

Macau Direct Elections, 1992 and 1993

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一九九二及九三年澳門直接選舉研究

香港和澳門將分別在一九九七及九九年回歸中國，成為中華人民共和國主權下的特別行政區。在這殖民統治的最後階段，這兩個社會正出現急速的政治和社會轉變，而草根階層亦有較多參與政治的機會。本文是根據作者在一九九二年九月及九三年五月分別就澳門立法會及市議會選舉所作的調查匯集而成，希望能引起更多學者研究港澳政治文化的興趣。

綜合兩次選舉研究的結果，發現澳門市民對選舉制度並不了解。以實際投票者而論，雖然選民大致了解競逐組別的數目，但對議席數目的認識則差強人意，對漢遜比例法亦不太了解。市民似乎只是從傳媒及競選宣傳品中吸取了基本資料，而並不認識選舉制度。

另一方面，澳門市民似乎普遍滿意現時的選舉方法，如以選組別為基礎的比例代議制，及委任、直選和間選議席各佔三分之一的比例。可是，當被追問理想的議席比例，及選組選人的制度時，意見便有不同，顯示市民由於認知不足，所以考慮並不同詳。

市民缺乏精密考慮的原因，可能基於公民教育的不足，選舉歷史的短暫，中國文化的內蘊因素，各種外在的政治因素，或是以上各因素的綜合影響，有待進一步研究。

INTRODUCTION

In 1997 and 1999 respectively, the sovereignty of Hong Kong and Macau will be reverted to China, and the two cities will become Special Administrative Zones under the People's Republic of China. In this last decade of colonial rule, both societies are undergoing rapid political and social changes. On the political front, with the retreat of the colonial powers, the political institutions of both societies are becoming more open to participation by local grassroots. This, however, is not to say that both societies have transformed themselves from colonial elitist societies to modern democratic societies, quite on the contrary, the process has only just begun. In Macau, for example, direct

election to the Legislative Assembly was introduced as early as 1976, but massive participation at the grassroots level only happened in 1984, when a change in the electoral law conferred voting rights to most of the local population. However, up to this date, the Macau Legislative Assembly has basically followed a balanced system under a consensus model.^① In Hong Kong, direct election to the Legislative Council was only introduced in 1991, but the pace of "democratization"^② has gone much faster, and the history of direct participation on a massive scale was also a recent phenomenon. A study of people's electoral behaviour in both societies would therefore provide an extremely useful database for understanding the evolution

of political cultures in Chinese societies.^③

Unfortunately, the study of electoral behaviour in both societies did not receive extensive attention until very recently. Studies of Macau elections, in particular, were rare. The only piece of electoral research that the author is aware of is Herbert Yee's study of the 1992 Legislative Assembly election, which interviewed more than four hundred Macau people within one week after the election.^④ This paper is based on preliminary findings from two electoral studies conducted by the author in September 1992 and then May 1993 on the Macau Legislative and Municipal Assemblies respectively.^⑤ It is hoped that the findings reported herewith will generate more interest from the research community, which would in turn produce more in-depth analysis and understanding of the evolving political culture.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Macau's 5th Legislative Assembly election took place on 20 September 1992, two surveys were conducted between 19th and 20th September 1992. In the afternoon of 19 September, and then the morning of 20 September, a telephone survey was conducted using random telephone numbers drawn from the Macau Telephone Directory. Telephone interviewers were stationed in Hotel Sintra, a total of 159 residents of 18 years and above were successfully interviewed.

On 20 September 1992, between 9:30 a. m. and 5:45 p.m., interviewers were deployed at all seven polling stations for the Legislative Assembly election to conduct an exit poll. Voters were systematically sampled according to a pre-designed time schedule as they stepped out of the polling stations, and face-to-face interviewed using a structured questionnaire. A total of 284 voters were successfully interviewed.

As a follow-up to these studies, during the Second Municipal Assemblies election on

31 May 1993, the author again conducted an extensive exit poll covering all the nine polling stations for the election. A total of 571 actual voters were successfully interviewed, while another 42 were partially interviewed, giving a sample size more than double that of the 1992 exit poll. For the sake of comparison, the questionnaire used in all these surveys were very similar.^⑥

Essentially, the questionnaire tested respondents' knowledge over various aspects of the electoral system, their reasons for voting or not voting, their opinion on the performance of the Assemblies, as well as their opinion on alternative models. Because the Macau electoral laws forbid asking voters how they have voted, within a fixed distance of the polling station, such questions could not be included in the exit polls.^⑦

Seven demographic variables were also included in the questionnaire, they included: gender, age, education, occupation, income, ethnicity, and years of residence in Macau. These variables, together with information of respondents' polling districts, could be very useful for in-depth analysis and future comparisons. In this article, however, only the most significant relationships are highlighted.

Before discussing the findings, it should be noted from the onset that technically there was not one, but two, municipal council elections in 1993—one being for "Mainland Macau" and one for the "Islands" of Taipa and Coloane.^⑧ However, for simplicity, this article has grouped both constituencies together in discussing the Municipal Council elections. Differential voter behaviour across the two areas are reserved for future analysis.

SUMMARY FINDINGS^⑨

1) Voter rationality and sophistication

Table 1 summarizes the stated reasons for voters turning out to vote, across all the three surveys mentioned. It could be seen that the figures are remarkably consistent: about half of the respondents stated that

they turned out to vote due to their sense of civic responsibility, followed by the desire to improve their livelihood. Very few people claimed that they had done so out of support for specific candidates or groups. These figures, of course, may not tell the real motives of the voters, but their fluctuation across time and election may become very useful indicators of voter incentive. Upon further analysis, it was found that respondents with higher education tend to be more driven by their sense of civic responsibility, whereas respondents who were not prepared to vote usually claimed that they had no time.

In the 1992 Legislative Assembly direct election, there were nine groups competing for eight seats, whereas for the 1993 municipal councils direct elections, there were four groups competing for five seats for the Macau Municipal Council, and five groups competing for three seats for the Islands Municipal Council. Tables 2 and 3 show that while voters' knowledge of the number of groups competing appeared to be quite acceptable,¹⁹ respondents' knowledge of the number of seats under contest was far from satisfactory. In the Municipal Assemblies elections, for example, more than three-quarter of the actual voters did not know the exact number of seats available. Apparently, respondents became aware of the number of groups competing through campaign materials and media reports. More than half of the respondents were seemingly receptive of the information. However, when the system itself was concerned, like the number of seats available in the assemblies, voters' knowledge was very limited, indicating a very low level of voter sophistication. Upon analysis, it was not surprising to find that those with higher education have better knowledge of the election, and non-voters, on the whole, were very ignorant of the electoral system. This was echoed by figures in Table 5, which shows that most respondents were unfamiliar with Hondt counting system, which was discussed so

heatedly in the Legislative Assembly before the revised version was adopted. On the easy question of voting age, however, most respondents got the correct answer of "eighteen".(Table 4)

2) Opinion on the voting system

Following the Portuguese system, Macau adopts the proportional representation system in both the Legislative and Municipal Assemblies direct elections. However, the vote counting method used in Macau since 1992 was a revised version of the Hondt method, which essentially gives more advantage to small groups/parties. Asked whether they preferred this method to the old one, about 30% of the respondents of all three surveys preferred the new method, but over 60% did not give a definite answer (Table 5), indicating a high level of unfamiliarity with the counting method. In fact, the author suspects that because the new method has been referred to as "the improved Hondt method" rather than using a neutral term like "the revised Hondt method" lured people to believe that it was a better method, without knowing the pros and cons of the old and new methods.

One basic tenet of proportional representation is that people vote for parties instead of individual candidates. In Macau, people vote for electoral groups formed specifically, sometimes temporarily, for this purpose. Asked whether they actually, sometimes temporarily, for this purpose. Asked whether they actually preferred this kind of system, over 40% of the actual voters favoured voting for groups, but over 30% would like to vote for individuals. (Table 6) This shows that satisfaction over the present system was far from overwhelming, and when the low level of voter sophistication is taken into consideration, one could anticipate that there could be plenty of room for change, when voters become more educated. Our study had also found that students generally favoured voting for individuals rather than groups, showing that the source of change might well originate from the

younger population.^①

3) Opinion on the seat ratios

As mentioned before, the Macau Legislative and Municipal Assemblies followed a balanced system of approximately equal number of appointed, directly elected, and indirectly elected seats. Asked whether they were satisfied with the present system, about half of the respondents said they were (Table 7), but respondents with higher education tended to be less satisfied. However when asked to suggest an ideal ratio for the different types of seats, much fewer people chose the current ratio. (Table 8) For the Legislative Assembly electors, only 17.4% opted for the current ratio, 37.8%^② would like to see an increase in the direct election element, 42.9% had no opinion, whereas for the Municipal Assemblies electors, the corresponding figures were 31.0%, 33.7%,^③ and 34.1% respectively. To sum up, about one-third of the voters would like to increase the direct election element in both Assemblies, and quite a number of voters did not have any opinion. Younger respondents with higher education tended to favour more direct elected seats.

CONCLUSION

The 1992 and 1993 surveys have both found that actual voters in Macau, not to say the general public, were apparently quite unfamiliar with the technical aspect of the electoral system, including the number of seats, the counting method, and to a lesser extent, the number of competing organizations. This low level of sophistication probably explains why average voters in Macau were apparently quite satisfied with the system, until alternative options were suggested, and why the younger and the more educated respondents tended to be much more critical.

Such lack of sophistication may well be the result of insufficient civic education, too short a history of electoral development, intrinsic elements of the Chinese culture, extrinsic constraints imposed by various political forces, or a combined effect of all these

factors. On the institutional level, Macau and Hong Kong followed a very different course of development, but in terms of Chinese culture and colonial history, both societies could be remarkably similar, depending on one's vantage point. The study of Macau people's electoral behaviour could therefore shed light on parallel studies in Hong Kong, and vice versa, and the study of how diversified factors interact to produce our political culture would hopefully help us locate the best track we should follow in developing our societies in the years ahead.

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① The balanced system is reflected in the almost equal number of appointed, directly elected, and indirectly elected seats in both the Legislative and Municipal Councils, whereas the consensus model is characterised by the large number of uncontested seats in the functional constituency elections.

② Could be a very misleading word, but is used here to refer to the increasing proportion of direct elected seats in the council, at the very least.

③ Perhaps "post-colonial Chinese societies" to be exact.

④ Published as part of the Research Report on the Political Culture of the Macau Chinese by Herbert S.Yee, Liu Bo-long, and Ngo Tak-wing for in-

stituto de Macau, 1993.

⑤ Detailed reports of the surveys are kept in the Macau Foundation for reference. Only major findings are highlighted in this report.

⑥ The questionnaires used are given in the research reports housed in the Macau Foundation. They are not repeated in this article in order to save space.

⑦ This is very different from exit polls conducted in Hong Kong and many other countries, in which case, exit polls become very important forecast of the final result.

⑧ The issue is irrelevant for the Legislative Assembly election because the entire territory of Macau is taken as one large constituency.

⑨ Figure quoted in this article may be slightly

different from that in the original preliminary reports, because the datasets used in this article have been standardized to include partially successful cases.

⑩ Referring to the percentage of correct answers given by exit poll respondents, but not telephone poll respondents most of whom were either unregistered or did not intend to vote.

⑪ The author also had the experience of talking to a campaign worker from the "traditional camp", who, after having shown the alternative option of voting for persons, became very sceptical about the present system.

$$\textcircled{12} 8.9\% - 6.4\% + 22.3\% = 37.8\%$$

$$\textcircled{13} 12.8\% + 2.9\% + 1.7\% + 16.3\% = 33.7\%$$

REASON TO VOTE

TABLE 1

	AM93(Exit Poll)	AL92(Exit Poll)	AL92(Tel. Poll)
Civic responsibility	50.5%	51.6%	52.8%
Improving people's livelihood	20.8%	21.0%	22.2%
For democracy	1.5%	2.3%	0.0%
Suggested by friends / relatives	4.5%	2.9%	2.8%
Support for certain candidates	4.3%	5.5%	8.3%
Support for certain groups	3.5%	4.5%	5.6%
Habit	6.6%	4.8%	0.0%
No specific reason	4.8%	5.8%	0.0%
Others	3.6%	1.6%	8.3%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

KNOWLEDGE OF NO. OF GROUPS

TABLE 2

	AM93 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Tel. Poll)
Right answer	68.0%	56.9%	26.8%
Wrong answer	32.0%	43.1%	73.2%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

KNOWLEDGE OF NO. OF GROUPS

TABLE 3

	AM93 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Tel. Poll)
Right answer	22.5%	45.9%	19.0%
Wrong answer	77.5%	54.1%	81.0%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

KNOWLEDGE OF NO. OF VOTING AGE

TABLE 4

	AM93 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Tel. Poll)
Right answer	84.4%	77.0%	72.2%
Wrong answer	15.6%	23.0%	27.2%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

PREFER WHICH COUNTING SYSTEM

TABLE 5

	AM93 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Tel. Poll)
New system	27.6%	31.2%	29.4%
Previous system	4.1%	8.9%	9.8%
Doesn't matter	7.3%	18.2%	11.8%
Don't Know the difference/change	25.1%	18.8%	10.5%
Don't Know	35.8%	22.9%	38.6%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

PREFER VOTING FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP

TABLE 6

	AM93 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Tel. Poll)
For individual	31.3%	36.1%	28.8%
For group	45.7%	40.5%	31.4%
Doesn't matter	13.2%	15.9%	17.3%
Don't Know	9.9%	7.4%	22.4%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

SATISFIED WITH PRESENT SEATRATIO

TABLE 7

	AM93 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Tel. Poll)
Very satisfied	4.3%	4.6%	5.6%
(Just) satisfied	49.7%	41.3%	41.0%
Neutral	8.2%	15.2%	20.1%
(Just) dissatisfied	16.4%	23.7%	10.4%
Don's Know	2.9%	4.6%	2.1%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

THE IDEAL SEAT RATIO

TABLE 8

	AM93 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Exit Poll)	AL92 (Tel. Poll)
Existing ratios	31.0%	17.4%	25.8%
All seats become direct-elected	12.8%	8.9%	10.1%
All seats become indirect-elected	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
All seats become appointed	0.0%	0.4%	0.6%
Abolish appointed seats	2.9%	6.4%	1.3%
Abolish indirect-elected seats	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Abolish direct-elected seats	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Increase ration of direct-elected seats	16.3%	22.3%	13.8%
Reduce ration of direct-elected seats	0.9%	1.8%	0.0%
Don's Know	34.1%	42.9%	48.4%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%