

ISA REGIONAL CONFERENCES

**Sociology in East Asia and Its Struggle  
for Creativity**

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Proceedings of the ISA Regional  
Conference for Eastern Asia  
Seoul, Korea, November 22-23, 1996

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## **INTRODUCTION SOCIOLOGY FROM AN EAST ASIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Introductory Remarks**

Sociology is a study of social change. Social change is inevitable. It follows then that sociology itself should change constantly. However, the history of the discipline demonstrates that it has generally tended to resist change. That is quite understandable because an institution cannot be easily changed. This does not mean that sociology as a discipline has not developed over time. Quite to the contrary! Practitioners of sociology all over the world have made remarkable achievements in terms of social analysis and theory construction. The irony is that our achievements, both quantitative and qualitative, have been a major obstacle to the deep transformation of sociology, which the contemporary social world demands and which some of its practitioners call for in a variety of ways.

Sociology is now under strain for at least two reasons. First, developments in social theory in recent decades have been significant enough to press sociologists to conceive a paradigmatic shift. Many of the fundamental premises which have buttressed European (and North American) sociology have been questioned. Second, profound changes in the modern social world, the very object of sociological analysis, have occurred. These changes have pushed sociologists to reflect upon the character of their discipline and its epistemological foundations.

Generally speaking, the complexity that the twentieth century world presents could not be properly approached by nineteenth century European sociology. Sociology had to change, and change greatly. If we recognize that sociology is a very historic and social form of knowledge in the sense that it was the outcome of a need for a new science that could discern the nature of rapid social change in nineteenth century Europe, it is paramount at this juncture for us to seek ways for reconstructing sociology. As much as the politics of the world-system and its geoculture have been transformed in the late twentieth century, sociology must "overcome the Eurocentric heritage which has distorted its analyses and its capacity to deal with the problems of the contemporary world" (Wallerstein 1996, p.3) in order to make progress in the twenty-first century.