

CRIMINOLOGY AROUND THE WORLD

If you have news, views, reviews, or announcements relating to international or comparative criminology, including new books or conference announcements, please send it here! We appreciate brevity (always under 1,000 words), and welcome your input and feedback. –

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Asian Criminology- Concept and Development

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Criminology originated in the West, has grown primarily in the West, particularly in the United States, and has achieved tremendous success. However, theories and policy initiatives are mostly proposed and developed in Western contexts. Research in comparative criminology shows that crime patterns and justice policy and practice vary from country to country, to such an extent that the dominant theories often do not work very well in non-Western countries. A critical challenge for criminology is to resolve the tension between the universality of theories, which is a basic assumption of sciences, and the cultural variations that are commonly observed across countries and contexts.

There are various approaches to responding to this challenge. The most often response adopted by many Western-based theorists is to assume the universality of their theories but occasionally discuss exceptions and the need for adjustments across different cultures. Other criminologists question the universality of the theories by Western-based scholars, while some further propose that theories are culture-dependent. Critical criminologists criticize Western dominance and trace its roots back to the history of Western colonialism of non-Western countries; and some criticize the hegemony of Western knowledge.

Asian Criminology can be understood as a response to this critical challenge. (Liu, 2009; 2019; 2022). The vast cultural, political, economic, and social diversity in Asia poses a challenge for building general criminological knowledge but also provides great opportunities to develop criminology as a discipline (Liu, 2009). Asian Criminology can be defined as “the study of crime and justice in the Asian context.” (Liu, 2022). This definition points to the advantages provided by Asian contexts in discovering facts and ideas often overlooked or ignored within the conventional criminological paradigm. Many aspects of crime and justice are not obvious in a Western context but are more visible in Asian contexts. Therefore, criminology can gain insights by studying crime and justice in Asia. The definition of Asian Criminology stresses that an in-depth study of contexts is more essential than merely acknowledging geographic or various group boundaries. The approach of Asian Criminology is a “context-focused approach” (Liu, 2021; 2022). The mission is not only to acquire new knowledge in Asian contexts but also to reveal the broader implications of these Asian discoveries for a higher level of general understanding in criminology.

The developmental path of Asian Criminology is summarized in the “Asian Criminological Paradigm.” (Liu, 2022). Its growth is described as having three stages. The first stage is to examine and test established theories, which mostly originated from the West, in Asian contexts and conditions. The second stage is to elaborate on the established theories and modify them to fit Asian contexts. The third stage is the most important, which is to propose and develop new theories based on evidence discovered in Asian contexts. New theories will enrich human knowledge and enhance criminology with a broader scope (Liu, 2009; 2019; 2021; 2022).

On December 17-20, 2009, about 50 criminologists from 14 different countries and regions gathered at the University of Macau to establish the Asian Criminological Society (ACS), and held its first annual conference. The group adopted ACS’s constitution and elected Jianhong Liu to be its first President. John Braithwaite was elected Chairman of the General Assembly, and Charles Chung-Weun Hou was elected Chairman of the Supervision Committee. The theme for the first annual conference was: “Asian Criminology in a Global Context – Challenges and Prospects.” Prof. Jianhong Liu made a keynote speech, “The Role of Asian Criminology Society in Achieving World Class Standard in Criminological Research in Asia.” Since then, the Annual conferences have become major events for scholars, justice, and legal professionals in Asia. After the Macau inauguration conference, annual conferences were held in Chennai (2010), Taipei (2011), Seoul (2012), Mumbai (2013), Osaka (2014), Hong Kong (2015), Beijing (2016), Cairns (2017), Penang (2018), Cebu (2019), Kyoto (2021), and Gujarat (2022). The coming 14th ACS conference will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in July 2023, the 15th conference is scheduled in Manila, Philippines, and the 16th conference in Brisbane, Australia.

ACS has grown into the most influential institution for Asian criminologists and a nexus to world criminology. The conferences have been well attended. For example, 575 participants registered for the Osaka conference; Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol (J.S.D.) of Thailand also made a speech. The meetings have been supported by governments, universities, justice and legal agencies, and local social organizations. The society has also established collaborative relationships with the American Society of Criminology (ASC), the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS), and the International Society of Criminology (ISC), and has received support from them.

A persistent special feature of ACS conferences is that themes and papers present new facts about Asian crime and justice and explore their broader meaning to enhance general understanding. Braithwaite commented: "It is the right time in the development of criminology in Asia to move away from an international division of scholarly labor whereby influential theories are developed in the west, while Asia's role is to apply or test those theories in Asian contexts or adapt them to Asian realities. It is time for a new era of the criminological theory that was given birth in Asia by Asian scholars" (Braithwaite, 2015, p. 183). Asian criminologists have started to develop new theories (Zhong & Zhang, 2021). These include "Theory of relational justice" (Liu, 2014), "Asian paradigm theory" (2014; 2016), "Relational theory" (2017), and "Relationism theory" (Liu, 2021). Braithwaite commented that "... the hope is that they may be useful for constructing the kind of relational theory of crime control advocated by Liu, (2014) ..." (Braithwaite, 2015, p. 184).

Asian Criminology is looking forward to making greater contributions to the discipline of Criminology.



Note: The Group photo of the Inauguration Conference of Asian Criminological Society in 2009.

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