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A Bridge Between East and West: The Universities Service Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong

DUNCAN ALFORD*

Fragrant Harbor is the literal translation of the Chinese (pinyin Xiang Gang) for Hong Kong. Once a British colony and now a Special Administrative Region within the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong is also a global financial center. In June 2006 I had the privilege of conducting legal research as a visiting scholar at the Universities Service Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.¹ My research topic was the influence of Hong Kong banking law on banking reform in the People's Republic of China. The following is a brief summary of my research and experience there.

The Universities Service Centre ("USC") was established in 1963 by several universities and foundations in the United States.² USC is an independent research institute within the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Its web site is located here: <http://www.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/> Soon after its founding, the USC became a major research center on China and its government. Scholars from the PRC and around the world converged there to exchange information on developments within China. By hosting individual scholars and convening conference, the USC provided a forum for this exchange of information.

At the USC, I was provided an office with a personal computer. In addition, I was able to use the extensive resources of the Center both in English and Mandarin. I used both the print resources and the electronic resources provided by both the USC and the main library of the CUHK. Jean Hung, the assistant director, and her staff were particularly helpful and

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¹ My scholarship was provided by the Lee Hysan Foundation for which I am grateful.

² Ezra Vogel, *The First Forty Years of the Universities Service Centre for China Studies*, *China Journal* 1 (January 2005). This article also provides a brief history of the University Services Centre.

welcoming. Their assistance was invaluable in making my three week stay productive and enjoyable.

At the Chinese University, I conducted documentary research using USC's collections and the law collection of the main university library. The USC has a strong collection of materials in Chinese, English and selected foreign languages on all aspects of China. While the USC's collection is particularly strong in politics, history and economics of China in the 20th century, its law collection is adequate. However, when combined with the law collection in the main university library located in the same building, the law collection supported my research well.³

In addition to the libraries at the Chinese University, I also conducted research at the library of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority ("HKMA") which is located on the 55th floor of Two International Financial Centre, one of the tallest skyscrapers in Hong Kong.⁴ The collection at the HKMA focuses on economics, finance and banking law.⁵

During my fellowship, I presented a luncheon seminar on my research at the USC. In my presentation, I gave an overview of the development of the banking system in the PRC and focused on the influence of Hong Kong law on banking reform. My preliminary conclusion from my research was that Hong Kong law has not been a direct model for the statutes and regulations reforming the banking system in the PRC. However, Hong Kong has been influential in the implementation of banking reform in the PRC. Certain regulatory officials from Hong Kong have served in or advised the PRC on financial regulation. In addition, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority has created and implemented an extensive training program for PRC bank regulatory officials from both the People's Bank of China and the Chinese Banking Regulatory Commission.

³ During 2006 the Chinese University of Hong Kong admitted its inaugural class of students to its new faculty of law and, as a result, CUHK was strengthening its law collection.

⁴ The views from the building over Victoria Harbor are impressive. However, on the day that I visited the HKMA library, there was a black umbrella storm in progress so there were no views to be had. In Hong Kong, storms are rated by colored umbrellas – black umbrellas are the worst and schools and businesses often close during those storms. I admired the views from the building later when I returned to conduct interviews of HKMA officials.

⁵ Its collection is described in more detail at:
http://www.info.gov.hk/hkma/eng/info_centre/index.htm

While at the Chinese University, I also met several other scholars who were using the collections and resources at USC. Dr. Amita Agarwal from the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur, India was researching security policy in the South China Sea. Two scholars from Yale University were conducting a symposium for younger scholars in sociology from the People's Republic of China. In addition, the USC hosted weekly seminars on various topics in English and Mandarin. I was able to attend two seminars on land reform in China and a critique of the recent biography of Mao by Chang Jung. The schedule of seminars and the topics covered is listed here: <http://www.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/uscen.asp> Ms. Jean Hung, Assistant Director of USC, also encouraged interaction among the visiting scholars by hosting lunches and weekend excursions into nearby country parks in the New Territories.⁶

In addition to my documentary research, I was able to schedule interviews with various financial professionals and government officials in Hong Kong during my stay. During my fellowship at the USC, I had the opportunity to interview the credit analysts at Fitch Ratings Hong Kong, research analysts at CLSA, a leading Asian brokerage house, and faculty and researchers at the University of Hong Kong Faculty of Law. In addition, I spent nearly an entire day at the Hong Kong Monetary Authority interviewing various officials. I also had a chance to meet other faculty and staff at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. All these exchanges and meetings during my three week period were helpful in my research and further developed my knowledge of financial regulation and policy in Greater China.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong owns and maintains residences for visiting scholars. I stayed in a mid-rise building about a 20 minute walk from the center of campus and the USC.⁷ The accommodations were comfortable and the building had a beautiful view of Tolo Harbor. The Chinese University of Hong Kong is located in Shatin in the New Territories of Hong Kong. Central, the financial district of Hong Kong, is 40 minutes away by the Kowloon-Canton Railway and MTR subway. The same KCR will take you north to the border with the PRC at Lo Wu in 30 minutes.

⁶ Ms. Hung's recommendations on hikes in Hong Kong were well-founded. A hike suggested by Hung across Lamma Island was a favorite excursion.

⁷ Scholars stay at the Yali Guest House. For a campus map see this link: <http://mmlab.itsc.cuhk.edu.hk/cm/campusmap/campusmap.html>

While I was focused on my research during my stay, I did make time to visit Hong Kong and nearby parts of China. During my stay, I toured Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. While the weather did not cooperate during my stay (I only saw the sun twice in three weeks), I made the most of it. Taking the Peak Tram to Victoria's Peak I saw some incredible views of the Hong Kong skyline. If you need a break from the hectic pace and crowded streets of Hong Kong, splurge on afternoon tea at the Peninsula Hotel in Kowloon or a drink at Harry's on the top floor of the same hotel with more incredible views over Victoria Harbor to the skyline of Hong Kong. With another visiting scholar, I took a ferry to Lamma Island, hiked through a tropical forest, sharing a seafood dinner in a seaside village, and ending with a boat ride through Victoria Harbor at night. I traveled via hydrofoil to Macao twice – once for a lecture at the Macao Ricci Institute and another day to tour the colonial buildings of this former Portuguese colony, now part of the PRC. The KCR subway took me to Lo Wu where I crossed into Shenzhen, a large, recently developed city on the border with Hong Kong. Shenzhen is known for inexpensive shopping but expect to confront some of the most aggressive hawkers in the world.⁸

Of course, as a law librarian, I arranged to meet the law librarian at the University of Hong Kong, Irene Shieh, and the law librarian at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, John Bahrij. The University of Hong Kong Faculty of Law is the largest and most prestigious law school in Hong Kong while the Chinese University of Hong Kong just started its faculty of law with its inaugural class beginning in August 2006.⁹ My law librarian colleagues were dealing with surprisingly similar issues to mine – limited budgets, space constraints, building interdisciplinary collections to support new faculty research areas, and decisions on the format of the collection.

For those interested in the laws of the People's Republic of China or of greater China, research at the Universities Service Centre is an invaluable experience. In a few short weeks, I gathered research material quickly, met new colleagues, and experienced one of the most dynamic cities of the world. The Universities Service Centre and its friendly, knowledgeable staff provided an ideal environment in which to accomplish these goals.

⁸ Take a look at the shopping in Shop in Shenzhen: An Insider's Guide by Ellen McNally at <http://www.shopinshenzhen.com/>

⁹ The Chinese University of Hong Kong Faculty of Law web site: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/law/> More information on the Law Library is located here: <http://www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk>