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**AN ENGLISH NEWSPAPER FOR BRITISH AND CHINESE: THE *SOUTH*
CHINA MORNING POST STUDY (1903-1941)**

ZOU YIZHENG

PHD

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2014

**AN ENGLISH NEWSPAPER FOR BRITISH AND CHINESE: THE *SOUTH*
CHINA MORNING POST STUDY (1903-1941)**

**By
ZOU Yizheng**

**A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History**

Lingnan University

2014

ABSTRACT

AN ENGLISH NEWSPAPER FOR BRITISH AND CHINESE: THE *SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST* STUDY (1903-1941)

by

ZOU Yizheng

Doctor of Philosophy

This thesis studies the relationship between the *South China Morning Post* and its audiences. To be viable and profitable in the Hong Kong media market, the *SCMP* had to meet the various needs of its Chinese and British readership. For example, British readers were serious sports fans and the *SCMP* endeavoured to be the best newspaper to target its wealthy British audience who was obsessed with the game of lawn bowls. Because playing fields were mainly granted to the British ex-pats over Chinese citizens, the sports pages of the *SCMP* mainly attracted British audiences. Chinese readers were generally merchants who were concerned about their businesses in China and Hong Kong. Hong Kong as an international trade and shipping centre provided both the *SCMP* and Chinese merchants an opportunity to grow through Chinese and British Imperial business networks. As a result, the *SCMP* represented the interests of Chinese merchants in its various reporting about China in the first half of the twentieth century.

Although the Hong Kong government executed a strict censorship against the Chinese press, the *SCMP* was free from censorship most of the time; consequently, it could publish sensitive and important events that Chinese subscribers desired to read and comment upon. In particular, Chinese audiences could express their concerns and attempt to mould the opinions of other readers because of reports, editorials and correspondence published in the *SCMP*. While the Chinese had limited influence in the British colonial government, the *SCMP* played an important role in improving Chinese audience freedom of expression and its social position in the course of consensus building in Hong Kong. In this manner, the *SCMP* had an economic, political and social function in the making of Hong Kong in the first half of twentieth century.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Zou Yizheng", is written over a horizontal line.

(ZOU Yizheng)

April 18th, 2014





CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

AN ENGLISH NEWSPAPER FOR BRITISH AND CHINESE: THE SOUTH
CHINA MORNING POST STUDY (1903-1941)

by
ZOU Yizheng

Doctor of Philosophy

Panel of Examiners:

 Prof. Nicola PIANCIOLA	(Chairman)
 Prof. John Mark CARROLL	(External Member)
 Prof. LAU Chi Pang	(Internal Member)
 Prof. CHOY Grace Ai-ling	(Internal Member)



Chief Supervisor:

Prof. LAU Chi Pang

Co-supervisor:

Prof. Mark Andrew HAMPTON

Approved for the Senate:

  Prof. Jesús Seade
Chairman, Postgraduate Studies Committee
23 JUL 2014

Date

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Introduction

This PhD thesis studies the contribution of an influential English language newspaper for Chinese and British readers, the *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, to the development of Chinese bourgeoisie audience freedom of expression and for the prosperity of British colonial business interests in Hong Kong in the first half of the twentieth century. This research shed lights on four themes of the fundamental realities of Hong Kong: the relationship between Hong Kong Chinese and Chinese elites, the relationship between Hong Kong Chinese and the Hong Kong government, the relationship between Hong Kong Chinese and China, and the relationship between media and Hong Kong.

One theme of my research is about the relationship between the Hong Kong Chinese community and the Chinese elites. Elizabeth Sinn studied the rise and fall of Chinese merchant leaders in the non-government organization Tung Wah Hospital regarding the way they handled integration and conflicts with the British Hong Kong government.¹ In other words, Chinese businesspeople's power and social position improved through establishing medical services for the Chinese community, which the British colonial government had deliberately neglected. John Carroll emphasized the collaboration between Chinese bourgeoisie and the Hong Kong government between the 1840s and 1930s.² Carroll studied the complex and even conflicting behaviours of Chinese merchant leaders, such as forming associations and clubs in Hong Kong, to exhibit the special position of the Chinese community. Carroll believed these behaviours could improve the position and influence of Chinese business leaders in the Chinese community and in British Hong Kong society. Some Chinese business leaders gained positions in the Hong Kong government through

these influences.

However, the elite status of Chinese leaders studied by Sinn and Carroll has been challenged in the twentieth century. My research shows that the *South China Morning Post* was a new platform to enhance the elite status of these Chinese leaders. The social, economic and political role of Tung Wah Hospital in representing the Chinese community significantly weakened in the first half of twentieth century, which decreased the influence of Chinese leaders in the Chinese community.³ In addition, the effect of Chinese leaders as an intermediary between the Hong Kong government and the common Chinese people weakened when there appeared to be frequent internal differences and conflicts.⁴ To maintain their own privileged status, scholars claimed that Chinese elites provided consultation services and exhibited their individual achievements and abilities to the Hong Kong government. That is to say, while Tung Wah Hospital had lesser social, political and even diplomatic functions in early twentieth century Hong Kong, Chinese elites managed to use substitutes to protect their social status, at least in the Chinese community. In addition, they could also use their special positions to enjoy more power in the autonomous Chinese community and seek further business interests.⁵

Accompanying the emergence of the *South China Morning Post* in the first half of the twentieth century, the role of Chinese leaders as intermediaries between the Chinese community and the Hong Kong government could be framed through the reporting and their speeches, which served to mould Chinese merchant opinions. With an elite status in Hong Kong society and the image of representatives in the *SCMP*, Chinese merchant leaders could influence other Chinese merchant audiences to make collective decisions and maintain the order of the society. In other words, the *SCMP* could help the Chinese leaders manage the Chinese community and build

consensus when disputes happened.

My research also investigated the relationship between Hong Kong Chinese merchants and the Hong Kong government. Scholars believed that the British Hong Kong government managed the Chinese through an indirect way. Elizabeth Sinn studied the Tung Wah Hospital as a semi-official institute to handle Chinese affairs such as petitions to the Hong Kong government. John Carroll also studied the leaders who gained special positions in Hong Kong who were selected as members of the Legislative Council and the Executive Council to represent and manage the Chinese community on behalf of the Hong Kong government. These occurrences reveal the segregationist nature between the Hong Kong government and the Chinese community.

However, some scholars show that the British Hong Kong government also interfered with Chinese affairs directly and the development of Chinese community benefitted from the colonization of British imperialists as a result. For example, Luk Chi-hung believed the Hong Kong government directly managed Chinese food providers when necessary.⁶ Huo Qichang praised the contribution of British colonial education to the Chinese community.⁷

Whether the British Hong Kong government executed direct or indirect measures in its administration, the Chinese community was mainly a subordinate mass in front of the Hong Kong government. As a result, the power of the Chinese community to directly influence Hong Kong society was limited. Instead, there were also racial segregation and discrimination policies against the Chinese community. When the Chinese had been ignored or treated unequally, scholars noticed that the media could meet the demands of Chinese bourgeoisie through helping solving the problems of Hong Kong Chinese and providing a fair and virtual place to express

their various needs. Elizabeth Sinn studied Chinese newspapers and pointed out that the Chinese press in Hong Kong “enabled Chinese to express their views as subject people of the colonial government”.⁸ However, even if Chinese audience could express their views in a Chinese newspaper, it was difficult for them to influence the British and the British Hong Kong government directly.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Hong Kong colonial government issued a series of forceful ordinances to censor the Chinese press. Scholars like Lee Chin-chuan and Carol Lai both believed that Hong Kong’s press freedom for Chinese newspapers was seriously suppressed in the first half of the twentieth century.⁹ Consequently, even if the Chinese press wanted to represent and help Chinese audiences, it might be sanctioned. The English press received the least censorship and interference from the Hong Kong colonial government, which endowed the *SCMP* with the status of representing the interests of its Chinese merchant audience, improving or shaping the position of leaders in the Chinese community and propagandizing Chinese nationalist sentiments. The *SCMP* shortened the distance between the Chinese merchant audience and the Hong Kong government, which also read the *SCMP*. From time to time, the Hong Kong government directly used the *SCMP* to communicate with the Chinese merchant audience and vice versa. This not only improved the efficiency of the Hong Kong government, but also enhanced the rights of the Chinese merchant audience. In brief, the Chinese merchant audience gained the freedom of reading information that represented their interests and the ability to post their needs and emotions in a forum for both Chinese and British audiences to make themselves heard by power elites such as the governors and senior officials.

My research on the *South China Morning Post* explains that the *SCMP* was a

newspaper read by British and Chinese bourgeoisie readers, including elite readers, and took the demands of readers seriously in order to make a profit for its shareholders. Thus, the Chinese bourgeoisie audience could benefit the media power of the *SCMP*. In addition, they used the *SCMP* as a channel to express their needs and exhibit their stances, which they could not easily do in the British colonial government. Furthermore, the *SCMP* could improve their power or position, which would make them as equal as the British audience to express opinions freely in its paper. Such a rare and important channel could help the Chinese bourgeoisie influence the British colonial society, in which the British leaders did not listen to or easily accept the voice of the Chinese. This study of the *SCMP* improves our understanding about the relationship between the Chinese merchant audience and the Hong Kong government. That the *SCMP* was a platform for British and Chinese audiences to communicate with each other revises our former understanding that the Chinese community was forced to express its needs to the Hong Kong government indirectly through elite Chinese leaders. Instead, they could approach the Hong Kong government informally via the *SCMP*.

The other theme is the relationship between the Hong Kong Chinese merchants and China. Some historians illustrated the important and positive influence of Hong Kong Chinese to China in the relationship between Hong Kong and China. For example, Huang Zhenquan studied the contribution of Hong Kong Chinese to the Qing Westernization Movement (Yangwu Yundong, 洋務運動).¹⁰ In addition, Huo Qichang studied the relationship between Hong Kong Chinese and the Revolution of 1911 in China.¹¹ Cindy Yik-yi Chu tried to disclose a closer relationship between Hong Kong Chinese bourgeoisie and the China Communist Party (CCP), and pointed out that the CCP had already noticed the important role of Hong Kong Chinese

capitalists as a significant part of the United Front since 1937.¹² In addition, mainland Chinese historians' research on Hong Kong history usually focuses on the close relationship between Hong Kong and China.¹³ Their research in the last two decades of the twentieth century usually criticizes the British imperial invasion of China and praises the Hong Kong Chinese fight for the return of Hong Kong to China.¹⁴

However, some scholars discovered that in some cases the attitudes of Hong Kong Chinese toward China showed another side. Cai Rongfang believed that in some Chinese nationalistic movements in Hong Kong, Hong Kong Chinese merchants showed collaborative and conditional nationalism. Collaborative nationalism means that the Hong Kong Chinese merchants wanted to use the advantage of their special position as Hong Kong residents to change China for their reform purposes.¹⁵ Conditional nationalism means that Hong Kong Chinese merchants supported the Chinese nationalistic movement in order to make profits and retreated when the movements damaged their business interests.¹⁶

Part of my research did show that the stances of the *SCMP* kept pace with those of Chinese merchants. In some critical situations such as the Great Strike in 1925, both the *SCMP* and Chinese merchants kept away from the nationalistic movement, which was radical and detrimental to their interests. However, in the reporting on earlier nationalistic movements, the *SCMP* or Chinese merchant audience showed a passionate attitude toward the nationalistic movements, which did improve their profits in business. It seems far-stretched for Cai to compare the degree of nationalism and business interests.¹⁷ The two terms, "nationalism" and "business interests", are not always diametrically opposed. Sometimes, they are united. When the two terms conflicted, it did not always mean merchants became traitors of China;

they may simply have not supported a radical movement of a particular government in China. Thus, for example, even if Chinese merchants held a conservative attitude toward the Great Strike in 1925, it never meant they cut off their relationship with China. This attitude became particularly obvious in the 1930s anti-Japanese reporting. Chinese merchant audiences pressured the *SCMP* to report more on the Sino-Japanese war as result of Chinese nationalist motions. Even if their nationalism or patriotism combined with the motives of their business interests, it never meant they were corrupt or negative because their trade and shipping activities with China was good for the Chinese economy and themselves. Overall, in my research, the Chinese audiences showed rational nationalistic sentiment. They were not radical patriots, nor negative collaborators of the colonial government.

There was a clear connection between the *SCMP* profits and Chinese nationalistic reporting, which took advantage of Chinese interests about nationalistic movements. My research discloses that the *SCMP* had a combined reporting strategy; that is, how the *SCMP* handled reporting according to the demands of its British and Chinese readers who were of higher stratum of Hong Kong society; viz., the British and Chinese bourgeoisie. In this way, the *SCMP* represented and advanced the position of these Chinese audiences, especially through providing more audience freedom than the Chinese press could offer on reporting about China. The commercial nature of the *SCMP* and its Chinese merchant audience did not deny their stances on Chinese nationalistic events. Furthermore, the *SCMP* and its Chinese merchant audience were susceptible to each other. In front of some important nationalistic events, the *SCMP* educated the audiences, built consensus and propagandized the Chinese merchant audience with patriotism.

Finally, my research on *SCMP* history will help scholars understand the role of

media in Hong Kong society. We had very limited knowledge about the relationship between the English media and Hong Kong society in the first half of the twentieth century. Carol Lai studied the freedom of the press in Hong Kong in the post-war years.¹⁸ I believe that the tradition of freedom of the press for the Hong Kong public partly originated from the *SCMP*. In my research, the Chinese merchant audience enjoyed the freedom of reading and expressing their opinions in an English newspaper, which showed the class nature of the press freedom for its audiences. I selected the largest Hong Kong English newspaper company, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) Limited that had both British and Chinese subscribers to study the role and influence of the English language press in Hong Kong history. The SCMP Ltd had two newspapers between 1916 and 1941. One was the *SCMP*; the other was the *Hong Kong Telegraph*. Both newspapers covered news and items of interest for British and Chinese bourgeoisie readers. The *SCMP* was the most influential English morning paper and daily in 1930s Hong Kong.¹⁹ In addition, I discovered that, during the period that I have researched, the *SCMP* was mostly used in Hong Kong government reports to the British government.²⁰

The Combined Reporting Strategy of the *South China Morning Post*

In this PhD thesis, I argue that the *SCMP* formed a combined reporting strategy, which improved Chinese bourgeoisie audience's freedom of expression in the press, and their social position, and contributed to the development of Hong Kong trade while it consolidated British dominance in Hong Kong. In other words, its business interests were its first priority.

The board of directors of the *SCMP* did not consider the freedom of the editorial room of the *SCMP* as the most important thing.²¹ The *SCMP* was not an official or

semi-official newspaper of the Hong Kong government, nor was it affiliated with any political party. It simply tried to interest its readers and increase its circulation and in doing so, it attracted many more advertisers than its competitors in Hong Kong. Furthermore, the *SCMP* was different from the Chinese press, which enjoyed less external press freedom than English newspapers. This research explains why the *SCMP* had such a business strategy, how the strategy worked and its influence in Hong Kong society. From 1903 to 1941, the *SCMP* employed such a strategy because of the following four factors.

Firstly, there was the factor of China. The *SCMP*'s board of directors, co-founders, editors, and Chinese staff were friendly to Chinese readers, and they wanted to attract a Chinese-speaking audience to read their newspaper. While the English newspaper market in Hong Kong was locked in furious competition, more than 97 percent of the Hong Kong population was Chinese, and they made up of the majority of the *SCMP*'s potential market.²² Although only a very low percent of Chinese residents were members of the Chinese bourgeoisie, nevertheless, there were still around 40,000 members of the Chinese bourgeoisie in Hong Kong in 1931.²³ In order to satisfy the Chinese readers' demand, the *SCMP* could more easily obtain news sources from China and at a lower cost than it could from Reuters News Service in the United Kingdom.

Secondly, the *SCMP* had to supply local and visiting British readers within British colonial Hong Kong and other parts of the British Empire with the news from Hong Kong and British sources.²⁴ Without British readers, British firms would not have advertised in a Hong Kong newspaper. With only Chinese readers, the *SCMP* could not have operated well because its circulation would have been low, and the revenue from advertisements would have been pitiful. Thus, British readers were

indispensable to the *SCMP*.

Thirdly, the development of industry, finance, and the entertainment business required a newspaper that could reach the greatest number of readers with consumer power. English speakers with decent incomes who were readers of the *SCMP* were the targeted customers of advertisers in English newspapers. Further explanation must be highlighted here regarding the formation of the combined reporting strategy. As early as the founding of the *SCMP*, it could not compete well with the other English newspapers so it targeted a “big circle of Chinese clients”, a limited number of English and other foreign residents.²⁵ Other competitors, including the *Hong Kong Daily Press*, had occupied the Hong Kong English press market and owned the valuable upper class British readers.²⁶ In other words, attracting those Chinese subscribers was the easiest method to sell its newspaper, not to mention the *SCMP* Ltd had been supported and owned by the National Bank of China, invested in by a group of Chinese merchant leaders such as the director of Tung Wah Hospital, Fung Wa Chuen, and was focused on the Chinese market. Even if the *SCMP* grasped a certain percentage of the Chinese reading audience, in order to be viable, it still had to own enough British readers to attract British advertisers, just as the *Hong Kong Telegraph* did.²⁷

Fourthly, the different censorship ordinances of the Hong Kong government toward the Chinese and English press gave the *SCMP* the opportunity to reach a group of English-speaking Chinese bourgeoisie readers. This meant that Chinese bourgeoisie readers who gained English language skills could read news that could not be printed in the Chinese press, and comment freely without being censored by the government. The *SCMP* became a public sphere for Chinese readers to express and even mould opinions.

Here, I will briefly explain the “different external press freedom policy”. The government’s racial segregation and discrimination policies in Hong Kong, as well as the ‘Zhongfa Xiyong’ (中法西用; the British used Chinese laws when handling Chinese inhabitants’ legal cases), were important factors that legally divided Hong Kong into two separate worlds. Thus, under the law, the Chinese and British press enjoyed different external press freedoms, which I will discuss further in subsequent chapters.

The *SCMP*’s combined reporting strategy worked well between 1903 and 1941. Since its founding, the *SCMP* ‘consistently maintained a strong lead’ in reporting on China.²⁸ The management believed the “policy of [the *SCMP*] will in the future” continue to “result in the greatest good to the greatest number”, including the change of increasing Chinese readers “gradually taking place” and thus the *SCMP* should “attract” Chinese readers with reporting of “Chinese origin”.²⁹ However, until the 1920s, the editor of the *SCMP*, Thomas Petrie, still felt it difficult to obtain enough China news to satisfy Chinese readers, because “Hong Kong is tied to Reuter[s]” which, as “a British agency, features British news and views”.³⁰ Moreover, Petrie believed that Reuters told readers “little or nothing about our immediate neighbours”, which was the “chief disadvantage of the present system or lack of system”. Thus, the *SCMP* management wished to have “a broader, bigger, brighter and better cable news service” to cater to “the numbers of native readers of the foreign press in China (Hong Kong was at least geographically affiliated with China, according to Thomas Petrie)”.³¹

The combined reporting strategy did not change in the 1930s. *SCMP* editor Ching wrote, “Our news is departmentalized. A ‘post reader’ can always find what he wants, in other papers the reader has to take his news where he finds it.” Furthermore, the

editorial editor admitted “the interest in a newspaper is diversified” on the “main page, or in the sporting columns”.³² To better gratify the diversified interests in the *SCMP*, the *SCMP* had a “high percentage of news to advertisements”. Except for the “shipping advertisements”, “unimportant items of court news”, and “cinema advertising”, the cable news and editorials were mainly about China or the British Empire, which could serve Chinese and British audiences separately.³³ I will discuss in the following chapters the influences of the *SCMP*, as well as explain how the newspaper executed such a strategy.

In summation, this research focuses on the background, course and result of the *SCMP*’s combined reporting strategy. Firstly, the *SCMP* editors and owner gradually formed a strategy of making profits from both Chinese and British audiences. Secondly, the *SCMP* provided audiences with broad and representative topic reporting for Chinese and British readers. Thirdly, the strategy of reporting on China improved the audience freedom and social position of Chinese bourgeoisie readers, which also helped the *SCMP* and even Hong Kong business development. The British also preserved their sporting culture and maintained their dominance in Hong Kong.

A Consistently Commercial Newspaper

From the founding of the *SCMP* in 1903 to its temporary closing as of the 1941 Japanese invasion, the newspaper was substantially owned by the financial and industrial bourgeoisie, who wanted to use it as a tool for their business interests. Before Dr Noble became the controller of the *SCMP* in 1906, the National Bank of China was its controller. In 1903, the board of the *SCMP* Ltd planned to make the newspaper ‘much better and more interesting’ than its rivals.³⁴ In 1903, the *SCMP*

Ltd had more than 100 investors; more than 90 percent of whom were British or other foreigners.³⁵ The National Bank of China appointed A. G. W. Playfair as the board chairman of the SCMP Ltd upon the newspaper's founding, thus controlling the *SCMP*.³⁶ The SCMP Ltd owed a large amount of money to the bank because of company debentures, and it would have become part of the bank's private property if Dr Noble had not acquired the majority stake in 1906, totalling 4,292 shares.³⁷

The bank invested in the *SCMP* because it wanted to use the *SCMP* to attract Chinese and British merchants and clients to open accounts at the bank.³⁸ Thus, it is clear that the *SCMP* became a newspaper that represented Chinese merchant interests. Similarly, other Hong Kong commercial newspapers in the nineteenth century were intermittently friendly when reporting on China governments.³⁹ Chinese people did not typically read English newspapers in Shanghai.⁴⁰ However, Hong Kong's English newspapers were cosmopolitan newspapers because the British substantially controlled Hong Kong, and these newspapers once had the freedom to criticise local issues as long as there was substantive evidence to support the opinion. Although this freedom was protected *de jure* by British laws on freedom of the press, it was suppressed *de facto* by Hong Kong government ordinances in the turbulent first half of the twentieth century.⁴¹

Frank H. H. King believed that the late nineteenth century Hong Kong English press exemplified personal journalism, which means that editors used the newspapers as their tools to comment on social events. Before this time, some editors were British or American merchants, and their primary goals in founding or buying newspapers were commercial.⁴² Newspaper editors liked or hated different colonial officials. Consistent criticism could cause the arrest of an editor for using the press for libel.⁴³ The editors of the *SCMP* were not arrested like those of the other three

newspapers—the *Hong Kong Telegraph*, the *Hong Kong Daily Press* and the *China Mail*, which demonstrates that the *SCMP* had a very mild style. In the early years (1903-1907) of the *SCMP*, the editorials had been written by Alfred Cunningham, Douglas Story, Thomas Petrie, and probably Tse Tsan Tai. All of these people had good relationships with the Hong Kong government, and they were not radical journalists. Tse Tsan Tai's position at the *SCMP* was as the co-founder and the comprador, to bring business to the company.⁴⁴ The *SCMP*, from the beginning, was actually a company that worked hard to make a profit.

Li Shaonan divided the Hong Kong newspaper history into three periods: the elite press period (1841-1873); the partisan press period (1874-1924); and the socio-economic press period (1925-).⁴⁵ Li clarified that there were different genres of newspapers during the same periods.⁴⁶ Li's argument makes some sense, but the suggested periodization could be re-periodized according to my understanding about the nature of the Chinese press in given eras. There are at least four reasons for the controversy of the "partisan press" period.

Firstly, Hong Kong had no long-standing political parties between 1874 and 1924. Li used Wang Tao's *Xunhuan Ribao*, Chen Shaobai's *Zhongguo Ribao*, and a series of Weixinpai (維新派, mild reformers) and Gemingpai (革命派, violent reformers, or revolutionaries) newspapers. In addition, the only famous party was also a secret society, the Revive China Society, which owned *Zhongguo Ribao*. However, Li Gucheng pointed out that *Zhongguo Ribao* might be an exaggerating story of a revolutionary party paper, because he could not find sufficient copies of *Zhongguo Ribao* and suspected the influence of *Zhongguo Ribao*.⁴⁷

Secondly, 1874-1924 was the most rapid period of development for the Chinese bourgeoisie in Hong Kong.⁴⁸ Chinese merchants acquired or founded newspapers,

including Chinese and English newspapers, for their business interests, not for political goals.⁴⁹

Thirdly, Li Shaonan made a weak argument using English newspapers as his supporting materials, saying only that the *SCMP* and the *Hong Kong Telegraph* had strong political orientations before the 1911 Chinese revolution.⁵⁰ However, Li did not provide any sources to support his assertion in his article.

Other scholars, such as John Wong and Lam Man-sum, offered different interpretations through context analysis. Wong studied English newspapers, such as the *China Mail* and the *Hong Kong Daily Press*, which supported Chinese reform but actually only wanted to protect British interests in China.⁵¹ Lam studied the four English newspapers—the *China Mail*, the *Hong Kong Daily Press*, the *Hong Kong Telegraph*, and the *South China Morning Post*—between 1895 and 1912 and found that these four newspapers were commercial newspapers, although the *China Mail* published the most radical editorials. In their 1911 revolution reporting, these newspapers did not support the revolution and only supported legitimate reform by the Manchurian government in China. In particular, in their editorials, they were primarily concerned with the stability and prosperity of Colonial Hong Kong.⁵²

Thus, the role of the four newspapers in Chinese reform and revolution was ‘usually indirect and rather unconscious’.⁵³ I agree with John Wong’s and Lam Man-sum’s insights that those newspapers were not partisan; rather, they were commercial newspapers for British interests; furthermore, I believe the *SCMP* represented Chinese merchants’ business interests.

Fourthly, the Chinese and English press, during this period, did not focus on political audiences. Rather, mainly businesspeople, middle class readers or lower class intellectuals purchased those other newspapers while the *SCMP* focused on the

British and Chinese merchants with its Chinese reform news reporting, a popular topic about which important news was being disseminated at that time. Li Shaonan did not differentiate partisan newspapers publishing political editorials from commercial newspapers providing a variety of unbalanced and changing comments on political events. In other words, Li Shaonan did not notice the close relationship of market value and political news, and he misunderstood that Chinese-edited newspapers with political news resulted in a genre of radical, or partisan, press in Hong Kong.

As for Li's "socio-economic press" period, from 1925 to the present, one of the defects of his argument is he neglected to acknowledge that between 1925 and 1941 there was a period of "co-existence of commercial newspapers and partisan newspapers". In the 1930s, varieties of newspapers supported by different parties and governments appeared in Hong Kong because of the Sino-Japanese war. The Japanese Hong Kong military government claimed that before the Manchurian Incident occurred on 18 September 1931, Hong Kong was a base for British imperial propaganda; after that, it was the Chongqing Nationalist Party's propaganda base. In other words, Hong Kong was an international propaganda market.⁵⁴ The *SCMP* took advantage of this opportunity to benefit from Chinese political parties' orders.

During this period, the *SCMP* had connections with the Chinese Nationalist Party (under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek), the China Defence Union (under the leadership of Madame Sun Yatsen), and the Communist Party of China's Hong Kong branch (under the leadership of Liao Chengzhi) for the purpose of reporting on the Chinese War Against the Japanese, which significantly improved the *SCMP*'s circulation, with its net profit reaching its zenith in the 1930s.⁵⁵ While Hong Kong had a stable commercial environment, large-circulation newspapers meant more

advertisements, especially for English newspapers with powerful, high-consuming audiences. It did not matter whether the readers were British or Chinese. With the combined reporting strategy, the Chinese audience read Anti-Japanese War reports and were hostile to Japanese-advertised services or products, though there were still many British consumers who made it profitable for Japanese advertisers to keep working with the *SCMP*. Thus, the *SCMP* made money either way.

I previously argued in the *Journal of Biographical Literature (Zhuanji Wenxue)* that the *SCMP* co-founder Tse Tsan Tai was a revolutionary propaganda pioneer in modern Chinese history, and I clearly indicated in the same article that the *SCMP* was a commercial newspaper and that it did report on Chinese reform, although not from its beginning.⁵⁶ Further to my previous observation, I have to add and highlight that the *SCMP*'s reporting on China met the demand of its business strategy.

In addition, Tse also did not want to turn the *SCMP* into a radical newspaper for revolutionaries. Tse's position as a revolutionary was a secret, so it was impossible for him to disclose his identity publicly, which would have been a huge risk. What Tse intended was to found a newspaper similar to other Hong Kong English newspapers so that he could make a profit to feed his family.⁵⁷ Editorials and comments on China in the *SCMP* were not radical because of the newspaper had 'frequent claims and counter-claims, charges and counter-charges', which was how other English newspapers operated in Hong Kong.⁵⁸

Frank H. H. King pondered in his book on Chinese coastal newspapers 'the extent to which it actually carried this [Tse's plan to support Chinese reform in the *SCMP*] through must be the subject of further research'.⁵⁹ My reply to this proposal is that Tse had a limited and unintended influence on the *SCMP*; however, Tse, like other British journalists, had a sympathetic attitude toward China and the Chinese people

and wanted a peaceful and prosperous China. He did not use the newspaper to encourage violent uprisings nor published radical editorials encouraging the overthrow of any government. I should emphasise that three barristers served as company directors including a chairman, in the *SCMP* boardroom.⁶⁰ Their presence minimised any illegal activities, including libel, which was the only restriction on the freedom of the *SCMP* editors before 1907.

James Curran argued that the short lifecycles of radical newspapers were the result of investors or advertisers not supporting such newspapers; the higher the circulation a radical newspaper had, the earlier it would close.⁶¹ Jean Chalaby argued that the transformation of the British press from political publishing to commercial journalism in the nineteenth century indicated that the commercialisation of the press might go against political publishing ideals.⁶² Further to their arguments, I present a de-Westernising version of the *SCMP*. The controllers of the *SCMP* focused on business development. They attempted to attract Chinese and British readers to increase circulation. The *SCMP* was well-accepted by local advertisers, including the Hong Kong government, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, Asahi Beer, Shewan, Watsons, Lane Crawford, and other prominent local companies.⁶³ Although the Chinese were oppressed in Hong Kong society, the *SCMP* did not challenge the unfair political system in Hong Kong but was a conservative commercial newspaper that accommodated itself to the colony and maximized its profits by obtaining advertising orders. The radical newspapers Curran mentioned were published for working-class readers in the United Kingdom; the readers of the *SCMP* were higher-class Chinese and British people who expected an open and fair Chinese market.

The *SCMP* had content on China politics and wars, and sometimes it disclosed Qing government corruption. As the *SCMP* was an English-language newspaper, the

Qing government would not have interfered with its circulation in China. After Dr Noble took over the *SCMP* in 1906, he only implemented financial and technical reforms. He did not dismiss editors like Thomas Petrie and did not change, but rather improved, the style of reporting about China for Chinese readers. Thomas Petrie worked at the *SCMP* as the editor until 1924, having joined the *SCMP* in 1905.⁶⁴ Petrie kept a good relationship with the Chinese in Hong Kong.

The *SCMP* was controlled by financial and industrial capital from the National Bank of China, Dr Noble, the Shewan family, and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, and the newspaper served the Hong Kong Chinese and British community as a conservative commercial newspaper. The high commercialisation of the *SCMP* made it into a “money tool” for the advertisers, but not a political publishing medium. It struggled to be profitable in the Hong Kong colony by integrating Chinese and British readers and cooperating with social organizations.

Michael Schudson argued that the anti-commercial bias in the study of the history of journalism was wrong and that it was incorrect to equate “profit and commercialisation” with corruption and to portray the editorial room and management as being in conflict.⁶⁵ My research shows that the *SCMP* used the aforesaid strategy to make a profit, but it also had positive social influences, including improving the right of Chinese bourgeoisie to be informed by the *SCMP*, and created a virtual platform for them to discuss varieties of current affairs.

Cooperation with British and Chinese Social Organisations

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky claim that the American press was a tool for its controllers and sponsors’ interests and represented them to convey propaganda to the public.⁶⁶ Although the *SCMP* was not a propaganda tool in my research period,

the *SCMP* also cooperated with organisations such as owners, management, advertisers (Shewan, HSBC, Asahi Beer), and the Hong Kong government, to filter unpopular news reports and editorials through self-censorship, censorship, and direct intervention by social organizations. The *SCMP* represented British and Chinese readers and formed a combined reporting strategy, and in so doing, the *SCMP* achieved its greatest business profits, resulting in extending the freedom of Chinese audiences to read news and express opinions that stimulated the development of Hong Kong economy.

From its founding in 1903, the *SCMP* had been controlled by a bank and then by Dr Noble, an important investor with expansive business interests in East Asia, especially in Hong Kong. The *SCMP*'s directors were from the National Bank of China, the Shewan family (a high-resource company in Hong Kong and one of the largest advertisers in the *SCMP*), and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, among others. The *SCMP* cooperated well with the government when Hong Kong faced crises. The cinema industry also cooperated very well with the *SCMP* because of important common interests; in particular, cinema advertisers liked the sporting page that attracted a British audience. Similarly, the British audience was a targeted consumer of the first-run theatres that screened English language films.⁶⁷

Given the newsroom was strapped financially, the *SCMP* had to rely on every possible method to remain viable. It not only needed the British to subscribe to and read the newspaper but also English-speaking Chinese readers; it not only needed advertising income, but it also begged for government stipends for Reuters telegrams to save money. It attempted to be socialised and commercialised with business in Hong Kong, and it refrained from criticising them easily. For example, the *SCMP* avoided criticizing two big companies, the Shewan and HSBC, as their bosses owned

board seats in the *SCMP*. The only exception was if a company did something detrimental to the Hong Kong economy, which was a basic prerequisite for the *SCMP*'s business, then the *SCMP* would attack this company, even if it advertised with the *SCMP*. For example, it once started a conflict with the Hong Kong, Canton and Macau Steamboat Company, which worked with the Canton government during the 1925 Canton-Hong Kong Great Strike.⁶⁸

In short, the *SCMP* took advantage of advertisers and governments and found a balance in reporting and representing the British and Chinese communities in Hong Kong.

Combined Reporting Strategy

In other British colonies in Asia, English newspapers were usually only published for British readers; for example, the English newspaper, *Strait Times*, did not begin to attract both Chinese and other non-British readers until 1938.⁶⁹ The *SCMP*'s combined reporting strategy was useful to advance Chinese social position as well as serve Chinese democracy and business.

Frank H. H. King noticed the phenomenon of the 'increasing role of the Chinese' in the history of Hong Kong journalism, which took two forms, one has been widely researched; i.e., the 'development of the Chinese language press itself', and the other, 'Chinese capital in English-language newspapers', requires 'considerable research'.⁷⁰ In addition, 'the effects of these investments [on the *SCMP* and the *SCMP*'s afternoon paper, the *Hong Kong Telegraph*] have yet to be established'.⁷¹ Further to King's expectations, I noticed that the "China effects" came not only from 'investments' but also from its readers who at the same time included the advertisers, government officials, politicians, editors and the newspaper's Chinese staff. I

elaborate on this in Chapter 1. As a result of the “China effects” from the aforesaid factors, the *SCMP* became a virtual place for Chinese merchants to read, comment, mould opinions and enhance the position of some Chinese leaders.

Herbert Schiller, in his *Mass Communications and American Empire*, points out that collaboration between press and commercial groups influenced reporting and suppressed press freedom in American press history.⁷² However, in my research, the *SCMP* cooperated with social organizations to make profits and create more audience freedom for Chinese bourgeoisie readers than the Chinese press. Consequently, the *SCMP* became more attractive to Chinese bourgeoisie readers because their news might not be reported in the Chinese press. For example, Chinese editor Henry Ching had no say in the *SCMP* business but still had partial editorial freedom to support the Chinese in the reporting as long as the board deemed it good for the company profits.⁷³

Hu Daojing argued that English newspapers in modern Shanghai facilitated communication among foreigners, but the Chinese did not read these newspapers.⁷⁴ Frank H. H. King provided a generalised response that English newspaper audiences were mainly foreigners. He believed that ‘interests in China were limited by the practical requirements of the foreigner in China, who was either trader or missionary, and these requirements were likely to direct attention almost exclusively to a limited aspect of the China scene’.⁷⁵ King believed that the *SCMP* might constitute ‘a further exception’, which provided much more content on China than other English newspapers.⁷⁶ The *SCMP* published shipping and cinema stories, classified advertisements and financial news, which attracted both the Chinese and British communities. Meanwhile, the *SCMP* also provided consistent and sometimes abundant reporting on China in its pages.

The Chinese, who comprised roughly 97 percent of the population of Hong Kong in the first half of the twentieth century, were a big market for the *SCMP*. Although the *SCMP* was read by British and other European consumers, as well as Americans, the *SCMP* never gave up its strategy of developing a Chinese audience market and meeting the needs of Chinese readers.⁷⁷ The *SCMP* did this for its commercial goals; i.e., higher circulation and advertising income, especially advertisements from Chinese companies. As a result, the *SCMP* provided specific news reporting to attract both Chinese and British audiences. Without either Chinese or British audiences, the *SCMP* would have been in danger of bankruptcy.

Chinese Bourgeoisie Audience

While British readers were a widely scattered audience in varieties of professions, Chinese readers were a very concentrated audience working mainly in commercial and financial firms. Although these readers included some professional readers in education, government, legal and medical services, nevertheless, according to Zhang Li's research on modern Hong Kong population and profession, the commercial and financial firm audiences remained the majority of readers of the *SCMP*.⁷⁸ These readers were wealthy and understood the English language; they were loosely considered bourgeoisie, the majority of who were Chinese merchants.

Hong Kong historical scholars like Carl Smith, Elizabeth Sinn, and John Carroll focus on the Chinese elites who collaborated with the British Hong Kong government in the making of Hong Kong. The *SCMP* Chinese readers included the Chinese elitist audience these scholars discussed. There were different understandings about "elite" in the Hong Kong study that might have left illusive and confusing concepts. For example, sometimes Carroll defined Chinese elite as the

“leaders of Chinese bourgeoisie” or “leaders of Chinese community”, while Chinese bourgeoisie have been defined as “urban elite connected with modern business”.⁷⁹ Such definitions confuse scholars about the relationship between elites and bourgeoisie. Scholars generally refer to the prestigious leading Chinese merchants as the “elite”. The meaning of Chinese elite could not simply be equalled to Chinese bourgeoisie in this study. It is understandable in Western academia that elite could mean “middle or upper class of Americans”, namely the “managers of one sort or another”, who can be “political managers, business managers (like corporate executives or that sort of thing), doctoral managers (like university professors), or other journalists who are involved in organizing the way people think and look at things”.⁸⁰ However, in my research, “Chinese elite” is only defined as the leaders of Chinese bourgeoisie or merchants. In particular, the *SCMP* Chinese audiences were “Hong Kong Chinese bourgeoisie readers”, which included Chinese elite readers. My definition of “bourgeoisie” is almost the same with Carroll’s, viz., “entrepreneurs, compradors, bankers, industrialists, and professionals such as lawyers and physicians”.⁸¹ Thereafter, even if “elite” is used in the research, I define it as the “leaders of Chinese bourgeoisie”.

Carl Smith believed the small group of Chinese elite was comprised of contractors, merchants, compradors, government servants and Chinese missionary employees, who could provide leadership in the Chinese community.⁸² Smith generated the list of Chinese elites through researching “names given on memorials, petitions and subscription lists”, and pointed out besides “the repetition of a name on subsequent lists, the amount of the contributions, and the position of the name on the document serve[d] to suggest the relative of an individual”, “proprietorship of land also suggest[ed] potential elite status”.⁸³ Smith’s selection standard of “Chinese elite” is

the exposure rate and fortune quantity. In addition, he named Chinese unofficial members in the Legislative Council “the elite of the elite”.⁸⁴ While Smith clearly understood elite meant the renowned Chinese bourgeoisie, John Carroll, most of the time, equated Chinese elite to the leaders of Chinese bourgeoisie. As a result, the lexical meanings varied in their research because the meanings of “leader of Chinese bourgeoisie”, “renowned Chinese bourgeoisie” and “bourgeoisie” are obviously different. In particular, sometimes Carroll used terms like “Chinese merchants as the Chinese gentry of a British colony”, or “affluent Chinese”, or “a Hong Kong Chinese bourgeois world”.⁸⁵ After reading his research, other scholars such as Law Wing Sang believe that Carroll talked about a “Hong Kong’s Chinese elite into a full-fledged bourgeoisie”. The definitions of “Chinese merchant”, “Chinese bourgeoisie”, “Chinese gentry” and “affluent Chinese” are different, which would be troublesome for readers to understand the term “Chinese elite” completely and consistently. Scholars had already pointed out that “elite” was “too complex for easy generalization” because even within “this relatively small group there existed different political orientations and different levels of allegiance, as reflected in the variety of career paths of their choice”.⁸⁶ In addition, the relationship between Chinese elites and Chinese bourgeoisie sometimes were vague; the Chinese elite could be leaders, representatives or partners of Chinese bourgeoisie. Chinese elites should first want to collaborate with the British colonists and then they should have enough financial, social and reputable resources to gain and maintain elite status or prominent roles in British colonial Hong Kong. While Chinese elites’ names appeared in the *SCMP*, like Ho Fu, Ho Tung, Tse Tsan Tai, Chow Shou Son, Ho Kai, less prominent Chinese bourgeoisie members also made up the *SCMP*’s Chinese readership. In Carl Smith and John Carol’s research, the effect of Chinese elite was

that they were an intermediary between the Chinese community and the Hong Kong government. In my research, the intermediary readership includes the elites and the *SCMP*, a newspaper that represented Chinese bourgeois interests and could publish their needs in the newspaper without disclosing their real personal information; such a practice also improved the position of leaders in the Chinese community, helping them maintain or gain the position and the reputation of elite status. In particular, my research not only shows that the *SCMP* was useful in shaping the elite status of the leaders of Chinese bourgeoisie in Hong Kong, it shows more importantly the Hong Kong Chinese bourgeoisie were politically “progressive bourgeoisie” and always weak in its civil society.⁸⁷ Chinese bourgeoisie also had their voices heard in the *SCMP* by virtue of the external and internal press freedom of the English language press.

Reporting for the Chinese Audience

While there were restrictions on the *SCMP* preventing it from publishing reports and editorials against the British Empire and Hong Kong, it was allowed to report negative or positive news about China. The *SCMP* paid lower costs to obtain news from Canton, Amoy, Shanghai and Beijing. It had correspondents in large Chinese cities but had few in the United Kingdom. Considering the demand for Chinese news by Chinese readers and the comparative cost advantage over British news, the *SCMP* copiously published China-related news.

I would like to point out those commercial newspapers, including the English-language *SCMP*, promoted Chinese reform and Chinese national sentiments, but it should be understood that they did this mainly to make profits by news and editorials, as well as provide information on China for British merchants to take into account

for their Chinese businesses. Paul A. Cohen, in his book, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reform in Late Ch'ing China*, told a similar story. Wang Tao, the famous Chinese reformer and founding father of Chinese newspapers, made a significant amount of money through his successful management of the *Xunhuan Ribao*, with its valuable business information, Chinese news, Canton news, Beijing news, and shipping information. Unlike other Chinese commercial newspapers, Wang published editorials against Qing government officials in *Xunhuan Ribao* to make profits. The legal protection in Hong Kong guaranteed such a strategy for Chinese newspapers before 1907.⁸⁸

Hu Daojing wrote that English newspapers were used to protect the Western powers' political and commercial interests in China.⁸⁹ Lai Guangjian pointed out that Chinese coastal newspapers represented British national interests. With reporting that lacked substantive evidence, the English newspapers in Chinese coastal cities, other than those in Hong Kong, supported the British invasion of China. These newspapers tried to control public opinion and harm Chinese interests.⁹⁰ Ge Gongzhen wrote that missionaries used the newspapers to spread Protestantism in China and in so doing, the missionaries wanted to subjugate Chinese culture to serve foreign countries' national interests.⁹¹ Zheng Guanying, the Qing official reformer and scholar, proved this argument in his *Shengshi Weiyan*: when there were Sino-foreign conflicts, the Western newspapers tried their best to slander the Chinese government.⁹² However, Chinese editors published more impartial editorials, and even the late Qing government noticed the importance of English newspapers in Chinese diplomacy.⁹³

Yong Z. Volz, Chin-Chuan Lee, and Jiarong Zhou remodel these arguments in their research on American and Japanese newspapers in China: they claimed that those newspapers, whether privately owned or government-sponsored, represented

their national interests in China.⁹⁴ My research shows that the *SCMP* worked differently. The *SCMP* had in-depth connections with both Chinese and British investors, editors, advertisers, management, readers, and political institutions; thus, it represented both British and Chinese interests during my research period. The *SCMP* expected a stable and prosperous Hong Kong society, which fit British interests in Hong Kong. In particular, while it supported Chinese reform for a better business environment for both Chinese and British merchants, it expected significant income as a result. Additionally, it represented Hong Kong and mainland Chinese merchants' interests through its editorials, which did not incur the anger of advertisers from the Chinese and British communities because the *SCMP* had readers of greater economic power in those communities.

Elizabeth Sinn echoed Zhang's argument and substantiated this conclusion via research on the Chinese newspaper *Qiribao* (*Zhongwai Xinwen Qiribao*, 中外新聞七日報), which was edited by Chen Ailing, who was later the editor of other Chinese newspapers, including *Huazi Ribao* (*Chinese Mail*), which operated under another form of the combined reporting strategy, that of Chinese and English language reporting in one newspaper.⁹⁵ This development occurred because the English newspapers intended to attract Chinese readers.

In actuality, the earliest Chinese newspapers in Hong Kong, such as *Zhongwai Xinbao*, *Huazi Ribao*, and *Xunhuan Ribao*, were founded by mild reformers, such as Wang Tao, Chen Aiting, Wu Tingfang, etc., who worked for the Hong Kong government, the Qing government, or the government of the Republic of China, in that order. They used the newspapers to improve the position of China around the world and freely expressed their views in Hong Kong. Although the development of Chinese newspapers was seriously influenced, or manipulated, by foreign capital,

Elizabeth Sinn claimed that these newspaper editors tried to be independent in reporting the news and especially in attracting Chinese readers, by identifying their newspapers as publications for Chinese readers in Hong Kong.⁹⁶

The first Chinese and British-founded English daily, the *SCMP*, had an important role in, and made vital contributions to, modern Hong Kong history. It helped to improve the position of Chinese bourgeoisie readers through reporting; in addition, the *SCMP* promoted audience freedom for the Chinese community in Hong Kong. Probably because of the difficulty in accessing the *SCMP* archives and the old newspapers themselves, the contribution of the *SCMP*'s reporting in support of Chinese reform and resisting the Japanese invasion of China has not been well studied. The *SCMP* reported on China for commercial objectives, but it also portrayed the contribution of Hong Kong Chinese readers to the causes of modern Chinese reform and nationalist movements. I discuss this in detail in Chapters 2 and 5.

British Audience

According to scholars, especially John Carroll, Hong Kong was an example of collaborative colonialism, which meant that the British could not control every part of Hong Kong by force, so they executed a policy of cooperating with local Chinese elites in the governance of Hong Kong.⁹⁷ In the field of the Hong Kong press, the *SCMP*, as a British colonial English newspaper, had to have both Chinese and British subscribers to be viable in my research period.

Hong Kong, as a British colony, could not shrug off the influence of the British Empire. Consequently, as an English newspaper, the *SCMP* had to satisfy the needs of British readers and report the “home news”, even if only using Reuters sources,

and it occasionally published stories on British imperial events. Most of the time, there were only a few hundred to a few thousand British residents in Hong Kong, plus sporadic British readers in Canton and China's coastal cities.

The *SCMP* preserved British cultural heritage via reporting on British sports, such as lawn bowls, cricket, golf, and football. Thus, besides news sources from Reuters, the *SCMP* had additional reporting sources among the British. It was the same with other British event reporting, such as the King's birthday, Empire Days, and the British Empire Exhibition in London in 1924-1925. In 1908, the new head of the *SCMP*, Dr Noble, emphasised this focus and noted that the *SCMP* had its feet in two worlds: the British Empire and China.⁹⁸ Moreover, the *SCMP* had to obey the Hong Kong government's Seditious Publication Ordinance of 1914 and restrict its negative reporting on the British Hong Kong government. In particular, it could not "bring into hatred or contempt His Majesty, or the Government established by law in the United Kingdom or in this Colony or in any British possession or in British India or the administration of justice in any of such places or to excite disaffection towards His Majesty or any of the said Governments".⁹⁹ In 1927, the *SCMP* also had to begin obeying the Printer and Publication Ordinance. The Printer and Publication Ordinance could require the *SCMP* to "pay any fine which may be imposed upon the proprietor, printer, publisher or editor of the newspaper in question, either under this Ordinance or in respect of any matter appearing in the said newspaper". In addition, the *SCMP* would have to "pay any damages that may be awarded in any action for libel in respect of any matter appearing in the said newspaper and the costs of any such action".¹⁰⁰ To avoid possible fines arising from reporting on the British Empire, the *SCMP* used British news agency content and created sports and exhibition news content, but it could not be like other British newspapers, such as *The Times* and

Manchester Guardian, which focused passionately on social affairs and frequently commented on the British government.

The *SCMP*'s history witnessed the decline of the British Empire and the rise of Chinese and American capitalism in East Asia. More than 100 British merchants sold their company shares to American investor Dr Noble, making the *SCMP* a company controlled by an American.¹⁰¹ Although before that, the *SCMP* was owned not only by British investors but also by Chinese investors, including a Chinese merchant bank, the National Bank of China. The *SCMP* was also an advertising medium for the companies of the wealthiest non-British owners.

Nationalism, British Identity, and the Business of the SCMP

The *SCMP* provided reporting about the rise of Chinese nationalism during the first half of twentieth century; for example, content on Chinese reform and business conflicts with Western powers.¹⁰² In addition, the *SCMP* provided more content of what Chinese readers expected on the Chinese war with the Japanese.¹⁰³ These cases showed the interaction of newspapers with Chinese nationalism. Eric Hobsbawm emphasised that human factors, such as propaganda, were used to stimulate national sentiment in the course of the construction of nationalism.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Hobsbawm believed that the nation would be constructed in keeping with the principles of nationalism.¹⁰⁵ Benedict Anderson, meanwhile, believed that the nation would appear or could be imagined under the simultaneous conditions of capitalism, printing technology and human language diversity.¹⁰⁶ In other words, the printing of capitalism in the form of newspapers provided material conditions for the imagination of the Chinese nation in Hong Kong. My research in this thesis discloses that the identity could also be helpful for the progress of media business.

My definition of Chinese nationalism employs those of Carlton Hayes and Hans Kohn. Hayes says, “Loyalty and attachment to the interior of the group (namely the nation and homeland) are the basis of nationalism”.¹⁰⁷ Hans Kohn defines nationalism as “A deep feeling of attachment to a homeland and absolute loyalty to it, and a sense of sharing its destiny are the basis of nationalism, which is genuine when no other factor checks the loyalty to the homeland”.¹⁰⁸ I define Chinese nationalism in this thesis as “a strong but unnecessarily eternal passion to the motherland”. The passion could be cultural-based, business-based and politics-based. For my purposes and intents, Chinese nationalism is conditional and could be weakened by the ebb of business interests from the motherland. Being Chinese in terms of race did not mean every Chinese was automatically a patriot or a nationalist. A “Chinese patriot” is simply defined as a Chinese person who supported his country development and endeavoured to protect it in front of external intimidation. A patriot did not necessarily support governments in China; viz., being pro-China. The meanings of the two terms “patriotism” and “nationalism” are almost the same in this thesis.

The rapid development of publishing capitalism in Hong Kong co-stimulated the burgeoning of Chinese nationalism. The *SCMP* grew with the tide of nationalism and the formation of modern republicanism, particularly because it could report Chinese news more freely. The *SCMP* has been a neglected factor in modern Chinese history. Its role in modern Chinese reform and revolutionary history was definitely limited, but it represented the press part of the contribution of Hong Kong to modern Chinese history.

Concurrently, the *SCMP* reported on British events, such as imperial exhibitions and sports, and, therefore, it met British imperial readers’ needs and made Hong Kong a part of the British Empire through its relevant reporting. Daniel Dayan and

Elihu Katz claimed that media events can ‘integrate societies into a collective heartbeat and evoke a renewal of loyalty and its legitimate authority’.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the reporting of lawn bowls in the *SCMP* exhibited the British identity of Hong Kong British residents.

The “identity” or “national identity” here means one feels he or she belongs to a nation, irrespective of anything else. Therefore, Chinese identity means a man who deems he is a part of China. British identity means a man who deems himself a part of Britain. “British imperial identity” means a man who deems himself a part of the British Empire.

British imperial identity, like other identities, was vague, dynamic and imagined. Bernard Porter claimed that British Imperial identity during the nineteenth century was mainly owned by the British middle and upper classes, which had commitments to the United Kingdom.¹¹⁰ The *SCMP* was a newspaper for the Chinese bourgeoisie and British, and Chinese merchant leaders had been portrayed as those who shared the British imperial identity with the British editor. Kelby Halone studied the interplay between sport, communication and identity and he claimed the contribution of identity and sports to communication.¹¹¹ Similarly, it is not surprising that the prosperity of the *SCMP* had a close relationship with British identity.

In summation, there were interactions between news reporting and cultural identities. While the news reporting portrayed identities, those identities, on the other hand, attracted audiences and improved the *SCMP* sales figures.

Freedom of the Press in British Colonial Hong Kong

A widely accepted definition of ‘press freedom’ is the freedom of expression, broadcasting and publication without government interference and approval before

the publication within the laws guidance or restriction.¹¹² Similarly, Hong Kong scholars accept the definition of press freedom in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*; namely, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”¹¹³ The press freedom applies to the press and its audiences. If the editors and media owners are the same group of people, it is not necessary to discuss editorial freedom. Editorial freedom is usually defined as the company-employed editor in chief having absolute authority to determine which news or news sources to report without interference of the media owners. In other words, the press freedom at least includes three parts, which are the freedom of the media without censorship by the government (external press freedom), the editorial freedom (internal press freedom) and the freedom for audiences to seek, receive and impart information in the media (audience freedom).

In this thesis, I employ the three parts of press freedom to analyse the relationship between the *SCMP* and Hong Kong society. The “freedom of the *SCMP*” means the *SCMP* newspaper itself could publish news without daily censorship or government interference; “internal” press freedom, or “editorial freedom of the *SCMP*”, means the *SCMP* editors had the freedom to publish without the interference of the management; “audience freedom” is the freedom of audiences to learn information and freely express their opinions in the *SCMP*. The three parts generally united on the principle of the stability of Hong Kong. Board members and the general manager had the power to interfere with editorial office work and the editors had no say in the final decisions. Nevertheless, interference from the board members and general managers did not happen frequently. In particular, the editors in chief most of the

time had very good relationships with board members and the general manager. In other words, the *SCMP* editors still had an ideal level of editorial freedom, though not an absolute one. As result of the good situation for the first two parts of press freedom, the freedom of audiences in the *SCMP* was protected and guaranteed.

The combined reporting strategy took advantage of the Hong Kong censorship muzzling China-related reporting in Chinese press. Thus, the *SCMP* used the China-related reporting to make profits. I identify the external press freedom in Hong Kong through three perspectives. Firstly, during different periods, the *SCMP* enjoyed different degrees of external press freedom under changing government ordinances. Secondly, for English newspapers, including the *SCMP* and other Chinese newspapers, external press freedom was differently enforced. For example, Chinese newspapers suffered daily censorship after the 1922 Seamen's Strike, which actually provided the *SCMP* an unfair advantage in the media market.¹¹⁴ The *SCMP* could provide information to attract Chinese bourgeoisie readers that the other Chinese newspapers should have been able to provide but could not. Thirdly, the *SCMP* board members, and government officials, including governors, sometimes pressured the *SCMP* editors and journalists to change or withdraw reporting against some advertisers or relevant social organizations. In this way, the *SCMP* maintained relevant advertisements.

Carol Lai, Chin-Chuan Lee, and Joseph Man Chan believed there was significant intervention in the external freedom of press by the British Hong Kong colonial government.¹¹⁵ Although the Chinese press suffered from severe censorship and regulations, nevertheless, Lai, Lee and Chan neglected the external press freedom of an English newspaper like the *SCMP*, or overstated the media regulation in British Colonial Hong Kong. Hong Kong English newspapers either supported or criticised

different colonial officials and their competitors from time to time. Although editors were sometimes sued for libel, it did not influence the operation of the newspapers, and the editors could manage their newspapers from prison, which again showed that external press freedom was respected in Hong Kong.¹¹⁶ The *SCMP* also had a libel contingency fund to cope with libel lawsuits, even though the *SCMP* did not need to submit its content for censorship before publication.¹¹⁷

The official report about the British press disclosed that suppression of the external press freedom in the British Empire was not rare: “Varying degrees of official control, censorship and intimidation prevailed [in] India, Burma and Malay”.¹¹⁸ In *To-day in Egypt: its Administration, People and Politics*, the *SCMP* co-founder and editor, Alfred Cunningham, said the Hong Kong English press was not like the English press in Egypt, as it was under censorship, while Arabic-language newspapers enjoyed external press freedom.¹¹⁹ Egyptian English newspapers were censored because they were influential and could be read easily by audiences in Britain.¹²⁰ Similarly, Chandrika Kaul’s research on the Indian press showed that the Indian media was deeply influenced by the British liberal press tradition, although there were suppressions from time to time.¹²¹ Lam Man-sum claimed that the Hong Kong English newspapers had little impact on British public opinion.¹²² Consequently, what the *SCMP* had reported would not cause serious concern in Britain.

To summarize, the *SCMP* enjoyed more external press freedom than the Chinese press in British colonial Hong Kong. The *SCMP* management sometimes suppressed editorial freedom, while at other times it met Chinese readers’ demands under the auspices of the *SCMP* board. These variations in the press freedom were exploited to maximise the newspaper’s profits. In addition, this profit-oriented practice was

helpful to improve the Chinese bourgeoisie audience's right to be freely informed by the press and to participate in public consensus.

The Framework of the PhD Thesis

I have employed five chapters to study the *SCMP* and its influence on Hong Kong society. In the first chapter, I discuss the relationship between the *SCMP* and its British and Chinese readers, advertisers, management, and editors and Hong Kong's political parties, as well as the Hong Kong censorship policy. In so doing, I hope readers will understand that the *SCMP* had to meet the demands of both Chinese and British readers to implement a combined reporting strategy and survive in the Hong Kong press arena. In addition, the *SCMP* had to navigate relationships with groups of people and institutions to increase its income and decrease its growth obstacles.

In the second chapter, I include case studies about the *SCMP*'s reporting on Chinese reform, the May Fourth Movement and so on. In so doing, I would like readers to understand that the *SCMP* managed to attract Chinese readers with abundant articles about China, making it different from other English press outlets in Chinese coastal cities like Shanghai, as well as in the British Empire. The *SCMP* had to obey Hong Kong's press laws and social orders regulating reporting on China and the British Empire, but it still needed to do something for its Chinese readers. Thus, it exhibited a complex and flexible attitude in handling its reporting.

In the third chapter, I focus on the *SCMP*'s coverage of lawn bowls, one of the most important sports in British Colonial Hong Kong. While reporting on China brought the *SCMP* good circulation and advertising value, some British readers might not have found it interesting or attractive, although instructive. In addition, the *SCMP* would not have a significant British audience if it only had reporting on China

because British audience considered the *SCMP* did not represent the British residents' interests in Hong Kong.¹²³ While the *SCMP* managed to attract Chinese readers, it still needed to retain British readers, so the *SCMP* provided what British readers liked; for example, sports reporting. It enhanced its lawn bowls reporting, and in so doing, the *SCMP* not only consolidated its British readership, but it also attracted advertisers, many of which were British firms.

In the fourth chapter, I detail that the *SCMP* provided interesting and attractive information for British and Chinese readers who expected to see what the British Empire Exhibition would bring to Hong Kong. The *SCMP* expressed British imperial sentiments in its reporting, but it also advocated the long-term interests of Hong Kong in an imperial business network, which improved the *SCMP*'s circulation and advertising income.

In the fifth chapter, I discuss the *SCMP* in the 1930s, a complex international political and business situation. The *SCMP* had to provide Anti-Japanese War reporting to meet the demands of its Chinese readers, but the British board of directors and readers did not support this tactic. The board did not want to lose Japanese advertisers and hurt the company's interests. In addition, British readers also worried that the Chinese might riot in Hong Kong because of anti-Japanese sentiment. The British colonial government and British legislative council members were also concerned that such news would bring Hong Kong society to an unstable situation. As an English newspaper experiencing the least censorship from the Hong Kong government, though there was self-censorship from the *SCMP* board, the *SCMP* still had the freedom to report Sino-Japanese war news for its Chinese readers. The *SCMP* board also finally realised that the best option was to cooperate with different political parties to make profits from selling war news to the Chinese and to

an increasing number of British readers. Most importantly, the Chinese advertisers and British advertisers had important interests in China, and being pro-Japanese or neutral in the Sino-Japanese conflict did not fit the interests of advertisers like HSBC, Bank of China, and Shewan. In other words, reporting on the Anti-Japanese War effort maximised the *SCMP*'s income via circulation and advertisements. Japanese advertisers still needed to advertise in an Anti-Japanese newspaper, because there were British clients and some unpatriotic Chinese clients who worked with those Japanese firms.

The *SCMP* focused on maximising its shareholders' interests in a colonial environment and formed a combined reporting strategy to create a profitable venture. In particular, it spoke for the Chinese audience. It also promoted the prosperity of Hong Kong, such as in the development of trade and sport. In doing so, it gained valuable audiences in the British and Chinese communities and attracted advertisers who benefitted from the fast-growing Hong Kong economy.

1. THE FORMATION OF THE *SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST* COMBINED REPORTING STRATEGY

In this chapter, I illustrate the British and Chinese readers and organizations connected with the *South China Morning Post* (*SCMP*), and the varieties of Chinese factors that existed in the *SCMP*, which finally led to a combined reporting strategy. These factors include readership, management, editors and advertisers. Five years after the founding of the *SCMP*, the editor of the *China Mail*, W. H. Donald, wrote, ‘British trade in China has always had a staunch supporter in the *Post*. In matters Chinese the *Post* has consistently maintained a strong lead.’¹ The strategy for reporting Chinese and British events for Chinese and British readers was one of the most significant characteristics of the *SCMP*’s reporting. The *SCMP* also received subsidies from the Hong Kong government for many years and had long-term advertisement contracts with the Chinese Nationalist Government’s companies. Thus, the *SCMP* was a profit-oriented newspaper, without the responsibility or the possibility of serving the masses, most of whom could not read English. Only by serving the bourgeoisie audience in this way, could the *SCMP* obtain the highest circulation, cover British and Chinese readers, and win the attention of varieties of advertisers in Hong Kong. To make profits, the *SCMP* sometimes suppressed editorial freedom to cooperate with advertisers and the government.

It also engendered a legal environment with greater external press freedom for English newspapers in Hong Kong to publish information and editorials that the Chinese press could not. With low circulation but a bourgeoisie audience, in an environment of harsh media suppression, the *SCMP* chose to be a conservative, quality paper accepted by both Chinese and British readers, and local advertisers.

Readership

The *SCMP* only had a circulation of roughly 300 copies as of its founding in 1903.² In 1916, it had a circulation of 500 to 600 copies.³ By the 1920s, it had made great progress, with a daily circulation of 2,900, which was partly due to good business management and the Great Canton-Hong Kong strike.⁴ In 1932, its circulation had reached approximately 5,500 copies.⁵ Unfortunately, there was a 10 percent drop soon after the circulation peak due to the world economic crisis.⁶ In 1938, the company Board minutes recorded that the circulation generally had shown a steady increase, but the minutes do not disclose the circulation figure.⁷ After discussion with former *SCMP* editor Robin Hutcheon and checking the population data in 1941, I have estimated a circulation figure that should be no fewer than 10,000 subscriptions before Japan took over Hong Kong.⁸

At the very beginning, the readers of the *SCMP* were mainly British and other European seamen serving on ships near the harbour, Chinese merchants, and British women and men from all strata of Hong Kong society.⁹ The *SCMP* started to attract Chinese readers because of a series of factors that I will explain in subsequent chapters. In addition, shipping news was traditionally the *SCMP*'s most important section, secondary to the sports section.¹⁰ The shipping section was mainly for British and Chinese merchant readers. The more Hong Kong developed as an international shipping and trade centre, the more shipping news and advertisements appeared in the *SCMP*. In Chapter 4, I demonstrate how the *SCMP* supported the improvement of Hong Kong trade, especially within the promising British imperial commercial network, through its British Empire Exhibition reporting.

The chapter on sports reporting will improve scholars' understanding of British colonial life and colonial press operation. The sports section was mainly for the

British readers. As the *SCMP* editor Douglas Story said, ‘every male Briton of Hong Kong engaged, from his Excellency the Governor to the most recently joined subaltern in the barracks, from the elderly Attorney-General to the youngest clerk in a shipping office’ followed sports obsessively.¹¹ They ‘pa[id] too much attention to sport’ in early twentieth century Hong Kong.¹² Therefore, it is understandable why the *SCMP* had a strong sports section and even put lawn bowls in the front section in its newspaper while other English newspapers did not do this. The large sports section meant higher circulation and more advertisement income, and so demonstrated the motives of the *SCMP* in using sports reporting to make profits. .

There were economic crises, financial market collapses and wars, which could potentially decrease the advertising income for the *SCMP*. In order to remedy advertising loss under those circumstances, the paper had to increase circulation and derive income from other channels. I will discuss these special situations in Chapter 5.

Between 1903 and 1941, the price of the *SCMP* was 10 HK cents per copy, and it cost approximately HK\$3 per month. Foreign and Chinese workers who did not understand the English language only made HK\$5 to HK\$15 per month, and most of their money was spent on food and other necessities. The readers who understood English had a certain higher than average level of financial capability, and they wanted to know about politics, economics, trade, business, Hong Kong, mainland China, and entertainment.

Of course, these people were also clients or potential clients of the local Hong Kong movie theatres, department stores like Lane Crawford, the Bank of East Asia, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, the Bank of China (Hong Kong), the Bank of Canton, and other advertisers in the *SCMP*. The *SCMP* was a newspaper

for the middle and upper classes in Hong Kong, who had significantly influenced the development of Hong Kong.

Thus, from this perspective, the *SCMP* was one of the most influential newspapers in Hong Kong, considering its circulation and Chinese bourgeoisie readership. Some Chinese newspapers might have had a greater circulation; for example, *Gongshang Ribao* and *Huazi Ribao* had approximately two or three times the circulation of the *SCMP*; nevertheless, their readers were lower class or middle class Chinese, who were not the most influential people in Hong Kong society. In addition, most Chinese newspaper readers were not wealthy enough to buy the products advertised frequently in the *SCMP*.

The *SCMP* never conducted a survey to determine how many Chinese and British readers they actually had before 1941, and the readership should be understood as dynamic. Robin Hutcheon told me that 70 percent of the post-war subscribers were British firms¹³ and that there were also subscribers in Canton and other Chinese cities.¹⁴ The *SCMP* also had subscribers in the United Kingdom and the United States, but the international circulation was limited;¹⁵ however, a Chinese scholar in the 1940s estimated that more than half of the readers of the English newspapers were Chinese.¹⁶ The *SCMP* intended, during the pre-war period, to absorb as many English-speaking Chinese readers as possible, and it attempted to learn to respect of the sentiments of Chinese nationalists.¹⁷ Hutcheon believed that some Chinese readers ‘skimmed the headlines, the cartoons, the photographs, etc., but were not serious committed readers’.¹⁸

In other words, the Chinese readership was different, with a different definition, and it consisted of subscribers who read editorials, business information and entertainment news. In particular, these special readers were advertisers and

politicians. While the *SCMP* had an overwhelming majority of the English press market in Hong Kong, we can easily believe that most of the English newspaper readers at least read the *SCMP*, considering the British population, the *SCMP*'s readership, and the readership's structure. There were several thousand British subscribers from British firms, and British readers made up a significant number, I believe, accounting for the majority of British morning paper readers in Hong Kong in the 1930s and 1940s, considering the unpopularity of the other morning paper, the *Hong Kong Daily Press*.¹⁹ From Royal Navy soldiers to the governor, a wide stratum of British read the *SCMP*. Even low-level British readers' food budget sometimes equalled ten Chinese workers' monthly incomes, or HK\$140.²⁰

The Chinese readers are divided into at least three groups. The first group is Chinese intellectuals. Whether these people lived in Hong Kong for half a century or only eight years during the Sino-Japanese War, they received a traditional Chinese education; even if they went on to postgraduate or even secondary school education in Hong Kong or the Western world, they usually maintained a strong sense of Chinese identity. For example, the librarian of the Hong Kong University Fung Ping Shan Library, Chen Junbao, OBE, read English newspapers, including the *SCMP*.²¹ In addition, he was a member of the Chinese Defence League, an anti-Japanese organisation under the direction of Madame Song Qingling.²² The *SCMP* also had an uncertain number of mainland Chinese intellectual readers, who received their education overseas or earned doctorates in the United States and the United Kingdom and later worked at universities or for the Nationalist government.²³

The second group, the majority of the *SCMP* audience, consisted of Chinese businesspeople who immigrated to Hong Kong for economic or political reasons in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some of them were called 'better-class

Chinese' (高等華人), and some of them were called 'higher-class Chinese refugees' (高等難民). Better-class Chinese made up the largest audience in comfortable first-run theatres.²⁴ Businesspeople were also important clients of the banks in Hong Kong, which helped merchants in their trade businesses. These merchants were patriots and bought National Salvation Bonds to ensure a victory against the Japanese Invasion in the 1930s, but they also hoped the Nationalist government's senior officials would return some of the funds that they 'accumulated ... to the Nation's War chest which urgently requires a lot of funds in order to secure our ultimate victory.'²⁵

The third group of *SCMP* readers were native Hong Kong residents who accepted Western education, worked for British companies, or for the government, and had much less connection to the mainland. Hong Kong-born residents made up more than one-quarter of the Hong Kong population beginning in 1921. Some of these people were educated at the University of Hong Kong and worked for the government or for foreign companies. The university student union subscribed to the *SCMP*, so students and professors could read it there.²⁶

These students were closest to the British colonisers and were loyal British subjects. The president of Minsheng College, Yang Duansheng, did not like some of the people in this group because he had little in common with them, and Chen Junbao fully agreed with Yang.²⁷ Actually, these natives included college students, lower level staff and compradors at companies, and government officials who paid greater attention to the *SCMP* news, job advertisements, and film advertisements. They spent their spare time in theatres watching Western movies and were inclined to be closer to foreigners. Readers in this group later became the professionals in Hong Kong society, and while they made up the lower level of the *SCMP* readers, they were still useful and valuable to advertisers because of the larger size of this

group, which constituted a majority of the clients of the *SCMP* advertisers.

The *SCMP* tried to attract Chinese readers as of its founding, and this policy did not change until 1941. Although the *SCMP* did not agree with everything that happened in China or that was done by the Chinese, nevertheless, the *SCMP* understood that it had to respect its Chinese readers' emotions, and thus it reported China news to satisfy the variety of demands of Chinese readers.²⁸ The *SCMP* provided news reporting and supported in its editorials what mainstream readers supported or sympathised with, which did attract Chinese audiences. I selected important events in modern Chinese history, such as early Chinese reforms, the May Fourth Movement, and the Chinese resistance against the Japanese invasion, to demonstrate that the *SCMP* had such an effect.

Management and Chinese Staff

The *SCMP* management treated Chinese and British staff in an equally courteous manner. The newspaper's Chinese staff members were entrusted with important posts, including editors in chief, editors, chief Chinese staff, accountants and compradors. In addition, the Chinese staff cooperated well with management during crises. According to He Xingfeng's research on the *Huaqiao Ribao*, which was founded by Chinese staff members Shum Waiyau and Chan Kai of the *SCMP*, they wanted to edit a newspaper for loving their motherland China²⁹; in contrast, the British managed the *SCMP*. This collaboration between the British and Chinese, from operation to news reporting, endowed the *SCMP* with Chinese and British characteristics, thus contributing to the combined reporting strategy.

Co-founders from China and Britain

The *SCMP* was a joint-stock newspaper business from its foundation. It did not successfully sell all initial 6,000 shares to investors, and the financial situation was not ideal for some time.³⁰ Frank H. H. King believed that using the capital of Chinese investors such as Tse Tsan Tai and others to found the *SCMP* improved the Chinese role of the colonial English newspaper.³¹ In addition, in 1905, Alfred Cunningham had to ask for a permit to erect a movable kiosk to sell ‘all or any of the other local papers’ and books at Blake Pier to make a profit.³² The kiosk permit had been cancelled in 1929 by the Director of Public Works, who required the manager of the *SCMP* to keep ‘the area in a clean and tidy condition’.³³

In 1903, Tse Tsan Tai was not in a good financial situation; he had lost money in business and was not wealthy at that time, so the *SCMP* was his greatest hope for making money.³⁴ Tse, although a former revolutionary leader, wanted to make money via media investment. Tse and Cunningham targeted both Chinese and British readers by reviving and sympathising with China, but they did not turn the *SCMP* into a radical revolutionary paper like *Zhongguo Ribao*.³⁵

Cunningham was also the organiser of the St. George’s Club in Hong Kong, where British people could socialise and play games together; later, *SCMP* editor George Lloyd became the chairman of the club committee.³⁶ Meanwhile, Tse Tsan Tai was the founder of the Chinese Club, where Chinese merchants could meet and discuss the development of the Chinese community in Hong Kong.³⁷ The two co-founders brought Britishness and Chineseness to the one newspaper. The editor of the *SCMP*’s contemporary *China Mail* pointed out that ‘one consistent aim of the *Post* has been to promote a clearer understanding, both politically and commercially, between the Chinese and the “barbarians” of the West.’³⁸ The *SCMP* supported Chinese and

British merchants' interests in the newspaper and created an image of co-prosperity for British and Chinese Hong Kong through its reporting, for example, through the enthusiastic reporting on the British Empire Exhibition in 1924, which is explained in a subsequent chapter.

Unfortunately, the low circulation of the *SCMP* as a start-up company could not support the luxurious lifestyle of general manager Alfred Cunningham. As a result, one angry shareholder, Joseph Whittlesey Noble, a dentist from the United States, acquired two-thirds of the *SCMP*'s shares and dismissed Cunningham and Tse, who together only owned roughly 10 percent of the shares in the *SCMP*, from the *SCMP* Ltd.³⁹ However, this did not mean a transfer in control. In fact, the controller of the *SCMP* since 1903 was the National Bank of China; the bank controlled the *SCMP* through company debentures, not shares, and had two seats on the *SCMP* board before Noble took over the company, and the bank remained on the board until it closed in 1911.

Joseph Whittlesey Noble

Dr Noble was a Far East entrepreneur who invested in the *SCMP* for profit and used it to promote his other ventures in Hong Kong. His newspaper contemporary J. B. Powell pointed out that Noble was a great man who bought *SCMP* shares at the earliest possible time, occupied the greatest number of board positions, and held the position of board chairman in Hong Kong.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, they did not explain why Dr Noble invested in the *SCMP* or how Dr Noble planned the objectives of the *SCMP*. Dr Noble became wealthy because of a generous award from the Qing Emperor. According to cultural expectations, Noble should have been grateful to the Chinese government. Noble directed the *SCMP* toward news reporting on China

because he was happy to see that an increasing number of Chinese readers liked to read the *SCMP*'s news reporting on China.⁴¹ In addition, he treated Chinese people with compassion; for example, he offered some free dental services to the Chinese community through Ho Kai's Alice Memorial Hospital.⁴² Noble also gave important positions to Chinese people, such as the editorship to Shum Waiyau and Henry Ching. Noble made profits from investing in the *SCMP*, as well as many of his own companies, or those in which he invested, that advertised in the *SCMP*.

Executive and legislative council member Sir Paul Chater was Dr Noble's newspaper investment partner in Hong Kong. Chater and Noble invested in the *SCMP* and in other businesses in Hong Kong and controlled scores of board seats at these companies.⁴³ Noble's accumulated business holdings in Hong Kong included Hong Kong Dairy Farm, the Ice and Cold Storage Co., Ltd., the Hong Kong Hotel, Ltd., Hong Kong Tramways Co., Ltd., the Hong Kong Electric Co., Ltd., the Green Island Cement Co., Ltd., and the *South China Morning Post*, Ltd. He was chairman of the Dairy Farm Company and the Hong Kong Hotel, Ltd.; he was on the consulting committee of China Light and Power Company, and he was a director of Hong Kong Tramways Co., Ltd.⁴⁴ While Noble used the *SCMP* to promote his businesses in Hong Kong, he understood that his newspaper reporting should be friendly to the Chinese and British communities, otherwise his companies and products would be boycotted.

It is no wonder that Noble directed the *SCMP* to publish reporting on China to make profits. To a certain extent, Noble was one of many American merchants who became wealthy by living their dreams in the Far East. General M. C. Stayer told Jonas E. Warrell that it was the Qing government that made Noble rich in the Forbidden City. At the end of the Qing Dynasty, General Stayer was the Sanitary

Officer at the American Embassy in China. The Emperor had problems with his teeth and wanted to find an American dentist who used more modern techniques than Chinese dentists did. The Emperor selected Dr Noble for the position of royal dentist. Noble was in San Francisco, but he accepted this duty, satisfied the Royal family, and was heavily rewarded.⁴⁵ We do not know the exact amount of money that Noble received, but we can estimate. The first Western dentistry clinic in Beijing belonged to Chen Shun Long, who opened his business in 1888; before that, an American dentist in Hong Kong educated him.⁴⁶ Because there was only one American dentist in Hong Kong whose name was Dr Noble, it is almost certain that Chen Shun Long was a student of Dr Noble's clinic, and Noble might have owned shares in the Beijing clinic. Chen Shun Long was a royal dentist and treated Dowager Cixi's teeth. His recompense was 500 taels.⁴⁷ Noble was invited to the palace and would have been rewarded more than Chen Shun Long; it is likely that his compensation could have been a few thousand taels. In any case, this would reasonably explain Noble's means to invest in the *SCMP*.

In 1911, Noble found that he had made an egregious mistake. Angus Hamilton, a well-known journalist in London, became the editor in chief of the *SCMP* in 1910. This man played an important role in the *SCMP*'s history. He wanted to bring the liberal tradition of British journalism to Hong Kong and criticised the one member of the Hong Kong elites, Robert Gordon Shewan, whose companies had actually been the most important advertisers in the *SCMP* for a very long time. Hamilton was good at writing lively and ironic editorials, and his articles took aim at Shewan. Hamilton rejected the *SCMP*'s board interference. Board director J. S. Harston, who previously employed Hamilton in London, said Hamilton's editorials were 'very nearly libellous,' but Hamilton claimed, 'Mr Harston had no knowledge either of the six-

column article or of the page article containing the careful, non-libellous and important analysis of the cause of the depreciation of the Green Island Cement shares.’ Hamilton claimed he ‘has written what he was informed’⁴⁸, which still resulted in the censorship of his editorials before publication.⁴⁹

The worst issue arose when Hamilton physically assaulted the Chinese chief of staff in the printing department, causing a strike at the *SCMP*, which later became a press strike across Hong Kong. The *SCMP* needed the Chinese staff to print the newspapers but no longer needed the troublesome British-style editor. It was wise for the *SCMP* to stand on the side of Chinese staff, because the Chinese staff saved the company from collapse several times on critical, historical occasions.

Another wise decision of the *SCMP* was the acquisition of the *Hong Kong Telegraph*, an afternoon English newspaper previously owned by Chinese merchants. The *SCMP* completely acquired the *Hong Kong Telegraph* in 1916.⁵⁰ This acquisition provided a guarantee for the *SCMP*, which meant that if the *SCMP* was in trouble, the *Hong Kong Telegraph* could help the *SCMP* overcome the trouble and decrease losses; for example, in case of a strike, even if the printers of the *SCMP* all left, the *Hong Kong Telegraph* could help with the printing. The synergy of the two newspapers made media management more flexible and helped to improve the competition between the two newspapers. The editors could work for both newspapers at the same time to cut costs.

In 1925, when the Great Strike and a stock market collapse occurred in Hong Kong, Dr Noble left Hong Kong happily for his first marriage. He sold most of his assets in Hong Kong, except for the newspapers and the Dairy Farm. Dr Noble married a divorcee, Ethel Darby, retired in his fifties and stayed in New York to placate his wife and children, and he no longer paid much attention to the business of

the *SCMP*. Darby disclosed that the reason Dr Noble left Hong Kong for the United States was only to marry her.⁵¹ Dr Noble completely believed that his selection of a Chinese editor would benefit the *SCMP* for a long time. In fact, the designated editor worked at the *SCMP* for thirty-four years and defended the combined reporting strategy. He also brought in his nephews as editors and accountants for the *SCMP*.⁵²

Another two designated managers were John Scott Harston and Benjamin Wylie, who were British. Harston was on the committee of the Hong Kong Law Society. He was also a director and chairman of the National Bank of China, Ltd., A. S. Watson & Co., Ltd., and Humphreys Estate and Finance Company, Ltd., and he was a member of the Hong Kong Club.⁵³ Harston ensured that the *SCMP* operated within British common law, and he sympathised with the Chinese. Wylie's general management promoted the *SCMP* in Hong Kong, and he obtained advertisements from local companies. Harston saved a score of Chinese revolutionaries in 1903 at the request of the co-founder, Tse Tsan Tai.⁵⁴ Wylie was the head of the Chinese printers and treated Chinese people in a friendly manner. Both Wylie and Harston liked British sports. Wylie liked lawn bowls, and Harston liked cricket. I explore the relationship among the *SCMP*, lawn bowls, and Britishness in a subsequent chapter.

Editor Henry Ching

The *SCMP* from time to time respected freedom of the press because the designated Chinese editor, Henry Ching (Shen Hanyang, 沈翰揚) Sr., was brave enough to insist on what he believed was right and to negotiate with the Hong Kong government, as well as with military forces.⁵⁵ However, the *SCMP* helped the Hong Kong government maintain the social stability of Hong Kong by filtering some news that was detrimental to the British administration.⁵⁶ Former editor in chief Robin

Hutcheon claimed that, except for those special cases such as ‘Empire Days’, the *SCMP* was not ‘the spokesperson of the British Empire and would not support the British business interests without question’.⁵⁷

As for the news reporting that the British or Hong Kong government disliked, as long as the *SCMP* editor thought it was necessary to report on events, and the directors thought it would be good for the company’s interests (for example, higher readership and more subscriptions), they did not fear possible intervention from the Hong Kong government. The editors of the *SCMP* and the *Hong Kong Telegraph* were reminded by the board chairman and other directors several times that what readers read in the *SCMP* had already been selected by the editors and would be useful for the company interests, as well as meet the readers’ demand. Nevertheless, I should emphasise that the *SCMP* enjoyed a broader policy of freedom of the press, and its editorials were not censored by the government.

In particular, regarding Anti-Japanese War reports, while some Chinese-language newspapers were censored by the Hong Kong government, as the biggest English newspaper in Hong Kong, the *SCMP* reported Anti-Japanese War news and printed supportive and powerful editorials.⁵⁸ It encouraged the international community to assist the anti-Japanese cause and expressed the desire for the Chinese to succeed in their resistance against the Japanese invasion. As a result, the *SCMP* won the support of Chinese readers, and *Ta Kung Pao* regarded the *SCMP* as the newspaper that sympathised the most with China.⁵⁹ I should clarify that Henry Ching’s primary national identity was Australian, followed by overseas Chinese.⁶⁰ This explained his passive reaction to anti-Chinese comments on the Sino-Japanese conflict in the early 1930s. However, the letters of his Chinese audience and his English-speaking Chinese friends’ private talks influenced his editorial support of the Chinese

resistance.⁶¹

Chinese Staff

After the 1911 Hong Kong press strike, the *SCMP* management decided to establish a good relationship with the Chinese and tried to treat them equally. John Scott Harston was a solicitor and chairman of the *SCMP*. Benjamin Wylie, a printer, was the acting general manager of the *SCMP*, and he held twenty-six *SCMP* shares.⁶² Henry Ching, whose mother was Australian and father was Chinese, experienced much discrimination in Australia.⁶³ However, Ben Wylie treated him very well and found that Ching was good at devising editorials. Therefore, Ching was promoted and served as the editor in chief for more than thirty years, which was recognised as a miracle among the Chinese residents in Hong Kong society.

It was very realistic for the *SCMP* to use talented Chinese people to work for the newspaper. The employment policy of the *SCMP* was so flexible that if a worker did not know English well, he could perform manual labour for the *SCMP*, although editors and journalists earned higher salaries by writing articles. Shum Wai Yau received a low salary at the very beginning of his career at the *SCMP*. However, once his ability became well known at the *SCMP*, he received a promotion with a higher salary and allowed access to positions of higher management. Finally, he founded the *Wah Kiu Yat Po (Overseas Chinese Daily)* with the complete support of the *SCMP*. Other Chinese staff at the *SCMP*, such as Chan Kai, C. E. Wong, and Henry Ching, earned a few hundred or even thousands, of Hong Kong dollars per month; some of them had higher salaries than the foreign staff.⁶⁴ Chan Kai worked at both the *SCMP* and at the *Overseas Chinese Daily*; at the same time that he was a shareholder and manager of the *Overseas Chinese Daily*, he was also the chief of Chinese staff for the

SCMP.⁶⁵

The *SCMP* rewarded the Chinese staff who were loyal to the company in the 1911 strike. The management decided to change the situation and treat the Chinese better, including allowing the Chinese staff members' children to work for the company.⁶⁶ The *SCMP* used family ties to strengthen the company's stability, and it employed senior Chinese workers to manage the younger Chinese; in this way, the *SCMP* used kinder human resources to treat its Chinese employees. When conflicts inside the *SCMP* became issues with a family, they were solved within the family; not only was loyalty formed within the company, but every member of the staff gained a sense of responsibility toward the *SCMP*. This indicated that the *SCMP* paid as much attention as possible to their decisions in order to understand Chinese employees' emotions. After well-educated Chinese became editors for the company, they could make hundreds of dollars every month, just like the British.⁶⁷

The *SCMP* also provided benevolent services for Chinese employees, although the sums of money were not as large as those for the foreign staff. They explained that the difference was caused by the different lifestyles of the Chinese staff and the foreign staff; for example, the British staff would retire and return to the United Kingdom, where the cost of living was higher.⁶⁸ In 1939, the *SCMP* established a special fund known as 'the Chinese superannuation fund' as a way of providing for staff or the family of staff who could no longer work. The *SCMP* employed a large number of native staff and was grateful to those who worked faithfully for the *SCMP* for many years. The fund was used to help Chinese staff members who grew old and needed to retire, or 'to the dependents of those who died, have been made by direct payments out of the company's monetary resources'⁶⁹; this showed that the Chinese staff enjoyed differential treatment compared to other Chinese employees in Hong

Kong.

The *SCMP*'s family ties management style controlled the labour movement inside the *SCMP*; thus, hiring present staff's relatives was regarded as a safe and effective method for avoiding strikes. Loyal and elderly workers for the *SCMP* could bring their sons and relatives to work for the *SCMP*. Although their salaries were low at the beginning, as long as the *SCMP* management recognised their abilities, they had many opportunities for promotion. In the 1930s, the Chinese staff earned the lowest salary at HK\$20 per month. The Chinese editor, Henry Ching, earned the highest salary, which was HK\$1,400 per month.⁷⁰ When Hong Kong's economy was weak, such as during periods of inflation and exchange rate fluctuation, the *SCMP* did not increase the salaries of the Chinese printers at the same rate as foreign workers. The salary increase was 10 percent for the editors, but it was 30 percent for the Chinese lower level staff, which ensured that low-income workers could buy enough food to eat when food prices rose steeply.⁷¹ The policy made the *SCMP* a united team.

The key reason that the *SCMP* flourished was due to the successful collaboration between the Chinese and British staff and the fact that the human resource management had established a connection with the combined reporting strategy. In a newspaper office that reached a rich balance between Chinese and British people, it created a balance in its reporting on Chinese and British events.

Advertisers

The largest advertisers in the *SCMP* included a series of firms that had substantial business in China and British colonial Hong Kong. These firms expected a peaceful and prosperous China and Hong Kong for their businesses to flourish. British advertisers represented the British merchants' business interests in China, but they

expected to benefit from the development of modern Chinese economy. These firms included Shewan Tomes Company, and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), which had two board seats at the *SCMP*. These advertisers would not allow anti-Chinese government reporting to appear in their newspaper while they participated in historic business cooperation such as granting national construction loans, financial reform, and their anti-Japanese monetary policy, with the various Chinese governments.

Shewan Tomes & Co.

In the early period of the *SCMP*, one of the leading advertisers was Shewan Tomes & Co., Ltd, which was also one of the largest companies in the East.⁷² This company's advertisements appeared on the first page of the *SCMP* almost every day for nearly twenty years.⁷³ In the 1920s, the *SCMP* moved front-page advertisements to the inside pages, and it maintained, on either side of four columns of news, two-column display advertisements, which were great revenue earners. The advertisements of Shewan Tomes & Co., Ltd. remained in the *SCMP* until the Japanese took over the newspaper office in 1941. The circulation of the *SCMP* increased steadily in the post-Noble period, and the advertising income increased enormously most of the time. The *SCMP* had a good relationship with the newsprint paper provider Shewan Tomes & Co., Ltd., and received a stable supply. The *SCMP* had sufficient newsprint in the 1930s, even when the price of newsprint rose greatly and supplies sold out. Robert Gordon Shewan was the director of the *SCMP* beginning in the 1920s, and he held 100 shares in the *SCMP*.⁷⁴ When the war caused newsprint to increase in price and sell out in 1939, the *SCMP* continued to obtain newsprint from Shewan Tomes & Co., Ltd.⁷⁵

Newsprint data of the *SCMP* from 1931 to 1939⁷⁶

Date of Order	Quantity (Reams)
1931/12	12,000
1932/3	6,000
1933/3	15,000
1934/2	15,000
1935/3	15,000
1936/9	15,000
1937/3	5,000
1937/9	10,000
1938/6	10,000
1939/1	15,000

R. G. Shewan's son and Shewan's representatives were also directors of the *SCMP* board and at the HSBC until 1941.⁷⁷ In addition to the advertisements of Shewan Tomes & Co., Ltd., the Shewan company controlled more relevant companies in China and Hong Kong, including the Canton Electric & Fire Extinguishing Company⁷⁸, the China and Manila Steamship Company, Ltd., the American Asiatic Steamship Company, the Green Island Cement Company, Ltd., the Hongkong Rope Manufacturing Company, Ltd., the China Provident Loan and Mortgage Company, Ltd., the China Light and Power Company, Ltd., and the Canton Land Company, Ltd.⁷⁹ Those companies had clients across wide regions and different social strata, covering both the Chinese and British communities and even mainland Chinese clients.

On the front page of 20 April 1925, there was the China Light and Power

Company, Ltd. advertisement, in which it said the company served ‘Business, Industry, and the [China] Domestic Economy’. Obviously, the company had important interests in Hong Kong and mainland China and the Shewan family did not want the *SCMP* to publish negative information about its business. After the incident involving Hamilton in 1910, the Shewan family acquired 100 shares in the *SCMP* Ltd., became the board director, and participated in the company operations; this was not only a financial investment but also an action on the part of the Hong Kong industrial and financial capitalists to promote their businesses with the *SCMP*. Obviously, from then on, the Shewan family business fared very well under the support of the *SCMP*’s advertising promotions. The negative news reporting and editorials against the Shewan family’s companies disappeared forever. The *SCMP* board usually had only three or four directors, and the director designated by the Shewan family was very influential in business.

Shewan Tomes & Co. had offices in Hong Kong and mainland China, which carried on ‘an extensive import and export trade, dealing in practically the whole output of the West, from piece goods to metals, and from flour to cement in everything, in fact, that is required by the people of the Chinese Empire’.⁸⁰ Shewan Tomes & Co. needed a peaceful and prosperous China and Hong Kong market for its business to succeed; naturally, the company expected that the *SCMP* to implement an appropriate reporting and advertising model to target its Chinese and British clients.

Banking Advertisers

The development of the *SCMP* was closely connected to financial capital. As early as the founding of the *SCMP*, the chief manager of the National Bank of China (hereafter NBC), G. W. Playfair, was the board director of the young *SCMP*.⁸¹ Two

directors of the NBC, John Scott Harston and G. C. Moxon, became directors of the *SCMP*.⁸² Before Dr Noble controlled the *SCMP*, the NBC was the creditor of the newspaper company, which owned a debenture of the *SCMP* worth HK\$50,000.⁸³ According to the record of the Colonial Secretary's Office, on 6 May 1904, the NBC had HK\$407,000, including 605 banknotes in circulation, third behind the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (hereafter HSBC) and the Chartered Bank of India, Australia, and China.⁸⁴ The NBC was founded by the most influential merchants in China, owned by investors in China and Hong Kong, and supported by Qing government senior officials, including Viceroy Li Hongzhang.⁸⁵ The objective of the NBC was 'fairly indicated by its name and as general bankers and finance agents, with its head-quarters in this colony'.⁸⁶ Undoubtedly, 'the vast volume of Chinese financial business will in the future be negotiated through this Bank, and in view of projected railways and the opening of mines all over the country, in addition to extensive water-work and reclamation schemes for Canton and other large cities.'⁸⁷

It seems the NBC was an early model of the Bank of China (Hong Kong); nevertheless, its institution was different. It was not a real 'national bank' for China; rather, the NBC was a Chinese capital bank managed by British and Chinese executives, though owned by Hong Kong Chinese leaders such as Wu Tingfang and Fung Wa Chun.⁸⁸ Its 'leading control would be vested in the hands of both natives and foreigners' and served the entire Hong Kong community.⁸⁹ Unexpectedly, the NBC did not develop very well, and the Hong Kong government did not make it into a legal note-issuing bank, so NBC managing director Ellis Kadoorie announced its liquidation in 1911.⁹⁰ Actually, since the founding of the NBC, the HSBC was widely believed to have engaged in tactics to damage this competitor in Hong Kong and

China, which was not a Chinese government bank, including exerting pressure on issuing banknotes and punishing the NBC's partners.⁹¹ Therefore, it is clear why the NBC needed the *SCMP* to promote its business through a method of absolute control; for example, running NBC advertisements in a much better position on the newspaper page than the HSBC advertisements.⁹² I should emphasise that the *SCMP*'s combined reporting strategy was very helpful to the NBC's business objectives, as the NBC and *SCMP* had similar clients: Chinese and British merchant readers. At least, the HSBC would not use the *SCMP* to publish propaganda detrimental to the NBC.

The HSBC had participated in Chinese government loans and economic development since the late nineteenth century.⁹³ In 1895, to succeed in the competition to manage money for the China government, the HSBC managed to persuade the NBC to withdraw from a promising agreement with the Qing government.⁹⁴ Finally, the NBC could not survive in the banking competition in Hong Kong and lost control over the *SCMP*, so the NBC's advertisements disappeared from the *SCMP*'s pages. In particular, 'throughout the 1930s, in keeping with its long-standing connections with government finance in China, the bank [HSBC] took a leading part in efforts to stabilise the Chinese national currency.'⁹⁵ Frank H. H. King studied how the HSBC cooperated with and supported Chinese governments closely and vehemently. He pointed out that after 1937, the HSBC changed its policy from 'active support for China' to 'must be opposed to Japan'.⁹⁶ Cooperating with the *SCMP* met the best interests of HSBC. The evidence for this assertion is that in 1933, HSBC's director, who was also a director of the *SCMP*, agreed that anti-Japanese reporting '[did] harm to the company's newspaper interests' and that actions should be undertaken 'to refrain from inserting any further' anti-

Japanese reporting.⁹⁷ However, the dual directors of the HSBC and the *SCMP*, R. G. Shewan and A. L. Shield, did not interfere further with anti-Japanese reporting, which reflected the HSBC's attitude toward the Sino-Japanese war, which was 'to fight Japanese with China.' The *SCMP*'s solution was to allow some long-term Japanese advertisements to remain, while allowing anti-Japanese reporting to grow at will.

The two banking advertisers were both influential and important to the *SCMP*. In one case, the *SCMP* had to abandon the policy of editorial freedom to save the advertisements and obey its directors' orders. The *SCMP* Ltd.'s afternoon paper, the *Hong Kong Telegraph*, had an editor named Norman Stockton who was intimidated by the reputation of the bank. In 1939, the *Hong Kong Telegraph* and the *SCMP* disclosed the divorce of the HSBC's chief manager, Sir Vandeleur Grayburn, along with his photograph in the *Hong Kong Telegraph*. Grayburn thought this was revenge borne out of hatred from the *SCMP*. The *SCMP* was required to clarify this and republish the news of Grayburn's divorce in the *SCMP* without a picture or headline, along with the understanding that the HSBC would no longer advertise in the *SCMP*.⁹⁸

At that time, the *SCMP* was divided, as both editors of the *SCMP* and the *Hong Kong Telegraph* insisted on their editorial freedom. Henry Ching was brave in the face of the threat of action against the company's newspaper, and he said that under no circumstances would he agree to suppress the report. The troublemaker Stockton, the editor of the *Hong Kong Telegraph*, insisted he had done nothing wrong.⁹⁹ The manager of the *Hong Kong Telegraph* and the general manager of the *SCMP* expressed their regret and apologised to the HSBC.¹⁰⁰ Ben Wylie wrote to the HSBC on behalf of the *SCMP* and told them that the editor of the *Hong Kong Telegraph*

would be seriously reprimanded, and the divorce and photograph constituted an unwarrantable report.¹⁰¹

Later, Grayburn asked for a formal letter of apology from three directors of the *SCMP* board.¹⁰² One of the directors of the *SCMP* replied for and on behalf of the *SCMP* Ltd., rejecting Grayburn's request for a further apology because Mr Wylie and Mr Harston were the people indicated in this letter.¹⁰³ A. L. Shields, who held board seats at both the *SCMP* and the HSBC, said that while he fully realised the necessity for freedom of the press, at the same time, there was such a thing as the dignity of the press, and he called for a board meeting.¹⁰⁴ The *SCMP* and the HSBC had common interests and finally came to a compromise. Although Wylie did not object to freedom of the press, given the loss of enormous business interests, he reprimanded the editor and told him to be cooperative; otherwise, he would be dismissed.¹⁰⁵

The HSBC was the *SCMP*'s longest term and most important advertiser. It advertised in the *SCMP* almost every day in the 1920s and 1930s. The HSBC had long-lasting interests in financing the Chinese economy, and it had a positive attitude toward the various Chinese governments. Although its business experienced setbacks in the 1911 Revolution, the HSBC still expected to cooperate with the new republican government and provide capital.¹⁰⁶

There were only a few bank advertisements on the first few pages of the *SCMP*, such as those from the HSBC and the Bank of China. The *SCMP* believed that more extensive financial reporting would bring a larger audience with financial interests and more financial advertisements. The *SCMP* director James Harper Taggart believed that the 1925 stock market crisis was a good opportunity for the *SCMP* to launch a financial page so it could attract banking advertisements.¹⁰⁷ During the 1925

Hong Kong stock market crisis, the *SCMP* promoted its financial reporting page and initiated long-lasting debates about stock investments and banking issues.¹⁰⁸ Since its founding, the *SCMP* published advertisements from Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, the Chartered Bank of India, Australia, and China, Nederlandsch Indische Handelsbank, N.V., Hong Kong Savings Bank, Nederlandsche handel Maatschappij, N.V., Banque-Franco-Chinoise, the Bank of Canton, Ltd., the Yokohama Specie Bank, Ltd., the Bank of Taiwan, Ltd., Bank of China, the Ho Hong Bank, Ltd., the Bank of East Asia, Ltd., the Bank of Kwangsi (Hong Kong Branch), and P. & O. Banking Corporation, Ltd.¹⁰⁹

Among these banks, the Bank of Canton was owned by overseas Chinese reformer and patriot Li Yutang, who funded Sun Yatsen's revolutionary activities. The Bank of China and the Bank of Kwangsi (Hong Kong Branch) were owned by the Chinese Nationalist Government. The Bank of East Asia was a Hong Kong Chinese merchant-owned bank. All of these banks targeted Chinese clients, and they advertised in the *SCMP* to attract better class Chinese to open accounts and do business with them; in fact, altogether, they accounted for the majority of Chinese bank account holders in Hong Kong. The Bank of China was in the same building as the Bank of Canton after 1938.¹¹⁰ The Bank of China also closely cooperated with the Bank of East Asia.¹¹¹ These banks all had very clear anti-Japanese attitudes.¹¹² The *SCMP* had to pay attention to these advertisers' reactions when it wanted to publish pro-Japanese reporting.

In summation, the majority of the banking advertisers in the *SCMP* were pro-China; thus, its reporting focused on Chinese news and sometimes was even pro-China because these banks targeted Chinese clients and worked with China governments.

Pro-China means the advertisers and the *SCMP* were close to and partial to China governments, especially the Republic of China government. Support of the Republic of China government could be political, moral and economic, but it did not mean the position was unchangeable because the *SCMP* choose to report on China case by case under the demand of its readers. Sometimes it criticized China governments, for example, the Qing government, to please its Chinese readers. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, the Chartered Bank of India, Australia, and China, and P. & O. Banking Corporation, Ltd., were owned by British merchants or British imperial investors, so the *SCMP* was not hostile to British readers and provided some attractive content for British readers to win over advertisers.

Monopoly and Defending the SCMP's Interest

Chinese news reporting was very important for the *SCMP* to attract audiences; the newspaper even collaborated with two others newspapers, the *China Mail* and the *Hong Kong Daily Press*, to boycott another English daily to buy Reuters Chinese news products. When Ben Wylie was on holiday during the summer, the manager of the *Hong Kong Telegraph* became the acting general manager of the *SCMP*. When the *China Mail* morning paper offered its Sunday paper, the *Sunday Herald*, F. P. Franklin, the manager of the *Hong Kong Telegraph*, proposed offering a Sunday edition of the *SCMP* to its editor, Ben Wylie. They hoped that their Sunday newspaper would bring in more advertising income and improve the competitiveness of the *SCMP*.¹¹³ Unfortunately, Franklin's proposal proved to be a failure in 1939 as street sales were negligible, and the paper's income fell to less than HK\$600. Franklin pointed out the sharp increase in the cost of newsprint and other essential supplies, which led him to believe that the Sunday edition of the *SCMP* should be

cancelled immediately to stop the losses and to conserve their stocks of paper.¹¹⁴ This case explained that the press market in Hong Kong was fully competitive and new English daily newspapers with competitive advantages would seriously decrease the incomes and profits of the *SCMP*.

Franklin did not make note of the appearance of a new Sunday newspaper months before the Sunday edition of the *SCMP* closed. The *Sunday China Times*, an English-language newspaper, published initially only on Sundays. A rumour circulated that it would publish daily in June 1939, which lit a fire under the *SCMP*, *Hong Kong Daily Press*, the *China Mail*, and *Hong Kong Telegraph*. What was more frightening to the old Hong Kong English dailies was that the new newspaper would be a five-cent daily; this price was half the cost of the old English newspapers in Hong Kong. The United Press Association manager in Hong Kong told Franklin that he would not sell content to the *China Times*.¹¹⁵ However, Reuters News Service made the four dailies in Hong Kong very nervous because it had decided to sell news content to the *China Times*. The editor of the *China Mail*, Graham Barrow, informed Franklin by telephone that he had advised the *China Times* that Reuters would not be able to supply the China news product 'Fareut', as it was discovered that it would infringe upon their agreement with the other papers to supply their services to a paper charging five cents per copy. Franklin said that the *China Times* had asked 'whether the service could be supplied if they amended the price to ten cents', and Barrow replied in the affirmative.¹¹⁶

This was the second time that the four English newspapers worked peacefully and enthusiastically with each other. The first time was to push the Hong Kong government to issue the Ordinance of Secret Societies during the 1911 Hong Kong press strikes.¹¹⁷ Their countersignatures appeared on a letter to Reuters of 12 June

1939 that protested the decision to sell services to the *China Times*. The London Reuters boss, Sir Roderick Jones, continued to support the *China Times*. Instead of compromising completely with the four English newspapers in Hong Kong, he directed Reuters to reduce the monthly service fee from £87 to £72.¹¹⁸

The *China Mail* did not agree with this solution and still complained to Reuters and explained the importance of the Reuters products to the Hong Kong newspapers. They argued that newspaper conditions in London could not be compared with those in Hong Kong: ‘It is possible for London newspapers to gather news from every corner of Europe and also from the United States by telephone, and thus secure exclusive stories from their special correspondents in order to supplement the standard news services such as Reuters.’ On the contrary, the high cost of bringing news to Hong Kong newspapers made them rely mainly upon Reuters or other news agencies. If Reuters sold its service to a competitor undercutting the standard selling price, the *China Mail* would not agree to it.¹¹⁹ As a result, the *SCMP* defeated the *China Times* in this attack. Subsequently, the *China Times* did not publish the morning paper as planned.

Press Freedom: a Way to Make Profits and Create a Virtual Chinese Council

From time to time the *SCMP* enjoyed freedom of the press, even if there were objections from the Hong Kong government and the *SCMP* board. A Hong Kong judge issued a ruling in a case on ‘press freedom and censorship’ in 1931, which stated that both external freedom of the press and censorship were legal according to the common law of the United Kingdom. The judge ruled that the ‘Legislature in Hong Kong would have power, if it so desire in an emergency, to establish a censorship of the Press, and ... has authority to depute such power to the Governor in

Executive Council'. The Governor would decide when censorship began and how long it would last. The Censorship Unit was founded and the position of Censorship Official created at the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs, where the leader of the Censorship Office was called the 'Chief Chinese Censor'.¹²⁰

The legal authorities and the Hong Kong governor did not subject English newspapers like the *SCMP* to censorship; only Chinese-language newspapers were censored in the beginning. As a result, the *SCMP* had a reputation for reporting more useful and important Chinese information for Chinese readers. The combined reporting strategy thus left British readers with the impression that the *SCMP*'s articles were 'merely helping to shake the prestige of the Britisher' and that the newspapers made accusations against the King's uniform and the police; as a result, a few readers endeavoured to eradicate all negative articles about the British from the columns of the *SCMP* in Hong Kong.¹²¹ The *SCMP* editors claimed that the *SCMP* was never meant to be the mouthpiece of clubs, organisations, and societies, adding that its new function was to provide news without favouritism.¹²² This again explains why the *SCMP* had a combined reporting strategy: it published reporting for the Chinese and British, and if it favoured one of the communities over the other, it would make one unhappy. The early news reporting and editorials supporting Chinese merchants' interests and the 1930s Anti-Japanese War reporting are good examples of this policy.

However, in the *SCMP*'s history, suppression of editorial freedom never stopped. If the journalists or editors criticised local elite, they were warned of potential dismissal, or forced to compromise under pressure from the governor. Therefore, the *SCMP*, together with other Hong Kong newspapers, existed in a situation that yoked partial freedom of the press to partial subordination to authorities. The most serious

case of interference with the press's freedom was the arrest of the editor and owner of the *Hong Kong Daily Press*, Yorick Jones Murrow, who irritated the Hong Kong governor with blunt editorials.¹²³ Many Chinese newspapers were carefully and notoriously censored and had to close because an unexpected amount of content was cancelled by Hong Kong government censorship officials. Some Chinese newspapers had even been charged with publishing letters from Chinese nationalists. For example, the newspaper *Kung Wo Po* published a letter from Chinese soldiers in Canton, which called on all Chinese to kill the traitors in the 1919 May Fourth Movement, as well as those responsible for the failure of China at the Paris Peace Conference. As a result, the newspaper was fined HK\$15.¹²⁴

The *SCMP* was only censored formally under the Censorship Regulations of 1917 and the 'Emergency Regulations Ordinance of 1922', in addition to an article on the censorship of English press placards and display sheets, August 1939.¹²⁵ However, Chinese newspapers were formally censored under the Chinese Publications (Prevention) Ordinance of 1907. In 1922, because of the Hong Kong Seamen's Strike, the 'Emergency Regulations Ordinance' was approved by the Hong Kong governor to authorise 'censorship, and the control and suppression of publications, writings, maps, plans, photographs, communications and means of communication'.¹²⁶ 'Emergency' solutions were used to handle the Chinese trouble; thus, censorship was applied only to Chinese newspapers. The former chief editor of *Gongshang Ribao* (*The Industrial and Commercial Daily*) confirmed this policy.¹²⁷

The controller of *Gongshang Ribao*, Man Kam Lo, who was also an unofficial legislative council member, represented the Chinese press and suggested that the Hong Kong government remove the censorship of the Chinese press and use British law books and *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to show that 'In the British colonies the

press is as free as it is in England'.¹²⁸ However, fourteen legislative council members voted against this motion because they believed that Chinese newspapers could be used by the Chinese to act against the interests of Hong Kong society.¹²⁹ Among those objections from legislative council members, S. W. Ts'o gave a typical explanation of why the Chinese press should be censored:

No one appreciates more than I do the principle of the freedom of the press... Hong Kong is situated on the outskirts of China with a population of no less than 97 percent Chinese. While there is, at the present moment, so much unrest and uncertainty in the political atmosphere in the Far East, it is very easy and quite natural for the Chinese papers to over-step their bounds by giving expressions to their feelings on matters Chinese and the Government can be the only judges as to the desirability or propriety of such expressions being broadcast in this Colony. Such expressions, if undesirable and unchecked, might create misunderstandings outside and stir up trouble inside the Colony.¹³⁰

Thus, the English press, and especially the *SCMP*, had an opportunity to report Chinese news or any other information that might be suppressed in the Chinese press. This is solid evidence that the *SCMP* enjoyed much more external press freedom than the Chinese press. Therefore, the *SCMP*'s reporting on China gained more and more popularity among the English-speaking Chinese readers and provided a virtual council for Chinese to discuss their concerns.

On the other hand, the *SCMP* was owned by large investors and industrial bourgeoisie, including Noble and an unofficial executive council member, Sir Catchick Paul Chater.¹³¹ They then owned two newspapers, including the afternoon paper of the SCMP Ltd., the *Hong Kong Telegraph*. The journalists for both papers worked in the same office, though the *Hong Kong Telegraph* had a separate manager: F. P. Franklin. Both Franklin and Noble lived on the Peak, which showed their high social status in the colony pursuing a racial segregation policy.¹³²

The *SCMP*'s general manager, Benjamin Wylie, said that the *SCMP* was a

conservative newspaper. The bottom line of the *SCMP* in news reporting was that it would not hurt the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong. Thus, in the case of the 1925 Canton-Hong Kong strike, the *SCMP* did not report on the British suppressions and massacres of Chinese workers and suppressed the truth. It not only pushed all of the responsibility for the strike on the Cantonese, it also criticised the working class strike, which caused serious instability in Hong Kong and affected the everyday life of the British community, especially the British middle class and capitalists. The *SCMP*'s general manager said that he was an obedient servant of the Hong Kong governor, providing KMT (Kuo Min Tang) intelligence from Canton, and negotiating with the Hong Kong military force and government when there were conflicts generated by the *SCMP*'s reports.¹³³ Henry Ching, Jr., the son of Henry Ching, and Hutcheon believed that Ching was a man who defended the stability of Hong Kong society.¹³⁴ Ching insisted on editorial freedom unless the interests of Hong Kong capitalist society would be harmed; thus, there was no absolute external and internal press freedom in Hong Kong as censorship, filtering and suppression were common and acceptable. The *SCMP* enjoyed press freedom, which was sometimes suppressed when it conflicted with the interests of advertisers and the government.

Chinese readers were the cornerstone audience of the *SCMP*. Without Chinese readers, the *SCMP* would be in danger of continuous financial loss. While the *SCMP* attracted a wealthy British audience via its shipping and sporting news, the varied advertisers were interested in targeting the similarly wealthy Chinese bourgeoisie audience who had high consumption power and a taste in purchasing the products that were advertised in the *SCMP*. The *SCMP* management and editors noticed such causality when making a combined reporting strategy to please the Chinese audience.

More importantly, in the mind of the *SCMP* editor, Hong Kong Chinese merchant audiences were highly engaged in the prosperity of Hong Kong and their interests should be protected.¹³⁵ Thus, the *SCMP* both represented British and Chinese audiences' interests in a British colony that suppressed the external press freedom of Chinese newspapers. As a result, the Chinese audience liked to publish their opinions and appeals in the *SCMP*; in other words, the *SCMP* improved audience freedom of the Chinese bourgeoisie readers and created a virtual council for them.

2. THE 'MODERN NEWSPAPER' COMPETING WITH IMPERIAL 'AMBASSADORS'

In the first quarter of twentieth century China, Chinese people experienced turbulent social changes. The Late Qing Reform left the *SCMP* readers hope, suspicion and frustration. The lost national interests in Shandong meant humiliation and anger to China, a victorious nation in World War I. The 1920s strikes subjected the Chinese merchant readers to a bewildering dilemma between patriotism and protecting their commercial interests in Hong Kong. As immigrants from China, especially Guangdong, who invested on a big scale in China, what happened in China not only attracted these Chinese readers, it was also highly related to their business interests. Therefore, they became attentive to the news reporting on China in the *SCMP*. The *SCMP* realized this great demand and facilitated corresponding and critical reporting for these Chinese merchant readers while the Chinese press was restricted in its ability to provide negative reporting on the Qing government.

In this chapter, I analyse the *SCMP* reporting on the Late Qing Reform, the boycott against American goods, the May Fourth Movement and strikes. The *SCMP* published positive reports on the nationalist movements that happened outside Hong Kong to please Hong Kong Chinese bourgeoisie readers. Nevertheless, their sentiments of Chinese nationalism or patriotism were transient and conditional. Once these detrimental movements became contagious to Hong Kong, and likely to influence the Chinese merchants and the *SCMP* interests, the *SCMP*'s stances changed. Although the reporting and Chinese correspondents showed a rational and conditional nationalistic sentiment, but for the Chinese community's lack of protection from the powerful motherland government, it could not simply deny the

merchants' limited patriotism. Under the circumstances of these social movements and conflicted merchants' opinions, the *SCMP* published Chinese merchants' concerns, represented Chinese merchant interests and moulded Chinese opinion. The *SCMP* was not founded to be a radical newspaper but as a 'modern newspaper' that stood against radical 'personal journalism' in Hong Kong.¹ At its first board meeting, the newspaper was designed to be 'very much better and more interesting' than its rivals.² The two co-founders, Tse and Cunningham, both held roughly 10 percent of the *SCMP*'s shares; however, the real controller was the National Bank of China. Naturally, the NBC used the *SCMP* as an advertising medium, besides taking it as a new client.

While the *SCMP* claimed to be a 'modern newspaper', it also called its competitors were 'old-time ambassadors', not 'newspapers'.³ The meaning of 'ambassador' was that the *China Mail*, the *Hong Kong Daily Press* and the *Hong Kong Telegraph* were propaganda tools, which 'lie[d] for the good of his country'.⁴ The *SCMP* was not designed by the editor to be a propaganda tool, but 'a newspaper by means of a few trenchant articles, so be that they have truth behind them, will rouse a public to resent aggression, so to reform abuses, to mould the policy of governments. Such is the power of the modern newspaper'.⁵ The nature of 'modern newspaper' was 'modern', which meant 'to tell the truth for the good of humanity', reporting not only for the British but also for the Chinese.⁶ The *SCMP*'s competitors focused on British readers and reporting British news, which has been understood widely by American and Chinese scholars as 'representing British interests', although the *SCMP* roused the public to resent aggression, reform abuses, and moulded the policy of the government.⁷

The 'modern newspaper' was actually the result of the phenomenon of the rising

class of Chinese bourgeoisie in Hong Kong in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The *SCMP* expected to attract the “best classes” audience since its founding and “earn the respect and the supports”.⁸ The market opportunity was to provide a newspaper that could attract English-reading Chinese. In 1901, a Chinese syndicate acquired a British newspaper, the *Hong Kong Telegraph*.⁹ This syndicate, headed by Robert Ho Tung, requested that *Hong Kong Telegraph* editor J. P. Braga publish a newspaper that considered the ‘increasing infiltration of the Chinese into Western-style business’.¹⁰ There were a limited number of English-speaking readers in Hong Kong, and the *SCMP* had to compete with three accepted newspapers which represented British readers’ interests; one example of which was, the *Hong Kong Daily Press* which represented the British elite who lived on the Peak.¹¹ Thus, providing the ‘increasing infiltration of the Chinese’ into the English newspaper world with interesting and useful information was the *SCMP*’s strategy. Wisely, the *SCMP*, just like the *Hong Kong Telegraph*, did not publish a newspaper only for the Chinese, but also ‘not to lose sight of the fact of British control of Hong Kong’s activities’.¹²

The founding of the *SCMP* was actually a shock to the *Hong Kong Telegraph* group. As an afternoon newspaper that had been punished for libel twice and the publisher of which had once been jailed, it attacked the *SCMP* as increasing ‘Hongkong’s troubles’.¹³ For a long time the *Hong Kong Daily Press* did not have a good relationship with the *SCMP*, which was why, during the strikes of the 1920s, the *SCMP*’s general manager angrily watched the temporary closing of the *China Mail* and the *Hong Kong Daily Press* and declined its request for help.¹⁴ Beginning with the founding of the *SCMP*, the *Hong Kong Daily Press* gradually lost ground to the *SCMP* and finally sold most of its business to the Chinese Nationalist

Government in 1939.¹⁵

Although the '*Post* ... consistently maintained a strong lead' in 'matters Chinese', it was not, as imagined by some people, that revolutionaries had founded a radical newspaper.¹⁶ The *SCMP* as a medium connecting the British and Chinese communities was not only an intercultural and international business ideal, but also a very practical solution of the fresh newspaper to remain viable.

The SCMP was a joint-stock newspaper company since its foundation, so one of its aims was to make money. It did not successfully sell all the 6,000 shares to the investors at the very beginning and the financial situation was not ideal for a long time.¹⁷ In addition, Alfred Cunningham had to ask for a permit to erect a movable kiosk to sell "all or any of the other local papers" and books at Blake Pier in 1905.¹⁸ The kiosk permit had been cancelled and was required to keep "the area in a clean and tidy condition"¹⁹; in other words, the *SCMP* faced critical financial problems since its founding. Winning readers and advertisement income was crucial to the favourable development and longevity of the *SCMP*.

When Tse and Cunningham had their newspaper business, even if the *SCMP* reported on Chinese reform, it was widely accepted in Hong Kong. Reporting and commenting are different from plotting reform, as they had previously used in other newspapers. Advocating Chinese reform via an overseas Chinese newspaper actually reflected the desires of the Chinese and British bourgeoisie, who wanted to participate in the Chinese economy, which was an important theme in the early twentieth century. The *SCMP* used this content to attract the attention of merchants and other readers. In fact, the *SCMP* had more than half of its columns covered with various advertisements from British and Chinese firms, which showed that the *SCMP* was accepted by both communities' advertisers. Additionally, it showed the *SCMP*

relied heavily on advertisement sales. During the Tse and Cunningham period (1903-1907), the editorials sometimes conflicted with one another, which could be considered a method of adjustment to make the newspaper acceptable among advertisers and readers.

In 1909, Dr Noble confirmed the *SCMP*'s objective to 'guard shareholders interests wherever possible', and he made sure that 'every effort [was] being made to make the newspaper readable and acceptable to the bulk of the English-reading people'.²⁰ One of the most important methods was to attract as many Chinese readers as possible. To achieve this goal, Dr Noble proudly announced that the editorial room was 'from time to time furnished with excellent copy of Chinese origin' and that the 'Chinese should be so attracted'.²¹ As a result, the 'circulation ... substantially increased' and 'its value as an advertising medium [was] most generally recognized'.²² The *SCMP*'s Chinese readers in the early period were mainly merchants who had strong purchasing power.

An ordinance suppressing the Chinese press accidentally brought new Chinese reporting market opportunities to the *SCMP*. On 11 October 1907, the Hong Kong Legislative Council passed Ordinance No. 15:

To prevent the publication in the Colony of matter calculated to disturb the peace of China. Whereas, owing to the proximity of the Colony of Hong Kong to the mainland of China and to the tendency to create internal dissension in that country, it is deemed expedient to prohibit within the Colony the publication of matter calculated to excite such dissension—

1. This Ordinance may be cited as the Chinese Publications (Prevention) Ordinance, 1907.

2. Every person who within the Colony prints, publishes or offers for sale or distributes any printed or written newspaper or book or other publication containing matter calculated to excite tumult or disorder in China or to excite persons to crime in China shall be guilty of an offence and be liable to imprisonment for any term not exceeding two years and to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars.²³

This ordinance was said to restrict Chinese publications, such as the supplement

of *Min Pao* and *Tiantao*.²⁴ As a result, it became difficult for the Chinese press to publish negative editorials against the Chinese government. Nevertheless, this became an unfair advantage of the *SCMP*, which enjoyed more external press freedom in reporting China issues and therefore gained more potential audiences concerning China issues.

Reporting on Chinese Reform

To meet the Chinese readers' reading and practical demands, the *SCMP* in its early years provided long-term reporting about Chinese reform. The *SCMP* held a pessimistic opinion on the internal reform of the Chinese government, believing that "there is no Chinese nation [because it was overthrown by the Manchurian Government]; there is merely a Chinese race". As a result, the *SCMP* claimed, "As we have again and again stated, to confer such powers upon a people grievously divided among them is akin to supplying fire to incendiaries." Few senior officials wanted to support a constitutional government, even if there were laws in China: "Laws will never divorce the Chinaman from the charms of the opium pipe"; in China, there was "no public", "no public opinion", and "no nation".²⁵ When the *SCMP* predicted more and more reforms would commence in China, it concluded, "[A] united China would certainly mean the end of any Manchu dominance".²⁶

Instead, the *SCMP* recommended reform in China. The *SCMP* published editorials on how China could learn from Japan about being a strong power,²⁷ as well as how to develop Chinese industry,²⁸ how to expel some of the Western powers in the Chinese railway industry, and how to build its own Chinese railway.²⁹ In this British colonial newspaper, such vague reporting did not identify those nations it considered "Western"; they might mean France and Russia, which were competitors of the

British Empire. In addition, building China's own railways would not hurt British interests, because, even if the Qing government built railways by itself, it would still need loans from British banks, such as the HSBC, which was an advertiser in the *SCMP*.³⁰ In any case, this kind of reporting attracted many Chinese readers and did not hurt the advertisers' interests. Furthermore, I have to highlight that the controller of the *SCMP*, the National Bank of China, was actually founded as a joint venture owned by the Chinese and British for the domestic Chinese railway business.

To clarify, the National Bank of China wanted to provide loans to Chinese companies that were involved in Chinese business. Thus, these editorials on China railways were entirely acceptable, as long as the NBC and the *SCMP* received maximum benefits from the editorials. As a result, the *SCMP* criticized or commented on the development of China reform while the Chinese bourgeoisie would have benefitted from successful political and economic reform. In other words, an efficient, impartial and fast growing China market would increase Hong Kong Chinese traders' fortunes.

China had numerous problems with corruption. For example, the *SCMP* disclosed that when British opium importation decreased, Yuan Shikai, one of the most powerful Qing officials, ordered 'opium boiling machinery from England' and was 'considering the best scheme for controlling the sale of this daily output'.³¹ This happened because when there were imperial edicts to suppress the opium trade, 'the production of native opium increase[d] year by year without restriction. Indeed, the Chinese Government [found] it a most profitable source of income'.³²

To meet the demand of Chinese readers concerning China issues, the *SCMP* not only reported on the reforms, but frequently offered suggestions for reforming China. Regarding economic reform, the *SCMP* suggested that China should not completely

boycott foreigners, as the foreign engineers' experience and capital could be good for the development of China. China had corrupt systems that were remediable with 'firm training in the right direction'.³³

Regarding cultural and educational reform, the *SCMP* suggested although there was some progress in the schools that were already open, the Japanese experience should also be heeded.³⁴ The *SCMP* also discouraged foot-binding in China, an issue in which Tse Tsan Tai was deeply involved in Hong Kong.³⁵ The *SCMP* further called for educating the Chinese and decreasing the illiteracy and profound ignorance of the population: 'Before China is ready for parliamentary powers such as educated and enlightened nations enjoy, a comprehensive propaganda has to be accepted by the people, and assimilated. Until this comes to pass and a purer public life characterises high official circles, all hope or real reform must remain in abeyance'.³⁶

Regarding the military, the *SCMP* believed that 'China had undergone a radical change, and the Chinese officers of the foreign-drilled troops to-day is of the same stamp of earnest young men of good family that the Chinese naval officer is representative of', which was significantly different from the old and corrupt Manchurian soldiers.³⁷ China was also considered by the *SCMP* to have realised that the 'the sign of highest civilisation is perfection in battleships and regiments'; thus, all of China's progress in building military schools and naval cruisers encouraged the editor of the *SCMP*, and the editor was excited about the development of the Chinese military forces.³⁸

Chinese merchants in Hong Kong also participated in the Chinese railways reform so there were conflicts between the Qing government and Hong Kong Chinese merchants. The *SCMP* represented the Chinese merchants' interests and repeatedly disclosed the danger of allowing Qing officials to manage investments. In the case of

the Canton-Hankow Railway, the Hong Kong shareholders were Chinese because foreign investment had been banned. Nevertheless, Hong Kong Chinese shareholders declined to hand over the money to ‘Canton representatives of the Railway bureau’ unless these officials satisfied them that ‘the large sum of money’ would be safely banked and could be accounted for, because ‘these Hong Kong merchants apparently believe[d] that speculation ha[d] already commenced, although the company [was] not yet legally established’.³⁹ In brief, the Hong Kong Chinese merchants would have liked to take advantage of railways ownership transfer to support the development of their motherland, but distrusted the government in China.

Similar to these Hong Kong Chinese merchants, the *SCMP* disliked the corrupt Qing government and the Empress Dowager Ci Xi. The *SCMP* said she was ‘remarkable for her cleverness, ability, and attainments, but she shone as a stateswoman, diplomatist, and subtle intriguer; and when it suited her purpose she feared not in the cruel and fiendish moments of her wrath to order the use of the executioner’s knife and the stranglers’ cord’. The *SCMP* did not trust the ability of the Emperor Guang Xu and predicted that ‘South China would be convulsed by a revolution eclipsing in magnitude that of the misguided and unfortunate Taiping Wang’.⁴⁰ The *SCMP* said that China needed ‘a strong man’ to reform and unite China.⁴¹

Li Guoqi pointed out in his book *Minguoshi Lunji* (*The History of the Republic of China*; 民國史論集) that Chinese revolutionaries had similar attitudes toward foreign relations. The difference was that the revolutionaries did not advocate aimless and emotional anti-foreigner activities. Their first priority was to fight for the independence of the Han Chinese and to unite China; the next step was to unite weak nations to fight against imperialists.⁴² The *SCMP*’s editorials expressed a similar

policy. They focused on domestic Chinese issues and expressed a negative tone toward imperialism, but the newspaper did not publish any lasting anti-foreign sentiments. Imperialist activities in China, as well as Manchu dominance, was criticised by the *SCMP*. Hong Kong Chinese merchants faced obstacles in China; while they tried to cooperate with the British merchants and even the British Hong Kong government, they continued to have various conflicted interests with them.

Boycotting American Products

The *SCMP* disparaged, criticized and denied imperial activities in China, as well as the Manchu dominance. When slogans like “China for the Chinese” appeared in the *SCMP* reporting frequently in the first ten years of the twentieth century, it was no wonder from time to time the *SCMP* also published some aggressive comments about Americans. The Hong Kong Chinese General Chamber of Commerce liked to publish meeting minutes in the *SCMP*. Publishing these minutes was for the convenience of Chinese merchants who did not participate in the meetings. The merchants could then read them and their opinions might then be moulded by the activities of the Chamber. When the incident of “The Chinese Exclusion Act” happened, Shanghai merchants telegraphed Hong Kong merchants, and required them:

To telegraph to the Minister of the Board of Foreign Affairs to delay the signature to the treaty which Liang Ching (Chinese Minister to the United States) had refused to sign. To consider the advisability of boycotting all American goods as a protest.

The Hong Kong Chinese merchants finally decided:

- (1) The Chinese merchants of Hong Kong approve of the decision that a telegram should be sent to the Board of Foreign Affairs to delay the signing of the treaty.
- (2) It being against the laws of the Colony to meet in order to discuss the question of boycotting American goods, this Chamber has nothing to say regarding the matter.⁴³

Cai Rongfang researched the stances of Hong Kong Chinese merchants and claimed there were conflicts between merchants, which were caused by the long-term interests and short-term interests. Cai pointed out the conflicted situation caused the Chinese merchant leaders to gradually lose their social position, and the original function of uniting the Chinese community.⁴⁴ Although the Hong Kong government regarded the boycotting of American products as a crime, nevertheless, it did not prevent the *SCMP* from publishing an article entitled, “A Strong Protest”. The reporting said “a large gathering of influential and prominent Chinese merchants and members of the gentry met [in] Shanghai... decided to cease purchasing or contracting for American goods until the terms of the proposed Treaty be modified and made to meet the requirements of justice”. The contrast of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Chinese merchants’ stances showed “there was much fiery rhetoric and eloquent appeals to patriotism”.⁴⁵ It did not mean Hong Kong Chinese merchants were not patriots. Probably, in British Colonial Hong Kong, the *SCMP* had tried to show its attitude to say the boycott was patriotic but both the *SCMP* and the Hong Kong Chinese merchants could not do more.

The *SCMP* endorsed the rational but not radical national sentiments through publishing some correspondences and letters to the editor. More and more people noticed the disadvantage of the boycott, especially the loss of Chinese merchants in Sino-US trade. In October 1905, the *SCMP* published Wai Ting Lu’s letter that criticized the Queen’s College students’ irrational anti-American movements, such as the one that “tore all our school books bearing an American imprint”. In other words, the advertisements of the Schlitz Beer Co. in its donated dictionaries might cause the students to vandalize all other schoolbooks. Lu pointed out in the *SCMP* “we have to

remonstrate against what is called ‘wanton mischief’”.⁴⁶ On 28 December 1905, Tse Tsan Tai “advocated a scheme for the termination of the United States boycott movement in China” in the *SCMP*.⁴⁷ On 24 October 1910, Tse “advocated a closer understanding between the United States and China, and discussed the future control of the Pacific” in the *SCMP*.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, as a co-founder of the *SCMP* and the Chinese Club, Tse’s announcement in the *SCMP* could influence and even mould other merchant opinions regarding the boycott.

As long as the reporting would not provoke a riot in Hong Kong or damage business, the *SCMP* could parrot quasi-radical reporting that also appeared in some Chinese nationalist papers. For example, in 1906, some missionary tragedies happened in China; Chinese people killed missionaries and their family members when an anti-foreigner sentiment permeated society. In the case of the Lianzhou Incident, five missionaries and their family members were killed because they occupied the villagers’ land. Americans were mistreated because the Chinese were disappointed by the behaviour of the “should be good” Americans. The British were satirized because they tried to occupy Chinese coalmines when the British protected them from the exploitation of other powers.⁴⁹ The *SCMP* seconded the late British Minister at Beijing, Sir Ernest Satow, who said that “China was not craving for the spiritual side (of) European civilization...Missionary interference with civil matters was largely responsible for massacres”, “our religious propaganda if persevered in must be modelled on lines that make for peace not war—for soothing influences, not perpetual irritation—for the bringing of the Bible of peace into the homes of the Chinese, not the bludgeon of arrogance”.⁵⁰

The stance of the *SCMP* in reporting the American missionaries’ case showed that, firstly, the *SCMP* had a similar opinion to the British diplomat who thought the

American missionaries interfered with Chinese national interests. Britain and America also had certain conflicts of interest in China. Secondly, the paper owned a limited American audience since its inception, and reports such as the British diplomat chastising the American missionaries was not offensive, especially since the paper also reported on the Chinese concern about being invaded by these American missionaries. Thirdly, even the American press published critical reporting about the misbehaviours of the American missionaries, so the attitude of the *SCMP* could at least be considered a different reporting perspective at that time. Chinese merchant readers during that period followed the American boycott movement and expected to restrict American interests in China.⁵¹

In short, the *SCMP* reflected the complex view of, and even contradicted, the Hong Kong Chinese merchants; however, it should be admitted that those Chinese merchants were leading and progressive Chinese in a changing China.

As for the *SCMP*, although its news and editorials were used mainly for its economic goal, nevertheless, its constant reporting on ideas of change and even the Reform China Movement could educate and mould Chinese merchants' opinions. In other words, although Chinese merchants had differences and conflicts with the imperialists and Qing government, Chinese merchants should benefit from the foreign technology, capital and business opportunities from the Qing government reform. Therefore, even if the Chinese merchants had gusty nationalist sentiments when important national conflicts rose, they easily compromised and did not reach a solution for foreign invasion, though they did expect an independent and strong Chinese government. This phenomenon happened simply because of a pragmatic issue; viz., it was not the Hong Kong Chinese merchants' mission to expel the Western powers from China when they collaborated with British merchants and

government. In addition, their attitude toward the Qing Reform and 1911 Revolution was open, optimistic, and thus Hong Kong Chinese merchants' nationalistic sentiment was a kind of long-distance and business interest-based nationalism.

May Fourth Movement

To publish reports on China for Chinese audiences, the *SCMP* used correspondents from Beijing.⁵² The *SCMP* paid greater attention to Chinese news, and the editors advocated for justice regarding some Chinese events. However, from time to time, there were restrictions. In this section, I address the reporting of the *SCMP* on the Hong Kong nationalist movement and its use of patriotic propaganda and profit.

As a leading Hong Kong English newspaper, the *SCMP* reported on the unfair treatment of the Chinese at the Paris Peace Conference and objected to Japan obtaining Shandong interests illegally; these were important events for Chinese readers. On the other hand, as a conservative British colonial newspaper, it obeyed the local ordinances and objected to the unauthorized demonstrations and riots that compromised the stability of Hong Kong society. A stable and safe social environment was good for the business of the *SCMP* and its advertisers. The *SCMP* had Japanese shipping and other consumer advertisers, as well as trade advertisers selling Japanese products. If any riots compromised the security of the advertisers, the *SCMP*'s operations would be affected.

In 1914, the Seditious Publications Ordinance placed a restriction on the *SCMP*. Publishing radical comments and announcements against the colonial government of Hong Kong and other parts of the British Empire was forbidden and disloyal materials were not allowed.⁵³ In detail, it forbade:

[Bringing] into hatred or contempt His Majesty, or the Government established by law in the United Kingdom or in this Colony or in any British possession or in British India or the administration of justice in any of such places or any class or section of His Majesty's subjects in any of such places or to excite disaffection towards His Majesty or any of the said Governments.⁵⁴

Thus, when the *SCMP* supported Chinese nationalist movements in its articles and news, it had to self-censor them to protect British imperial interests in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, there would not appear a large-scale students' patriotic movement; any leap in the dark was soon crushed. In essence, the *SCMP* obeyed the law, and it would not support the students' violent and patriotic demonstrations. What the *SCMP* did was to pacify the rioting of Chinese in Hong Kong and to protect the stability of Hong Kong. As a result, both the audience and advertisers would sympathize with what the *SCMP* reported, which was good for the *SCMP* circulation and advertising income. In other words, the characteristics of the *SCMP*'s reporting on the May Fourth Movement reflected its flexible business strategy.

The May Fourth Movement reporting exhibited complex characteristics. For example, firstly, the *SCMP* freely covered the May Fourth Movement in mainland China on a timely basis, and pointed out that it was illegal and in violation of equality for Japan to take over Shandong. The *SCMP* covered Chinese sovereignty and tracked the development of a solution to the Shandong issue. It also reproduced anti-Japanese news from mainland Chinese newspapers.⁵⁵ Secondly, the *SCMP* supported China's work in search of justice at the Paris Peace Conference, and it claimed that there was no legal basis for Germany and Japan's ownership of Shandong interests.⁵⁶ Thirdly, the *SCMP*'s anti-Japanese news reporting met the demand of Chinese readers, who felt support from the press.⁵⁷

At the very beginning, the *SCMP* only provided peaceful perspectives in reporting

on the Chinese diplomatic failure at Paris Peace Conference and the student patriotic movements. The *SCMP* showed a sympathetic attitude toward arrested students in Beijing; at most, it recorded the patriot activities happening in mainland China, especially in Canton. The *SCMP* did not have a taboo against blocking mainland Chinese nationalist news; on the contrary, ‘boycott’, ‘demonstration’, and ‘Japanese products’ were hot topics in the *SCMP* then. The *SCMP* used many columns to report this material because Chinese bourgeoisie readers paid attention to this kind of news, which might influence their interests and emotions.

When reporting the May Fourth Movement in Canton, the *SCMP* called the Cantonese residents an ‘excited crowd’ and ‘mob’ that destroyed every Japanese straw hat seen on the street. The Cantonese police only came to maintain order.⁵⁸ At one time, more than 10,000 male and female students in Canton paraded under the leadership of Ho Liang, a student of Canton Christian College (格致書院, the name of Lingnan University in 1919). The students all had flags in their hands with writing on them that read, ‘Calling up the people to refrain from buying Japanese goods and urging the punishment of national traitors’.⁵⁹

In summation, the *SCMP*’s editorials on the May Fourth Movement depicted Chinese patriotism through its mainland Chinese news reporting; however, it objected when similar activities were conducted in Hong Kong, and it supported the suppression of Chinese youth movements by the Hong Kong government. The *SCMP* satisfied the demand of merchants to read about drastic changes in the business environment of mainland China. It met the need of the Chinese community to read nationalist reporting on the May Fourth Movement, and it protected the local British companies’ business interests by helping to suppress potential local riots by issuing press warnings.

The *SCMP* did not mind reporting the activities of people advocating in circulars that customers ‘patronise native products’ and ‘stop business transactions with Japanese’. Obviously, these were sporadic propaganda activities, but there were few large movements. When nine Chinese youths held a demonstration with an ‘oil paper umbrella, Chinese made, on which was written eight large Chinese characters “Chinese community should patronize native products”’, the *SCMP* resolutely pointed out that this kind of demonstration was detrimental to foreign business interests and should not be ‘allowed in a British Colony’. The *SCMP* felt ‘satisfactory that the Police stopped the movement, for such activities, if allowed full scope might develop into a serious matter’.⁶⁰ When the government and the *SCMP* did not promote these unexpected activities, the only option for anti-Japanese protesters was plastering Hong Kong with placards in Chinese, which said things such as ‘advocating the boycott of Japanese goods’, thus escaping ‘the notice of the authorities’.⁶¹

The *SCMP* was concerned about maintaining the safety of its Hong Kong business advertisers and the safety of businesses in Hong Kong so that they would continue to advertise in the *SCMP*. Simultaneously, it still had to ensure that its Chinese readers appreciated its reporting about the May Fourth Movement. If Chinese readers felt disappointed about the *SCMP*’s reporting on the suppression of the students in Hong Kong, they might choose not to read the *SCMP* anymore; if that happened, the advertisers might feel that the *SCMP* was not useful to their products and services.

The *SCMP* had a flexible attitude toward the May Fourth Movement because of the complex relationship between the reporting on China and the Hong Kong legal system. For example, it agreed with the arrests of Hong Kong Chinese students who demonstrated on the streets because they broke Hong Kong ordinances and hurt the

stability of Hong Kong.⁶² When the *SCMP* learned that Chinese readers felt great sympathy for the arrested students, it published a reader letter to save its reputation. The letter went against the *SCMP*'s commentary by claiming that walking on the street with umbrellas was just like foreign workers wearing native hats and that the Chinese characters on the umbrellas were a kind of advertising, and the police made a mistake because schoolchildren were fond of rambling in groups, which was not the same as a demonstration. The reader boldly hoped his enlightenment of these facts would 'also help to lessen the possibility of a recurrence of similar offences arising out of ignorance, and thus enable the Honourable C.S.P. [chief superintendent of police] to devote more time to more important matters regarding the welfare of the Colony'.⁶³ It is unclear whether the letter was written by an *SCMP* editor, as it was the newspaper's convention to publish inappropriate material in the editorial section.⁶⁴ For example, the advertisers and the Hong Kong government wanted the *SCMP* to obey the law and not support radical movements. On the other hand, the *SCMP* still needed to entertain Chinese readers who felt uncomfortable when the *SCMP* supported the arrest of ignorant schoolchildren. From this case, we can see that one of the advantages of the *SCMP* was that it published different viewpoints for Chinese and British readers regarding the same events. This was its strategy to use editorial freedom to increase its circulation while avoiding responsibility for what had been published previously. With this strategy, the *SCMP* could win both Chinese and British readers and pacify different groups of audiences. With regard to the student arrest issue, it did not mind reprinting 'a view from Japan' from the *Japan Chronicle*. The *Japan Chronicle* claimed it might be illegal for the Hong Kong authorities to arrest students, and Japanese diplomatic officials 'compelled the Chinese to suppress newspapers which denounce[d] the Shantung settlement in too

heated terms and to forbid indignation processions and every manifestation of popular feeling'. The *Japan Chronicle* also hinted that the Japanese consuls would demand that the United Kingdom and Hong Kong enforce similar policies in Hong Kong to protect Japan. As for the students, 'boycott is obviously an ineffective weapon, but, like the strike, it may be carried out in a legal way; however, as Marquis Okuma said, racial equality is not for uncivilised people like the Chinese'.⁶⁵

The *Japan Chronicle* was an independent newspaper founded by Robert Young in Japan, which had a close relationship with Fleet Street and Chinese newspapers and belonged to the 'British imperial press network', according to Peter O'Connor's Japanese newspaper study.⁶⁶ The Japanese government tried to bribe Robert Young from time to time.⁶⁷ It is difficult to analyse the motives of the *SCMP* in reprinting the *Japan Chronicle*'s editorial, which criticized the police arrest of students, encouraged strikes instead of demonstrations and was biased against the Chinese. The *SCMP* might have wanted to ease the pressure from readers who sympathised with Chinese nationalism, but it also did not want to irritate the Hong Kong government at the same time. Thus, such editorials were reprinted by the *SCMP*.

It was also impractical for the *SCMP* to support Chinese merchants who did not want to sell Japanese or other foreign products and only sell Chinese products, because Chinese readers and advertisers contributed only part of the *SCMP*'s income. There were still many Japanese products that could not be sold in Hong Kong, and in some cases, this fact hurt Chinese businesspeople's interests. Limiting trade with Japan was not thought to be in the best interest of the Chinese and British businesspeople. Thus, it was very understandable that the *SCMP* reported on the trip of British Trade Commissioner Bright to Hong Kong and China, and he held meetings with Hong Kong Chinese businesspeople and encouraged cooperation in

the expansion of British products in the Hong Kong and Chinese markets, rather than boycotting them.⁶⁸

The *SCMP* also highlighted that there would be a reward for Chinese businesspeople who cooperated with the British government and sold British products.⁶⁹ Thus, we can understand why the *SCMP* objected to excessively promoting Chinese products, because doing so would have hurt British products, and objecting to buying Japanese products would not be accepted because it hurt the British and Chinese bourgeoisie's business. The *SCMP*'s editorials pointed out that "this kind of demonstration, being detrimental to foreign (it meant Japanese) business interests, cannot be allowed in a British Colony."⁷⁰ Hong Kong's foreign companies, including Japanese companies, provided advertising income to the *SCMP*, so the *SCMP* did not support peaceful demonstrations by students because they hurt local business.

In short, the *SCMP* did not support student movements in Hong Kong, nor did the Hong Kong government because the student movements affected the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. Nevertheless, it did not mean that the *SCMP* did not like reporting on Chinese nationalist movements like the May Fourth Movement, anti-Japanese movements, or any other Chinese news. The *SCMP* did have some Japanese advertisers, but it did not have Japanese editors. Although the *SCMP* reported on the success of Japan in the new world order in its early twentieth century editorials, it nevertheless set an example for China to study and follow. Japanese companies were the *SCMP*'s advertising partners, but interests and demands coming from Chinese readers were also important. Reporting on China was one part of the *SCMP*'s combined reporting strategy, which became more significant in the *SCMP*'s reporting in the 1930s.

The *SCMP*'s Reporting on Strikes

The attitude of the *SCMP* toward strikes in Hong Kong showed that the *SCMP* represented bourgeoisie readers. While the *SCMP* paid great attention to Chinese news, it attempted to minimise the detrimental influence of riots and strikes on its business. In a trade centre, the Hong Kong merchants, both Chinese and British, would not like strikes. Although Chinese merchants sometimes had some national sentiments, it did not mean they would conflict violently with the British. In particular, when the British and Chinese audience's lives and fortunes faced serious danger from Chinese strikers, the natural choice for the *SCMP* and audiences was to maintain the social order in Hong Kong.

Lam Man-sum studied the four English newspapers and found they did not object to the Chinese revolution in 1911.⁷¹ In addition, the *SCMP*'s important advertisers, HSBC and the Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce, also predicted that the revolution might be helpful for their business in China.⁷² However, when the nationalist movements negatively influenced the stability of Hong Kong, the *SCMP* had to consider its business interests. During the 1911 Hong Kong strikes, believed to have been caused by the 1911 Revolution, the *SCMP* reported on the 1911 revolution but helped to suppress company strikes with the solid support of the Hong Kong government. In its reporting, the newspaper hinted that the strikes were staged by the underworld or the Triad Society. In fact, it was difficult to prove the connection between Chinese working class strikes and organised crime.

In the 1925 Canton and Hong Kong strike, the Hong Kong government cooperated with the *SCMP* to stabilise Hong Kong society by using the *SCMP* to support Chinese merchants and the British community. Benjamin Wylie decided to support the founding of the *Huaqiao Ribao* under a request from the Hong Kong

government and Shum Waiyau, believing the newspaper would be good for the stability of Hong Kong and for the *SCMP* itself.⁷³

The *SCMP* attributed all the responsibilities to two groups of people: the Russians and the Chinese Nationalist radicals. After Chinese Communist Party member Gu Zhenghong had been murdered by the Japanese Spinning Company, Shanghai students organized meetings to start a general strike.⁷⁴ The *SCMP* sent its own correspondent to impartially investigate and report the details of the incident. The strike was highly relevant to the Chinese merchant network in Shanghai, and many Shanghai Chinese merchants had connections with the Chinese merchants in Hong Kong. Although students were portrayed as “agitators”, “extremists” or a “mob” in the *SCMP* when they had demonstrations, the *SCMP* showed a different attitude toward Chinese merchants and still generously published the announcement of the chairman of the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce, “in view of the assassination of our brethren, we have decided on a general strike”.⁷⁵ In addition, the demands of Chinese students were also published in the *SCMP*:

Let us overthrow modern Imperialism and abolish unequal treaties. Let labourers, merchants and students join in one body and fight together in common cause...boycott of foreign banknotes; withdrawal of Chinese deposits from foreign banks; control of the Municipal police to be placed in Chinese hands; withdrawal of foreign warships from the Whangpu; release of the students and labourers and labourers arrested; trial of the murderers of the students and labourers; compensation for the sufferers; recognition of the right of labourers to strikes.⁷⁶

In addition, the *SCMP* correspondent also recorded that the police killed eleven students, but did not identify the nationality of police.⁷⁷ In fact, these Chinese students were shot to death by British police. Meanwhile, the students who were killed constituted a “mob”.⁷⁸ The *SCMP* not only recorded the participants in the riots, like students, labourers, merchants, it also reported that the Chinese

government protested to the Diplomatic Corps about the action of the police at Shanghai.⁷⁹ Although the *SCMP* did not admit it was wrong for the British police to murder Chinese students, it did publish the telegram of Reuters that:

The Foreign Office has sent a further Note to the Diplomatic Corps, saying that there are further reports of police firing, while the arrested men have not all been freed, as requested in the first note. It again requests most urgent instructions to the Consular officials in Shanghai immediately to order a cessation of the practice of firing on strikers.⁸⁰

The *SCMP* at least cared about the feelings its Chinese merchant audiences when it reported the Chinese riots and deaths in Shanghai was like a tragedy and the British should refrain from further killing Chinese. In addition, it pushed the responsibility on to Russians and Chinese radicals, viz., the Chinese communists. In doing so, it could divert the Chinese audience's focus on why British police killed Chinese in Shanghai and it would not offend British in Hong Kong. The *SCMP* left the bloody incidents alone and focused on the Soviet Union. It pointed out China was a "part of the [Soviet Union's] revolutionary front", "without the participation of the Oriental peoples, the progress of the world revolution was being considerably retarded".⁸¹ The *SCMP* had formed its theory that the communists were really convicts other than the British police. It reported the [British] settlement authorities "conducted their attention" on "communist centres" and arrested people in the Shanghai University because of alleged connections with "communist money from the Peking radical branch of the Kuomintang".⁸² A *SCMP* correspondent managed an interview with E. Osarnin, the Soviet Consul-General, about whether the Soviet Union supported the recent uprising and the students. The answer the *SCMP* got was that "the Consulate has no connection whatever with the strike, nor gives instruction to anybody with regard to same. All fictions invested to bind in any way the Consulate with the strike are nothing else than provocation aiming to discredit the Soviet Government."⁸³

However, the *SCMP* did not believe this and hinted that the Soviet Union should not pretend to be innocent after it caused the deaths of Chinese people.⁸⁴

Toward the riots in Shanghai, the *SCMP* used Reuters and its own sources to prove that there was “irrefutable evidence that Bolshevik money and activities are behind the present disturbances and it is further established that the Russians are merely using the Chinese students as tools in their efforts to extend the Moscow programme.”⁸⁵ Moreover, “the Communists, taking advantage of the disturbed affairs, are harming the patriotic movement”.⁸⁶ Most important, it published comments such as “powers defend police action” and “British suffer most”.⁸⁷ The *SCMP* attempted to mould the opinions of audiences that it was the Chinese communists and Russians’ conspiracy to instigate such a nationalist movement.

Employing such logic, they could convince the Chinese audiences that, even if strikers were “fighting for national rights” and “the freedom” of Chinese people, communists actually sold Chinese national rights to Russia and killed Chinese people. By employing such reasoning, the British became the most vulnerable.⁸⁸ It was true that the British faced Chinese hostility; thus British audiences paid attention to the continuance of the riots. Such kinds of reporting proved that the *SCMP* represented British audiences’ interests but could not thoroughly pass the buck to the Chinese people. As a result, communists and Russians became the scapegoats.

The *SCMP* became experienced in handling strike issues and news. When the strikes commenced in Hong Kong in the third week of June 1925, it managed a very good propaganda campaign to draw a clear distinction between Hong Kong and Shanghai. It published interviews with the Secretary of Chinese Affairs, who stated that, “The Shanghai matter was one to be dealt with between the British Minister and the Chinese Government. It was nothing to do with Hongkong, which was a British

Colony”. Therefore, “workmen who would not do their work were merely loiterers and should go back to their own country”. What the Hong Kong government planned to do was to “stamp out evil and protect the good”. These words published in the *SCMP* would warn the Chinese merchants to decide their stances; that is, to be “stamped out” as evil or “to be the good”. Hong Kong Chinese merchants actually had no other options. If they worked with the Canton Nationalist Government, the Hong Kong government would punish them. If they stayed with Hong Kong government, labourers would leave Hong Kong and their business be forced into failure. Nevertheless, working with the Hong Kong government would be a better option for them because strikes would be detrimental to the benefit of Hong Kong Chinese merchants.

As a result, Chinese merchant readers would not sympathize with the victims of riots in Shanghai and even Hong Kong, after the *SCMP* analysed that their readers would be potential victims of the strike. No wonder, in the Shameen massacre, though around fifty Chinese people had been slaughtered by British soldiers, the *SCMP* pushed all of the responsibility of this tragedy on to the Canton Chinese Nationalist Government.⁸⁹ The famous Hong Kong movie director Lu Dun witnessed British soldiers starting to shoot Chinese students once they saw the students of Whampoa Military Academy demonstrating in Canton.⁹⁰ Reporting Chinese news on the stance of the British interests in Hong Kong in the 1925 strike became characteristic of the *SCMP* reporting. In fact, Chinese merchants’ interests tied with the British interests on the point of maintaining peaceful social order. The *SCMP* did this to uphold a secure market for its media business, as well as for the business safety of its Chinese audience and advertisers in Hong Kong; in addition, the strikers were not its audience at all. The *SCMP* and the government together attributed the

Hong Kong crisis to Chinese nationalism and the Cantonese government.

The *SCMP* liked to report sensational strike news from China. It did this time, too, but from its own interest. Even in its reporting of the Shameen Massacre, the *SCMP* highlighted the deaths of foreigners but suppressed reporting Chinese deaths.⁹¹ Naturally, the *SCMP* hoped that the Hong Kong government would stop the incidents as soon as possible so that it could avoid losing too much in the 1925-1926 strike.⁹² Thus, the *SCMP* sent enough messages to the audiences that Hong Kong should not have a strike because what happened in Shanghai was irrelevant to Hong Kong. Even if strikes happened in Hong Kong, there would be enough food supplies, so there was no need for the audiences to be panic. Considering the horrible atmosphere that the *SCMP* created for the audiences, such as, “Britisher killed and lady wounded”, Chinese newspapers demanded “the execution of the British Consul-General in Shanghai”, “the daily loss of the Chinese in Shanghai during the strike is \$3,00,000”, foreigners were seeking asylum in China. British and Chinese readers could easily realize the severe consequences of a strike if it happened in Hong Kong. In particular, the *SCMP* told its readers “the [Shanghai] Chinese General Chamber of Commerce had passed a vote to terminate the strike at the weekend, and the reason given therefore was that commercial interests had already suffered staggering losses”⁹³. From the beginning of the strike to the end, the *SCMP* opposed the strike and had no mercy on strikers. What the *SCMP* cared about was the food supply and safety problems in Hong Kong, which reflected the concerns of its Chinese and British audiences.

While some other Chinese newspapers and English newspapers closed because of the press strike, the *SCMP* stayed opened and provided a channel for the Chinese merchants to save themselves in Hong Kong. The Chinese merchants really had

nothing much to do to support the nationalist strike at that moment. The British government said they would secure the lives and property of the British in China, without “weakness and hesitation”.⁹⁴ In addition, the Hong Kong governor, Stubb, passed the message to the Chinese audiences of the *SCMP* that “any attempts at disorder will be relentlessly repressed”.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, the governor also conveyed gratefulness to the rich Chinese residents in Hong Kong who helped the British Hong Kong government in the strike.⁹⁶ However, when Chinese merchants hoped the government would announce they were solving their protection problems, the governor only said Chinese should “guard themselves” and government “had always given satisfaction”.⁹⁷ Even for such a brief answer, it needed the leading Chinese merchant Chow Shou Son and colonial official Robert Cotewall to discuss the matter with the governor.⁹⁸ The *SCMP* reported that more than two hundred members of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce worried about safety and security problems during the strike.⁹⁹ Their leaders Chow Shou Son and Robert Cotewall did show their high position as a bridge between the Chinese merchants and the Hong Kong governor, but the reply they brought from the Hong Kong government obviously discouraged the Chinese merchants. For example, the governor said that there were enough food supplies in Hong Kong, but “Government could not undertake the distribution, it was up to the public to make their own arrangements to get their supplies”.¹⁰⁰

While the Hong Kong government in the *SCMP* showed an irresponsible attitude toward the Chinese community in the period, the *SCMP* recorded that Chinese merchant leaders held meetings frequently in looking for solutions protect the safety of the Chinese community. The Chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, Li Yau Chuen, held the meeting and approved the proposal that a

Merchants Self-Protection Corps should be formed to assist the police in the maintenance of peace and order in the Colony.¹⁰¹ Each Chinese shop would provide two shop clerks for duty.¹⁰² As for the food supply problems, it was complex: Chinese might have too much pork to eat because there were too many pigs in Hong Kong and it became a problem for the Pig Dealers' Guild to dispose of them in the Hong Kong summer.¹⁰³ The *SCMP* reported that Li Yau Chuen worked with the government to allow people to set up meat and vegetable stalls to sell the pork, and salesmen and hawkers could sell this pork without a license.¹⁰⁴ As a result, not only did the losses of Chinese merchants decrease, but Chinese residents could easily get the pork.¹⁰⁵ From the *SCMP* reporting, Li Yau Chuen left a more responsible image to Chinese readers than that of the Hong Kong governor. The *SCMP* showed that the Chinese merchant leaders worked for them efficiently. In addition, Chinese readers provided suggestions to solve the food supply and security problems for other Chinese readers in the *SCMP*. For example, reader T.I.M. suggested the Dairy Farm, the biggest meat provider in Hong Kong, provide more convenient payment methods to guarantee food sales to Chinese clients during the crisis.¹⁰⁶

It is also worthy to mention an ex-police reservist claimed himself one of the "section of the Chinese community who has no sympathy with the present foolish and unwarranted adventure".¹⁰⁷ The reader proposed reorganizing a team of 600 or 700 men from the former Hong Kong Police Reserve formed during World War I to protect the Chinese community.¹⁰⁸ The reader believed that if leaders of the Chinese community accepted his proposal, there would be a good result.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, beside the Merchants Self-Protection Corps, the famous Chinese lawyer S.W. Tso and his committee members Messrs Wong Tin, I. M. Wong, S. Wong Tape and F.C. Mou Fung registered names and allocated duties to over 100 of men, who became the

members of the special constables. They were under the leadership of F.C. Mow Fung, who was the experienced ex-inspector of the wartime Police Reserve.¹¹⁰

The *SCMP* reporting about Mr. S.W. Tso appeared as the headline on the front page on 30 June 1925, which showed the urgency of the safety problem identified by the Chinese audience.¹¹¹ It created a good image of Tso in the hearts of Chinese and British readers, who believed Tso was courageous, experienced and loyal to the Hong Kong government and showed an enterprising leadership in the Chinese community. In particular, Tso contributed to the protection of the Chinese bourgeoisie in Hong Kong. Obviously, because his endeavours had been recognized, the *SCMP*'s coverage about him during the strike impressed the British Hong Kong officials, and years later, Tso became the Chinese member in the Hong Kong Legislative Council.¹¹² It could not be denied that in crises, the *SCMP* gave hope and support to the Chinese audiences. In particular, it gave Tso an opportunity to lift his social reputation and position in the Chinese community and in British colonial Hong Kong.

The social prestige of Chinese merchant leaders improved especially when the Chinese audiences complained about the uselessness of the Hong Kong government to help them. A Chinese reader nicknamed "Town Dweller", who had many Chinese trader friends, criticized the Hong Kong government, which did not efficiently solve the strike problems. "Town Dweller", a representative of the Chinese businessmen, under the request of Chinese merchant friends, told the *SCMP* that:

On every hand Chinese businessmen are hourly asking me why the Government does not act. I have not yet met with one Chinese [better class person] who had not heartily condemned these labour unions and the settlement which the Government made with the Seamen's Union in 1922. Surely here is one essential in which the Government can instil confidence in the large body of peaceful and law-abiding Chinese traders and residents as to its ability to govern? It is a well-known fact that Chinese despise a weak Government and nothing would go further to allay these fears of the Chinese

community than to see the Government take a firm stand on this vital question and act at once. Further delay will only be construed as weakness...Of course it may be that there are not sufficient police for such a distribution but could not aid be sought from the military and let them do the picket patrols?¹¹³

The reader published his and his Chinese merchant friends' views anonymously probably because of criticizing the government. That his views in such an unfriendly attitude were published showed the *SCMP*'s support of Chinese merchant readers. It was also possible that the *SCMP* editor did this anonymous critical piece to please Chinese readers. In August, a large and representative meeting, a combination of "the Committee of the Trade Protection Bureau and the Committees of the Co-Operative Societies of the Twenty-Four Commercial Guilds", was held and presided over by the leading Chinese merchant Ho Kwong and thereafter, announced three resolutions in the *SCMP*:

1. Chinese merchant residents in the Colony are desirous of expressing their thanks and gratitude to the Governor of Hong Kong for his promptness in enforcing the emergency measures for the preservation of peace in the Colony, to which they owe their safety.
2. Regarding the present strike, we merchants are dead against it.
3. With regard to the enforcement of Bolshevik measures by the de facto Government in Canton, which are aimed at the destruction of commerce and the serious entanglement of finance, as well as the cutting off of the supply of foodstuffs from Canton to Hongkong, as preliminary steps to sovietising the area under their rule, we merchants are desirous of expressing our opposition thereto.¹¹⁴

The anonymous Chinese merchant held opinions that the present Hong Kong government was weak and despised by the Hong Kong Chinese merchants, but the Chinese merchant resolutions still thanked the governor. It was easy to understand that the conflicted tones of the Chinese merchants meant they did not like the strikers and the Canton government as well as the Hong Kong government. They wanted an exit to such a miserable strike but they did not have many useful channels; for

example, they did not like the government's slow action but still flattered the governor. The *SCMP* was used to influence the Hong Kong government or the governor, or at least the British readers, with uncertain effect. Nevertheless, it showed the courtesy and stance of the Chinese merchants. The *SCMP* published Ho Kwong's response that he would communicate with Chow Shou Son and Robert Cotewall about sending their resolutions to the British government in London.¹¹⁵

After checking the correspondence between the Hong Kong government and the British colonial office, I could not find the Chinese merchant resolutions. Thus, it proved that what Ho Kwong proposed was something like a deformed criticism to the Hong Kong government. The resolutions showed the Chinese merchants' attitudes received support in the *SCMP* and the *SCMP* sufficiently represented Chinese merchant interests. Chinese merchants and the *SCMP* had no interest at that time in patriotism or Chinese nationalism. In other words, Hong Kong Chinese merchants did not live on the ferment of patriotism or nationalism; they lived on their business interests. What they cared about was their business losses and interests. As a result, they had to show their loyalty to the British government and hoped the imperialists could respond with harsh action against the Cantonese government. Although the *SCMP* sometimes provided anti-foreign news to please the Hong Kong Chinese merchants, the prerequisite was clear. The Chinese merchants' interests should not be negatively influenced because of these kinds of articles.

In the bewildering situation of the strike, the *SCMP* explained the stances of the Chinese merchants, and the power of Chinese merchants to maintain their living in Hong Kong. In addition, it showed that the leaders of Chinese merchants strived to mould opinions of Chinese merchant readers, and to influence colonial decision-making.

In brief, the goal of boycotting and eradicating the British governance of Hong Kong seriously conflicted with the essential business interests of Hong Kong Chinese merchants. That Hong Kong Chinese merchants supported the Chinese nationalist revolution but compromised in the 1925 Strike just told us that they were rational nationalists if they supported the Chinese nationalist movement in previous years. Their changes could be considered rational retreat and progress from a general situation of nationalism defined by John Plamenatz; nationalism in Asia was an Eastern nationalism of “both acceptance (to accept Western scholarship and political systems) and rejection (to seek for reform and a real national independence)”.¹¹⁶

Hong Kong Chinese merchants maintained the rationale that they would not allow the strikes to hurt their business in the 1925 Strike. They did not have a better choice when they became pitiful intermediaries between the British Hong Kong government and the Canton government. Primarily, Hong Kong Chinese merchants imitated Western business culture, including the international trade, English language and Western laws, etc. In other words, they desired an independent and powerful Chinese bourgeoisie government, but the Canton-Hong Kong Strike was led by communists, Russians and nationalist radicals. Although these merchants admired the Cantonese government under the leadership of Sun Yatsen and sympathized with the nationalist movement, nevertheless, the development of the strike superseded their political ideals and damaged their interests. Thus, their boycott, dissatisfactory behaviours and even criticisms against the Canton Nationalist Government had nothing to do with their patriotism.

As for the *SCMP*, although the Hong Kong government requested its cooperation in restraining the strike and Chinese nationalist sentiments becoming contagious in the Chinese bourgeoisie world, nevertheless, it was the *SCMP*'s natural choice to

protect Hong Kong's prosperity. In particular, its circulation had increased to an amazing extent during the 1925 Strike, which showed that the bourgeoisie readers recognised the stance of the *SCMP*, not to mention using the *SCMP*, as a tool to mould Chinese merchants' opinions. Consequently, the *SCMP* combined its growth with the fate of Hong Kong Chinese merchants.

To conclude, the *SCMP* was passionate in spreading the ideas of reforming China in order to maximize the Chinese merchants' interests in China. The reporting could be nationalistic because the relationship between the interests of Chinese merchants and international merchants were in conflict. In other words, the *SCMP* imagined an ideal and powerful Chinese government where the Chinese government could protect Hong Kong Chinese merchants' interests and even make the Hong Kong Chinese merchants' interests a priority. When the Chinese government sabotaged the Hong Kong Chinese merchants' interests and even Hong Kong prosperity, the *SCMP* did not do nationalistic reporting but managed to protect the Hong Kong Chinese merchants.

The *SCMP*'s nationalistic reporting did not mean it solidly supported a certain Chinese government. The *SCMP* showed sympathy with the Chinese Nationalist Government, founded by Sun Yatsen, but it did not mean an eternal support, especially when the Chinese Nationalist Government executed a detrimental policy toward Hong Kong. Largely, the *SCMP* had no favour of the varied governments in China in my research period. The nationalistic sentiments and ideals appearing in the *SCMP* simply projected an imagined, historical, cultural, mercantile and independent motherland.

Scholars had various discussions about nationalism in early twentieth century China. Huo Qichang believed that the leaders of Hong Kong Chinese merchants were

loyal to the British Hong Kong government and simultaneously the Chinese patriots or nationalists.¹¹⁷ Chen Xueran clarified that Hong Kong during the May Fourth period was not what other sources claimed: full of violence and nationalist movement in Hong Kong.¹¹⁸ Cai Rongfang claimed that Hong Kong Chinese merchants were not always supportive of Chinese nationalist social movements, but it did not mean Hong Kong Chinese merchants were not patriots.¹¹⁹ As previously mentioned, now that the Hong Kong Chinese merchants more or less had an imagined China in their minds, they did not necessarily support a government or government-led movements, especially when their business interests had been seriously damaged. When evaluating the nationalism of Hong Kong Chinese merchants, more attention should be paid to the bottom line of the stratum. Even if they supported the Great Strike, it might be a tragedy for them in the Armageddon. In other words, even if the Chinese merchants cooperated with the Canton Nationalist Government against the Hong Kong government, their business interests might be severely damaged by the Hong Kong government and betrayed by the Canton Nationalist Government. In a word, the nationalism of the Hong Kong Chinese merchants was rational, conditional and not simply biased.

During the turbulent first quarter of twentieth century the *SCMP* proved to have a pivotal social, economic and even politic role in helping Chinese merchants to maintain their business interests, safety, stability and equality in Hong Kong and even China. Whatever news reporting changed in the *SCMP*, it was consistent with the interests of its Chinese merchant readers, especially when it had limited British readers in the first ten years of its establishment. Thus, it became clear why the *SCMP* was full of nationalist sentiment and vehemently represented Chinese merchant interests. Along with the increase of British readers and in spite of the

interference of laws against the external press freedom in the second ten years of the *SCMP*, vis-a-vis the May Fourth Movement, the *SCMP* had no hesitation reporting this event with a sense of justice. But it also chose to be a chameleon in front of the Hong Kong government interference in light of the potential social disorders. In particular, it always stood on the side of Chinese merchants in Hong Kong who expected a stable commercial environment in Hong Kong and China. Thus, it would be easy for us to understand why it opposed the famous and long-term Canton-Hong Kong Strike in 1925. The *SCMP* did not deny the incentive of the incident in Shanghai was a “patriot movement” as it was at the beginning; rather, the *SCMP* said the Chinese newspaper readers and shareholders in Hong Kong would not like the strike because it mainly hurt Chinese merchants’ interests in Hong Kong. In other words, the *SCMP* believed that the “so called anti-foreign movement” was detrimental to the Chinese merchants because “the majority of Hongkong ‘foreign’ concerns are Chinese owned: wherefore the interests of foreigners and Chinese are identical and cannot be separated”.¹²⁰

The nature of Chinese merchant nationalism and the *SCMP* made the position of Hong Kong in modern China confusing and ambiguous. Some scholars believe that Hong Kong had no positive influence on the modernization of China.¹²¹ Chinese merchants were merely the collaborators of British imperialists, who invaded and exploited China. Other scholars justify the positive role of Hong Kong in modern China history. Huo Qichang claimed Hong Kong provided capital and intellectuals to the development of modern China.¹²² As previously discussed, Chinese merchants united to maintain their living and safety under the leadership of some Chinese leaders. Furthermore, as the in-betweens, they used the *SCMP* to vent their dissatisfaction in front of the British and Chinese strikers and call for action from the

side of the Hong Kong government, which they deemed irresponsible in protecting the Chinese merchants. The contribution of the *SCMP* and the Hong Kong Chinese merchants in the strikes might be neutral but it did not mean Hong Kong was useless or neutral at the edge of China. In particular, the Great Strike in 1925 brought Chinese international trade to a sudden dive.¹²³ The *SCMP* and Chinese merchants expected the expansion of a business network in China, and the British Empire caused Hong Kong to play a unique role at the edge of China, along with the significant influence of Chinese merchant leaders such as Ho Kai, Ho Tung, Wu Tingfang and Tse Tsan Tai, in Chinese affairs.

3. LAWN BOWLS REPORTING FOR THE BRITISH

My primary goal in this chapter is to examine how the *SCMP* made a profit while meeting the demands of British audiences with lawn bowls reporting. I disclose the nature of British sports and community and the influence of the *SCMP* lawn bowls reporting on the development of British colonial Hong Kong—keeping in mind the interaction between the British identity and the lawn bowls reporting. The analysis begins with the history of lawn bowls and the involvement of the *SCMP* with lawn bowls activities, and then focuses on why and how the *SCMP* carried out the lawn bowls reporting. I conclude by pointing out how the lawn bowls reporting took advantage to the point of “creating news” by actually forming leagues, playing up the scores and stories to enlarge the circulation, how the *SCMP* portrayed the British identity, and how this particular newspaper showcased the dominance of British colonial occupation in Hong Kong.

Claude Jeanrenaud and Stefan Kesenne edited *The Economics of Sport and the Media* to study the complexly pecuniary relations in the field of sport and broadcasting.¹ Kelby K. Halone improved previous studies on the interplays of sport, communication and identity and claimed that any two of the three dynamics may literally constitute the presence of the other; e.g., sport and communication gave rise to the identity.² While Halone’s theory makes sense, I argue that any one of the three boosts the other two in a small British colonial island; the interaction between the local English newspaper and sporting development would be simple, direct and frequent. In addition, the British identity and cultural background of British expatriates demanded good sports reporting, the effects of which were to improve the local English media, and vice versa. In other words, The British identity caused the demand on British sport lawn bowls and the attention of the local newspaper. The

SCMP took advantage of this to make a profit from lawn bowls reporting.

After the *SCMP* learned the road to report Chinese events to attract Chinese readers, it also searched for the magnet to attract a plentiful British readership that would spend freely on advertising. In particular, the *Hong Kong Daily Press* was the biggest paper for British elite; the *SCMP* still needed to compete, at its inception, to achieve its goal to be a paper for the “best classes”. This valuable audience as potential advertisers was finally realized through sports reporting, especially lawn bowls. In fact, the *SCMP* sporting news was one of “the two major news fields” in its paper.³

The British liked lawn bowls and the *SCMP* spent many columns reporting lawn bowls competition results. The *SCMP* staff also participated in the lawn bowls organization and led the Hong Kong Lawn Bowls development. As a result, the *SCMP*’s lawn bowls news was in a leading position in Hong Kong, and the readers of the lawn bowl news were older and wealthier.⁴ Therefore, reporting lawn bowls for British audiences not only met the demand of British sporting hobby, but also attracted advertisers, which were interested in the consumption power of the *SCMP* readers.⁵ Furthermore, the *SCMP* editor noticed the interconnection between sporting news and film advertisements.⁶ Both of these contents were attractive to the *SCMP* British audiences. The *SCMP* aimed to add more lawn bowls reporting and get more film advertisements.⁷ The result was very optimistic; the *SCMP* became a leader in lawn bowls reporting and first-run film advertising in Hong Kong.⁸ In addition, the difficulty of getting news from Britain and the laws against criticism of the British Empire did not make the *SCMP* become a lively and political newspaper on British daily politics. Instead, it became a newspaper reporting Reuters news, Chinese politics and the lawn bowls, etc.⁹

Lawn Bowls Appeared in Hong Kong

Lawn bowls had been a traditional British game for hundreds of years. When English people were not allowed to play lawn bowls widely because of military reasons during the reigns of Edward III and Richard II, the Scottish fell in love with it.¹⁰ As Scots increasingly found jobs in overseas colonies, including Hong Kong, they brought the game to Hong Kong, too, and several versions of lawn bowls emerged in Hong Kong. However, these were always British stories. It was said that a few Scots played lawn bowls around their houses and then founded a club called the Kowloon Bowling Green Club (KBGC).¹¹ Later, the number of Scots who joined this club increased, as well as more English and Americans. Benjamin Wylie, a Scottish printer, lived with the Scots in Kowloon even after he became the general manager of the *SCMP* and the president of the KBGC and the Hong Kong Lawn Bowling Association (HKLBA).¹² He was the leader of the Scottish Residence Association and he could play lawn bowls more easily with his Scottish fellows.¹³ This might be a reason to explain why he lived in Kowloon instead of on the Island, where the *SCMP* building was erected.¹⁴

The colonial government officially supported lawn bowls. When a property owner asked a high price to lease the land as bowling green, the governor of Hong Kong lent a hand. The governor, Sir Henry Blake, granted the KBGC the right to use a piece of land where the Volunteer Camp was located, and opened the Clubhouse for one hundred KBGC members.¹⁵ At that time, the KBGC president, W Ramsay, Vice President WC Jack, and other members of the club had a meeting and decided that the KBGC members should be only British and American, with no Asians being admitted.¹⁶ In the early twentieth century Hong Kong, racial segregation and discrimination widely existed. The sport and other social resources were mainly

allocated to the British colonizers. Playing cricket, lawn bowls and golf became a symbol of British superior social position to the Chinese community, including the Chinese better and lower class.

While the other governor visited the KBGC to watch the matches from time to time, the chief judge of the Supreme Court could cancel the daily work affairs to play lawn bowls. ADA Macgregor, a devout lawn bowl fan, invited the chief jailer, supervisor of the jury and chief inspector to play lawn bowls after a rushed adjournment of a court hearing.¹⁷ Actually, this was not an exceptional case; Justice RE Lindsell, a member of the Kowloon Cricket Club, had been revealed by the *SCMP* to play lawn bowls at two thirty p.m. on Tuesday afternoons, when he could normally have been expected to be at work.¹⁸ The British officials spent too much time on sports but did not manage Chinese affairs well. Therefore, Hong Kong Chinese themselves managed the methods to improve their businesses and lives through the institutions of their own, such as the Tung Wah Hospital and the *SCMP*, which reflected their interests and social demands.

The Involvement of the *SCMP* in Hong Kong Lawn Bowls Development

British identity played an important role in boosting the development of sports reporting for the *SCMP*. Lawn bowls was a popular sport in Hong Kong before 1941, and was mainly played by British residents. From time to time, the British bowlers talked about lawn bowls culture, British history, food, sportsmanship and British music in the *SCMP*, and in this way, the *SCMP* cultivated lawn bowls and portrayed the British life. Thereafter, it could interest British audiences to read its newspaper and even study how to play lawn bowls. Moreover, the lawn bowls reporting showed the dominant social position of the British community. In Hong Kong, the British

occupied the majority of available sports fields, while Chinese occupied the minority of land allocated for sports. As a result of the inequality, the *SCMP* mainly reported on British sporting events.

The first meeting of the HKLBA took place in the building of the *SCMP*. In addition, *SCMP* editor Thomas Petrie participated in the foundation of the HKLBA and held meetings in the *SCMP* boardroom from time to time.¹⁹ Benjamin Wylie, as the *SCMP* general manager, had been the vice-president and president of the HKLBA many times and even AO Brawn, the 1932 president of the HKLBA, could not remember the exact number of Wylie's appointments.²⁰ When Ben Wylie left Hong Kong for Britain and could no longer be the vice-president or president, HKLBA elected AL Shield as the vice-president, who later became a board member of the *SCMP*.²¹ The editors, shareholders and general manager of the *SCMP* strongly supported lawn bowls and became the chairs of the lawn bowls club and association one by one. Due to its special relationship with the lawn bowls, the *SCMP*'s sporting pages were frequently filled with lawn bowls news, especially its club events.

The *SCMP*'s participation in the lawn bowls management, innovation and organizations improved the *SCMP*'s lawn bowls reporting. For example, the *SCMP* covered the league matches in Hong Kong and generated frequent sport events for the *SCMP* to report. Its abundant reporting made the lawn bowlers a loyal audience of the *SCMP*, and some of them formed the habit of reading the *SCMP* lawn bowls news in the morning. For example, the reports of Robert MacWhirter, the *SCMP* sport editor, excited some bowl enthusiasts with the news they could have by breakfast time.²²

Playing lawn bowls was not popular until the first half of the twentieth century. It was said that it was the *SCMP* editor Thomas Petrie, who became the first Hong

Kong lawn bowls association president in 1909, and brought the lawn bowls games to Hong Kong.²³ The general manager of the *SCMP*, Benjamin Wylie, was the president of both Hong Kong Lawn Bowl Association and Kowloon Bowling Green Club.²⁴ The other editor of the *SCMP*, GT Lloyd, and former cashier EB Ayris, also participated in the KBGC activities.²⁵ John Scott Harston, the *SCMP* board chairman, was, however, a cricket fan.²⁶ Therefore, it was understandable that reporting on the two sports occupied the most part of the sporting page. Sometimes, lawn bowls score results and editorials occupied the most obvious position of the sporting page. Many editors in the *SCMP* liked lawn bowls and did well in the game, such as Robert MacWhirter, who chaired the KBGC in the pre-war years and wrote a book entitled *Lawn Bowls in Hong Kong*, which was published and advertised by the *SCMP*. As a result, both the *SCMP* business and the lawn bowls sport prevailed.²⁷ The *SCMP* sometimes recorded emotional lawn bowl stories and portrayed the British sentiments in its reporting. The British in Hong Kong learnt to play lawn bowls in their spare time and went back home 'with gratitude' to the British fellows in the Hong Kong Lawn Bowls Association. This was Mr CB Hosking, the secretary of the HKLBA's, experience. He did not have the opportunity to learn to play lawn bowls in Britain, but he gained the opportunity to play the game in Hong Kong, which made him very thankful to the HKLBA, and he would often remark that he had learnt lawn bowls in Hong Kong.²⁸ This case enlightens us that, to a certain extent, as a part of the British Empire, Hong Kong was a place where British culture was disseminated. The Hong Kong Lawn Bowls Association was a member of the English Lawn Bowls Association. Any HKLBA 'member going Home would have the privilege of playing on any Club green affiliated with the English Lawn Bowls Association'.²⁹ Furthermore, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Hankou British would

register a Far Eastern Lawn Bowl Association in Britain to improve the communication among British bowlers in the Far East.³⁰ Lawn bowls was not only a sport genre, but also an agent of British cultural identity in Asia.

This British cultural identity had been well protected because the Hong Kong government granted large tracts of land on which to play lawn bowls and cricket to the British. Although the Hong Kong government granted the Kowloon Bowling Green Club sports land from time to time, the room was still considered inadequate. In June 1925, the club decided to invest HK\$25,000 in a bigger clubhouse.³¹ The British liked lawn bowls so much that they even worried about the expansion of their sports land when the Chinese were on strike and Hong Kong's infrastructure was in upheaval as a result. This not only uncovered how much the British were addicted to lawn bowls, but also disclosed the nature of the British community who lived outside the Chinese society and maintained their own identity and lives. They could sustain a more decent life than the strikers and enjoyed more playing fields than the Chinese because they exploited the Chinese merchants and working class but did not offer reciprocal interests to the Chinese in Hong Kong.

The contribution of Benjamin Wylie, who advised the KBGC in evincing 'such shrewdness and foresight necessary for the new building', should not be left out.³² At the KBGC annual meeting of 1927, Benjamin Wylie became the vice-president of the KBGC because he had done much for the club and the president thought that Benjamin Wylie was 'always for the good of the club' though 'his remarks sometimes are very antagonistic'; Wylie admitted that this was true.³³ In 1928, Wylie also became the president of the Hong Kong Lawn Bowls Association because he had 'all the qualities needed' for the position.³⁴

Benjamin Wylie frankly confirmed discrimination against female bowlers in the

pre-war years.³⁵ However, there was no apology to the Chinese community, because as early as the founding of the KBGC, Chinese had been officially refused membership in the club.³⁶ As far as masculinity and sports go, Patrick McDevitt approached the intersection of sports, British imperial history and masculinity in *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880–1935*. He probed the interactions between the imperialism of Britain and the nationalism of its colonies. Sports, which linked the British imperial metropolis and its colonies with masculinity, reinforced the domination of the British in their colonies.³⁷ It was true that British men were addicted to this game and liked winning. Peter Hall testified that Hong Kong British expatriates played lawn bowls in the afternoons because they liked the thrill of success in the game.³⁸ In other words, the lawn bowls reporting was merely a business strategy of the *SCMP*. Nevertheless, it portrayed the conquerors who subjugated Chinese enjoyed sporting privileges in Hong Kong.

The assumed superiority of the British residents in Hong Kong and gave the *SCMP* the opportunity to report lawn bowls for British readers; nevertheless, it was also a great pity that the *SCMP* rarely reported sporting events for Chinese readers in the pre-war years. The explanation was the serious inequality of land allocated for sports between Chinese and British residents. More than 97 percent of the Hong Kong population consisted of Chinese residents; however, it was difficult to get a small piece of land for Chinese to play games in Hong Kong. The land was precious and expensive to use solely for occasional sporting purposes by only 3 percent of the population, though no more than 14.75 percent of available playing fields were allocated to the Chinese in Hong Kong.³⁹ The Chinese merchant leader and lawyer Man Kam Lo did not publicly conflict with the British and deemed this a racial issue,

but a mistake of neglecting the rapid growth of demand of Chinese on sports activities.⁴⁰ John Carroll pointed out that there was a British identity in pre-war Hong Kong sports clubs.⁴¹ Carroll not only adduced the British sports players' monopoly in the cricket game, but also argued there was a simultaneous racial discrimination against Chinese communities.⁴² Carroll asserted, "The Hong Kong Chinese bourgeoisie never embraced the British sports and game culture as wholeheartedly as did the new local bourgeoisies elsewhere in the British Empire"; what these Chinese sports clubs leaders attempted to show was their elite status and prestige to "each other, to their European opponents and to the Chinese lower classes".⁴³ In fact, besides the demands of widening the living space and lifting the social positions of Chinese merchant leaders, the Hong Kong Chinese, who were excluded from British clubs due to racial segregation, wanted to form more sport clubs of their own, but could not because they could not get the same quantity of land. M K Lam pointed out that "the Chinese, who are taking very extensively to open-air games and outdoor sports, do not enjoy the facilities comparable to the other sections of the community".⁴⁴ The limited amount of land restrained Chinese sports development in Hong Kong. As a result, such British hegemony harmed advertising opportunities of the Chinese in the *SCMP* who would have been equally or more interested in advertising as wealthy Britishers. Should there have been more sport fields and more Chinese players, there would have been more sports reporting for Chinese, which would have brought the *SCMP* more advertising income and Chinese subscribers.

Admittedly, the *SCMP* itself was very likely aware they contributed to the British audiences' sense of privilege by reading about and playing lawn bowls. Unexpectedly, while the *SCMP* promoted the development of lawn bowls and attracted British bowlers into this game, it also created more demand from the British

residents to occupy sporting grounds, with the unintended result of boycotting possible space the Chinese residents would have used for sports of their own. While the *SCMP* portrayed the success and power of the British lawn bowlers, it also reminded Chinese residents of the failure of competition with British residents and racial discrimination in allocation of land for sporting venues.

***SCMP* Lawn Bowls Reporting**

The *SCMP* had abundant lawn bowls reporting and left a new reader an impression that lawn bowls clubs were ‘in abundance, and it seems that this sporting business is being just a little overdone’.⁴⁵ Around 1920, the *SCMP* sometimes put lawn bowls reporting in its front page, which further attracted British audiences.⁴⁶ Later on, the editor suggested, “Effort must be made to interest advertisers in our sport page”.⁴⁷ One important advantage the *SCMP* had in reporting on lawn bowls was that *SCMP* executives were themselves involved in the development of the game in Hong Kong. SCMP Ltd. owned two newspapers, the *SCMP* and *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, both of which reported on lawn bowls. The readership drew in abundant advertising income for the paper, but also a 10 percent commission directly into the pocket of Benjamin Wylie, the general manager.⁴⁸ In 1932, the president of the HKLBA, AO Brawn, said Wylie ‘has done much to mould this Association into the form that it is now’ and ‘has done more for bowls in Hong Kong than any other man I can think of’.⁴⁹ Wylie’s involvement in the lawn bowls development provided good opportunities for the *SCMP* to receive timely news sources for lawn bowls and highlighted the paper’s reputation among bowlers.

The Interplay Between the *SCMP* Reporting and Lawn Bowls

For British bowlers, playing lawn bowls was an addictive hobby. They played the game with their friends, compatriots, and colleagues. The *SCMP* reported on these games just to meet the demand of its readers, since more lawn bowls matches would draw more readers' attention and improve the audience's loyalty to the *SCMP*. The *SCMP* not only reported the events and their results, but also portrayed a kind of culture, because in addition to the games, there were activities such as barbecues and dances.⁵⁰ Since the 1930s, the *SCMP* added more interactive content on lawn bowls, such as the letters from bowlers, the discussion of lawn bowls development in Hong Kong and match results in the paper. There were more and more lawn bowls matches exhibited in the *SCMP*. On the right or left side of lawn bowls reports, there were often English film advertisements.

As previously mentioned, the *SCMP* lawn bowls page became a bulletin board and a forum for bowlers. There were columnists like 'Jack', 'Toucher' and 'Rinker' in the *SCMP* lawn bowls reporting who frequently commented on the matches and the development of lawn bowls in Hong Kong. Lawn bowlers and the audience also had the opportunity to critique matches and players' attitudes. In other words, the lawn bowls page was more interesting and attractive than the previous period when the newspaper reported only competition results.

'Jack' once worried about the sports standard of Hong Kong lawn bowls very much and said 'there was a danger of the premier bowling club in the Colony being in less distinguished company next year, unless they bucked up. I do not mean to suggest that this had anything to do in putting a little bit of 'devil' into them, but they certainly must have recognised the danger. Their victory over Taikoo and the defeat of both the other Kowloon clubs mean that there are now four clubs in the running

for relegation'.⁵¹

Jack's comments received some feedback from the *SCMP* readers too. For example, 'I agree with your opinion of the HKLBA being an unbusinesslike body, judging by their decisions'; 'the decision regarding selection for the Interport team was only agreed to after many years of deliberation'; 'I think it is absurd to confine this competition to four players from each Club, when in league games more than twelve players participate'; 'I am afraid the Association is overdoing it in Championship games'.⁵²

Sometimes, there were serious criticisms from the audiences to the bowlers, especially when they did not accept the audience's criticism; reader 'Sport' once said:

The inevitable has again taken place. Can you tell me, Mr Editor, how it is that year after [year], lawn bowlers in this Colony resent criticism of their play? Apparently, the same applies also to those players of the game in Shanghai. During the last two Interport Bowls seasons in Hongkong, among the bowling fraternity there was resentment shown both in speech and writing to newspaper criticism of players and the game. This year, it would appear, we are having a recrudescence of the same thing. When newspaper writers criticise the play of footballers, cricketers and tennis players either at interports or ordinary games, we never hear of any back chat. Is it that bowlers in general are not nearly such good sports? Or is that, in their own superior minds, they deny any but themselves the right to criticise the game? I wonder.

Yours, etc.,

Sport
Hongkong, 9th Oct. 1925.⁵³

These criticisms illustrate that lawn bowls was a sport about which British expatriates in Hong Kong cared deeply. In addition, they participated vicariously in the game through the *SCMP*, which had the media function of endorsing, advocacy and criticism. The columnists could mould the audiences' opinions through such criticisms and reform the mechanism of the sports clubs in Hong Kong. Although the British had no universal suffrage in the Hong Kong government, they at least could

elect their representatives or a committee to protect their interests. Bowlers used the *SCMP* to inform other Hong Kong bowlers and members of clubs and associations about meetings at which they could discuss important issues. For example, the reader ‘JR’ once noticed there were alterations to arrangements of the Aitkenhead Shield Competition when he read articles in the *SCMP* from ‘Spectator’ and ‘Rinker’. As a result, he suggested in the *SCMP*:

A meeting of two representatives from each Club should be convened previous to the match in order to build up the Hongkong team so that the available strength of the various rinks should be nearly equal...In any case I think all bowlers in Hongkong will agree to the necessity of a small Committee to deal with any matter affecting their interests. The arrangements are evidently to be on a big scale, and again I should remark this should have had the consideration of the board as constituting the Hongkong Lawn Bowls Association. To Hongkong bowlers I would suggest a meeting at the Civil Service Club House on the 7th October, at 5.30 p.m., to appoint a Committee and arrange a team for the Aitkenhead Shield Competition.⁵⁴

British civil servants, professionals and merchants would have been the majority of bowlers. They resided in Hong Kong to maintain the role of Hong Kong as the agent of the British Empire. The British took Hong Kong as the eternal land of the Empire and played British sports in Hong Kong.

The *SCMP* sometimes represented its audience and published its readers’ suggestions on lawn bowls. In 1938, when the Shanghai and Hong Kong Interport Lawn Bowls Match was held in Hong Kong, reader ‘B Up’ suggested the ‘esteemed paper’ *SCMP* publish a suggestion, or an open letter to the bowlers:

As every follower of Lawn Bowls is aware, Mr H Wallace is the present Singles Champion of Shanghai, and Mr BW Bradbury our local Champion. Could not a match be arranged between the two here and a nominal small charge to see the match, proceeds to be devoted to charity?

Trusting this suggestion will bear fruit.

B. Up.⁵⁵

The *SCMP* provided bowlers an interactive platform and comprehensive information channel. With increasing lawn bowls reporting and types of contents, the *SCMP* could attract more high quality audiences and advertisers.

Portrayed British Identity in the *SCMP*

When the lawn bowls game was introduced into more clubs, more British expatriates had the opportunity to play. It was common that the bowlers' wives and kids would crowd onto the green to watch the match for a whole week's afternoons because it was just like the way they spent their holidays or the way they lived in Britain.⁵⁶ They bowled, barbecued, danced and drank.

The *SCMP* also portrayed the Hong Kong British residents' British identity in the 1934 British Empire Games in London, which was regarded as the biggest international lawn bowls competition. The *SCMP* reported consistently about the British Empire Games that year but it had to admit that the British expatriates tried their best but did not do very well in the matches.⁵⁷ In order to encourage the sporting news audience, the *SCMP* still told the readers some good news, such as that the Hong Kong team had defeated Ireland in a single match, the Hong Kong team defeated Rhodesia, South Africa and Scotland in a pairs match, or that Hong Kong had, amazingly, defeated Australia and Wales in the pairs match.⁵⁸ Finally, Hong Kong ranked seventh out of eight teams in the Empire Lawn Bowls single matches and ranked third in the pairs match. The *SCMP* commented that Hong Kong teams did not do very well in every match like cricket, swimming, etc.; as for lawn bowls, the team members upheld the best British traditions in Hong Kong.⁵⁹

The *SCMP* recorded how the Hong Kong colonial government officials liked lawn bowls and supported it. In other words, the *SCMP* became a virtual platform on

which the British elite could communicate during their leisure and working time. On the eve of World War II, Governor Sir Geoffrey Alexander Stafford Northcote was watching a lawn bowls match when he heard the news that the Second World War had broken out in Europe, which was a piece of bad news for him because he had to leave the match.⁶⁰ Before 1941, the governor's lawn bowls team played two afternoons a week; thus, the administrative officials had to be very efficient in handling the administrative affairs.⁶¹ The *SCMP* recorded that the governor and colonial secretary sometimes had dinners at the Hong Kong Hotel with bowlers and reviewed the British lawn bowls history with bowlers. The *SCMP* loyally conveyed the 'royal and ancient' lawn bowls history of several British monarchs, including Edward III and Charles I, to its readers in British colonial Hong Kong.⁶² Governor Northcote was a celebrity in the *SCMP*, which reported Northcote invited bowlers to play bowls at the governor's house.⁶³ He also played bowls with other bowlers during work time.⁶⁴

Lawn bowls was such an important ingredient of British life that they could not live well without it. They would even sacrifice their working time to play the game. While the *SCMP* reporting recorded the activities of bowlers who loved lawn bowls and shared a British identity in a Far East colony, it also portrayed a group of British who parasitized a Chinese city, whose fortunes were mainly created by Chinese merchants. Hong Kong Chinese could not share equal sport fields or sports reporting in a newspaper that targeted Chinese audience. That such exploitation existed showed the British hegemony and imperialism in Hong Kong.

The Boom in the *SCMP*'s Business

It was a big opportunity for the *SCMP* to participate in the development of lawn

bowls in Hong Kong. Even through the financially troubling early years, through 1941, The *SCMP* provided a boardroom for the HKLBA to hold occasional meetings.⁶⁵ Sometimes Wylie, though no longer president of the HKLBA, presided over the HKLBA conference in the *SCMP* boardroom.⁶⁶ The reports became a good opportunity to obtain the latest information for the *South China Morning Post* as well as its readership. The *SCMP* was the sponsor of lawn bowls in Hong Kong. Compared with other newspapers in Hong Kong that reported the sports news every day, the *SCMP* was unique because it reported the lawn bowls consistently, sensationally and in depth. Other newspapers, such as the *Hong Kong Daily Press* and the *China Mail*, sometimes promoted the status of the *SCMP* when they reported on the Lawn Bowls Association meetings held in the *SCMP*'s offices.⁶⁷ In addition, Hong Kong's English newspapers sometimes reported lawn bowls matches' charitable donations to the *SCMP* war fund.⁶⁸ It was a wise strategy to sponsor a game with little cost, even though the bowlers were rich enough to afford the cheap membership fee. After they paid for the game, they played lawn bowls and bought newspapers to read the reports of game results later. Those British who were busy working in their offices and could not attend the matches had to read the *SCMP* the following day to find out their friends' scores. As a marketing method, sports sponsorship greatly stimulated the circulation of the *SCMP*. There were only a few bowlers in the 1900s, but later there were hundreds of bowlers in a given club, and there might have been thousands of bowlers in Hong Kong who were sure to have heard of the name of the *SCMP* and read the lawn bowls reports. The British cultural background of lawn bowlers might remind them to find their British fellows in the clubs and associations. Thomas Petrie, Benjamin Wylie and Robert MacWhirter, as representatives of the *SCMP*, would bring more readers when they appeared in the

bowls. MacWhirter even published a small book through the *SCMP* to educate the lawn bowlers on how to play the game, including psychological strategy in bowling.⁶⁹

The interactions between the *SCMP* and lawn bowls games garnered very profitable returns for the *SCMP*. The circulation of the *SCMP* in 1903 was 300; in 1916, it was about 500 to 600. It was after 1911 that the *SCMP* had a better financial situation and the lawn bowls game in Hong Kong became popular through the paper's advocacy. As a partial result of the explosive popularity of lawn bowls, the circulation of the *SCMP* increased to 2,900 in the 1920s, and it once almost doubled to 5,500 in 1932.⁷⁰ Having the general manager, Benjamin Wylie, as the president of the Hong Kong Bowling Association in 1928 and 1930, as well as the president of the KBGC in 1928 and 1934, was no hindrance to circulation growth, either. With the publication of Robert MacWhirter's book about Hong Kong lawn bowls in 1931, plus the sensationalised reports about lawn bowls and the increasing number of readers as well as bowlers, the *SCMP*'s reputation increased in Hong Kong along with that of lawn bowls.

As previously mentioned, the *SCMP* editor Henry Ching believed that the *SCMP* was the best newspaper reporting on lawn bowls in Hong Kong. The readers usually had higher social positions and purchasing power in Hong Kong society.⁷¹ The high-quality readership and the significant circulation would seize the advertisers' hearts right away, which was one of the reasons why they preferred to spend money on the *SCMP*. No doubt, through sponsoring the lawn bowls, the *SCMP* became one of the most valuable media sources in Hong Kong. The *SCMP* Ltd.'s afternoon paper, *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, also reported lawn bowls news, which would have increased the *SCMP*'s reputation for lawn bowls reporting in Hong Kong. Thus, if readers

wanted to read lawn bowls news, the *SCMP* or *The Hong Kong Telegraph* would be their best choices.

All things considered, the *SCMP* helped the Hong Kong British community establish a closer connection with the British Empire via lawn bowls, Interport and imperial lawn bowls competition, and lawn bowls reporting. Lawn bowls, just like boundary stones, helped the British people who occupied Hong Kong playing fields and even one of the most aggressive Chinese members of the Legislative, Council Man Kam Lo, did not take it as a racial discrimination. In fact, it showed the vast social changes from Britain to Hong Kong. The British had universal suffrage in Britain but not in Hong Kong. Therefore, they had varied clubs to select the representatives in the councils to manage Hong Kong with the governor of Hong Kong. Lots of them led a poorer life in Britain but finally became bourgeoisie or professionals in Hong Kong and led a much better life. The British not only simply shipped their families and goods between Britain and Hong Kong, but also shipped the views and practices of dominators and imperialism. It is difficult to deny the control of British community in occupying the majority of playing fields, which also influenced the quantity and nature of sports reporting in the *SCMP*.

When the *SCMP* portrayed British identity in the lawn bowls reporting, it also announced the bowlers were agents of the British Empire. When British families attended the afternoon lawn bowls competition, the women observed a sporting show and established a social and cultural network between British families in Hong Kong. British families enjoyed good sunshine with delicious cookies, while the majority Chinese lower class struggled to feed these British families. As a result, the working class, or Chinese merchants, challenged these privileges in Hong Kong. As long as the *SCMP* passionately reported lawn bowls or crickets, it manifested that strong

British men were powerful enough to control Hong Kong as part of the British Empire.

In any case, the Chinese community did not have enough sporting grounds to exercise their bodies. To change the social inequality, Chinese chose, according to the scope of this study, three methods. First, the working class walked out on strikes against the British, though the Chinese merchants were on the side of the British. Second, the Chinese merchants collaborated with the British who did not share their everyday life and privilege with Chinese merchants, but Chinese merchants had to do business with the British merchants within a British imperial business network to show their loyalty to the British Empire and got higher social status. The third way was that the Chinese bourgeoisie struggled to share the British colonial power via the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, or used the *SCMP* to mould Chinese opinions and improve their audience freedom in specific situations.

To summarize, this chapter studied the origin of lawn bowls in Hong Kong and the interplay between media and the sport. I highlighted that the *SCMP* benefitted from its sponsorship of lawn bowls, and the management worked very hard to promote lawn bowls and lawn bowl reporting in Hong Kong. Lawn bowls was an important game to unite the British in Hong Kong, and reporting lawn bowls news was beneficial for the *SCMP*. The alliance between the media and lawn bowls was an innovation in Hong Kong. Particularly, the *SCMP* cultivated lawn bowls in Hong Kong and organized the league matches and tournaments. When the *SCMP* reported on lawn bowls events in Hong Kong, the newspaper company also benefitted from these activities.

4. MAKING “AN EMPIRE SHOP WINDOW”: THE BRITISH EMPIRE EXHIBITION REPORTING

In the previous three chapters, I illustrated reporting on China news and British sports in the *South China Morning Post*, (*SCMP*), to meet the various demands of its Chinese and British readers. Business reporting on China or the British Empire sometimes attracted both Chinese and British audiences. Although there was a factual segregation within the Hong Kong society; e.g., the Chinese community and British community resided in different districts, and Hong Kong belonged to a collaborative colonialist model, which meant the British had to cooperate with the local Chinese community to execute some policies and develop colonial business. John Carroll in his *Edge of Empires* clearly illustrated that the Chinese business elite had an indispensable role in colonial government.¹ In addition, the British had to reward these Chinese to gain their loyalty to the colony and the British Empire. Aside from Carroll's study, Elizabeth Sinn in her *Power and Charity: A Chinese Merchant Elite in Colonial Hong Kong* used a small case of the Tung Wah Hospital to exhibit a big picture of Sino-British segregation to the British and Chinese integration in hospital management and the colonial power.² This chapter argues that the *SCMP* positively and enthusiastically supported Hong Kong to participate in the British Empire Exhibition, something like the World's Fair, which took place near London at Wembley Stadium in 1924 and 1925. The *SCMP* not only added some content to attract Chinese and British readers, especially Chinese and British bourgeoisie readers, but also advocated that an integration of Hong Kong Chinese merchants into the British imperial business network through this Exhibition would advertise the Hong Kong colony and bring long-term benefit to this port. Since the *SCMP* lived on

advertising and subscriptions from bourgeoisie readers, especially the merchant readers, participating in the Exhibition and all the resulting advertising revenue would greatly benefit the company.

Chinese merchant leaders also sometimes used the *SCMP* to mould Chinese merchants' opinions to achieve their goals. In the 1920s, the *SCMP* relied on shipping, trade and consumption advertisements. The Empire Exhibition was an important opportunity to promote international trade in Hong Kong. If the Exhibition improved Hong Kong's position in the imperial business network, the *SCMP* would also significantly benefit from increasing shipping and trade advertisements. Therefore, the *SCMP* had sufficient reason to advocate to its audiences, especially the Chinese merchant audience, to support the British Empire Exhibition. In addition, the potential British Empire business travellers to Hong Kong were also helpful to the *SCMP*'s circulation as an important source of clients.³

Simon Potter believed that sometimes the British imperial identity equalled the colony or dominion's merchant commercial interest.⁴ In the case of the Exhibition, the *SCMP* also showed a similar commercial position as well as an imperial identity in its reporting, which integrated Chinese and British participants' loyalty to the Empire, the desire to attain a higher position from establishing a closer relationship with the Empire and the expectations of benefiting from business activity. The *SCMP* consistently reported in a manner that encouraged Hong Kong merchants' participation in the Exhibition and believed that being a part of the British Empire's commercial network would eventually benefit Hong Kong. Thus, the *SCMP* expressed its suggestion to the Empire and its readers that Hong Kong representatives should participate in the Wembley Exhibition "permanently" if it opened every year.⁵ In brief, the colonial paper owned by an American, British and

Chinese was eager to utilize this opportunity to make money.

Robert Bickers posits that, as the nominal subject of the exhibit, Hong Kong brought its Chinese image to Wembley, rather than something closer to the reality of Hong Kong itself.⁶ John Carroll noted that by doing so, Chinese merchants could distinguish themselves at home and within the British Empire.⁷ Both Bickers and Carroll noticed the influence or feedback of the Wembley Exhibition to the Chinese from two different perspectives. I will expand Bicker's observation and point out that there was also a team of British expatriates in the Hong Kong section that did not sell products but was part of the Hong Kong section. They were also representatives from Hong Kong who went to support the British Empire Exhibition; for example, the former *SCMP* editor Thomas Petrie and *SCMP* board chair John Scott Harston both went to Wembley and sat in the Chinese restaurant of the Hong Kong section.⁸ Thus, it was not a pure Chinese Wembley exhibition in the Hong Kong section. Instead, the *SCMP* portrayed a Chinese and British cooperative project in a British Empire advertising platform. Chinese were exhibitors, merchants, lower staff and even cooks, and the British were engineers, journalists and officials. Due to reasons outlined later, the merchants lost a great deal of money. Since the first venture was not lucrative, they needed to decide collectively whether to return in 1925. Not all the participants wanted to disclose their inclination about returning to the 1925 Exhibition. Some Chinese merchants even tried to withdraw from the Exhibition.⁹ Obviously, loss at Wembley was not a good factor for the Chinese merchants to distinguish themselves well in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the *SCMP* chose to positively portray those merchants who were pro-Wembley; they reported at great length on those who made profits at the Exhibition or who cooperated with the commercial network. Similarly, Anne Clendinning argued that the Wembley

Exhibition provided Canada with a chance to assert its national identity as a self-governing “white” dominion and let visitors deal directly with Canadian businesspersons, increasing export and import.¹⁰ I could not find supporting evidence for a national identity in the reports of the event but it was clear that the *SCMP* did report on the British Empire. Although we could not know how every exhibitor thought about their identity, the British imperial identity was what the *SCMP* reports of Wembley used to influence the society and to make a profit.

The British Empire Exhibition Reporting in 1924

Fifty-six colonies and dominions came to Wembley in 1924, and the British Empire Exhibition that year was one of the biggest ever held. It was first proposed as an event in 1913; however, World War I, poor preparation work, and bad weather delayed the event until 1924. The aim of the Exhibition was to highlight the importance of the British Empire to the world, whether on the side of economy, politics, or its powerful and positive image; an empire on which the sun never set. In the first days of 1924, the Hong Kong governor appointed Mr Edward Richard Halifax to be the Commissioner and Mr Chow Shou Son and Sir Robert Ho Tung to be Honourable Associate Commissioners of the Hong Kong Section of the British Empire Exhibition 1924.¹¹ Additionally, there were three Chinese individuals (Hon. Sir Chow Shou Son, Sir Robert Ho Tung, and Mr R. H. Kotewall) on the Hong Kong committee; de facto, a joint committee of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce also had an independent committee of its own, under the leadership of Mr Ip Lan Tsun, which led other Chinese businesspersons to Wembley in 1924.¹² There were more than one hundred Chinese workers in the Hong Kong sections. The

British Hong Kong government financed 50 percent of the cost of the exhibition; the other costs were met by exhibitors or from donations.¹³ With the financing solution, Hong Kong “went to” Britain.

When the *SCMP* reported on the Wembley Exhibition, it portrayed the British Empire Exhibition as a great cooperative effort in which governments and Hong Kong merchants would partake in a national or imperial project. For instance, the *SCMP* reported that the purpose of the British Empire Exhibition 1924 was:

To find, in the development and utilization of the raw materials of the Empire, new sources of Imperial wealth; To foster inter-Imperial trade and open fresh world markets for Dominion and home products; To make the different races of the British Empire better known to each other; and to demonstrate to the people of Britain the almost illimitable possibilities of the Dominions, Colonies and Dependencies overseas.¹⁴

The *SCMP* used Reuters, *The Times* and other channels to get information from the Exhibition and sometimes just simply repeated verbatim Reuters or *The Times* reporting in its pages. Simon Potter’s *News and the British World* and Chandrika Kaul’s *Reporting the Raj* argued that the British news agency and media united the British dominions and Colonies into a single British press system and formed a British imperial identity in those colonies. On one hand, I think these arguments make sense when the *SCMP* sympathized with the British press including Reuters and *The Times* reporting. On the other hand, the *SCMP* was proud of being part of the British Empire. Moreover, it announced its standing point of supporting the Empire and the will of co-prosperity within the Empire.

The *SCMP* did not avoid reprinting praiseworthy imperial information from the Reuters telegrams or *The Times* and *Manchester Guardian* editorials, demonstrating admiration for the Royal family and highlighting the importance of the exhibition itself. Before the King came to Wembley, the *SCMP* reported there was an audience

of 150,000 in the Wembley Stadium to listen to his speech. Unfortunately, using the Reuters exaggerated figures sometimes meant making international mistakes for the British Empire papers, but it was good for imperial propaganda.¹⁵ There were many fewer than 150,000 in the audience at that time. The *SCMP* used Reuters to create an image of representatives of the dominions and colonies being honourably and proximately arranged to sit at the corner of the Royal Dais largely created an imagined British Empire.¹⁶ Not only did the atmosphere show the grandness of the ceremony, it also underscored the power and vastness of the British Empire.

The *SCMP* published some of the other dominion's comments on the Exhibition, especially the words of the Australian premier Mr Bruce. In a cable to the Australian High Commissioner in London, he concluded that "in the spirit that animated and sustained our fathers, [we should] pledge ourselves by loyalty to the Empire's products to build up on a lasting foundation of prosperity for every individual citizen, a greater and nobler Empire than we have yet known."¹⁷ Mr Bruce's words showed his British imperial identity was a combination of loyalty and materialism, and materialism within the British Empire was a final goal of Australia. The *SCMP* agreed with Mr Bruce's theory and maintained that Hong Kong had been fittingly represented at the British Empire Exhibition, though not every Hong Kong citizen could "pop home" just like children of the British Empire, and the British Empire Exhibition was honoured by the *SCMP* as the "eighth wonder of the world". The *SCMP* also suggested that the Hong Kong display would undoubtedly be worthy of the "tout ensemble", and that this Colony would receive its due reward of publicity and profit.¹⁸ It was hoped that this exhibition would endow the British Empire with increasingly economic connections and make it increasingly powerful via coordination and cooperation.

Shaping the Elite Status Image of Chinese Merchant Leaders

The members of the Hong Kong Section were listed in the newspaper because they were the most important representatives of the Hong Kong section, and the *SCMP* tried to interview them whenever possible. The *SCMP* used exaggerated rhetoric to express the popularity of the Hong Kong section, which was “apparently” visited by tens of thousands of visitors. The *SCMP* told its readers that Hong Kong “notables” Mr Chow Shou Son and Mr Sir Robert Ho Tung had been arranged to sit “adjacent to the Royal dais” while “many other Hongkongites” were arranged to sit in the Stadium. In addition, the *SCMP* proudly announced, “Hongkong’s contribution to the British Empire Exhibition is one of which the Colony may be proud” and “Hongkong is taking its share also in the many brilliant functions”.¹⁹ In the *SCMP*’s reporting, Mr Chow Shou Son and Mr Sir Robert Ho Tung “represented Hong Kong at Princess Mary’s reception”. In reporting this event, Chow was brought to the position of elite Chinese person in Hong Kong.

Chan Lau Kit-Ching believed that leaders of the Chinese merchants gained their elite status in British colonial Hong Kong through three channels: first, “directorship of Tung Wah Hospital (Donghua Yiyuan) and the Po Leung Kuk (Baoliangju), membership of the District Watch Committee (Tuanfangju), membership of the District Watch Committee (Tuanfangju) which ‘ranked at the top of the hierarchy of Chinese societies in terms of its political status, influence and prominence,’ and appointment as unofficial Justice of the Peace and unofficial member of either the Legislative Council or Executive Council or both”; second, “the merchants had close ties with the leading local professionals, lawyers, doctors, accountants, and others”; third, “the merchants effectively disseminated their views and popularized their attitudes through the major local Chinese newspapers, prominent among which in the

1920s and 1930s were the *Huazi ribao*, *Xunhuan ribao*, *Huaqiao ribao* and *Gongshang ribao*”.²⁰ While doubting the assertion of the Chinese press as a tool of the leaders of Chinese merchants to influence the complete Chinese community in Hong Kong and mainland China, without sophisticated research on the classification problem of the Chinese readership, I could not simply believe the Chinese press could influence the elite status of the leaders of Chinese merchants in the eyes of the British, few of whom read Chinese newspapers. In other words, the Chinese working class could read Chinese newspapers, but they did not respect the leaders of Chinese merchants very well during the 1925 Canton and Hong Kong Strike.

Furthermore, the Chinese newspapers in 1920s and 1930s did not report some important events in which Chinese merchant leaders were involved, such as the British Empire Exhibition. Instead, reporting on the British Empire Exhibition was one of the most important reporting works of the *SCMP* in 1924. While the *SCMP* self-claimed the contribution of Hong Kong to the British Empire Exhibition, it did not, and in fact, it could not, neglect the importance of Chinese merchants in the British Empire Exhibition. In other words, Hong Kong relied on Chinese merchants in the Exhibition in the short-term project and in the long term, Chinese merchants would steer the trade and business in Hong Kong. Thus, it was no wonder that the prosperity of the Chinese community won their leaders like Chow Shou Son and Ho Tung the opportunities to meet King George and Princess Mary and enjoyed an honourable position in the Empire Exhibition. Most importantly, the *SCMP* reporting on these events portrayed the image of Chinese merchant leaders being decently received by the British Royal family, which was an unmatched honour for both British and Chinese bourgeoisie readers in Hong Kong. The respected status of Chow Shou Son and Ho Tung was also formed while they could influence other Chinese

and even British.

The *SCMP* was inclined to report how the Chinese elites like Chow were involved in British imperial activities and expected people like Chow to support and praise the British Empire and its exhibition. In addition, as a colony full of Chinese residents, the *SCMP* also exhibited the influence of Chinese elites like Chow to unite Chinese under a British administration, which met the best interests of the British Empire in Hong Kong. For example, during the Wembley Exhibition, Chow visited and talked with the Chinese Students' Union in Britain, and spoke on the benefits of Western education, urging the students to persevere and become men able to construct their country.²¹ Whether Chow Shou Son wanted to use the *SCMP* to establish his elite status in Hong Kong is unknown, but the *SCMP* did show Chow's power in influencing and even moulding the Chinese young students' ideals and opinions on receiving a British education, who might work with the British Empire in the future. In fact, the *SCMP* had already recognized the elite status of Chow Shou Son and Ho Tung and even wanted them to influence other Chinese merchants when necessary.

Mr Sir Robert Ho Tung was presented to the *SCMP* readers as an image of a loyal and distinguished Chinese business leader through the reporting and interviews in the *SCMP*. In fact, Ho Tung showed solid support and loyalty to the British Empire and the Hong Kong government and held the same stance on the Exhibition as the *SCMP*. Before Ho Tung went to the Exhibition, the Hong Kong government required him to introduce the silkworm business to the British in London.²² Ho Tung fulfilled the wish of the Hong Kong government and announced to the world that "the Hongkong section at Wembley, particularly the silkworm exhibit, had been a pronounced success and was a popular feature of the Exhibition".²³ Ho Tung had been given such an admirable opportunity to announce the success of the silkworm exhibition to the

world, which would favourably impress the Hong Kong governor because of the success of his entrusted mission.

The *SCMP*'s exhibition reporting solidified Ho Tung's reputation as a Chinese merchant leader and supporter of the exhibition. This was particularly significant in reporting about a Chinese General Chamber of Commerce meeting at which the Hong Kong government representative Robert Cotewall announced that Sir Robert Ho Tung's contribution of HK\$15,000 to the Exhibition insurance fund raised to guarantee that no merchant would incur losses if they participated in the Exhibition. Cotewall also said that Ho Tung at the very beginning desired to contribute more than HK\$25,000. Nevertheless, he had been prevented in doing so because Cotewall thought that more Chinese merchants would contribute if given more time. In fact, Chinese merchants each contributed around HK\$200 or HK\$500 to the fund. Ho Tung was commemorated by the government at a special meeting for his generous contribution to the Exhibition Insurance Fund. The *SCMP* recorded Kotewall's comment that "this is another act of public-spiritedness and generosity of his which I am sure the community will not easily forget".²⁴ While the Hong Kong government endowed Ho Tung's reputation and trust, the *SCMP* audiences also saw Ho Tung as a prestigious merchant who helped them overcome business difficulties during the international exhibition. That is to say, Ho Tung, as a Chinese spokesperson and representative, consolidated his social position and influence through the *SCMP*'s reporting about him.

Furthermore, the *SCMP* also portrayed Sir Robert Ho Tung as a very important person in British colonial Hong Kong because "he has been approached unofficially to continue the Hongkong section to 1925". In particular, the *SCMP* showed that Ho Tung held such an important position in Hong Kong because he would "discuss the

question with the Hong Kong government” and decide whether Hong Kong would participate in the Wembley Exhibition in 1925.²⁵

Ho Tung’s elite status had been portrayed and shaped in the *SCMP*, not only because the *SCMP* reported his indispensable position in Hong Kong. Ho Tung had also been reported to have established relationships with distinguished political and commercial people in London, Lisbon, and Genoa, including the Governor of Portuguese Macau in London.²⁶ Furthermore, readers of the *SCMP* would have been impressed by Ho Tung’s power and influence in China because it was reported that “Sir Robert Ho Tung hopes that if it is still necessary he will resume his work in assisting the restoration of peace and establishment of unification in China”, which would not be “an anti-foreign movement”.²⁷ These kinds of relations were good for furthering business development, and especially good for his escape to Portuguese Macau during World War II. Having multiple identities sometimes brought more advantages, including business opportunities, higher political positions and so on. As a British subject, he had business partners and opportunities in Europe and the British Empire; as a Chinese merchant leader, he had investments in mainland China and government friends. Ho Tung did not see his multiple relationships with the British Empire, Western nations and China as a conflict of interest because he touted that the relationship between Western nations and China was peaceful and he would be an important person in either China or the British Empire. Whether Ho Tung’s expression was correct or not did not matter; what really mattered was he could mould the opinions of the *SCMP* readers, especially the Chinese merchant readers. For example, now that the most notable Chinese merchant in Hong Kong decided to go to Wembley again in 1925 because 1924 was a great success, the other Chinese merchants might want to follow Ho Tung to continue the Wembley Exhibition in

1925.

The privileged status of Ho Tung and Chow Shou Son not only brought them respect from the merchants, but also put them into the top of the list of names that the Hong Kong government could consult with, rely on and communicate with when the government dealt with Chinese community affairs; for example, whether Hong Kong should attend the Wembley Exhibition in 1925. The special position of these Chinese elites also help themselves obtain trust, reputation and business opportunities from other Chinese merchants.

Mercantile Reporting on the Exhibition

Hong Kong was too small of a place in the British Empire and it was much less valuable compared to Australia, India and Canada in the British Empire Exhibition. Nevertheless, the *SCMP* had already discovered the advantage of Hong Kong as a trade and shipping centre for the British Empire, China and other parts of the world. The Empire Exhibition was not only a chance to show the loyalty of Chinese merchants to the British Empire; most importantly, it was a chance to allow other dominions and colonies to learn about Hong Kong and bring more and more business opportunities to better the future of Hong Kong. Thus, the *SCMP* managed a passionate mercantile reporting to depict Hong Kong's bright future to its audiences.

The *SCMP* frequently used words like "little" and "miniature" to describe the Empire in Exhibition reporting. This was done in order to imply the vastness of the Empire: Canada, Australia, India, Hong Kong and scores of other dominions and colonies, all were now neighbours in Wembley, visitable, at least in a small sense, in a day. The *SCMP* readers could realize they were not alone, but belonged to the British Empire "family".

The *SCMP* highlighted the large number of visitors in its editorials: “The eighty thousand (the Reuters’ 150,000 was an overestimated figure) people who attended the opening of the stadium overflowed into the dominions and colonial pavilions, which often could not be passed though, especially the smaller buildings of the African colonies and dependencies, Palestine and Hong Kong.”²⁸ The relative size of Hong Kong in comparison to the other nations in the exhibition at Wembley gave some *SCMP* readers and Chinese businesspersons the impression that Hong Kong belonged to an unexpectedly large empire, making Hong Kong readers of the *SCMP* feel proud of the big size of their “big family” or “home”. The *SCMP* competed with other media outlets such as radio, but the newspaper’s staff still recorded the King’s voice in their newspaper from the radio as the British Empire Exhibition opening ceremony began.²⁹ The King’s speech was recorded and was sent to radio broadcasters around the world. This was an innovative method of royal communication, which showed how modern the British Empire Exhibition was, and how powerful and advanced the British Empire could be.

The *SCMP* was very proud of Hong Kong’s position in the British Empire. It admitted that many of the larger pavilions, such as those from Canada and Australia, were more popular in 1924, and appeared again at the Exhibition in 1925. In other words, they had more products and industrial progress than Hong Kong. For example, they had longer railways and rich natural resources, including woods, grain, and various mineral deposits. Australia provided mutton, cotton, and bread for the Empire. While highlighting the importance of other dominions and colonies, the exhibition as a whole succeeded in lowering the perceived position of power of Hong Kong both in the British Empire and in the British Empire Exhibition. The *SCMP* did not conceal that Hong Kong Chinese entrepreneurs knew they had fewer favourable

economic conditions in the British Empire Exhibition. However, the *SCMP* liked to show Hong Kong as an international trade and shipping centre in the British Empire and highlighted the important influence of participating in the Empire Exhibition in long-term return.

The newspaper, however, spun the disappointing event into a success. For example, the *SCMP* quoted information from C H P Hay, Secretary of the London Committee of the Hong Kong section at the British Empire Exhibition, who told the local committee that the Hong Kong section was decidedly popular.³⁰ The *SCMP* compared the Hong Kong section with other parts of the empire and regarded Hong Kong as attractive due to the colourful appearance of its architecture.³¹ Although the Hong Kong section did not have as many natural resources to display, nevertheless, the *SCMP* portrayed an overseas Chinese merchant network in the British Empire, and the Chinese merchants made up for this lack through hospitality, inviting the distinguished Chinese to dinner at the Hong Kong Chinese restaurant within the Hong Kong section.³² They improved the business connections among each other and these activities were Chinese in their traditional style and good for future business deals, which was also an expected result of the Exhibition.

The *SCMP*'s main reports on the Exhibition were focused on economy. However, the paper did offer a unique opportunity to display some of the British Empire's military prowess in front of the *SCMP* readers. For example, the navy, army, and the air force had been reported to organize "impressive displays, and many important aspects of Empire communication, Empire trade, Empire settlement and imperial economic development". The air force's exhibition of models, for example, was later supplemented by exhibits of actual airplanes and aircraft in an aerodrome. In particular, there was a British Empire war medals exhibition.³³ The *SCMP* Chinese

readers might have complex feelings in front of these exhibits: considerable shame, and embarrassment or subjection for Hong Kong as a ceded colony because they were nationals defeated by the British Empire. The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, therefore, was not simply a trade and economic exhibition; it was also a proclamation of power to the *SCMP* Chinese and British readers and showed that the British Empire still had important and powerful international military influence.

During reporting the 1924 Wembley Exhibition, the *SCMP* kept close pace with the British press and echoed its loyalty and pride to be part of the British Empire. For example, at the end of the British Empire, the *SCMP* vindicated its position toward the Exhibition. The most detailed reporting on the Wembley Exhibition in the Empire was not the *SCMP*; that would have been a British newspaper such as *The Times*. Although *The Times* was a potential newspaper competitor in Hong Kong, the *SCMP* recommended its readers read *The Times*' special Exhibition numbers. The *SCMP* obviously sympathized with what *The Times* said and believed its record about the Exhibition would be "worth preserving for historic reference" and "will be read in Hongkong with the greatest interest". The *SCMP* summarized its reason for such a recommendation: it was a "worthwhile" and "vast imperial enterprise".³⁴ The *SCMP* believed this was a "beginning of a new epoch in the history of Empire", just as the Chairman of the Exhibition Board, Lord Stevenson, said.³⁵ In addition, the *SCMP* seemed to prepare for a theory to comfort its readers and the disappointed Chinese merchants when they finally found out that the Exhibition was a financial failure. The *SCMP*'s theory was that even if the Exhibition "had done nothing else", it improved the understanding about the united Empire in the imperial people and at least created an "Empire shop window".³⁶ The *SCMP* believed this could be considered an "advertisement", which cost money and would affect Hong Kong in

the future.³⁷

The Reporting on the Exhibition of 1925

In July 1924, there were discussions about extending the British Empire Exhibition to the next year, due to the bad weather and the lack of attendance; the Prince of Wales supported this movement.³⁸ The president of the Exhibition administration, Lord Stevenson, agreed.³⁹ Replying to questions in the House of Commons, Colonial Secretary Mr. Thomas said that it was too early to expect any definite indications of an increase in exports in the Crown Colonies pursuant to participation in the Empire Exhibition.⁴⁰ At the same time, Chinese businesspeople were not making money at Wembley and discussing how to cover the loss.⁴¹ Nevertheless, thirty-nine exhibitors at Wembley had been rewarded with the Exhibition Certificates of Honour (medals).⁴²

At the end of the British Empire Exhibition in 1924, some of the dominions withdrew from another season in 1925, due largely to the cost. Hong Kong also had issues with the cost, but the *SCMP* suggested that there were both advantages and disadvantages to continuation. In terms of advantages, it could promote the imperial atmosphere, meet the needs of visitors and advertise the products of Hong Kong while prolonging Hong Kong's publicity. The exhibitors could sell products at their counters. The problem was that the Hong Kong section's support came mainly from the government.⁴³ The *SCMP* advocated joining the 1925 British Empire Exhibition to support the British Empire, not only to portray an imperial identity within the colony, but also to maintain further and greater interests for Hong Kong across the empire.

The *SCMP* paid much attention to the Chinese merchants' attitudes toward the

British Empire Exhibition and wanted to mould a united response on the approval of attending a Wembley Exhibition in 1925. According to *SCMP* previous editorials about the Exhibition, it expected Chinese merchants to participate in the Empire Exhibition, which had an “advertisement” function.⁴⁴ Therefore, the *SCMP* sent a reporter to “sound the opinion of different merchants yesterday and obtained some interesting details bearing on the Exhibition”. The reporter first interviewed the commissioner of the Hong Kong section, Chow Shou Son. However, Chow expressed his hesitation to the *SCMP*.⁴⁵ Chow paid more attention to the feelings of the Chinese merchants. He told the *SCMP* “it was a very difficult question to answer until the return of the exhibitors. The attitude of the merchants might be swayed by the reports of their representatives and also the extent of the help from the Government next year”.⁴⁶ Obviously, Chow cared about the realistic benefit of Chinese merchants other than the invisible and unpredictable business interests described by the *SCMP*. Chow’s expression factually represented the other Chinese merchants’ concerns. In further interviews with more Chinese merchants, other Chinese merchants expressed similar attitudes to the *SCMP* and disclosed another condition for them to go to Wembley again in 1925: there needed to be some contracts signed before the decision deadline of 1925 Exhibition.⁴⁷ The *SCMP* was very passionate about this important British imperial event in 1924, and reported some exciting news; for example, some Chinese merchants found out the financial results were up to expectation and “have sent instructions to their men to arrange for an extension of their stay in London”.⁴⁸

Participating in a long-term international event not only consumed time, labour force and fortune; it was detrimental to the merchant’s original business if they wasted time in the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1925. Chow showed his

cautious and responsible image in the *SCMP*. As a leader of the Chinese merchants in Hong Kong, Chow did what he should and represented the opinions of Chinese merchants, which was a “wait and see tone”.

The *SCMP* did not achieve its goal to get a positive response from Chow and other Chinese merchants, so it sent the reporter to do an exclusive interview with Robert Ho Tung and hoped he would express his optimistic and supportive attitude toward the Exhibition of 1925. As a long-term reader of the *SCMP*, Ho gave his explicit reply to the *SCMP* journalist, “My opinion is that, should resumption of the Wembley Exhibition in 1925, as has already been done in the case of South Africa, then Hong Kong should not stand out”. In other words, Ho recommended that Hong Kong merchants should not boycott the Exhibition, as South Africa had done. Ho said he had several “good reasons” for his consideration but avoided the fiasco of the Chinese merchants in the 1924 Exhibition.⁴⁹ In addition, Ho Tung informed other Chinese merchants that 1925 might be a good year for the exhibitors because there would still be visitors to the Hong Kong section.⁵⁰ Especially, other Chinese merchants who did not go to Wembley in 1924 might want to go to the Exhibition in 1925.⁵¹ Most importantly, Ho Tung spoke very encouraging words that the *SCMP* published:

The main consideration for the Hongkong Government would be one of expenditure. Personally, from a cursory estimate, I should say that one quarter or one third of what was spent by Government this year should be sufficient to cover the expenses for next year, in view of the fact that the buildings are still intact, these requiring only slight renovation or alteration. Of course, a great deal of reorganization work on the whole would have to be undertaken and I am inclined to think that the other commissioners will agree with me in this respect.⁵²

In fact, neither the Hong Kong government nor Chow Shou Son held a similar opinion to that of Ho Tung. However, the *SCMP* provided Ho Tung an opportunity to

be the opinion leader to influence and even mould the opinions of other Chinese merchants in Hong Kong. Such a privileged status was rarely enjoyed by general Chinese merchants in Hong Kong. As for why Ho Tung wanted to use the *SCMP* to influence the other Chinese merchants, probably he wanted to maintain a good relationship with the Hong Kong governor and show his loyalty to the Royal family in London.

For the 1924 Empire Exhibition reporting, the *SCMP* had very frequent coverage, often daily. The *SCMP* did not worry about the losses of the Chinese merchants; what the *SCMP* cared about was the international benefit from the British Empire; for example, it echoed the *Manchester Guardian*'s report on Hong Kong:

The official of the Hong Kong pavilion divides the success of their pavilion at Wembley into two sections. They feel that, first of all, representation at Wembley has brought them tremendous publicity and that, secondly, it has had a certain direct influence on the trade of the port.⁵³

Furthermore, the *SCMP* suggested the Hong Kong exhibitors should reform and change their products list and should not sell too expensive antiques and ancient paintings in the Exhibition. In addition, the *SCMP* continued its view that the Chinese merchants should not expect to make immediate money from the Exhibition and should take the Hong Kong section Exhibition as a successful and good “advertisement.”⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the Chinese exhibitors had a serious difference about going to the 1925 Wembley Exhibition. For example, Chinese merchant Ho Kwong said that the object of “introducing to foreigners goods dealt with in Hong Kong had been achieved”, thus, “there was no need to do so again”. Obviously, Ho did not understand the advantage of enhancing business development in the British imperial business network.⁵⁵ Another merchant, T. N. Chau, felt that “if most of the other

Colonies are represented next year, except Hong Kong, it will arouse unpleasant curiosity”. Thus, Chau had taken himself as a British colony subject and would not disgrace Hong Kong in the Empire. Furthermore, he wanted to place himself as a member of the British imperial business network.⁵⁶ Other exhibitors, including Tsu Woon-man and Wo Siu-kui, wanted to go to Wembley again if the Hong Kong government would help the exhibitors to the same extent as 1924 season.⁵⁷ However, the Chinese official in the Hong Kong government, Robert Kotewall, believed that “the government would not feel disposed to give the support it had already given to the exhibitors in view of the report that a good many firms had suffered losses.”⁵⁸ Kotewall considered financial results as the most important reason for a return to Wembley. The exhibitor Chu Yeung-so believed that the Exhibition was not very disappointing, because the Empire Exhibition provided no gainsaying trade opportunities to Hong Kong.⁵⁹

The *SCMP* tried to participate in the Exhibition discussion actively, and criticized the shortsighted Chinese merchants by saying that “it is a pity that the local exhibitors have allowed the immediate profits to overshadow their minds.”⁶⁰ In addition, the *SCMP* showed its strong British imperial sentiments:

In justice, however, it must concede that they cannot be expected to appreciate the value of advertisement, much less to appreciate the honour and privilege of a part in an all-Empire show... Were we to canvass our readers, we feel sure the verdict would be that Hong Kong must represent at whatever reasonable cost. It remains for the Government to devise a way that will be least expensive yet worthily represent the colony and at the same time preserve the intimate sympathy between Hong Kong here and Hong Kong there.⁶¹

After the discussion and editorials in the *SCMP*, the Hong Kong government decided to participate in the 1925 British Empire Exhibition, though there was less immediate reason than ever for the colony to be represented.⁶² The British Empire

Exhibition 1925 secured British Empire government backing and its blessing, and when other colonies and dominions dropped out, it was an opportunity for Hong Kong to show its loyalty and support to the British Empire. The Hong Kong Chinese merchants, including Chow Shou Son and Robert Ho Tung, participated in the new season at Wembley largely to maintain their British imperial identity and support the British Empire. Chinese “face saving” contributed to this. The size and scope of the Exhibition meant that despite the Hong Kong section having few contracts and deals, maintenance of the Hong Kong section at the event was continued in order to maintain prestige.

Before the British Empire Exhibition, both the Hong Kong government and Chinese business elites knew that they would not see immediate business prosperity results from the Exhibition. After the 1924 season of the British Empire Exhibition, and despite its previous financial losses, the Hong Kong government and Chinese business elites decided to participate again in the 1925 season. The *SCMP*’s support for the British Empire Exhibition did not change much throughout the year, though it admitted the results were not encouraging. The *SCMP* supported the Exhibition because it aimed for a potential long-term benefit from Hong Kong as an international shipping and trade centre in the British Empire and the Far East.

In encouraging participation in the British Empire Exhibition in 1924-25, the mercantile motive of the *SCMP* combined with the leadership of Chinese merchants to provide Chinese merchants a platform to discuss and share their opinions. Most importantly, while Chinese newspapers were indifferent to the business opportunity provided by the Exhibition for the development of Hong Kong and Chinese merchants, the *SCMP* shouldered this responsibility and gave Chinese business leaders chances to mould the opinions of their fellow Chinese merchants in its paper.

As bellwethers of bourgeoisie readers, Chinese leaders used the *SCMP* to play an important role in British colonial consensus building.

5. THE ANTI-JAPANESE WAR REPORTING

During the period of the 1930s, the *SCMP* served the British and Chinese bourgeoisie audiences and thus enjoyed the status of being one of the most influential newspapers in Hong Kong. The newspaper reported or supported the Chinese in the Anti-Japanese War unambiguously between 1934 and 1941 and in doing so, its circulation and income increased. The *SCMP* management worried that reporting on Sino-Japanese conflicts would be offensive to British readers, some of whom did not like the Chinese to attack Japanese residents in Hong Kong. More importantly, they were concerned that Japanese advertisers might abandon the *SCMP* and advertise in other newspapers. However, if the *SCMP* did not report the Anti-Japanese War sentiment or how China bravely battled Japan, Chinese readers might abandon the *SCMP*, which would be a disaster for the *SCMP* too. Although Chinese and British readers had different interests in Hong Kong, which were reflected in the *SCMP*, nevertheless, the management finally realized they had to publish Anti-Japanese War reports if they wanted to make long-term profits. The *SCMP* Ltd formed almost a monopoly in the Hong Kong English press. Therefore, Japanese advertisers had to place their advertisements in the *SCMP* if they wanted good results. Even if the Chinese readers boycotted the Japanese advertisements, there were still British and other foreign readers. The *SCMP* still had a good advertising value.

Japanese advertisers especially had no better options after the other morning paper, the *Hong Kong Daily Press*, became the fortune of the Chinese Nationalist Government.¹ This acquisition would make the *Hong Kong Daily Press* a “pro-British and pro-Chinese” newspaper; viz., a newspaper working with the Hong Kong government and the Chinese Nationalist Government.² In addition, China Nationalist

Government General Wu Teh Cheng and Madame Sun Yatsen made former United Press journalist Israel Epstein an editor of the *Hong Kong Daily Press*.³ As Madame Sun Yatsen's friend and partner in the Chinese Defence League, Israel Epstein later became the assistant editor at the *SCMP* because of the unpopularity of the *Hong Kong Daily Press*.⁴ In other words, the *SCMP* was more popular in Hong Kong.

From 1931 to 1941, the population in Hong Kong doubled because of war in China. The majority of the immigrants were civilian refugees who had difficulties making a living in Hong Kong.⁵ The minority of these immigrants or refugees were businesspeople and celebrities.⁶ Those businesspeople and celebrities were similar to the existing Chinese readers who were bourgeoisie, or the "better class", as the *SCMP* called them. The new Chinese audiences could help the *SCMP* slightly offset the decreased circulation in China's cities lost to the Japanese army.⁷ Meanwhile, the thousands of British and other European refugees could bring more potential audiences and advertisers to the *SCMP*.⁸ As a result, the "circulations generally have shown a steady increase".⁹ However, the newspapers were mainly subscribed to by companies, and "street sales" were "negligible and the figure fell last Sunday to less than HK\$600 (\$48USD).¹⁰ As previously mentioned, readers of the *SCMP* usually owned businesses and permanent residences in Hong Kong, and were considered the upper class.

There is some conflicted research on Hong Kong newspapers in the 1930s. Li Gucheng thought there were two periods for Chinese newspapers before the fall of Hong Kong in 1941. The first period was from the 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident to the fall of Guangzhou. In this period, newspapers in Hong Kong were conservative, non-political or with amorous content because they were supervised and suppressed by the Hong Kong government. To a certain extent, the newspapers

were influenced by pornographic tabloids from the early period of the nationalists' Republic of China. Therefore, before the fall of Guangzhou in 1938, Hong Kong was considered by mainland Chinese intellectuals as a cultural desert. After the fall of Guangzhou, many anti-Japanese newspapers crowded into Hong Kong. Hong Kong became the base of the Anti-Japanese War.¹¹ Huo Qichang believed anti-Japanese reporting was the main theme of the majority of Chinese newspapers in Hong Kong in 1930s, which also promoted the development of Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong.¹² It is true some Chinese newspapers run by the China Nationalist Government and the Communist Party of China were of an anti-Japanese style. Zhong Yunqing discussed that the anti-Japanese characteristics of the literature and art supplement (Hong Kong edition) of *Ta Kung Pao*, a Chinese communist member, Yang Gang, was responsible for this leftist supplement. In particular, it introduced Yan'an in literary works, Chinese communist guerrilla and Nationalist Party governing areas and the thoughts and lives of intellectuals. It also disclosed the ugly image of the Japanese invasion and occupation in the Hong Kong edition. Hong Kong Chinese censorship officials sometimes were not alerted about the writings in the newspaper; sometimes they declined to publish a Chinese patriotic poem.¹³

However, Wang Xiaolan's comprehensive research on the anti-Japanese reporting strategy of the China Nationalist Government pointed out the anti-Japanese propaganda in Hong Kong was not satisfying. There were still significant media in Hong Kong supporting Japan until May 1941. In particular, anti-Japanese media of the China Nationalist Government was still censored. As a result, the China Nationalist Government sent a memorandum to the British Embassy in China about this matter. After this incident, the Hong Kong government expressed it would change its present policy.¹⁴ In other words, the China Nationalist Government did not

have an ideal public sphere in Hong Kong.

Things were much worse in Britain. Two scholars did some context analysis about reporting on the Sino-Japanese conflicts in the 1930s. Zhang Wei noticed that *The Times* provided one piece of news on average daily when the September 18 Incident of 1931 and the July 7 Incident of 1937 happened. When reporting the first incident, *The Times* was not friendly to China and Chinese people, which obviously meant *The Times* did not sympathize with China nor did it criticize the Japanese invasion in China. In reporting the latter incident, initially *The Times* still argued in favour of Japan.¹⁵ Chen Shuping and Li Zhuping held a similar opinion that *The Times* was indifferent toward China when reporting the July 7 Incident, though it changed its stance to support the Chinese Resistance against the Japanese War after 1938. However, it was then still not confident about China's anti-Japanese capability.¹⁶ As a result, in February 1939, a representative of the China Nationalist Government visited the general manager of *The Times* to remind *The Times* not to support Japan with Japanese news sources and that they should use more China government news sources. Thereafter, *The Times* expressed that it would adjust its content as required.¹⁷

There has been no detailed study on the influence of the *SCMP* in the Sino-Japanese War period. While China published international propaganda against the Japanese in World War II, the *SCMP* played a pivotal role in Chinese Anti-Japanese War reporting in Hong Kong, which was the Nationalist Government propaganda centre in Asia. The Hong Kong government increased its budget of the censorship department to ensure that Chinese newspapers were not in a position to provoke Chinese nationalism and riots in their newspapers. The censorship department had a larger room to accommodate more employees,¹⁸ as more people had been employed

as censors. As a result, the monthly budget for the employees was about HK\$27,000.¹⁹ To put it differently, the British feared the Chinese, whose land had been invaded by one of the imperialist nations: Britain. At that moment, Japan was another invader in China and threatening to invade Hong Kong. Anti-Japanese and anti-imperialism newspaper articles made the British Hong Kong government nervous. Between 1939 and 1940, Hong Kong suffered pressure from Japan. Mentioning words like “Japanese invasion”, “War Atrocities” publicly in the Chinese language newspapers was not allowed.²⁰ After Chinese newspapers were asked to delete the anti-Japanese words and reports, the *SCMP* still reported such news to encourage an anti-Japanese spirit. From the perspective of the editor, Henry Ching thought it was wrong for the Japanese to invade China and slaughter Chinese civilians.²¹ In addition, he thought anti-Japanese reporting could better attract Chinese readers.²² As a result, he decided that the *SCMP* should execute an Anti-Japanese War reporting policy. From the perspective of the *SCMP* management, they worried about the possible detrimental impact of anti-Japanese reporting to the *SCMP*, but they chose finally to acquiesce.²³

My primary goal in this chapter is to examine why and how the *SCMP* undertook anti-Japanese reporting in the 1930s. I will study factors including the *SCMP* management and journalists, the involvement of political parties, advertisers and readers—keeping in mind that the *SCMP* was free of censorship—and to show that profit was the most important thing the *SCMP* management worried about.

The analysis begins with evolution of the *SCMP* management and journalists’ attitudes and conflicts, which gave rise to the editorial freedom of the *SCMP*, then focuses on the audiences’ discussions about the Sino-Japanese War that emerged as harbingers of improving Chinese bourgeoisie readers’ audience freedom and social

positions. I conclude by considering how the *SCMP*'s anti-Japanese reporting influenced Chinese audiences' right to know accurate new information, the right to be respected in the public sphere created by the *SCMP*, and the right to participate in Hong Kong colonial consensus building. Simultaneously, as a complicated result, the *SCMP* also contributed to anti-Japanese propaganda in the international community.

SCMP Management and Journalists

Cooperating with the *SCMP* met the best interests of the HSBC during the anti-Japanese invasion period. The evidence of this assertion is seen in the paper's rejection of one director's advice. In 1933, a Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (HSBC) and *SCMP* director argued that anti-Japanese reporting would "do harm to the company's newspaper interests" and actions should be taken "to refrain from inserting any further" anti-Japanese reporting.²⁴ However, the dual directors in HSBC and *SCMP* Ltd., R. G. Shewan and A. L. Shield, did not interfere with anti-Japanese reporting after the HSBC formed its position toward the Sino-Japanese war: to support China against the Japanese.²⁵ The *SCMP* attempted to retain some long-term Japanese advertisements; at the same time, the *SCMP* printed Anti-Japanese War reporting in a big scale.

As the Hong Kong English newspaper with the largest readership, the *SCMP* played the most important role in the Anti-Japanese War movement because the editor, Henry Ching, negotiated with the board chairman, John Scott Harston, on the issue of Anti-Japanese War reporting. Henry Ching "shared the Chinese sense of nationalism and their indignation against Japanese aggression";²⁶ in addition, he "stuck to his guns on the 'Bird's Eye View' and resisted pressure by saying that "a conviction for alleged insubordination and ungentlemanly conduct before I had been

adequately heard” was “wholly wrong” in the *SCMP* minute book.²⁷ Ching finally made Anti-Japanese War reporting the main theme of the news reporting in the 1930s.

Henry Ching was the backbone of the *SCMP*. In Robin Hutcheon’s *SCMP: The First Eighty Years*, Ching was depicted as a man who possessed “Britishness” and Chinese nationalism. Profoundly influenced by Japanese invasion topics among his Chinese friends, Ching told the board that Chinese readers paid extremely close attention to this momentous event.²⁸ The board finally realized its best strategy was non-interference to the editor’s decision: namely, to enjoy the increased circulation figure, and accept advertisements from pro-China or China government advertisers, as well as Japanese advertisements, which had been declined by the Hong Kong Chinese press and later by the *Hong Kong Daily Press*.²⁹ As a result, for 1939, the paper’s net profit increased about 300 percent over that of 1936.³⁰ The increase was high partly because the profit of 1936 was very low because of economic depreciation.

The *SCMP* employed what would now be called a diverse staff. When Violet Sweet Haven worked for the *SCMP* in 1940, there were only nineteen men for the two newspapers—the morning paper *SCMP* and *SCMP*’s afternoon paper *Hong Kong Telegraph*—and she was the only female journalist in the Hong Kong newspaper industry. They were two Australians, three Australian-Chinese, six Englishmen, four English-Eurasians, one Scot, one Chinese, one Indian and one New Zealander. Half of the editors and the majority of the *SCMP* staff were Chinese. Some of the journalists had graduated from Yanjing University.³¹ Henry Ching, the editor of the *SCMP*, played cricket with other Chinese in his spare time. All the close connections with the Chinese made it understandable that the *SCMP*’s reports

positively portrayed Chinese nationhood. The British, Australian, and New Zealander editors disliked the Japanese invasion and also supported the Chinese people. Their feelings toward the invasion may have been different, however, from their Chinese counterparts: they might have been sympathetic toward the plight of the Chinese in the war, while the Chinese editors were angry.

Reporting the Sino-Japanese disputes was a correct ethical and financial decision for the *SCMP*, and this act of showing loyalty to the British Empire was not limited to publishing anti-Japanese articles. Henry Ching also wrote articles from time to time on the subjects of St George's Day, Empire Day, or ANZAC Day with an easy fluency that came spontaneously from a sense of natural pride and commitment.³² The *SCMP* raised more than two million HKD for a war fund to purchase airplanes from the British Empire.³³ The most generous donors were Chinese bourgeoisie in Hong Kong, not the British. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) local office in Hong Kong received millions of HKD donation from anonymous local people.³⁴ The Chinese staff of the *SCMP* also purchased some Kuo Min Tang (KMT) bonds, about HK\$935.³⁵ The general manager of the *SCMP*, Benjamin Wylie, received a commemorative brass plaque from the Minister of Aircraft Production for a generous donation to the United Kingdom.³⁶

Israel Epstein was not Chinese, but he dared to write articles to criticize the Japanese invasion. When the Japanese occupied Hong Kong, the British were sent to an internment camp. Before the fall of Hong Kong, the CCP Hong Kong branch believed the Japanese would arrest and kill Epstein, who had a Westerner's face and wrote lots of anti-Japanese propaganda in a British newspaper.³⁷ Liao Chengzhi managed to fabricate Epstein's death and another communist journalist, Yang Gang, sent him to a safe house. Although Epstein was arrested later, he finally fled to

Macau after the Japanese took over Hong Kong in 1941.³⁸ Israel Epstein's articles appeared in both the *SCMP* and *China Defence League Correspondence*.³⁹ His main theme was to call for help for the Chinese people to resist the Japanese invasion.

The Involvement of the Political Parties

The *SCMP* had not been strictly censored before because of the different censorship policy toward English newspapers. During the 1930s, the China Defence League and the Nationalist Party (KMT) were trying their best to get financial and international support from Westerners and overseas Chinese in Hong Kong. An English newspaper that had a powerful influence and was immune to the censorship restriction would be helpful for anti-Japanese reporting.

Both the CCP and KMT had connections with the *SCMP* in the 1930s and 1940s Anti-Japanese War period. Chiang Kai-shek sent his representative Chen Qiyu to Hong Kong to meet Tse Tsan Tai, the founder of the *SCMP*, who still participated in the business activities of the *SCMP*.⁴⁰ The KMT hoped Tse would use his influence to persuade the *SCMP* to support the KMT Anti-Japanese War movement. Tse Tsan Tai said he would help.⁴¹ He wrote to Chiang Kai-shek and hoped Chiang could unite all the parties in China to fight against the Japanese invaders.⁴² In addition, Tse Tsan Tai wrote articles for the *SCMP*, and called on different political powers in China to unite to fight against the Japanese.⁴³ Tse had a long-term influence on the *SCMP*, which was happy to publish his articles. In addition, the Tse family held important positions in the *SCMP*. At annual meetings, for example, Tse made proposals and the *SCMP* investors accepted them, including employing account auditors and nominations for directors.⁴⁴

The *SCMP* sometimes printed books compiled by the Nationalist Government.

After Japan invaded China, the *SCMP* subscriptions in Chinese cities had fallen, though this was compensated by increasing numbers of readers in Hong Kong who escaped from the Mainland. Still, the *SCMP* did not print as many newspapers as before and the advertisement income dropped too. For example, in 1939, the advertisement income dropped 22 percent and the newsprint use dropped 18 percent. Unexpectedly, the *SCMP* income dropped only 4 percent.⁴⁵ The explanation was that the *SCMP* had new printing orders from the China Defence League and the China Nationalist Government. When *SCMP* profits had declined due to the war, it found a way to stop the profit losses through doing business with anti-Japanese parties. Between 1938 and 1941, the *SCMP* printed pamphlets entitled *Japanese Trample on Foreign Rights in China*, *Sino-Japanese Hostilities in North China*, *Can China Win?*⁴⁶ These pamphlets were edited by the China Information Committee, which was an international department of the Nationalist government founded for the purpose of anti-Japanese propaganda. According to Wang Xiaolan's research, the Nationalist government decided to found its own media and cooperated with international media to produce anti-Japanese propaganda beginning in 1937.⁴⁷ In 1938, the *SCMP* started to print pamphlets by the China Information Committee, probably because of the introduction of Tse Tsan Tai.⁴⁸ Most importantly, the *SCMP* actively took part in cooperating with Chinese resistance against the Japanese invasion, which called on Hong Kong to support Chinese industry in the war.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the *SCMP* printed the publications of the China Defence League, a powerful anti-Japanese organization in Hong Kong and mainland China chaired by Madam Soong Ching Ling. The *China Defence League Correspondence* actually became a co-publication of the *SCMP*; *SCMP* editor Israel Epstein wrote articles for it and the *SCMP* printed it. The circulation increased from one thousand to two

thousand copies per issue worldwide.⁵⁰ Reporting differences between the two publications were not obvious after 1940.

The decision to work for anti-Japanese propaganda publishers brought new business orders but endangered the lives of *SCMP* journalists. Epstein was one heroic example of a *SCMP* journalist who supported the Anti-Japanese War.

Anti-Japanese Banking Advertisers

The *SCMP* had long-term banking advertisers in its finance section, including the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, Bank of China, the Bank of Canton, and the Bank of East Asia. All of them were assets or important partners of the Republic of China government. The HSBC had participated in the Chinese government's loans and economic development since the late nineteenth century.⁵¹ The HSBC was particularly involved in national affairs: "Throughout the 1930s, in keeping with its long-standing connections with government finance in China, the bank took a leading part in efforts to stabilise the Chinese national currency".⁵²

Frank H. H. King studied how the HSBC cooperated with and supported Chinese governments closely and vigorously. He pointed out that after 1937 the HSBC changed its policy from "active support for China" to "opposition to Japan"⁵³ other banks' influences were slightly less direct. The Bank of Canton was owned by overseas Chinese reformer and patriot Li Yutang, who funded Sun Yatsen's revolutionary activities, the Bank of China and the Bank of Kwangsi (Hong Kong Branch) were owned by the China Nationalist Government, and the Bank of East Asia was a Hong Kong Chinese merchant-owned bank. All of these banks targeted Chinese clients and advertised in the *SCMP* to attract higher class Chinese to open accounts and do business with them. The HSBC did not target common Chinese

clients, thus the Bank of Canton and the Bank of East Asia covered many Chinese bank account holders in Hong Kong. The Bank of China was located in the building of the Bank of Canton after 1938,⁵⁴ and was in close cooperation with the Bank of East Asia.⁵⁵ These banks all had clear anti-Japanese attitudes;⁵⁶ the *SCMP* had to pay attention to these advertisers' reactions when it reported news.

Japanese Advertisements

Chinese newspapers had united activities against the Japanese invasion as early as 1931. That is, all the local Chinese newspapers in Hong Kong had a meeting to announce their decision to reject all Japanese advertisements and shipping news.⁵⁷ However, Japanese shipping firms had advertised in the *SCMP* since its founding. In 1907, an editor published anti-Japanese editorials in the *SCMP* and Japanese shipping advertisements were withdrawn by a Chinese agent. As a result, the journalist had been warned, "Care has always to be exercised so as to avoid if possible the rendering of any such boycott possible".⁵⁸ As a result, the Japanese shipping advertisements appeared in the *SCMP*. They were with the Anti-Japanese War reporting in the 1930s until Japan took over Hong Kong.⁵⁹ The explanation is simple: the *SCMP* had important advertising value and the Japanese shipping companies did not want to abandon it. There would be potential clients in the British and even some Chinese readers. Thus, the *SCMP* still collaborated with the Japanese merchants for profit.

Until July 1941, the sole agent of Asahi Beer, Mitsui Bussan Kaisha, Ltd., still advertised in the *SCMP*, although few other Japanese commercial advertisements were printed alongside the *SCMP*'s anti-Japanese articles. The *SCMP* criticized the Japanese invasion but accepted advertisements from a Japanese beer company.

However, the *SCMP* Asahi Beer advertisement changed its look; for example, the picture of the Japanese flag on the Asahi beer bottle disappeared, as did the beer bottle, and only a glass of beer with an indication of the Asahi brand showed in the *SCMP*.⁶⁰ The *SCMP* did not like to miss any opportunities to make money, especially from a long-term client.

The *SCMP* editors were worried about an invasion by the Japanese. One journalist recorded, “the Japanese are on the boarder [sic] thirty miles away. If they bomb Hong Kong it would be wholesale slaughter, and we, sitting here in this newspaper office, are in the centre of the most densely populated square mile on earth. It would go up in flames like paper.”⁶¹ Placing Japanese advertisements showed the *SCMP* management wanted to keep its income stable and benefit from Japanese advertising income and Chinese reader subscription. In a word, the *SCMP* management had a different attitude than the editor, Henry Ching. However, Ching still had a big family to feed with his salary, which meant he had to work for the *SCMP*; otherwise, he could not find such a good job with HK\$1400 per month, which was partly from the Japanese advertisers.⁶²

The *SCMP* kept Japanese shipping and consumption advertisements while it did abundant anti-Japanese reporting. In the tough wartime economy, Japanese advertising income was important for the *SCMP* and the practice was accepted. For example, Japanese shipping advertisements occupied 10 percent to 20 percent of the *SCMP* shipping advertising columns. However, the remaining advertisers still expected Chinese readers, who were no less than 30 percent of the *SCMP* audiences, and who liked to read Anti-Japanese War reporting, to support them by buying their products. Furthermore, the British audience, some of whom had businesses in China, also needed to check the *SCMP* Anti-Japanese War news. The *SCMP* was the rare

medium accepting Japanese advertisements in Hong Kong. Therefore, whatever Anti-Japanese War reporting the *SCMP* did, Japanese advertisers had no say in the cooperation with the *SCMP*. Thus, the *SCMP* had no pressure to worry about the Japanese advertisers and could appeal to Chinese readers with numerous Anti-Japanese War reporting.

Readers

The *SCMP* was not keen on an anti-Japanese reporting at the beginning of the 1930s. As the Chinese in Hong Kong became angrier about the Japanese invasion, the *SCMP* brought the facts of the Japanese invasion and anti-Japanese activities to the attention of Chinese and Westerners in Hong Kong. The *SCMP* was independent; reporting the crimes of the Japanese army was also a brave decision because Japan had a good relationship with Britain. The paper reported boycotts, attacks, and riots against Japanese in China and Hong Kong.⁶³ The *SCMP* also portrayed the humiliation of the Chinese and their nationalism via many editorials on the KMT government's Anti-Japanese War activities and the local Chinese community's hatred toward the Japanese. For example, the *SCMP* reported the half-mast flags on Chinese Humiliation Day.⁶⁴ In addition, they also reported the slogans calling for Chinese to unite to fight against Japanese on the Hong Kong streets.⁶⁵

The *SCMP* also cared about its Western readers' demands for security during the anti-Japanese riots in turbulent Hong Kong. For example, in 1931 it published a letter from a reader called "Englishman" who supported the Japanese suppression of Chinese anti-Japanese movements:

How many right thinking Chinese must bow his head in shame after the disgusting incidents of the past week-end? A very appropriate "Humiliation Day" might be held now (they are very good at holding such days it seems). These events bring us back to the events of the past few years which have

been one long string of murders and worse, i.e.,

The Nanking Outrage 1927.

The Hankow incident 1927.

The Tsman affair where again innocent Japanese were murdered.

The murder of Priests in Hupeh.

The murder of missionaries all over China on different dates.

The affair of JOHN THORBURN which every Briton must justly feel ashamed of the inability of his own Government to obtain satisfaction over. The Japanese it seems are the only nation who have the courage to try and put a stop to all this fool beastliness. I wonder what would be the reaction if Chinese were murdered by mobs in Britain?

ENGLISHMAN⁶⁶

The newspaper could select and publish letters from readers, but this case exhibited that the *SCMP* still had no exclusive policy to support the Chinese anti-Japanese sentiments at that time. In particular, this letter reflected that the British residents feared Chinese anti-foreign activities and stood with the Japanese army which invaded China. Overall, the *SCMP* mistakenly evaluated the potential influence of this reader's letter. The *SCMP* just wanted to represent the needs of British residents who advocated a safe and stable Hong Kong, and no Chinese rose up to kill British in uprisings. This tone of calmness was evident upon occasion in the *SCMP*. In 1931, the *SCMP* recriminated against the Chinese community in editorials indicating the British were intolerant of the anti-Japanese riots in Hong Kong, and Chinese nationalists were regarded as hooligans:

The air is full of recrimination and the Editor's box is choked with letters [from British], all anonymous all indignant, almost all making personal attacks on this or that official... Let it be stated again also that the attitude of the Chinese community and its leaders calls for condemnation. The rioting, looting and killing were, of course, the work of hooligans; but the great majority of Chinese residents regarded the excesses with complete tolerance, even amusement and gloating, entirely oblivious to the human suffering and to the moral and political considerations involved... A taunt in many letters directed against the Chinese members of Council is of undue timidity; but it is surely cowardly to abuse them from behind the shelter of assumed names. We agree that the Chinese members were not effective. A suggestion made in one letter is that they could easily have broadcast by radio their condemnation of the riots and their appeals for order. That would probably have been of

much help to Government; and if the advice did not reach the hooligan understanding it might at least have brought about a different outlook among the better classes and saved the Chinese community generally from the heavy reproach which now lies upon it...Responsible comment we shall publish, but we shall not print letters which are offensively recriminatory and abusive. The crisis is too recent to permit any encouragement of verbal brickbats to add to the damage.⁶⁷

The permanent policy of the *SCMP* was to make a profit from the Chinese and British audiences in a peaceful Hong Kong. From the foresaid editorial, the *SCMP* clearly stated its stance: it wanted to be a judge and tool to stabilize Hong Kong through “a recrimination”. It blamed the Chinese bourgeoisie readers, their leaders, and even the Chinese community, though it also took a punch at the indignant British readers for criticizing Chinese leaders.⁶⁸ The *SCMP* respected Chinese readers and protected them when they were attacked. This showed that the *SCMP* realized that it should maintain a peaceful relationship with the Chinese community, especially Chinese leaders. Irritating Chinese audiences was not in the best interest of the *SCMP*.

The *SCMP* at that time still encouraged people to respect Japanese civilians and boycott any anti-Japanese activities in Hong Kong. It also wanted to win the trust and favour of both Chinese and British audiences by its judgement; in other words, it criticized the Chinese overall, so that British audiences would be satisfied. Similarly, it reprimanded angry British audiences. Nevertheless, it was not easy to find a balance at that time between Chinese and British audiences. In particular, in a British reader letter published in the *SCMP*, the Japanese invasion was said to be a kind of “courage”, the Chinese rising had been considered “fool beastliness” and Chinese were expected to be “murdered”.⁶⁹ As a result, Chinese audiences showed their resentment about the *SCMP*’s stance. A Chinese named P. Chan sent a protest to the *SCMP* the next day:

Your leading article of this morning calls for a word of protest from the Chinese community...No doubt, the Chinese members of Council who you say have been attacked anonymously are equally capable of defending themselves, should they wish to do so. What seems to me to call for an answer from me is your remark...I say that you had absolutely no reason for it...Your sweeping statement was as unfair as it was mischievous...The Chinese, while being indignant over the high-handed action of the Japanese in Manchuria, are all for the preservation of good order in the Colony...Your remark is libellous, and I think that the least you can do is to withdraw it.⁷⁰

More Chinese readers sent letters to the *SCMP* to require the *SCMP* to withdraw the previous editorials. The *SCMP* had to clarify that they had never suggested that the better class Chinese residents approved of the outbreaks, and they regretted if their comment could be so interpreted.⁷¹ Another Chinese claimed that the Germans were badly treated by the British in the World War I, and he asked the *SCMP* why it did not report much on the wholesale massacre of Chinese people in Korea and in Manchuria while stating the Japanese must not be molested in Hong Kong.⁷² The editor of the *SCMP* explained that local incidents concerned the *SCMP* more than external news in the neutral British colony.⁷³

During the anti-Japanese riot in 1931, Chinese leaders did not react, and condemned Chinese discord immediately. They did not prevent such movements in time, obviously, because they had their specific concerns, which included understanding Chinese patriotism and even indignation that they could not speak out in the public. In other words, silence was a kind of acquiescence. However, British community leaders were not happy about this and suggested they take further and effective action. Lieutenant Colonel T. A. Robertson claimed, "A punishment of HK\$5.00 or seven days to an offender seems futile".⁷⁴ Members of the "Reform" Club "proposed, seconded and carried unanimously that arrangements be made to hold an emergency meeting of the Executive and Legislative Councils" immediately and to "stand in solemn silence with bowed heads and hands firmly on the Board

table, for one minute” before the meeting.⁷⁵ On the same page, the *SCMP* also printed the declaration of the Hong Kong Government that “Sections 7-14 of the Peace Preservation Ordinance 1886 are in force”, so it was “the citizen’s duty” to “keep off the streets” because arrests were on the way.⁷⁶

Under such a pressure, the three Chinese Legislative Council members, Robert Kotewall, Shou Son Chow and S. Y. Tso, arranged a meeting with the *SCMP* reporter. These three Chinese leaders hoped the *SCMP* would pass some messages to the Chinese community: firstly, they had already informed the Chinese press of “condemning the unfortunate incidents of the last few days and advising the Chinese to observe the law”.⁷⁷ Secondly, the Chinese leaders did not berate Chinese residents but criticized “the real agitators generally go unpunished by remaining in the background”.⁷⁸ Thirdly, instead of deploring the Japanese victims, Chinese leaders showed their concern about Chinese residents, hoping Chinese residents would not suffer from disturbances and agitation. In particular, there were “more Chinese residents in Japan than there [we]re Japanese living in Hongkong”, so it would not be wise to continue to injure and kill Japanese.⁷⁹ Finally, Chinese leaders told the *SCMP*, “Love of country is a virtue we all cherish, but we serve our country best by pursuing the right course”.⁸⁰

In brief, the three Chinese leaders held the same opinion that “the Government could not have done anything to prevent people from showing their [patriotic] feelings, provided that nothing was done to disturb the peace of the Colony”.⁸¹ Chinese leaders showed tolerance for Chinese residents and attributed the riots to unknown agitators even if the police had arrested some Chinese residents had been arrested. Chinese residents in the eyes of Chinese leaders were not mobs and the *SCMP* portrayed an image of responsible and patriotic Chinese leaders. Although

patriotism in the eyes of Chinese leaders was obeying the law with buried feelings, nevertheless, it was more progressive than the neutral position of the Hong Kong government. As a result, their support of the *SCMP* protected not only Chinese national esteem but also improved Chinese social position because they tried to build a consensus that Chinese feelings should be respected though riots were not accepted.

The *SCMP* made periodic attempts to report anti-Japanese news. This stance formed under the pressure of the *SCMP* Chinese readers. The *SCMP* had to treat their Chinese readers with respect because most of them were bourgeoisie. In fact, days before the Chinese audiences' protest, the *SCMP* had already pointed out that the "Chinese [man] is not so much cowardly as discreet as peace loving: he fights ferociously when he is sufficiently angered."⁸² However, this was still far from enough. A stance of "sympathizing with Chinese" should be changed to "anti-Japanese invasion" to meet the needs of its Chinese readers. In particular, the change of the *SCMP* stance rested with a series of complex and integrated factors of management, readers, editor, advertisers and political parties, which have been previously elaborated upon.

While some international newspapers were still uncertain about the nature of Sino-Japanese conflicts after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, a Chinese reader pointed out in the *SCMP* that the *SCMP* "can be taken to represent the views [of] practically every thinking Chinese". Obviously, the audience had such an impression because the editor of the *SCMP* was seriously influenced by the Chinese community in Hong Kong and the *SCMP* had to report Anti-Japanese War news more frequently.⁸³ In addition, Chinese readers had been granted the power to criticize the Japanese invasion and even Western powers that did not help China during the war. In

particular, the *SCMP* also became a place where Chinese audiences supported “Chinese people who have already reached their last limits of endurance” and had “no alternatives except to meet force with forces in an endeavour to preserve their existence as a race on the surface of this earth which they have learnt to love and treasure for more than four thousand years”.⁸⁴ Although the *SCMP* was a British colony paper, it was bold to publish Chinese audiences’ voices such as labelling “governments of both Europe and America” as responsible for the invasion of Japan.⁸⁵ Not only had the *SCMP* achieved its goal of ingratiating itself with the Chinese audience to make a profit, the *SCMP* also tried to maintain Chinese “territorial integrity and national independence in the face of an alien invasion” via its pages; for example:

Today the Chinese people are united as one man behind the Central government and are resolved to wage a war of prolonged resistance against their insatiable invaders who are by far superior to them in modern equipment of war on three fronts—physical, spiritual and intellectual, while the world Powers apparently look on and are merely concerned over the evacuation of their own nationals and the International Settlement and the Concessions...It is to be hoped, therefore, that all the sane peoples of the world will give China at least their moral, if not material, support for furthering her noble mission.⁸⁶

Furthermore, in its editorials the *SCMP* showed a solid support to Chinese people and asserted that Japan would lose the war and the Chinese would win. Such a stance was much more progressive than British mainstream newspapers such as *The Times*, which did not report the Sino-Japanese War in a big scale and showed an indifferent attitude. By doing so, the *SCMP* differentiated itself from Western English media, which at the very beginning, did not understand the nature of the Japanese aggression and the justice of Chinese resistance, let alone the *SCMP*’s affinity with Chinese audiences, which the Western media did not own.

The Japanese invasion unambiguously damaged Hong Kong Chinese merchants’

normal trade and manufacture. Therefore, Hong Kong Chinese merchants had a strong anti-Japanese motive. Thus, although the management once hesitated, they finally acquiesced to the readers regarding the Anti-Japanese War reporting. Moreover, the *SCMP* even published a War Edition for a short time after 1937. Nevertheless, the limited Chinese readers themselves could not support the *SCMP*'s new venture and finally it became a failure. This case showed that the *SCMP* had been tempted by the profitable combined reporting strategy, viz., attracting Chinese and British readers. Without the Anti-Japanese War reporting, Chinese readers would not be happy. However, if the *SCMP* emphasized the same topic too much, it would not help get more sales in the British community.⁸⁷

When Hong Kong was attacked by the Japanese army, Madam Sun Yatsen published a statement in the *SCMP* calling on all Chinese to unite to expel the Japanese.⁸⁸

In the same day's *SCMP*, a Chinese reader named Walter Hanming Chen pointed out the hypocrisy of Japan's "sincerity" and "real desire for peace", and asserted "Japan will regret this day for the mighty forces of America, Britain and China will bring about her extermination".⁸⁹ The *SCMP* had no choice but to exhibit a clear anti-Japanese attitude, whether from the perspective of justice or the perspective of business.

Chen Junbao, the librarian of the Hong Kong University Library, pointed out that anti-Japanese reporting was beneficial and the Hong Kong and Guangdong students would like to use the *SCMP* to call for support to the mainland Chinese resistance against the Japanese.⁹⁰ In addition, he asserted the *SCMP* provided detailed and accurate Anti-Japanese War news, while Chinese newspapers avoided mentioning some news.⁹¹ In a word, the *SCMP* was cooperative under demands of Chinese

readers and provided a platform for anti-Japanese reporting.

The present analysis of the *SCMP* news on Sino-Japanese conflicts in the 1930s revealed the *SCMP* had the following characteristics in reporting anti-Japanese news. First, the *SCMP* retained a freedom of the press policy and reported the truth of the Japanese invasion of China, even under pressure from the Hong Kong government and the board of the *SCMP* in the colony, which remained neutral. Next, although the *SCMP* did not like communists for a long time, it still reported the CCP's cooperation with the central government of China to fight against the Japanese. Third, the *SCMP* criticized the non-interference policy of Western powers from time to time. Fourth, the *SCMP* reported events like the boycott against Japanese and murders of Japanese in a quasi-indifferent tone; in other words, it did not criticize these kinds of terrorist behaviours, but displayed an attitude of *schadenfreude*. Finally, after 1938, the *SCMP* started to encourage the mainland China anti-Japanese movement, criticized the Japanese frequently, and wished for the success of the Chinese in the Anti-Japanese War, though the Chinese suffered failures most of the time. That is to say, based on the demands and requests of Chinese readers and various nationalist parties, the *SCMP* published anti-Japanese reporting.

The Wide Influence of the *SCMP* anti-Japanese Reporting

The *SCMP* was the most influential anti-Japanese reporting medium in Hong Kong though it was considered a very conservative British newspaper.⁹² The unmatched position of the *SCMP* in Anti-Japanese War reporting not only attracted a Chinese audience, but also increased its popularity worldwide, which was potentially beneficial for its business. In other words, the *SCMP* built up a positive public image of supporting the Anti-Japanese War movement, which helped its branding.

The *SCMP*'s influence was not only noticed by the China Defence League and KMT, political moderates also considered the *SCMP*'s support in their anti-Japanese reporting. *Ta Kung Pao*, a newspaper for Chinese moderates, said in an editorial that all the Hong Kong English newspapers sympathized with China and the *SCMP* was the most powerful. Therefore, the *SCMP*'s comments had an important influence in encouraging the anti-Japanese movement and Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong.⁹³ Some of its encouraging editorials were translated elsewhere, and Chinese nationals were greatly encouraged.

Hong Kong local newspapers like *The Industrial & Commercial Daily*, *Chinese Mail* and *Ta Kung Pao* reprinted *SCMP* editorials from time to time. In the reporting of the Wang Jingwei incident, the American appeasement policy, and in regard to the notorious Japanese invasion of mainland China, the *SCMP* was the flagship firing at Japan and the puppet Wang Jingwei government.⁹⁴ The *Chinese Mail* stated that the *SCMP*'s editorials encouraged anti-Japanese parties and advocated Chinese nationalism.⁹⁵ The effect was magnified by the Hong Kong Chinese newspapers and mainland Chinese newspapers like the *New China Daily*. Therefore, in January 1939, CCP representative Liao Chengzhi said that the *SCMP* represented powerful British persons and looked down upon the Chinese Nationalist Party traitor Wang Jingwei through its editorials.⁹⁶ As a result, the *SCMP*'s reporting of anti-Japanese news brought it big fame and grew its circulation and advertising business.

Greedy and ugly images of the Japanese appeared in the *SCMP* and other Chinese newspapers after 1937. After the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Japanese invasion was respectively criticized by the *SCMP*, whose articles were reprinted in Chinese in *The Industrial & Commercial Daily*. The *SCMP* pointed out that it was illegal for the Japanese to blockade the China coast; it also decried the uselessness of international

law and regulations. The Chinese were doing their best to cope with this difficult situation. This editorial also highlighted that Hong Kong played an important role in assisting the Anti-Japanese War effort during this period, as long as Japan did not blockade Hong Kong's sea transportation.⁹⁷ *The Industrial & Commercial Daily* considered the *SCMP* an impartial medium while the *SCMP* depicted the Japanese as clowns.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the *SCMP* predicted that the Japanese policy of enticing the Kuo Min Tang to capitulate was unbelievable in the views of the Chinese army and government. *The Industrial & Commercial Daily* used the translated *SCMP* reports more than a dozen times a year on average between 1938 and 1941. For example, it would reprint or retell the *SCMP* editorials that described the British public's dislike of the Japanese, the Japanese atrocities in China and the international conflicts caused by the Japanese. The newspapers told its readers that Japan would regret what they did to China.⁹⁹

One *SCMP* editorial could be reprinted in several Chinese newspapers at the same time, which would generate a heavy influence on the anti-Japanese movement in Hong Kong. The *SCMP* constantly condemned the cruelty and violence of Japanese air raids, which wounded the British Ambassador and killed Chinese soldiers and common citizens. The *SCMP* not only criticized the Japanese; it also criticized the Western powers that compromised with Japan on the China issue. The *SCMP* expressed its position that it would not compromise with Japan.¹⁰⁰

The *SCMP* portrayed a harsh image of the national traitor Wang Jingwei, the president of the puppet Nanjing Nationalist Government. These reports were reproduced on a large scale by Hong Kong Chinese newspapers, and the *SCMP* pointed out that Nationalist government leader Wang Jingwei had caused serious damage to China.¹⁰¹ The *SCMP* commented that the Chinese Nationals could not

tolerate Wang Jingwei's traitorous behaviour and he would be abandoned by his Chinese friends.¹⁰²

The *SCMP* praised the Chinese Anti-Japanese War spirit and encouraged China to fight Japan to the end. The *SCMP* claimed that China, as the sole nation to fought Japan at that moment, would never surrender.¹⁰³ The *SCMP* also highlighted its faith that China would defeat Japan in the end. It reported on Japan's trouble in China and the success of the Chinese army.¹⁰⁴ Numerous such reports increased nationalism in Hong Kong and the reproduction of the *SCMP* anti-Japanese editorials in Chinese newspapers elevated the position of the *SCMP* in the Anti-Japanese War reports.

Through cooperation and compromise with social organizations, including political parties, advertisers, and the *SCMP* staff, the *SCMP* became one of the most important English media outlets that transmitted Sino-Japanese war news to the international community. At that time, the Nationalist government opened up an anti-Japanese propaganda office in Hong Kong and provided war information to English newspapers in Hong Kong.¹⁰⁵ The *SCMP* valued such a free information source and cooperated with the Nationalist government. When the *SCMP* reported Japanese atrocities in 1937, some newspapers could not believe these stories and accused the *SCMP* of fabrication.¹⁰⁶ The effect of the *SCMP*'s reports on the international understanding of what was taking place in China was important because there were many "neutrality" and "isolation" voices in the United States. The *New York Times* of that era supported the Chinese Anti-Japanese War and reported Japanese atrocities to American fortunes in China.¹⁰⁷ Even though President Roosevelt proclaimed, "Isolation is not protection" to the public, the anti-war attitude in the USA did not change much.¹⁰⁸

Under such circumstances, the *SCMP* continuously spread important information

to the world. For example, in a 1938 editorial, it sent a warning to the United States and Britain that Japan had finally abandoned hope of diplomatic or other assistance from Great Britain and no longer cared whether she provoked Britain by trespassing in the Hong Kong area.¹⁰⁹ It had important influence in the international media when some news agencies such as the United Press International focused on Japan instead of China or Hong Kong after 1938 because the United Press International believed the Chinese war was in a “strategic stalemate” and spent more of its budget on reporting about Japan.¹¹⁰ In other words, Western media reporting on the Sino-Japanese War did not target Chinese audiences; Western media need not care about Chinese concerns when they designed their reporting strategy. Thus, it was no wonder newspapers such as *The Times* had much less relevant reporting than the *SCMP*, which provided abundant anti-Japanese propaganda and faithful news reporting.

In conclusion, the *SCMP* achieved its goal of making money through Anti-Japanese War reporting and supporting China when it met its Chinese audience’s expectations. This was not the original intention of the *SCMP* Ltd. Nevertheless, the *SCMP*’s advertisers, editors and staff pushed the *SCMP* to stand on the side of the anti-Japanese camp. Meanwhile, the *SCMP* enjoyed much external press freedom in Hong Kong, so it could publish sentimental comments of Chinese readers against the Japanese invasion and the advice of Chinese leaders to mould Chinese readers’ opinions. As a result, during the anti-Japanese period in the 1930s, the *SCMP* improved the freedom of Chinese audiences and shaped the elite status of Chinese leaders.

CONCLUSION

The *SCMP* published a combined reporting style for Chinese and British communities in its business operation. As a result, the *SCMP*, on one hand, represented the British audience interests and safeguarded the privilege of British colonisers in Hong Kong, and on the other hand, represented the Chinese merchant audience's interests, improved their audience freedom and social position, and provided a channel for the Chinese merchant leaders to mould Chinese audience opinions and even built consensus in the British Hong Kong. That is to say, the history of the *SCMP* closely connected the economic, political and social aspects of Hong Kong history.

The inception of profit-oriented English newspapers like the *SCMP* and the *Hong Kong Telegraph* which were founded, funded, and operated under the cooperation of the British and Chinese, took advantage of British cultural identity, British imperial identity, and Chinese nationalism in its reporting to promote its business. Just as the *SCMP* itself claimed, it was a newspaper that represented a wider audience, including the British and Chinese, for the first time with the title of a 'modern newspaper' in Hong Kong. The Chinese and British audiences had varied identities and needs, which were respected and met by the *SCMP*, whose goal was to profit from its readership and advertising. In doing so, it quickly occupied the Chinese readership market and gradually encroached on the traditional market of the British audience, which had previously focused only on the *China Mail* and the *Hong Kong Daily Press*.

The *SCMP* benefitted from the economic development of Hong Kong. Thus, it endeavoured to promote Hong Kong's economy integrated into the business network

of the British Empire and China. The *SCMP* assisted in the development of Chinese enterprises through its advertisements and editorials. It almost perpetually listed the advertisements of Chinese banks in its pages and was concerned about the business interests of Hong Kong Chinese merchants. This practice was also applied to the development of British firms in Hong Kong; for example, the advertising of the HSBC in the *SCMP* helped develop the bank into a well-known business, and it made Hong Kong a potentially international financial centre after 1941. A combined reporting style in a newspaper also advocated that British and Chinese merchants together attend the British Empire Exhibition for mutual prosperity in Hong Kong. In doing so, the *SCMP* helped make the British and Chinese community wealthy. The development of the *SCMP* shows that it became a profit-oriented newspaper, serving the Chinese and British upper classes in Hong Kong. Thus, it played an important role in the development of Hong Kong.

Although the British Hong Kong governors and their governments were the predominant power in Hong Kong, the Chinese also established some institutes like the Tung Wah Hospital, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and so on, to share the power in managing the Chinese community. However, the Hong Kong government deprived the Tung Wah Hospital of power around the turn of the twentieth century. Thereafter, history witnessed the director of Tung Wah Hospital and the National Bank of China, Fung Wa Chuen, participated in the founding of the *SCMP*. The development of Hong Kong Chinese bourgeoisie won only pitiful positions in the Hong Kong Legislative Council and the Hong Kong Executive Council, but they realized the power of the English press and used it to obtain their social powers which were insulated from the universal suffrage. The external press freedom and internal press freedom of the *SCMP* offered its Chinese audience the freedom to use

the *SCMP* as their forum to maintain their interests and position in Hong Kong; particularly when their fortune, reputation and safety were threatened during social and political disorders.

The role of the *SCMP* in some social changes disclosed the nature of Hong Kong Chinese merchants who showed their rational and conditional nationalist sentiments, or patriotism, toward China. The *SCMP* combined reporting style reflected the close relationship between China and Hong Kong Chinese merchants, who had a stable identity and compliance toward the Chinese national territory, culture and blood relationship. Nevertheless, their factual attitudes varied with favourable and disadvantageous Chinese influence toward Hong Kong. Their Chinese nationalist sentiments weakened when Chinese social movements damaged their interests, but they still claimed they had patriotism of their own, or a complex emotion of inability to avoid the dilemma.

Whether China was insusceptible to the unique factor of the British colonization of Hong Kong in the first half of twentieth century was uncertain without accurate economics statics. Nevertheless, sporadic data and cases in critical situations showed the close relationship between Hong Kong and China. The *SCMP* benefitted from the investment and business expansion of its advertisers and audiences in China. Thus, while highlighting the contribution of Hong Kong at the edge of China in the first half of twentieth century, the role of the *SCMP* should not be neglected. More importantly, the conspicuous propagandising of the *SCMP* in the 1930s Anti-Japanese War period should not be neglected in media history and modern history studies.

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Introduction

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