<sup>1</sup>Of course we cannot consider that it was a British colony in the whole period. The questionable periods are many such as the earliest occupation was not recognized until 29 August 1942, Japanese occupation from 25 December 1941 to 30 August 1945 and United Nations deleted Hong Kong as a colony in 1972 and here after until June 1997.

He successfully proposed and organized young Chinese students to study in the United States. Many of students, with some came from Hong Kong, returned to China and made significant contributions to modernizing China. Pupils in Hong Kong were educated who generally joined forces with the colonial authorities. They were Chinese members of European companies and the power of the compradors. They acted as links between the British and the Chinese business communities.

When the Sino-French War happened from August 1884 to April 1885, some three thousand civilians were killed in the bombardment of Foozhou in August 1884. The Chinese reaction was fierce and immediate and the southern provinces of China from Zhejiang to Yunan were swept past waves of anti-foreignism. Hong Kong caused to be involved that a strike broke out in the shipyards protesting the French warship in Hong Kong. Chinese labours acted on to the extent of demonstrations and refusal by port workers to service French vessels. (Welsh 1997, p.291) People in Hong Kong refused all offers of pay to do any work whatsoever for the French ships. It was the first manifestation of a spontaneous, grass-roots nationalism in Hong Kong. It was distinct from the old generalized xenophobia and directed against one specific nation. (Welsh 1997, p.291) However, the British government acted with authoritarianism. People were commanded to return to work or, otherwise, they were fined. The issue result gained tranquil. Sun Yat-sen was a student in Hong Kong<sup>2</sup> and learned his ideas of revolution starting the Chinese people in Hong Kong standing against to work for French army. The resistances of Chinese people being as French labours activated his national sentiments were not anti-imperialist but nationalistic and Chinese self-strengthening. He read from local newspapers and reviews of the Sino-French War and course of the negotiations. He witnessed worker's strikes and merchants' boycotts against the French as sheer acts of patriotism. All these helped to affirm his desire to work for the salvation of his nation. (Ng Lun et al 1986, p.5)

Later, he studied at the Hong Kong College of Medicine for Chinese from 1887 to 1892. During this time, there was the Ching Dynasty rebellion. With a group of revolutionary thinkers, they were nicknamed the Four Bandits. They grew increasingly frustrated by the corrupted and conservative Ching government and its refusal to adopt more technological advanced and western knowledge to reform China. It was explained by Ng Lun Ngai-ha.

The environment of culture of the school itself played perhaps a more significant part in affecting the political attitude of some of the students. Firstly, the school provided a meeting place for youths who were in their formative and impressible years. Ideas could be more easily exchanged and spread. Thus Tse Tasn-tai admitted that his revolutionary ideas were formulated during his years at the Central School among a group of friends. Sun Yat-sen too was frequently visited Yan Ho-ling, Chen Shao-pai and Yu Lieh at the Medical College to discuss politics. (cited in Ng Lun 1984, p.151)

The group actually was spreading the idea of overthrowing the Ching. The one was Yeung Ku-wan as the leader and founder of the Furen Literacy Society<sup>3</sup>. The other one was Tse Tsan-tai who was a student at the Central School and the other one of earliest revolutionaries. The guiding principles of the Society were to "open up the people's minds" and "Love your nation with all your heart". It released books and pamphlets discussing the fate of China and advocating the overflow of the Ching government. They merged with the Hong Kong Chapter of the Revive China Society in 1894 and wanted a revolution to replace the imperial dynastic system with a modern nation state in the form of a republic. The Revive China Society was founded in Honolulu on 24 November 1894 and the branch was set up at Hong Kong in February 1895. The oath was to "Expel Manchus, Revive China and Establish a Republic Government". After the failure of Guangzhou uprising in October 1895, the Hong Kong government forced Yeung and Sun to leave, barring them from entering Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government monitored student activities very much and their activities were prevented from making troubles between Hong Kong and the Guangzhou government. The British Hong Kong government actually adopted the neutral policy but, in order to make good relationship with the Guangdong government, they prohibited the revolutionary activities from being carried out.

Yeung was assassinated in his school by an agent sent by the Ching government and reported by Hong Kong Daily Press on 12 January 1901. It was stated:

<sup>2</sup>He studied at the Diocesan Boy's School in 1883 and the Government Central School from 1884 to 1886.

<sup>3</sup> The society was formed in Hong Kong in June 1892 by Yeung Kiwan and Tse Tsantai. It was the first formal organization of small group of young intellectuals in Hong Kong. They had been educated in Hong Kong and lost of them were employed either as teachers or clerks in government office and commercial forms.

It appears that shortly after six o'clock when teacher and pupils were engrossed in the studies of the day, a man suddenly entered the room, which is situated on the first floor at 52, Gage Street, and before Mr. Yueng had recovered from his surprises at the unexpected intrusion, or had time even to utter a word, the man whipped out a revolver and fired four shots in rapid succession at the unfortunate school master, who fell to the ground. The murdered schoolmaster was 34 years of age and well known to his compatriots in the colony as a political reformer. (cited in Sweeting 1990, p.271)

The Boxer Rebellion was motivated by pro-nationalist sentiments and opposition to foreign imperialism in China in 1900. It was a major cause in the degeneration of Ching Dynasty. Here after the riots happened frequently in China until the 1911 Revolution. These events aroused nationalistic responses from a new generation. Social movements in Hong Kong were not avoidable. Student movements, on the contrary, were seldom. The education policy was revised in 1902. Two separated languages system were financed differently. The Hong Kong government changed the education policy. The English schools were given great assistance and the Chinese were ignored. The popular education for Chinese was dominated by the conservative and elite Chinese organizations. Majority of them did not support revolutions and preferred constitutional reforms.

In the closing period of the Ching Dynasty, militarism education had been voiced. It was noted that this national militarism ever educated pupils in defense for China in some vernacular schools in Hong Kong. The school was set up by Li Zi-zhong and Shi Gu-yu at the former site of the Longjin Charity School in the Kowloon City. The purpose of the school was to promote modern subjects of learning and to disseminate the revolutionary message among students. It also introduced physical education in the form of military drills so as to arouse people's attention to movement for self-strengthening. The school was closed in 1907 but physical drill as a school subject began to gain popularity in a number of schools in Hong Kong. (cited in Ng Lun et al 1986, p.52)

Although Hong Kong had been a source of revolutionary ideas and a base for the preparation of anti-Manchu operations, the Hong Kong government had no intention of encouraging such development. (cited in Ng Lun 1984, p.150) The prominent social activities recorded were actually two cases only which were in 1905 and 1908. The history discovered that these two social movements or strikes were led by the Chinese merchants with their complicated conflicts of interests. The movements were the boycott of American and Japanese products respectively where were organized by interest related industrial merchants with their workers or labours.

Popular unrest threatened not only the British Hong Kong government, but also community peace, prosperity and stability which were the commercial interests of Chinese merchants. However, no noticeable student movements occurred during this period until 1911 Revolution. It inspired Hong Kong people to a new awareness of national identity and political consciousness. But the dominated educational system could not react with this scenario.

The Chinese Revolution stimulated certain enthusiasm among the education authorities in Hong Kong. An act of indiscipline resulted in the expulsion of a considerable number of boys at Queen's College in 1911. Lugard again alluded to the debating society and expressed his disapproval of the discussion of political subjects. (Cheng 1949, p.272) He spoke about the sympathy which had been evoked by the recent events in China in an address to the pupils of St. Joseph's College in 1912.

The University of Hong Kong was founded in 1912. It was expressed that the paramount founding of the university was on the future of China and the relations between Britain and the Chinese nation. (Cheng 1949, p.268) But Chinese parents found by experience that their children returned from studies in foreign countries with revolutionary mind sets and caused a danger to the state. It was considered of the significance that the University should not be allowed to foster political societies and organizations. The letter of Lugard, the governor, to Guangzhou in the "conception and foundation of the University of Hong Kong" on 20 January 1909 expressed that pupils would study Hong Kong among their own race and not become denationalized. Separated for long years from their families, returning might be with revolutionary ideas and having lost their pride in their nation and patriotism. (cited in Sweeting 1990, p.281)

What it had been said that since the founding of the University of Hong Kong, students had no sense of belonging to Hong Kong. They only adopted the attitude of indifferent observer on events in China. A stagnant, uncritical and despondent atmosphere pervaded the university campus. Material satisfaction and degenerate personal honour and status were what the students look for. (Cheuk 1978 cited in Leung 1992, p.10)

The further step of the Hong Kong government was to control the political activities of schools by the way of compulsory school registration. They enacted the Education Ordinance 1913. Part of Article 12 was:

It shall be lawful for the Governor-in-council to make regulations and from time to time rescind or vary the same providing for (b) the methods of enforcement of discipline in schools and (c) the prohibition in registered schools of the use of any book, the use of which appears undesirable.

As the first legislation anywhere in the British Empire to require school registration, it was aimed at curbing political activities in schools. (Luk 1991, p.657) It noted that schools might be unlawful under supervision. Moreover, the Chinese Vernacular Education Board was formed on 7 September 1911 which was abolished by this Ordinance. What the Hong Kong government wanted apparently to do was to get absolute control over all schools through a system of compulsory registration. The reason was political to prevent the dissemination of anti-foreign views in native schools. Under this ordinance, schools were liable to become cover for unlawful propaganda. (Irving 1914)

As the Republic of China was founded in 1912, it was followed the XinHai Revolution on 10 October 1911. Much disappointed, the central authority disintegrated and the central power succumbed to that of regional warlords. Some warlords aligned themselves with various foreign countries in an effort to wipe each other out. Unifying the nation and repelling imperialism was a remote possibility. China could be saved only if intellectuals found some way to awaken and enlighten the mass. (Wasserstrom 1991, p.203)

## **2. Re-orientation of Student Movements with National Awareness**

There was the New Culture Movement in China starting from 1917. Later, the May Fourth Movement of 1919 was the action counteracting imperialism and feudalism. Intellectuals and students were disappointed with the Western powers' injustice treatment of China. The demonstration began by Beijing students and triggered more youth movements. The governmental attempts disrupted student activities and arrested student leaders but they led to telegrams of outrage from students and social groups. Classroom strikes, street-side lecture campaigns and demonstrations were caused. Students formed pickets and recruited from the ranks of Boy Scout troops to keep tabs on their fellow classmates. (Perry 2007, p.32) These sparked national protests and marked the upsurge of Chinese nationalism in China. The movement spread among students and workers in China, provoking enthusiastic nationalistic sentiments and eventually incorporating a National Language Movement. (Sweeting 1990, p.347) The slogans were Democracy and Science and students became activists in China. Student movements led to great enthusiasm in education. It was a shift towards politicization and away from cultural reforms and a movement towards populism rather than rationalism.

When youths formed a nationwide union and began organizing more protest actions in China, these were not common in Hong Kong. Only one noticeable action was reported that nine pupils held the umbrella and posted the two Chinese words of *guohuo* (national goods) on 3 June 1919. It could be the protest to boycott Japanese goods. Based on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance signed, the alliance's provisions for mutual defense prompted Japan to participate in the First World War and the Hong Kong government took actions against the protest. The students were arrested but only the eldest pupil was fined 10 dollars and the others were released after warning. Although the movement found partial success at removing Chinese traditional culture, Chinese traditions and values should be the fundamental of the community of Hong Kong. Some Confucian schools were advocated to establish in Hong Kong.

After the movement, some participants turned their energies to establish the Chinese Communist Party. The patrols represented an impromptu effect on the part of striking workers and student demonstrators. (Perry 2007, p.33) The united front was also started in operation in Hong Kong. Its tactic was simply an initiative whereby the Communists proposed to join with all works belonging to other parties and groups in a common struggle to defend their interests. Educational fields and student movements were of no exception.

The story of the Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong may be said to begin with three men who started the irregular *Zhenshanmei* [Truth, Good and Perfection] Magazine in 1920. It should be the effect of the New Cultural Movement and the May Fourth Movement. Lin Jun-wei was a school inspector with the Education department, Zhang Rendao was a graduate of the Queen's College, and Li Yibao was a primary school teacher. They wanted to report on labour issues and introduce basic Marxist principles to a wider audience. Some time at the end of 1920, they made a special effort to meet Chen Du-xiu on the boat. When Chen was travelling on from Shanghai to Guangzhou, it passed through Hong Kong. Inspired and encouraged by Chen, the three men established the Marxism Research group at Mengyang Primary School in Happy Valley where Li Yi-bao was teaching. (cited in Loh 2010, p.43)

Being teachers, they were able to attract a number of students to the study group. Their activities were carried out in the name of the New China Students Club Hong Kong Sub-branch, which by 1923 became the Chinese Socialist Youth League, Hong Kong Special Branch, coming under the Guangdong Socialist Youth League.

As the Chinese Social Youth League was the only Chinese Communist Party related organization in Hong Kong in the early days, it represented both the party and the league in effect. Achievements were modest since members lacked resources and expertise. (cited in Loh 2010, p.43) A hard core of communist activists specialized in working among the students but they were small in number actually. (Chan Lau 1990, p.179)

The Shanghai protests on 30 May 1925 were replicated elsewhere around China where large nationalistic protests involved workers, students, merchants and citizens in the other cities. The general strike in Hong Kong expressed sympathy for Shanghai victims. Before the strike, the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party used Hong Kong as a base for revolutionary activities. But they were not generally welcome or accept by the Hong Kong community. Hong Kong people changed suddenly to be patriotic and anti-imperial.

The boycott of classes started on 18 June when 80 percent of the senior students from Queen's college absented themselves. The news of the strike spread quickly. Fearing a backlash from the British government, seamen, tramway men and printers led the walk out and left for Guangzhou on 19 June. (Loh 2010, p.48) Student leaders of the Chinese College called a mass walk-out and other student representatives responded to the news by calling a strike. Students refused to return to schools. Most of the senior students in the Yaumati Government School did the same thing on the following day. St. Paul's college had organized under the supervision and encouragement of the Hong Kong Branch of New Student's Society and sent representatives to Guangzhou on 21 June. Students at St. John's College, St. Stephen's College and the Yaumati Government School struck one after the other when news of the boycott of lessons continued to spread. (Horrocks 1994, p.118)

The most serious case occurred in Guangzhou. This Shamian Incident caused 52 Chinese killed and 117 injured on 23 June. The British Consul-General at Guangzhou expressed that the Chinese were responsible for the shooting and blamed the Soviet Union's adviser for provoking the riot. (Sweeting 1990, p.350) On the other side, after the shooting, the Chinese demanded drastic action against the British imperialism.

The result was a huge outcry in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, provoked many more workers in Hong Kong to join the strike, began the great exodus of Chinese and left for Guangzhou. They erupted into a full-scale General Strike. This served to bring about an exclusively anti-British protest and demonstration. It led directly to a widespread boycott movement against British goods throughout southern China. The student strike that accompanied the worker's strike was well organized by the Chinese Communist Party. The Hong Kong Education Study Group, the Hong Kong Branch of the Guangdong New Student's Society and the Confucius Society organized their propaganda activities. School pupils took a leading role in the organization of the strike and boycott. (Sweeting 1990, p.350) It was reported by Kotewall on 24 October 1925<sup>4</sup> that the most serious and significant features of the disturbances played by schoolboys and students. He showed the evidence that it was the students who created the shooting incident at Shamian. The Hong Kong schoolboys were moved to their turbulent behavior by some students from Shanghai. They had a clear 10 days to do all the mischief they could. All the schoolboys were more or less contaminated. (Kotewall 1925 cited in Sweeting 1990, p.401) It felt that the Chinese in Hong Kong were not governed by the British but they were governed by and were loyal to Guanzhou. (Forster 1927 cited in Sweeting 1990, p.342 or 462)

The strike-boycott served as the paramount content which cemented the Nationalist and Communist entente during the general strike. The nationalist could support and organize the strike in demonstrating that the government loved people and dealt with Chinese injustice. The popularity of the Guanzhou government was arisen and the military forces promoted were reorganized strong enough to conduct the Northern Expedition. It was the successfulness of the Nationalist through the governmental building by the strike. On the other hand, the Chinese Communist Party was the sole leader of the movement.

---

<sup>4</sup>The memorandum by Robert Hormus Kotewall on the 1925 Strike and Boycott, dated 24 October 1925, and published along with the Report by Sir Reginald Stubbs in the Colonial Office Paper, February 1926, in CO 129/489, pp.423 ff. (cited in Sweeting 1990, p.399) He was a businessman and legislator in Hong Kong. In 1936, he joined the Executive Council.

The party members worked with workers and students to persuade hesitant union leaders and teachers to join the protests in sympathy with massacred Chinese in Shanghai at first and Guangzhou later. (Horrocks 1994, p.119) The strike committee set up a workers' college for political training of union cadres, eight extramural schools for adult workers and eight primary schools for the striker's children. (Chan Lau 1990, p.182) Both parties in the end gained the popular support by Chinese community through protesting against imperialism.

There were estimated 250 thousand people leaving Hong Kong for Guangzhou. Workers played the vanguard role and students were only of secondary importance (cited in Wasserstrom 1991, p.19) in the end. The Guangzhou government organized their living activities and special teachers and students teams were formed as well. More than three thousand teachers and students were arranged to stay at Guangzhou. The inspector of schools of the Hong Kong Education Department was Lin Changchi who motivated students to participate in the strike and was expelled by the Hong Kong government. To join the strike, he was appointed by the Guangzhou government to be the receptionist for the Hong Kong educational strikers. The main aspects of communist work were recruit of members and unification of labour union. The strike lasted until October 1926. The communist party members were increased from 700 to 7000. It was the first major growth of Chinese communism.

The Hong Kong government was unable to manage the crisis initially. The strike and boycott deteriorated Hong Kong. The strike affected the daily life of Hong Kong. To this strike, the Guangzhou government added a call for the boycott of British goods. A state of emergency was declared in Hong Kong. (Sweeting 1990, p.350) A crisis was developing and the relationships between the Chinese and British were affected seriously in Hong Kong. The strike was undoubtedly caused by a Bolshevik intrigue in Guangzhou, conducted with the avowed object of destroying the economic life of Hong Kong. (Kotewall 1925, cited in Sweeting 1990, p.400) Economic activities of Hong Kong reduced very much. It was harmful to Hong Kong business and industry. This affected the British all major ports in China and especially Hong Kong. (Sweeting 1990, p.350) The Chinese community in Hong Kong organized to keep Hong Kong continuously running. The Counter-Propaganda Bureau was set up to influence ideological thinking of the public. The worse was considered over by the end of July 1925. G. M. Young was the controller of the Labour Control System and was assisted in recruiting volunteers for the essential services in Hong Kong. Five hundred men and one hundred ex-police were recruited as volunteers to assist hospitals, restaurants, abattoirs and to drive motor lorries and trains. On the contrary, most of the expatriate and Chinese teaching staff of the Queen's College volunteered for various duties counteracting the strike. (Chan Lau 1990, p.187) The Chinese bank owners and depositors lost confidence in Hong Kong issued bank notes, resulting in a run on silver and financial crisis. (Butenhoff 1999, p.51) The effect of the Great Depression was started in 1929 further affecting Hong Kong economy after the general strike in 1925.

The general strike motivated the British government to pay more attention to giving local Chinese and begin to attach more importance to education in Chinese. It was very necessary to learn from these events how to prevent the corruption of schools boys in future, and particularity their attempts to interfere in politics. (Kotewall 1925 cited in Sweeting 1990, p.401) There was an appearing awareness of values of education, Chinese or Western. Rivers wrote the article to express that, until recent years, the teacher's ideal students were the pupils whose attendance and punctuality could be help up as an example to their classmates. (Rivers 1926, p.32)

Moreover, the problem of schools was merely how to give some ideas of the meaning of education to those who were about to end their academic education in Hong Kong. (Keenon 1927, p.31) The key observations were the influences of nationalistic and cultural movements in China. Hong Kong was merely a pied-a-terre both for British and Chinese residents. Their contacts were no fusion, no community thought or feeling. (Foster 1927, cited in Sweeting 1990, p.462) Education became functional or instrumental utilization.

Cecil Clementi was appointed as the Governor of Hong Kong to replace Stubbs for his dealing unsuccessfully the issue of the strike in November 1925. To handle the crisis, Clementi invited all the most senior literati then in Hong Kong, men who had held imperial examination degrees and court ranks under the now-defunct Chinese empire, who were alienated by the Republic Revolution and, even more, by the increasing radicalization of the new Chinese intelligentsia of the May Fourth Movement. He welcomed these dignitaries with a speech in Cantonese, extolling traditional Chinese learning and morality, emphasizing how important it was that the Chinese should treasure their ancestors' learning and live up to the ancestral moral code, rather than follow any fad from abroad. (cited in Luk 1991, pp.658-9) The Government Vernacular Middle School was established and opened on 1 March 1926. It contained a Normal division.

The other two Normal Schools established and opened on the same day were the Vernacular Normal School which was operated by using the place of Man Mo Temple and the Rural Vernacular Normal School which was situated at Tai Po Market. These normal schools were the education under the Confucian doctrines and adopted traditional Chinese ideology to suppress the revolutionary demands. The University of Hong Kong reacted to this Chinese movement by opening a special diploma course in Chinese classics in 1927. Hong Kong endeavoured to monitor that political propaganda and agitation should be excluded from schools.

The American new school system was passed at the conference of the National Federated Provincial Education Association held in Guangzhou in 1921. (Cheng 1949, p.50) It was adopted later and some Hong Kong schools also used not until 1927, after the general strike.

Chiang Kai-shek adopted party purification policy on 12 April 1927, starting from Shanghai. Hong Kong had close anti-communist cooperation between law enforcement agencies in Guangzhou and Hong Kong. The Hong Kong authorities made no secret. The arrests were made by police, the trials and deportation in many cases of the communists and alleged communists. (Chan Lau 2005, p.177) Kotewall gave the comments of the government's success in maintain peace and order during this period. They were the cooperation of almost the entire Foreign Community and the Chinese of the upper and the middle class with the government and the close co-operation between the government and the Chinese representatives. (cited in Chan Lau 2005, p.176)

The nationalist government as well as the Hong Kong government disliked communism, so as to social and student movements. After the defeat of the Guangzhou uprising in December 1927, more communist activities were banned. Communism did not disappear and their choice was only to operate underground in Hong Kong. The Overseas Chinese Education Committee was established under the Ministry of Education of the Nanjing Nationalist government in February 1928. It indicated the Nationalists' intention of intervening more of overseas Chinese affairs. The new school system was introduced into Hong Kong as well. A new set of regulations was issued by the Overseas Chinese Education Committee in 1931. They made other efforts exclude Communist influence from schools.

### **3. Student Movements led by the Communist on Resisting Japanese Invasion**

The Mukden Incident was the indication of Japan invaded China on 18 September 1931. Opinion criticized Zhang Xueliang for his non-resistance to the Japanese invasion, and Chiang Kai-shek was indirectly responsible for this policy. Japan took over northern east China in 1931. It angered Chinese. Student protests occurred at many cities for the government's non-resistance and Japanese invasion. Hong Kong students reacted with public protests, boycotts and strikes. Hong Kong people's feeling was very strong. It gave rise to what the Hong Kong government considered the disturbance in Hong Kong. There were about two thousand Japanese living in Hong Kong. When China declared the day of national humiliation on 23 September 1931, flats were flown at half mast without permission in Hong Kong. (cited in Chan Lau 1990, p.258) Anti-Japanese riots broke out in the Wanchai district where the Japanese shops aggregated at that evening. Japanese house suffered damage during the crisis in Hennessey Road, Lockhart Road and Johnston Road. The Japanese, whose house had been attacked, were evacuated and gathered at the Japanese Primary School which had been converted into a refugee camp on 26 September. (Chan Lau 1990, p.258) Arrangements were made to gather the Japanese and place them in certain specified areas. The places were put under heavy military of police guard. The police believed that students from Guangzhou and the Communists had been involved in the chaos. (Chan Lau 1990, p.259) Anti-Japanese demonstrations, rioting and destructive activities continued until 29 September. (Chan Lau 1990, p.258)

The Anti-Japanese National Salvation was formed at many cities in China. Chiang' non-resistance policy was strongly and continuously being criticized and attacked. Student protests by the communist were invaluable ways and means. Later, Chiang generated continuously his policy on encirclement campaigns. "Resisting Foreign Aggression after Stabilizing the Country" was the basic policy of the Nanjing Nationalist government for dealing with the communists and Japan after the Mukden Incident. It was the strategy that China should not risk fighting any major foreign power until it was truly unified. Students mobilized public comments in order to press the nationalist government fighting against Japanese invasion on the hand, and prevent the communist from isolating and destroying the developing Chinese Red Army on the other hand.

The Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission was established in Nanjing on 7 December 1931, partly as a recognition of the need for a more comprehensive and effective policy towards the overseas Chinese to elicit support from them, a recognition which was especially keen after the Mukden Incident. (Sweeting 1990, p.353) After a year, more schools noticeably registered in Nanjing. (Sweeting 1990, p.354)

Chiang Kai-shek heralded the New Life Movement at Nanchang in 1934. It was to rally the Chinese people against the communists and build up morale in China. He used Confucian notion of self-cultivation and right living for the movement. It was spearheaded by Chiang within ruling regime. The New Life Movement aimed at the promotion of a regular life guided by the four virtues, li yi lian chi (ritual, rightness, honesty and shame). At the time, he was the leader of the Republic of China.

The government was seriously underfunded and had only nominal control over vast areas of the nation. The allies were run by warlords retaining substantial power backed by their own armies. Chiang extended his overseas Chinese policy and one of the policies was education. Intellectuals debated and attacked traditional Chinese values and the Communist Party was active underground in the cities.

Moreover, student movements were frequently happened in China and the Nationalist government was criticized and attacked. Chiang disliked these student movements but he could not use too strong forces to suppress these. He could only blame the communists caused riots and suppressed the communist activities. Thus, the ten years' civil war lasted until the Xian Incident when Chiang Kai-shek was forced to form the communist Second United Front against the invading Japanese. Here after, the communist could conduct activities openly.

During the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, Hong Kong was not under attack. The Lukouchiao (Marco Polo Bridge) Incident and the fall of Tientsin and Shanghai created great commotion in Hong Kong. On 18 September 1937, some secondary school students joined hands and formed an Organization called the "Hong Kong Resist Japan and Save the Nation Society" in secret, after having observed a National Humiliation Day commemoration ceremony at the Lap Tak School. The object was to rouse Hong Kong Chinese to join the society's anti-Japanese activities with their propaganda. (cited in Chan 2009, p.15) All 86 people were arrested. The persons in charged were flogged and expelled out of Hong Kong. (Jiang 2011, p.162)

When Japanese troops began to invade China and the Sino-Japanese War triggered off a wave rioting in 1937, many Chinese fled to Hong Kong. In the period of the war of resistance against Japan, the population broke the record of 1.5 million with reviving economic prosperity after the bad effect of the Guangzhou-Hong Kong General Strike.

With the outbreak of war, Hong Kong had a new importance to China. Hong Kong really became more prominent entrepot center and was one of the paramount entry points of strategic materials for China. Many institutions or business sectors evacuated to Hong Kong or made a branch here. The Nationalist government carried out various clandestine missions in Hong Kong. The Communist, on the other hand, conducted extensive relief and propaganda political activities. The Hong Kong office of the Eight Route Army could be set up as well in January 1938.

On the other hand, Hong Kong became a city to donate and transfer materials for the war of resistance against Japan. And also, it was the resistance war activity center. The Japanese occupied Guangzhou on 21 October 1938 and Hong Kong was effectively surrounded. Moreover, regarding the Sino-Japanese War, Britain could not maintain a consistent policy.

The communists adopted their Second United Front strategies, one side resisting Japanese and on the other side developing themselves. Student movements should be one of their important tasks. The first student member of the Chinese Communist Party was Lai Shiang in October 1936. He was a student of the Huaqiao Middle School (school for overseas Chinese). Two more members added in November and they established the Student National Salvation. The organization was actually the underground works of the Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong. It was led by the Communist Party's member Wu You-heng and the members of the Student National Salvation were about seventy to eighty. (Jiang 2011, p.162) The Central of the Chinese Communist Party directed to dismiss this secret organization on February 1938 and mobilized the members to organize more institutions of student activities separately.

The Hong Kong Students Relief Association was established by Li Zheng-yao and Zhong Ming in September 1937 and they were the leaders of the University of Hong Kong. Zhong was actually a member of Chinese Communist Party in November 1936. The Association was organized by 24 schools. The meeting was held at the campus of the University of Hong Kong. Student representatives of schools joined the committee members of the association. It was actually led by the Chinese Communist Party. The underground works of the Chinese Communist Party were operated by the cryptocommunicists in Hong Kong. They mobilized students to participate in resisting Japanese invasion. The Morning Bell Society had mobilized classmates to take part in activities for helping the works resisting Japanese invasion during the period of the war against Japan. The Chinese Medicine Relief Association of the Students' Union of the University of Hong Kong collected donations and drugs in supporting wounded soldiers and affected fellow citizens. Later, the expanded conference was held on 13 October 1937, where the number of schools as committee members increased from 24 to 44 and eleven branches were established to handle various duties and works.

Basically speaking, the duties of student social movements in Hong Kong were a part of works of the Chinese Communist Unit Front. On the other hand, the nationalist owned resources under the Chiang's control. There was a working team overseas and the Hong Kong branch employed many staff in order to promote tasks for the war of resistance against Japan. They had printing companies and newspaper issuing their political ideas and having to propaganda politics. The Youth Groups by the three Principles of the People were organized by the Nationalist government. A team was formed in Hong Kong. Obviously the nationalist organizing power did not compare with that of the communist. They wanted to snatch the leading power of the Hong Kong Hong Kong Students Relief Association. Of course, it was unsuccessful.

The Hong Kong Students Relief Association was a registered organization with many branches and many famous persons being as consultants. After the association founding, they organized exchange service programmes in mainland China, issued magazines, conducted exhibitions, reading clubs, composition competitions, summer camps and ambulance classes. Some students later participated in the guerrillas of the East River Column acting as military forces to resist Japanese invasion.

Some undergraduates of Hong Kong University teamed up with the Chinese Pharmaceutical and Relief Association and appealed to about 300 schools to form a group called the Hong Kong Relief Association in September 1937. Student from some of the most elite schools like King's college, Queen's College and St. Paul's college joined in. They helped in raising funds and organizing patriotic anti-Japan activities and managed to raise individual teams to visit every school to spread the message. The funds raised were donated to the New Fourth Army, the Eighth Route Army and other guerrilla groups. (Chan 2009, pp.15-6)

Japan started to invade Hong Kong on 8 December 1941 and Hong Kong surrendered to the Japanese on 25 December. Student movements stopped and they should turn to other pages of their lives.

### ***Discussion and Conclusion***

This paper discussed student movements occurred in Hong Kong in the prewar period from 1841 to 1941. Student movements were more active only after the turn of the century. Hong Kong was always a facilitating center to help China. The British sovereignty was seldom challenged even through Hong Kong was an imperialist colony.

In conclusion, student movements in the pre-war period of Hong Kong were complicated. Starting from self-strengthening and counter-acting imperialism, the nationalistic picture was simple but it would not be the human lives of common people. Hong Kong people did not require revolution. The revolutionary soils in Hong Kong came from its special educational and western knowledge. Sun's revolutionary activities were not anti-imperial. He did not activate any of social movements in Hong Kong and only used Hong Kong as a revolutionary base.

After the success of the Chinese Revolution accidentally, the British Hong Kong government's awareness prevented from politicizing the society. Keeping Hong Kong away from chaotic situations made by warlords in China, Hong Kong was a relatively safe and peaceful place. In the starting of the 1920s, Hong Kong was not escapable from labours striking. Students participated in these strikes. Students might trigger or initiate demonstration, protests of strikes but the influences were never the same consequences caused as these happened by labour unions.

The Guangzhou-Hong Kong General Strike was the two political parties building process and not fighting really for human rights or counteracting imperialism. Two parties drew strength from student support and actually gained popular supports through fighting for nationalism and against imperialism. The Nationalists created an officers corps at Whampao, while the Communists turned student supporters into an army of cadres. (Li 1994, p.121)

Hong Kong people sometimes might act anti-imperial and nationalist but they never challenged the British sovereign legitimacy. The Chinese frequently used the boycott or strike as instrument against foreign activity in China but it was generally not supported by the elite community in Hong Kong.

The participants in mass protest saw their grievances as rooted in the existing arrangements of power and authority in contemporary society, and they viewed their own activity as political action aimed at altering these arrangements. Students and associated youth leagues generally placed enormous emphasis upon developing propaganda techniques to bring lower classes into their patriotic movements. The common approach of both political parties was the regimentation of young student nationalists into an organized and disciplined force.

To maintain this regimentation both parties developed control devices, exemplified by the underground network of the young officers movement and the rectification process of indoctrination. (cited in Li 1994, p.121) Obviously, the separation between the nationalist and the students increased when Chiang Kai-shek was seen to falter under Japanese pressure in the early 1930s. The Chinese Communist Party regimented student support and deployed the hastily trained cadres to help expand successfully the party's power and influence during the resistance of Japanese invasion.

China was the source of meanings for the social movements about the ambivalence of the Hong Kong people towards the Colony and China. When revolutionary, anti-imperialist and nationalist sentiments soared in china, Hong Kong gave responses and triggered off collective actions generally.

After Hong Kong's territory to Chinese sovereignty and the establishment of the Special Administrative Region, its people feel increasingly uneasy with Beijing's rule. It is especially contentious starting from the forth term's and the third Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying. Or he is a cryptocommunist but the real situation cannot be disclosed. Nowadays, we may doubt our future generations what they are doing on the public issues and acting against the people governing them abnormally. Student social movements in Hong Kong reveal intelligence of the present generations in keeping on their right values and movements' strategies. Students are active and mobilize to echo our society injustice problems.

## References

- Adams, Robert (1991) *Protests by Pupils: Empowerment, Schooling and the State* London & New York: The Falmer Press
- Butenhoff, Linda (1999) *social Movements and Political Reform in Hong Kong*, London: Praeger Publishers
- Chan Lau, K. C. (1990) *China, Britain and Hong Kong, 1895-1945*, Hong Kong: Chinese University Press
- Chan Lau, K. C. (2005) '10. Business and Radicalism: Hong Kong Chinese merchants and the Chinese Communist Movement, 1921-1934' in Lee P. T (ed.) (2005) *Colonial Hong Kong and Modern China: Interaction and Reintegration*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp.169-184
- Chan, Sui-jeung (2009) *East River Column: Hong Kong Guerrillas in the Second World War and After*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press
- Horrocks, R. J. (1994) *The Guangzhou-Hong Kong Strike, 1925-1926: Hongkong Workers in an Anti-Imperialist Movement*, Ph. D. Paper, Department of East Asian Studies, The University of Leeds.
- Leung, Benjamin K. P. (1991) *Social Movement as Cognitive Praxis: the Case of the Student and Labour Movements in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: social Sciences Research Centre, the University of Hong Kong
- Li, Lincoln (1994) *Student Nationalism in China, 1924-1949*, New York: State University of New York
- Liang, Keping (2005) *Kang ri zhan zheng shi qi di Xianggang xue yun*, Xianggang : Xianggang ge jie ji nian kang zhan huo dong chou wei hui you, xian gong si : Xianggang ge jie wen hua cu jin hui you xian gong si (in Chinese)
- Ng Lun Ngaiha, Chen Shenglin, Guo Jingrong and Luo Lixin (1986) *Historical Trashes of Sun Yat-sen's Activities in Hong Kong, Macao and Overseas*, Hong Kong & Guangzhou: the Chinese University of Hong Kong & Zhongshan University
- Ng Lun, Ngaiha (1984) *Interactions of East and West: Development of Public Education in Early Hong Kong* Hong, Kong: the Chinese University Press
- Perry, E. J. (2007) *Patrolling the Revolution: Worker Militias, Citizenship, and the Modern Chinese State*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Rivers, S. J. (1926) 'The spirit of the new education' in the *Hong Kong University Society's Education Journal* No.1, May 1926, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University, pp.32-37.
- Skolnick, Jerome H. (1968) *Politics of Protests*, New York: Simon and Schuster
- Sweeting, A. E. (1990) *Education in Hong Kong pre-1841 to 1941: fact and opinion*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press
- Wasserstrom, J. N. (1991) *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: the view from Shanghai*, Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Welsh, Frank (1993) *A History of Hong Kong*, London: HarperCollins