POPULAR NEWSPAPERS IN POST-MAO GUANGZHOU: TOWARD A SOCIAL HISTORY OF SOUTHERN WEEKEND, 1984-2010

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This project sets out to understand the Chinese press within a regional context during the post-Mao reform era. As an extension of the Party press, post-Mao popular newspapers grew from within the Party-state bureaucracies in response to the economic and social reform since the late 1970s and early 1980s. Foregrounded by the history of *Southern Weekend* [*Nanfang Zhoumo*], a news weekly based in Guangzhou yet with national influence especially since the late 1990s, the study aims to examine how popular newspapers have explored the forms and politics of their journalism under new historical conditions. For each period of development, the project worked to locate the key transformations of the Guangzhou press, and then characterized the journalistic paradigm of *Southern Weekend* in reference to the sources of change. It presents a journalism history of what I call the "Party-popular" expanding from cultural to social and political realms in the post-Mao Chinese society.

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ABBREVIATIONS

SPPA 中华人民共和国新闻出版署 (1987-2001)
State Press and Publications Administration

GAPP 中华人民共和国新闻出版总署 (2001-2013）
General Administration of Press and Publication

SARFT 国家广播电影电视总局 (1998-2013）
Administration of Radio, Film and Television

GAPPRFT 中华人民共和国国家新闻出版广电总局 (2013-)
State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of the People's Republic of China

* SPPA was renamed GAPP in 2001 and elevated as a state ministry.
* GAPP merged with SARFT into a mega ministry GAPPRFT in March, 2013. The merger was driven by the need to reduce overlap of responsibilities between the two regulators and streamline bureaucracy especially when, with the arrival of the Internet era, both tried to exert control over the various Internet-based new media.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps no other newspaper in the post-Mao era attracted as much attention regarding press and politics in mainland China as *Southern Weekend* [*nanfang zhoumo*]. This provincial newspaper is often studied as a groundbreaking commercial newspaper, independent voice, and organ of professional journalism. Despite apparent limitations, the prevailing image in its popular and scholarly narrative is of courageous journalists seizing on an opening to produce the kind of investigative reportage admired in the West. In the conventional story, this opening closed, and the party-state reasserted control.

The story I am about to tell is more nuanced. I situate *Southern Weekend* in the historical context of local competition, regional experimentation, and transborder cultural flows. Its story is not one of simple confrontation with the Party-state but of mediating between a Party-state bureaucracy on the one hand and a booming chaotic media marketplace on the other. I will tell a story not of heroic individual journalists (important as they have been) but of complex newsroom developments regarding practices, structures, and divisions of labor. This would be, as John Nerone kindly summarized for me, "less a story of a discrete journalistic sphere than of a geography of news practices embedded in a national popular culture."

This project is, in short, a social and cultural history of *Southern Weekend*. As such, it makes a contribution to journalism history that is often written from the inside out. The conventional approach normally highlights inventions initiated by great figures within the newsroom, and contains with it an evolutionary logic in journalism towards political independence (e.g. Park, 1923). In American journalism history, dissatisfaction with the progressive paradigm appeared in

the 1970s, and called for writing social and cultural histories of the press (Nerone, 1987: 383). Within these new styles, the evolutionary logic moves beyond the individualism of journalists and editors. The sources of journalistic development were explored not as the working out of a particular set of professional practices but embedded within specific socio-historical conditions. The answers to what drove journalism towards the hegemonic form of "objectivity," for instance, vary greatly depending on one's emphasis of the "social." While many historians agreed upon the central role of mass market in driving the press toward its current commercial orientation (e.g. Baldasty 1992; Chalaby 1998), others emphasized different defining factors, including the emergence of mass politics or cultural consensus of the American society, in shaping the face of news production (Schudson 1978; Schiller 1981). Informed by American journalism histories that have moved beyond a progressive logic, my project on *Southern Weekend* is a paralleled investment on Chinese journalism history that has long been captured by a mirror image—the seemingly invariable political control and absence of freedom.

A social and cultural approach to post-Mao press also adds a non-western episode to the global history of journalism within the neoliberal moment. The influential *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert, Peterson, Schramm, 1956), though have been updated from the original context of Cold War (Nerone, 1995; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Christians et al., 2009), continued to cast a long shadow in thinking about media and communications in non-Western countries. The primary occupation with "free versus unfree" press assigned to different countries has already triggered multiple calls to broaden the conceptual framework (Ostini & Fung, 2002; Yin, 2008; Meng, 2010; Sparks, 2012). In the case of contemporary China, Colin Sparks argued earlier that the plural nature of Party-state, society, and media relations no longer supports a unitary press

model (Sparks, 2012). Focusing on a leading press market in post-Mao China for three decades, therefore, my project joins the recent efforts (e.g. Xin, 2012; Zhang, 2014) in producing media histories to enrich empirical evidence for further theorization. While, according to Clifford Christians and others (2009), the role of the western press varies from monitorial, facilitative, radical, to collaborative ones, the post-Mao Chinese press has yet come to comparable conceptualization as its previous "mouthpiece" role. The post-Communist press, in short, calls for nuanced analysis that grounded better by social specifics than unchanged theoretical entry points.

By telling this journalism history from the outside in, I also hope that the project on *Southern Weekend* can illuminate the ways in which news media entangled with the play of power in China where formal political discourses cannot represent a quickly stratifying post-Mao Chinese society. Gramsci once wrote that "in countries where there is a single, totalitarian, governing party…other parties in fact always do exist and other tendencies which cannot be legally coerced…political questions are disguised as cultural ones" (1988: 149). Concerning the popularity of the post-Mao press, it is logical to assume its importance in addressing emerging social interests and conflicts that reconfigure its relations with the Party-state and readership. Journalism culture, in other words, bears with it greater political relevance than the narrow lens of political control and resistance in countries like China.

Defining the "Popular"

I use the term "popular newspaper" for the project to refer to newspapers established and openly circulated during the post-Mao period. They include not only subsidiaries of Party

newspapers but also newspapers founded by various governmental units, professional and semi-social organizations, and—especially in the 1980s—unauthorized individuals. "Popular" here, first of all, refers to the market orientation of the post-Mao newspapers. Popular journalism in this project then broadly encompasses different kinds of post-Mao newspapers in their changing forms. Party newspapers and dailies, on the other hand, refer to newspaper titles established *before* the economic reform. Mostly affiliated with Party committees on municipal and provincial levels, Party newspapers continued to carry on the obligation to propagate Party-state policies and guide public opinion but also, like popular newspapers, initiated market reform.

Using "popular newspaper" has several benefits. It suspends the convenient connotations one gets from "tabloid" [*xiao bao*] as opposed to "serious newspapers." Within the dramatic evolvement of Chinese newspapers in the post-Mao period, the division of journalism between Party dailies and the newly-established papers was not always self-evident. Going popular in the rising consumer market, after all, has been a hegemonic turn of the Chinese press regardless of their bureaucratic origins. Using the term "popular" in this study helps us to open the room to understand different types of newspapers and their relationships without categorical assumptions.

To be sure, the term "tabloid" [*xiao bao*] continues to be used in referring to the post-Mao popular newspapers (e.g. Huang, 2001; Hendrischke, 2005) for at least two reasons. One is defined by the politics of their institutional relations. Similar to its western counterpart, the term *xiao bao* has the derogatory meaning of reporting the sensational, the trivial, and even the fabricated. Market orientation, after all, was the central metaphor of capitalism and dismissed in Mao's regime. To call the post-Mao popular newspapers "tabloids," generally speaking,

represents the lasting dominance of the Party press and ideology in policing the post-Mao expansion of the press.

The other possible reason is more tangible. Tabloids, *xiao bao* or literary "small newspapers," were used to describe the size of these newspapers as opposed to Party dailies which normally were printed on broadsheet-size papers (folded in half instead of quarters). In the 1980s, in particular, while the right to print was extended from Party committees to other governmental units, many of the newly-established papers were launched with limited resources. Those new comers, therefore, were normally in tabloid size. As I will discuss in chapter 1, these tabloids were also circulating in large quantity and often carrying dubious content especially in comparison with the Party dailies. The starting point of post-Mao newspapers, one may say, was the moment when the two branches looked most distant from each other. But as these newspapers evolved, the distinctions of "tabloid" waned. For *Southern Weekend,* its "de-tabloidization" happened in both senses of the word as it changed its journalistic paradigm as well as the size of the newspaper. In this project, I adopted the term "tabloid" only up to the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, or chapter 1, to acknowledge the messy but quickly evolving post-Mao press.

Some others also used "official vs. unofficial" (e.g. Link, 1985; Zhao, 2002) or "Party (organ) vs. non-Party (organ)" (e.g. Lee 2003: 158; Tong, 2011) to categorize these two types of newspapers. These terms highlight the institutional origins of the two. Even though both types of newspapers are state-owned until today, the differences between their affiliations with Party committees versus other administrative departments still hold significant explanatory power in

understanding their post-Mao fates. So I also use "Party newspapers" and "non-Party newspapers" whenever their political affiliations are emphasized.

In addition to these direct benefits in newspaper history, I also prefer the concept of "popular" which potentially links journalism to the field of cultural studies, two sub-disciplines coexisting uneasily together. As Barbie Zelizer put it, "journalism remains constrained by its somewhat reified but nonetheless instrumental respect for facts, truth, and reality" (Zelizer, 2004). Its commitment to modernism, in other words, seems conceptually unreflective from the perspective of critical cultural studies. A proposal on "cultural studies of journalism," I assume, would risk blasphemy in the journalism department while ineffably uninteresting to cultural and media scholars whose interpretative schemes have a much bigger space in the fictional world of literature, film, and television. Such tension between journalism and cultural studies in disciplinary epistemology also manifested in the division of research agenda between "news" and "entertainment." While journalism scholars are preoccupied with "news" and the role of the press in political communication, their definition of "politics" may be seen as stubbornly narrow by the other camp.

But journalism, indeed, is and has been entangled with cultural formation and had its place in cultural studies. The British school of cultural studies, for one, had journalism as a key focus for its work in the 1970s with an emphasis on class relations. In studying the relationship between the press and popular culture, Raymond Williams (1970, 1978) grounded his definition of the "popular" in the historical development of the British press in the nineteenth century. He identified how the radical political press was isolated and steadily incorporated along with the rise of the "respectable press" led by *The Times* and the emergence of Sunday papers. The

meaning of "popular" was defined by Williams in three different categories: (1) the old radical sense of "for the people" as represented in the political press of the 1890s; (2) an intermediate sense of "a skillful and vigorous combination of generalized political attitudes with the established popular reading materials"; and (3) the purely market sense as a steady movement away from independent political radicalism and a more open reliance on habitual tastes and markets (1978: 49).

Similarly, Stuart Hall, another key figure of British cultural studies, had used the case of British press history to emphasize the relation between culture and questions of hegemony. The rise of a new kind of popular press in mid-nineteenth century Britain, for Hall, not only was an active marginalization of the indigenous radical press but also of the process of changing class relations (2006). Hall extended Williams' ideas on cultural formation among the "dominant, residual, and emergent" (1977) to other forms such as incorporation, distortion, resistance, and negotiation; and he further destabilized the market definition of the "popular" as oscillating between pure autonomy and total encapsulation rather than "whole and coherent."

In addition, empirical work done by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham such as *Paper Voices: The Popular Press and Social Change, 1935-1965* (Smith, 1975) and *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (Hall, 1978) also investigated the interactions between the British press and broader sociopolitical changes, and studied journalism within the politics of public culture. In the introduction to *Paper Voices,* which was drawn from a longer research report published by the University of Birmingham in 1970, Stuart Hall identified the goal of the project as "to examine how the popular press interprets social change to its readers; and to explore and develop methods of close

analysis as a contribution to the general field of cultural studies." Newspaper journalism, according to Hall, was linked to the popular political consciousness assumed by the press in its readership (p.13). By comparing two British newspapers, the book found that the left-wing newspaper *Mirror* failed to challenge in post-war Britain the metaphor of "an unprecedentedly affluent society" portrayed by the Tories and supporting newspapers like the *Telegraph.* Journalism in both projects, in brief, was understood "as a structure of meanings rather than as a channel for the transmission and reception of news" (Smith, 1975: 17).

The early theoretical framework of British cultural studies in journalism was also shared by American counterparts and followers. In his critique to the field of journalism history, James Carey clearly defined journalism in terms of his cultural approach to communication as "one form of human imagination, shared by writers and readers, in which reality has entered consciousness in an aesthetically satisfying way" (1974). As a form of industrialized expression, journalism here is defined closer to what Raymond Williams called "structures of feeling" (1977). In a later attempt, James Carey traced the eclipse of public life in American history on the ground of press transformations and argued that "the real problem of journalism is that the term which grounds it—the public—has been dissolved, dissolved in part by journalism" (1987). His criticism here was directed against "a journalism of the expert and the conduit, a journalism of information, facts, objectivity, and publicity," as promoted by Walter Lippmann, that inherited and institutionalized in American history (p.14). These examples show that journalism and its politics locate beyond the narrow measures of political or economic autonomy. Popular journalism, especially, has its potential in revealing the key characteristics and elements of public life.

In Chinese studies, post-Mao research on popular culture has yet been located within the press and journalism until recent years (e.g. Cai, 2005). The definition of the "popular" therefore has stayed as a subject of much debate if not confusion. Baranovitch (2003) identified two common ways of understanding "popular" in contemporary Chinese history: one is associated with the Cultural Revolution during which the "popular" was produced and disseminated by the Party-state; the other, as presented in *Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic* (Madsen, Pickowicz, and Link, 1989), identifies the popular with the unofficial. In studying post-Mao popular music, Baranovitch found that, comparing to the 1980s, the permeating state power in the cultural scene intensified in the 1990s. He further argued that the relationship between popular culture and state power varied beyond the dichotomy of cooperation and resistance. Forms of symbiosis, assimilation, and collaboration have been evident. The politics of popular music has more to do with its changing relations with state power than the abstract measure of "freedom".

Bringing these discussions on the "popular" in cultural studies to post-Mao journalism, an explicit goal here for the project is to think about the relations between "the political" and "the popular" in Chinese journalism history. This, in fact, has been an integral part of a cultural situation where the quest for modernity in China initiated. To have a better historical context, a brief outline should be offered here.

Chinese Newspapers: an Overview

Outside the imperial system, journalism histories in the nineteenth century China were written predominantly along the lines between foreign [*wai bao*] and domestic [*min bao*]

undertakings. It was the time when the printing press ineluctably interacted with the maelstrom of conflicting political forces among the tottering Qing regime, colonial gunboat power, and the rise of reformists and revolutionary parties. With the strong agenda for renewing political power, propagating religious and modern knowledge, or modernizing the political system, the genre of "tabloid" seemed hardly relevant. Instead, three types of publication—the protestant press, the domestic press, and the commercial press—played a central role in the so-called Chinese *fin de siècle*.

Early missionaries from Britain began publishing periodicals as early as 1815 in Southeast Asia and expedited their inroads to mainland trading ports after the Opium War (1839-1842). As part of the extension of western journalism yet departing from its mainstream commercial model, the liberal wing of the protestant press had remarkably secularized toward Chinese social life by the late nineteenth century (Volz and Lee 2007; Tao, 2007). From promoting western science and technologies, advocating educational reform and participating in broad social issues through political criticism, the protestant press indeed served as the major source for the rise of the indigenous political press at the end of the nineteenth century in China (Zhang, 2007).

The years after China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war (1895) witnessed a surge of political papers and periodicals which soon surpassed the pre-1895 press in numbers, circulation, and political liveliness (Nathan, 1985), entering what Lin Yutang called the "Golden Age" of Chinese journalism (Lin, 1937: 114-130). Unlike the liberal protestant press which emphasized mass education as the role of journalism, however, these domestic papers and periodicals were deeply embroiled in national politics dominated by two groups of politician-journalists: the conservative-reformists led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, and the revolutionaries led by

Sun Yat-sen. Acclaimed by news historians as the founding norm of Chinese journalism, the political press prioritized editorials and debates over "news" to compete for followers. Ge Gongzhen, who wrote in the 1920s, applauded "the political papers for one thing relied on donations without profit-orientation; and for the other offered unequivocal opinions to guide readers. This is the right track of newspapers [*baozhi zhi zhenggui*] yet hard to be found these days" (Ge, 1925: 179). Zeng Xubai (1966), similarly, endorsed the political press as socially responsive because "at the time readers cared about what the newspapers thought [*yi*] instead of what happened [*shi*]" (Zeng: 193).

A third model of journalism also growing in Chinese treaty ports of the nineteenth century was the commercial press founded by foreign merchants. As Volz and Lee (2007) noticed, the secularization of protestant press in the late nineteenth century was a partial reaction to competing with those "ungodly" papers for influence. In the case of the immensely popular *Shenbao* (1872-1949) founded by the British merchant Ernest Major and others in Shanghai, cultural and political conservatism was apparent in its close lineage with classical literacy and urban consumer culture (Mittler, 2004; Tsai and Connect 2009). Despite its financial independence, *Shenbao* did not try to assert political leadership until Shanghai was bombed by the Japanese in the early 1930s (Wang, S., 1994). The widely read supplement of *Shenbao,* the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, was so well embedded in the urban life of Shanghai—advocating projects from running water system to city hygiene—that it did not say a word about the 1895 petitions for political reform or the turning point in Chinese political history toward the 1911 Revolution (Ye, 2003).

What Lin Yutang celebrated as the "Golden Age" of Chinese journalism between 1895 and 1911, however, did not include a fourth and less cared-about member—the modern tabloid press—growing along with the commercial press in Hong Kong, Shanghai and other treaty port cities. Founded toward the end of the nineteenth century by low and middle-ranking literati who relied on the marketplace for fame and profit, the tabloid press cast a sarcastic lens on a descending imperial court, representing the voices of outsiders and underdogs who lost their entry to the nation's political life after the imperial exam system was abolished in 1905 (Wang, J., 2012). Nourished by popular fiction, tabloids also embraced local leisure such as opium dens, gambling houses, and brothels, things the political press despised. After the Qing court turned to a reform agenda in its last years, the tabloid papers and magazines also relied heavily on social criticism to stay popular (Wang, 2007: 92-95).

After the Xinhai Revolution (1911) which ended the imperial rule of the Qing Dynasty, newspapers of the early Republic of China (ROC, 1912-1949 in the mainland) largely inherited the tradition of political press of the late Qing, relying mostly on political commentary instead of news and so "the hopes and fears of a paper depends on a few pens" (Zeng 1966: 263). The Nationalist (KMT) government established Party newspapers and news networks on both central and regional levels while factional papers within the Party or subsidized by regional warlords, the army, and other political juntos also prevailed and competed for power (Gao, 2005). While partisanship seemed to enhance the number of papers quickly, big commercial dailies such as *Shenbao* and *Xinwenbao* and a tabloid press continued to flourish. In 1920s and 1930s, more than a thousand tabloids—mostly published every three days—were circulating all kinds of

"inside stories," anecdotes, and celebrity news in Shanghai and other urban centers, establishing urban leisure as a genre in the print market (Meng, 2005: 20-21).

The momentous role played by the political press in the late Qing state of affairs continued the tradition of "literati politics" [*wenren lunzheng*] (Lee, 2008), and cast a long shadow in making and evaluating the Republican popular newspapers. The U.S. trained Deweyan scholar Hu Shi (a.k.a. Hu Shih, 1891-1962) complained in 1928 that "all Shanghai newspapers are dead, suffocated by the government; only a few tabloids occasionally spoke with some honesty" (Hu, 2001: 110-113). Lin Yutang, having witnessed the passing "Golden Age," lamented in 1930s the timid Party dailies and sensational tabloids as both insignificant and straying away from social life. For Lin, the flaccid Republican journalism was another example of the inverse relations between the government and the press in the power seesaw (Lin, 1937).

As such, the political press continued to carry forward the domination of national politics in Chinese newspapers and contained newspaper within the educated elites and political struggles. Japanese aggression in the 1930s further heightened the need for a press—for both the KMT and the CCP—as a powerful instrument of public enlightenment, national consciousness, and mass mobilization. The political urgency felt by Chinese elite intellectuals even twisted the imported American model of journalism education, the hands-on pragmatist curriculum from Missouri, and gave more weight to courses on propaganda techniques and government public relations rather than business related ones (Volz and Lee, 2009).

Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC, 1949-), in brief, late Qing and Republican newspapers split along the lines of the political and the popular. The two were not only independent of each other but also mutually exclusive: the political journals took pride

in their patriotic motives and devoted themselves mostly to essays of political dispute and advocacy; the commercial papers flourished in semi-colonial cities and became immersed in the burgeoning urban life and culture.

This divergence between the popular and the political in Chinese newspaper culture, however, was largely unified in Mao's China (1949-1976). After the socialist transformation when newspapers were quickly incorporated into the state-planned economy (Zhang, 2009; Huang, 2012), the press became an integral part of the Party-state bureaucracy for policy propagation and political mobilization. Regional dailies followed closely *People's Daily,* the newspaper affiliated with the Central Party Committee, in layout, page design, and typography while local news was discouraged and kept to the minimum unless an item might serve as a model case for national emulation. The "mouthpiece" theory of the press by Lenin found its fullest articulation in the Chinese Communist Party's press theory and has survived in multiple dimensions of Chinese media and ideological structure until today (Zhao, 2011). In Mao's top-down and centralized communication system where the press was essentially CCP's political speech in public, the meaning of "popular" in journalism was in its radical sense that the Party, proclaiming itself to be the vanguard of the proletariat, represents the interests of the people (Zhao, 1998: 19-22).

In addition, there were also special interest newspapers and an entertainment-and-lifestyle oriented tabloid sector within the Party press structure. Special interests newspapers targeted social groups such as workers, farmers, women, and the youth. *Workers' Daily,* for instance, was published by the Party's mass organization All-China Workers' Federation. In the late1950s and early 1960s, the Party also created 13 evening newspapers, most notably *Yangcheng Evening*

News in Guangzhou and *Beijing Evening News* in Beijing, as a form of popular culture for the urban population (Ibid: 129-131). Popular, in this second sense, was a skillful combination of widely-circulated cultural genres for party cadres, intellectuals, and a larger (mostly urban) readership as off-hour reading without deviating from the unitary national political agenda or the Party principle. The *Yangcheng Evening News* in Guangzhou, for instance, was known for "blending communism in chatting" and was popular among intellectuals and urban readers since its inception in 1957. Mostly shut down during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) for their distance from national politics, evening and special interest newspapers were revived in the post-Mao period and signaled the restoration of literary and cultural content in newspapers.

Historically, in sum, the division between political and popular press in China has not been resolved. In the rough account I sketched above, popular newspapers existed but only on the margin. If the early tabloids in semi-colonial port cities negotiated between classical literacy and urban consumer culture in late Qing China and embraced urban leisure in Republican China, the evening newspapers under Mao mediated between Party-state politics and the urban and intellectual life. The question for this project, simply speaking, is what has characterized popular newspapers in the post-Mao era as both Party-state owned and commercial. With a focus on *Southern Weekend,* a popular subsidiary of a provincial Party daily*,* this project will review the evolvement of the popular press within one of the most vibrant printing centers in post-Mao China to offer some answers.

Locating the Guangzhou Press

As the capital city in the southern province of Guangdong, Guangzhou has a relatively long history of trading activities with the west as a treaty port. In the modern period of China fraught with war and political turbulence, large numbers of Cantonese emigrated overseas after the Opium War (1840-1842), after which Hong Kong, the outer port area approximately 100 miles further south of Guangzhou, was ceded to British rule till 1997. As part of the Western Bloc during the Cold War, British Hong Kong had been cut off from Mao's China for three decades since 1949 even though waves of Guangdong refugees continued to cross the border to Hong Kong and overseas. The number of Cantonese expatriates, including those settled in British Hong Kong, reached nearly 10 million by 1949 and 20 million in the 1980s, accounting for about two thirds of the overseas Chinese population (*Guangdong Province Gazette,* 1996: 2-3; 374-5).

The history of the maritime economy and the prevalence of overseas connections—especially with British Hong Kong—continued to play a role in the fate of the province during the Maoist and post-Mao periods. In the 1950s and 1960s, national investment was concentrated in interior instead of coastal provinces. Guangdong, as one of the most exposed areas, not only received little new investment but had some of its existing facilities moved inland (Vogel, 1989: 36). Under Deng Xiaoping's economic reform, in contrast, overseas connections were redressed as not only legitimate but beneficial in inviting foreign capital and technologies. The shift, from Mao's self-reliant nationalism to Deng Xiaoping's strategic open policies, indicated another radical turn of Guangdong in relation to the domestic and the outside.

While overseas connections especially with and via Hong Kong played a vital role in bringing back desirable capital, technologies, and managerial personnels necessary for the open

reform, domestic migration has brought in millions of laborers to the region, making it the second most populous megacity in China today (OECD, 2015: 36-7). The residential population of Guangzhou grew from 4.93 million in 1979 to 8.06 million in 2010 (Statistical Bureau of Guangzhou: 2012); the migrant population, on the other hand, increased from 420,000 in 1989 to 3.91 million in 2006 (Yao et al., 2009). By 2010, people who lived in Guangzhou [*chang zhu ren kou*] regardless of their *hukou* or residential registration status had reached 12.7 million (Statistical Bureau of Guangzhou, 2011). A recent study shows that, between 1990 and 2005, more than 7.5 million inter-provincial migrants went to Guangdong, making it the number one destination within post-Mao China's human migration (Chan, 2013: 9). Standing at the forefront of economic reform, therefore, the printing press in Guangzhou has been part and parcel of the cultural formation in the precipitating post-Mao socioeconomic transformations.

Similar to other major cities in China, the newspapers in Guangzhou before the Cultural Revolution had three major components: (1) the provincial and municipal Party dailies (*Southern Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*), (2) one evening newspaper (*Yancheng Evening News*), and (3) a few special interests newspapers sponsored by corresponding governmental departments or institutions such as *Guangdong Police Gazette* [*Guangdong gongan bao*], *Guangdong Broadcasting* [*Guangdong guangbo*], and *Guangzhou Hygiene* [*Guangzhou weisheng*]. Following the Soviet press model, again, the provincial Party newspaper *Southern Daily* adhered closely to the central newspaper *People's Daily* and devoted limited space, usually no more than one out of four pages, to local news. The evening newspaper, on the other hand, was more reader-oriented by softening propaganda into human interest stories and columns. *Yangcheng*

Evening News in Guangzhou was known for its double subsidiary pages "*Flower Land*" [*hua di*] and "*Evening Gala*" [*wan hui*] drawing on local culture to promote reader participation.

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) brought in chaos to the press to various degrees, ranging from multiple interruptions to full suspension of publication. While *Southern Daily*, the provincial Party organ, closed its popular columns to relay more top-down (and long) speeches, the more intellectual and lively *Yangcheng Evening News* was shut down in 1966 or the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Other casualties in the same year included the *Guangdong Police Gazette* and *Guangdong Broadcasting*, both of which resumed publication approaching the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1975.

For the local press system, the end of the chaotic decade was signaled by both the resurrection of evening newspapers in the early 1980s and the emergence of newly-established papers and journals. The internal adjustment of Party dailies, though significant in their own right, was much less remarkable for local readers who witnessed the vigorous boom in newsstands and publications in the city. Unlike other smaller governmental and cultural institutions, the path of reform for the major Party organs remained constrained. For them, the spirit of reform was translated into restorative practices such as a renewed emphasis on local news and reviving popular columns and the use of bylines. In the case of *Guangzhou Daily*, for instance, the deadline was postponed to 10 pm and made flexible to accommodate the flow of daily news. *Yangcheng Evening News* added a group of columns on local life and later a daily news cartoon to one of the cover stories.

On the other hand, market orientation became desirable not only for governmental departments but also many other institutions which were less constrained by ideological

responsibilities. To be sure, to what extent market incentives could agree with the ongoing restorative practices in the newsroom was still unclear then, not to mention the exploratory role Guangdong now had on its shoulder for the national economic reform. But all momentum pointed to an experimental spirit. Before establishing *Southern Weekend* in 1984, the provincial Party paper *Southern Daily* had four pages and still, as one of the three major Party newspapers in Guangdong, entirely depended on state subsidies, subscription, and postal distribution. In the following three decades of development that this study covers, the southern city of Guangzhou had its number of newspapers grew from fewer than 10 in the late 1970s to 100 by 2010 circulating in local, regional, and national markets. These new members, what I have called popular newspapers, are the context within which *Southern Weekend* was established and evolved.

Organization of the Study

In general, the project will be structured according to the periodization and characterization of *Southern Weekend*'s journalism between 1984 and 2010. Particularly, there were three major expansions of the weekly newspaper that can serve as a timeline of its history. For each section, I generally follow the "outside in" pattern of first mapping the major social and institutional changes from which the press evolved, and then moving on to its dominant form of journalism to further understand the connections.

Part I, including chapter 1 and 2, covers the transitional period of the post-Mao era from the inauguration of *Southern Weekend* in 1984 to the year of 1991, or before its first expansion from four pages—a standard design of party papers—to eight in 1992. In contrast to the previous

practices under Mao, the booming popular press took on a significant "cultural turn" in journalism anchoring on a rising local identity. Chapter 1 begins with framing what constituted the turn or what kind of "culture" was mobilized by mapping the major types of newspapers in Guangzhou: Party dailies, non-Party popular papers, and the "Party-popular" as seen in the case of *Southern Weekend.*

A significant component of the cultural turn in journalism during the 1980s was the rising influence from Hong Kong and Taiwan as alternative sources. With the absence of national politics in the early *Southern Weekend*, a new geography started to emerge from its pages across the national border to incorporate cultural content from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other foreign countries. Chapter 2 analyzes this cultural formation and examines its structure, themes, and politics to understand the role *Southern Weekend* had played during the period.

Part II, including chapters 3 and 4, discusses the years from 1992 to 1999 when *Southern Weekend* stabilized its national circulation. The newspaper grew aggressively during this period and started to wade deeper into domestic social life. A new form of popular journalism, investigative reporting, had been established in the weekly newspaper by the end of the twentieth century while another form of popular journalism, the metro papers, quickly developed along urban clusters. Chapter 3 identifies the key institutional changes of the press in the early 1990s, including the labor force, and how they contributed to increasing conflicts when the weekly newspaper began to cover social news. Chapter 4 characterizes this new form of journalism, investigative reporting, in reference to institutional conditions as well as historical linkages.

Part III or chapter 5 deals with the continuous "up-scale" movement of *Southern Weekend* in its corporate stage in the 2000s when it shifted gear to political reporting. By the end of the first

decade of the twenty-first century, *Southern Weekend* was still a leading news weekly but no longer a "fighter" as it was in the late 1990s. The chapter first describes how the press changed in relation to political, economic, and also organizational factors, and then situate the most recent paradigm of political reporting within such contexts.

A note on methods

The project relies primarily on first-hand reading of the newspapers under study, including *Southern Weekend* since its inception in 1984 to 2010, and other major contemporary newspapers in Guangzhou. Meanwhile, I have relied on major trade and academic journals in China through documentary and archival research to understand the historical context. Previous research on media reform, journalism history, and the press was also consulted.

Chronological in first order, the study shifts its lens of research accordingly to capture the key changes of the newspaper in response to what I have called the "outside-in" approach. The first stage of journalism development in the 1980s, for example, was characteristic of the cultural and secular turn from radical politics to social-economic life. For Guangdong, in particular, this turn was marked by its reconnection with Hong Kong. In part I, therefore, I first map out the reviving printing market in Guangzhou through archival research and, in chapter 2, do a cultural analysis of how *Southern Weekend* reported on the "problem" of Hong Kong, the politics in practice, to examine the detailed connections between the newspaper and cultural changes.

Around the mid-1990s, *Southern Weekend* experienced a crisis of legitimacy while turning to reporting social life again within changing social conditions. In chapter 3, I focus on two cases to exemplify the unprecedented crisis and challenge the newspaper faced at the time; chapter 4 then

discusses how both emergent and unchanged conditions were translated into newsroom production of a new form of journalism. The evaluation of investigative journalism, again, highlighted the socio-historical sources of change instead of prominent individuals.

The final section or chapter 5 deals with the current stage of press reform when both the Party-state and corporate press exerted ascending power in the newspaper market and news production. I will outline their roles and link the political and economic situation to another new form of journalism, political reporting, by *Southern Weekend* to understand the politics of such a turn. Again, I mean to show the interaction between the press and changing social relations in which it located to characterize what "Party-popular" in the making means across time.

PART I

The 1980s of mainland China was a time of secularization in almost all aspects of social life. Many intellectuals recalled this period with nostalgia on the centrality of cultural expressions and ideological debates. New books were translated from abroad, avidly sought-after, read, and discussed like the resumed evening newspapers and tabloids. Guangdong province, especially, was standing at the historical and spatial forefront of China's open and economic reform—where the market was first introduced.

This section covers the transitional period from the early 1980s to 1992, when *Southern Weekend* initiated its first page expansion. The coming two chapters (1 & 2) will trace the broader change of the printing press in Guangzhou within both domestic and translocal contexts to understand how it took on distinct approaches to the post-Mao population in production and distribution. In particular, how did "culture" come to the center of journalism?

Relying primarily on archival research, chapter 1 begins with mapping the major types of newspapers in Guangzhou: Party dailies, non-Party popular papers, and the Party subsidiaries as represented by *Southern Weekend.* Chapter 2 takes a closer look at the trans-border cultural flow from Hong Kong, a major contributor of the cultural turn in journalism during the 1980s, as seen in the case of *Southern Weekend.*

CHAPTER 1 MAPPING THE REVIVING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE: TABLOID JOURNALISM OF GUANGZHOU IN THE 1980S

A synthetic culture is easy. An old culture is remote.

(Williams, R., 1967: 35)

Back to Life

Lin Li, a veteran journalist of the central newspaper *People's Daily,* wrote an essay for an internal journal in the spring of 1981 titled "*The Curious Case of Southern Newspapers*" (Lin, 1997) criticizing the tabloids flooding the city of Guangzhou. Lin had worked for *People's Daily* since 1947 and two major Party newspapers in Guangzhou—*Southern Daily* and *Guangzhou Daily*—before returning to his post in Beijing in the early 1970s. In his critical report signed by the pseudonym "guest of the Ram City" [*yangcheng ke*], or "Canton guest," Lin contrasted the decline of Party dailies with the rise of tabloids in Guangzhou newsstands and lamented the prevalence of such "vulgar and nonsensical" journalism.

> *Southern Daily,* the newspaper of the provincial Party Committee, shrank in circulation from the highest 980,000 to 600,000; the municipal Party paper *Guangzhou Daily* went down from 300,000 to 180,000; the rural edition of *Southern Daily* dropped from nearly 400,000 before the Cultural Revolution to merely 60,000…the only Party paper that increased in circulation was the *Yangcheng Evening News* which resumed publication in early 1980 and reached almost one million in distribution.
>
> (Lin, 3 Mar.1981)

What disturbed Lin more, it seems, was not only the disparity between two types of newspapers in circulation but also the role that the Party played in the new market conditions. Among the eight papers he randomly collected from a street vendor, *Southern Wind* [*nan feng*], *Golden Times* [*huangjin shidai*], *Flower Land* [*baihua yuan*], *Guangzhou Hygiene* [*Guangzhou weisheng*] and *Screen and Stage* [*wutai yu yinmu*] were supervised by provincial or municipal cultural organizations. Lin was most outraged by these sponsors that included, in the case of

Golden Times, the provincial Party committee of Guangdong! After surveying a few news stories and styles, Lin ended his diatribe by taking issue with the local government who "seemed so careless about the content of publications that completely gave up their leadership on the ideological front."

The voice of Lin was suggestive of the state of Guangzhou newspapers at the turn of 1980 or the so-called post-Mao reform age. It at least represented the anxiety of established power against an emergent order in urban newspaper production. In his encounter with the Guangzhou newsstands, Lin found on the front page of *Golden Times* a serial fiction reprinted from *Cheng Ming Monthly,* a banned political journal published in Hong Kong. Indeed, a large amount of content in these publications was adapted or simply recycled from foreign materials—Russian novels, British movies, Japanese stories—with saucy visual elements added to attract readers. Lin expressed a deep moral concern about the potential threat of capitalist culture that might make the opening south not only a special economic zone (SEZ) but also a cultural one. These "chop-suey," "pages and pages of…nonsense," and "dazzling content" in Lin's eyes were by no means compatible with the socialist project of economic reform no matter how vaguely it was defined at the post-Mao moment.

The anxiety of Lin could largely attest to the lively reading public that Perry Link witnessed in Guangzhou and elsewhere in 1979 and 1980. Link estimated the popular readership, mostly young people and workers in the city, at around one million (1985). Except for daily news, Link observed, literature, especially those translated foreign fictions, was the most sought-after reading material in local public libraries, bookstores, post-offices and newsstands. Avid readers were found gathering at postal offices for the resumed *Yangcheng Evening News* whose daily

circulation jumped from around 200,000 to 510,000 in less than three months (Link, 1985: 226; Song, 2009: 25; Lu, 2009; Huang & Chen, 1985). *Literary Works,* the provincial literary journal of Guangdong, was circulating at 460,000 in early 1980 while the municipal affiliated literary journal *Guangzhou Literature and Art* at 300,000; both topped the circulation in China of literary periodicals at their levels (Link, 1985: 240).

It was within this expansion of print production that a sea change of press culture in the post-Mao era is to be understood. The provincial capital Guangzhou and the larger Guangdong province—the size of a major European nation—have been widely recognized as leading economic change in post-Mao social transformations as the "South Gate." Probably earlier than elsewhere, the challenge to Party media was evidenced by the first "tabloid wave" of Guangzhou city in 1979 and 1980 which caught the attention of the visiting journalist and further investigation.

Indeed, when *Yangcheng Evening News* resumed publication in the early 1980 with previously well-received cultural columns and became the only rising star among Party papers, more than a dozen new weeklies and journals hit the market in the same year and next in Guangzhou (Appendix A). Unofficial prints with mixed institutional identities tested the Party line even more vigorously, quickly forging a "special economic zone" in post-Mao newspaper production.

But Lin and Party hardliners alike were not only concerned about the soaring numbers of non-Party publications. They were more apprehensive of what was defining a Party publication when many of the morally suspicious papers now involved Party sponsors. Was this scene an irony of reform policies? What kinds of popularizing strategies have been adopted by Party and

non-Party papers respectively? What did they share within the same local media ecology in transition? What characterized their relationships in competing for readers? To begin answering these questions, we have to first look at three types of newspapers: the Party dailies, the boisterous non-Party tabloids, and the Party tabloids at the post-Mao moment.

1.1 Establishment of Guangzhou Newspapers

After the Chinese Communist Party took power of mainland China in 1949, news institutions went through series of Mao's socialist transformation. Newspapers established during the Nationalist government (1912-1949) or before, including the KMT Party press, commercial newspapers and tabloids, were mostly shut down, confiscated or transformed (Liu, 1971: 131). The Party press of CCP, again, is composed of two major groups according to their affiliations: newspapers linked with Party committees on different administrative levels—so-called Party organs—and those sponsored by mass organizations and professional societies such as the Communist Youth League and writer's associations—so called non-Party papers.

The Party press system before the reform era, including Party organs and non-Party newspapers, was fully integrated into Party and governmental bureaucracy of different levels. The qualification for a government unit to sponsor a newspaper was determined by its bureaucratic ranking. For each administrative rank—central, provincial, municipal, and county level, the newspaper must be supervised by a governmental unit ranked no lower than the area of its circulation. In other words, the jurisdiction of the sponsor overlapped with (if not larger than) the assigned territory of the newspaper. For national newspapers, the sponsoring unit must be a central ministry [*bu*] or be of an equivalent rank; for provincial newspapers, it must be a

provincial bureau [*ting*/*ju*] or of equivalent—if not higher—rank, and so forth (Chan, 2002). County Party Committees rarely published papers of their own but, more often, the provincial newspaper published a rural edition aiming to serve the counties and communes. Newspapers sponsored by mass organizations targeted special groups such as workers, women, and the youth or a specific area of content such as education, health, and technology. But structurally they were less penetrative compared to the Party organs. Some major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Xi'an, and Shenyang also had an evening newspaper, totaling 13 across the country before the Cultural Revolution, usually representing a softened Party voice and stronger local and intellectual orientations. So much are the open publications—newspapers and periodicals.

There are also internal publications printed by and circulated mostly within schools, colleges, factories, and other public institutions. Their circulation could range from a few hundred to more than ten thousand—in the case of large state-owned manufacturing plants, for instance. The army also had its own military press organized in accordance with its internal structure (Cheung, 2011: 128-149). At times, these internal publications could "transgress" into public circulation as we will see below. But generally they could not compare with open publications in cultural influence especially when top-down regulation came quickly into place.

It should be noted that both open and internal publications concentrated heavily in urban areas and especially provincial capitals where provincial and municipal departments abounded. Rural areas have been largely dominated by oral communication despite repeated efforts such as newspaper reading groups and the establishment of rural editions in sending newspapers downwards. A report in 1963 revealed that of the eleven model counties [*xian*] where eighty or

ninety percent of their production brigades subscribed to the rural edition of *Southern Daily*, seven were near Guangzhou due to easier transportation (Liu, 1971:143).

Like most provincial capitals in mainland China during the 1950s, Guangzhou had two Party dailies, the provincial *Southern Daily* (est.1949) and the municipal *Guangzhou Daily* (est.1952). Probably in recognition of intellectual and popular culture in disseminating Party news, the provincial government of Guangdong launched *Yangcheng Evening News* during the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957 as a subsidiary of *Southern Daily* (Zhao, 1998: 129-131). Except for the interruptions in the Cultural Revolution, the three newspapers constituted the backbone of the Party press system for the following decades in the region and grew into three powerful media conglomerates—the "new mainstream" of the press today (chapter 5).

Outside the Party trio, only a number of special weeklies were founded before the end of the Cultural Revolution. In the early 1950s, most of these new publications were established in line with the political agenda in national security, public health, and—in the case of Guangdong—issues of overseas connections. *Guangdong Police Gazette* [*Guangdong gong'an bao*] and *Guangzhou Hygiene* [*Guangzhou weisheng*] both came out in 1951; *Guangdong Radio* [*Guangdong guangbo bao*] and *Guangdong Expatriates* [*Guangdong qiaobao*] were launched in 1955 and 1956, respectively. All of them were weeklies or bi-weeklies directly linked to and produced by a governmental department, office, or media institution.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed mostly shutdowns rather than establishments in cultural production. During the Cultural Revolution, institutions were at best chaotic, if not completely paralyzed, when many people with specialized knowledge were cleansed or driven to rural areas. It was indeed a decade of "de-intellecutalization" of the press (Liu, 1971:149). In Guangzhou, all

papers suffered similar closure or years of suspension except for the provincial organ *Southern Daily,* which was interrupted only briefly for two weeks in 1967 (Yang: 2009: 7-9). The others, including *Yangcheng Evening News, Guangdong Police, Guangdong Radio, and Guangzhou Expatriates,* were all forced to fold in 1966 and did not resume until the end of the ten-year perdition. Even the municipal *Guangzhou Daily* went out of print in 1967 and returned after a hiatus of five years when all columns of general interest, regarded as "bourgeois practices of journalism," were gone.

Restorative initiatives were taken in the last few years of the Cultural Revolution. A technical weekly, *Guangdong Science and Technology* [*Guangdong keji bao*], was published in 1973 by the Guangdong Association of Science and Technology. This was probably a response to the urgent need for knowledge and learning by the end of the decade-long suspension of education. A few other establishments in the 1970s seemed to be addressing similar needs for the younger generation. The municipal *Guangzhou Daily* had printed a weekly paper called *Guangzhou Youth News* [*Guangzhou qingshaonian bao*] since 1972. The provincial Party committee of the Communist Youth League opened a 48-page monthly journal *Guangdong Youth* [*Guangdong qingnian*] in 1973, re-named *Golden Times* in 1981, featuring youth related topics from introducing role models like the revolutionary Sun Yat-sen to practical discussions on romantic relationships, job market, and self-study guides (*Golden Times,* 4. 1981). In 1979, two years after the national exam for colleague resumed, a special paper *Guangdong Enrollment* [*Guangdong zhaosheng bao*] began to publish information for the back-to-school generation.

For a city of over 2.8 million in 1982 (Yang, 2009: 371*)*, including many whose education was interrupted during the Cultural Revolution, a pressing need to know and to catch-up was

strikingly high after the three-decade dominance of national politics within the Cold War order. For Guangdong, an immediate repercussion was to re-connect with the outside through personal networks. Leonard Chu in 1980 recorded that:

> People in Hong Kong and elsewhere have been flooded with letters from their relatives asking for specific brands of TV sets, cassette radios or watches. Some of the brands are even unknown to the letter receivers. At Shumchun (i.e. Shenzhen or the first Special Economic Zone in Guangdong and China, my note), the Chinese town bordering Hong Kong, people carrying TV sets on bamboo poles have become a common sight for the past year.
>
> (Chu, 1989: 141)

Meanwhile, the Party organ *Southern Daily* still remained a close follower of *People's Daily*, a lasting practice known as "small papers copied big papers, big papers copied the central paper" [*xiaobao chao dabao, dabao chao zhongyang*] during the Cultural Revolution (Lu, 1994). In a limited response to the reviving cultural landscape, *Southern Daily* claimed to achieve "four 60 percents" in its production, including "60 percent on local content among which 60 percent on news" (Yang, 2009: 20). Compared to *People's Daily*, nonetheless, *Southern Daily* in 1980 contained even less local news produced by its newsroom. Ip and Wong found that the ratio of content relayed from the central Xinhua News Agency versus produced by its own staff, by comparison, was 70:12 for *Southern Daily* and 54:44 for *People's Daily* (as cited from Bishop, 1989: 156-157). *Southern Daily* remained the least radical in news reform in the following years, a "rear-guard," within the local media ecology.

It is true that Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic reform agenda of "*feeling the stones while crossing the river*" did not equip the media with specific guidelines to spell out the grand introduction of the market even though it was legitimized in principle. But as the national lab for reform, Guangdong province was given more independence to respond to its own needs and moved

boldly in introducing market practices in almost all areas of social life. The border between Guangdong province and British Hong Kong re-opened, with ongoing transportation projects and simplifying procedures for crossing. This radically ended Mao's closed-door policies since 1949. One of the popular puns during the 1980s "*East, south, west, north or central, for money you go to Guangdong*" [*dong-nan-xi-bei-zhong, facai dao Guangdong*] indicated the spirit of enterprising individuals in the changing social map. In only a few years, Guangzhou drew in 880,000 migrants from across the country, accounting for more than one third of local residents in 1986 (Yang, 2009: 377). How the printing press responded to the emergent social changes is one key entrance to understand the cultural changes of the reform era.

Decentralization & new comers

One crucial shift in newspaper production in the post-Mao era involved the units and organizations that were able to print, a result of institutional decentralization in general. Administrative departments and public institutions in science and technology, education, culture, sports, public hygiene, law enforcement, and economy were not only legitimate but now aspiring publishers. Additionally, even though private media ownership was—and still is—virtually out of the question, these quasi-social groups including Party-affiliated mass organizations (labor unions, women's federation, and the Communist Youth League), the nine satellite "democratic parties," and various professional associations and academic societies started to establish their media voices (Wu, 2000). The capability to print was uneven, generally easier for cultural institutions or departments with direct access to intellectual resources than others. Among them, Guangzhou Cultural Association, Guangzhou TV station, Guangzhou Institute of Literature and

Art Research, Guangdong Playwright Association, Guangdong Legal Press and Guangzhou Lingnan Art Publishing House, just to name a few, all started their own paper or periodicals in the early 1980s (Appendix B).

One can argue that decentralization of media power and subsequent abundance of media outlets especially below the provincial level may contribute to the trend of localization in print culture, but they do not necessarily mean ideological pluralism. Keeping in mind the full integration and control of Party organs within bureaucratic hierarchies, decentralized newspaper production in the early 1980s might be feeding the informational need of economic reform *while* rebuilding the power of the propaganda system, potentially a double movement of "containment and resistance" (Hall, 2006: 443). Did the skepticism of Lin Li on the southern newspapers point to a regional formation or, more significantly, an ideological divergence between Party and non-Party sectors?

The post-Mao tabloids were blessed by a set of optimum conditions. As noted, the structural decentralization of the Chinese media from national capital to regional localities, and from central Party system to functional departments and branches in the government significantly transformed the overall structure of media outlets. In addition, the newly found freedom also offered access to urban newsstands and the emergent local advertisers. The institutional link between the affiliated unit [*zhuban danwei*] and its paper—usually described as *guo kao*, hitch-up or lean on—was at best loose if not nominal (Wu, 2000: 55). Though editorial capacity was in general limited, many of these publications exploited additional sources to feed their publications. The influx of popular materials from Hong Kong, especially, was crucial in supplying content for print.

Along with the scattering of production, publishers and distributors went even further beyond top-down planning. When the distribution of Party organs still depended predominantly on the postal network, private newsstand owners and printers in the 1980s started to grow in the urban market. Retail print sellers soon developed into a two-tier distribution network. The first-tier dealers, usually referred to as the "newsstand heads" [*baokan tou*] or wholesalers, would buy in a variety of newspapers and periodicals from multiple publishers and then sell them in smaller quota to the second-tier or individual newsstand owners. In the 1980s, newspaper wholesalers gradually connected with their counterparts in other provinces and formed interprovincial distribution networks across the country. In Guangzhou, for instance, there were three newspaper wholesalers which the early *Southern Weekend* quickly grasped for its national distribution (Zuo, 2008: 202).

In most cases, semi-social organizations and their publications depended heavily on the private distribution networks. *Weekend Pictorial* [*zhoumo huabao*], a popular weekly produced by Guangdong Lingnan Art Publishing House in Guangzhou, boasted a circulation in more than 80 cities across the nation (Hu, 1984: 43-44). In 1984, nearly 60 tabloids sold on Guangzhou newsstands were circulating between three and four million *daily* (Xin, 1986: 27-29). Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning province in northeast China or as far as 3,000 miles away from Guangzhou, found multiple tabloids produced from Guangdong province in 1984 (*Campaigns in Guangdong,* 1984: 5). In other cases, one popular tabloid was recycled by multiple printers in different areas, often without formal contracts. A Guangzhou tabloid banned in 1985, *Xiang Qiao* (*Scented Bridge*), was produced in the adjacent Guangxi province, re-printed and distributed by a wholesaler in Zhaoqing of western Guangdong as well as the printer of a local publisher in

Guangzhou (Xin, 1986). Thus, the proliferation of tabloids was far from a regional phenomenon as Lin Li reported. In fact, the cover story on *Golden Times* that sparked his outrage in 1981 was reprinted from *Heilongjiang Youth* or a provincial journal from Northeastern China. It pointed to a broad network of production and distribution beyond regional boundaries or official assignment and even, in Lin's case, his imagination.

1.2 The Non-Party "Popular"

From Party organs to semi-official and complete underground papers, a remarkable market craze hit both in and outside the Party press system. At a glance, the post-Mao papers in the 1980s—including the newborn and resumed ones—probably just looked as outdated to any contemporary eye. Usually half size of the dailies, most of the papers were still printed in a four-page format as most Party papers were. They could only print black and red colors, and continued to carry calligraphy by Party officials as mastheads. They looked largely but not voluntarily similar to each other on a newsstand while competing for post-Mao readers. For most of them, exclusives were rare while filler material such as literary articles, short stories, and anecdotes were quite often recycled without clear acknowledgment. Freelance writing across news institutions and provinces was common. This further made the newspaper look similar at the time.

Compared to Party dailies, tabloids published by semi-social groups in the 1980s were run on a much smaller scale. Nationally, the average size of the workforce in 1983 was merely 9 people in tabloids versus 129 in provincial and municipal Party organs, which normally owned their own publishing plant, distribution units, and dining halls (*China Journalism Yearbook* [CJY],

1984: 55). *Southern Daily* in 1982 employed a total 891 hands, including 272 newsroom staff, 8 political cadres [*zhenggong ganbu*], 101 administrative personnel (the three groups above were "cadres" [*gan bu*]) and 510 workers in production and logistic departments (CJY, 1982: 269). The number remained stable throughout the 1980s (*Guangdong Provincial News Gazette*: 179). The municipal *Guangzhou Daily* had a workforce of 382 in 1982, including 179 newsroom staff and 113 in publishing. The number grew to 707 in 1989 with 220 working in the newsroom (CJY, 1990: 382). In contrast, *Football* [*zu qiu*], the best-selling tabloid published by *Guangzhou Daily*, had 12 newsroom staff and a total of 18 at work. The popular *Weekend Pictorial* [*zhoumo huabao*] published by Guangdong Lingnan Art Publishing House was founded by only 3 staff in 1980 and grew to 9 in 1984 (Huang, 1997; Hu, 1984).

Judging from the size of newsroom, the gap of circulation between Party organs and tabloids seemed only more ironic. In a defense against Lin's accusation on Guangzhou tabloids, Huang Wenyu, the former director of *Southern Daily,* quoted that "[*Weekend Pictorial*] is a laudable enterprise which reached one million in circulation by only three staff!" (Huang, 1997). And this seems to be the reality for most new tabloids. Even the provincial subsidiary *Southern Weekend* had a modest 8 news editors upon inauguration in 1984. And the number remained less than 20 until 1992 (Yan, 1986: 29-30).

At a time when the circulation of *Southern Daily* dropped to 600,000 with its 891-staff workforce, the market success of tabloids was indeed striking. No doubt, actual readership did not directly link to the official number of circulation (even if accurate) since Party organs were mostly subscribed and read in work units—offices, reading rooms, and public spaces—by multiple readers. Conversely, the newly-minted tabloids exploited heavily the rising cash

economy in urban streets for individual consumption. However, the comparison of newsroom workforce was meaningful in explaining the practices and forms of journalism, a starting point both Party and non-Party tabloids stood at and eyed ahead. For non-Party tabloids, the limits of newsroom productivity decisively opened the paper not only to other publications but also to writers from across various professions and social standings. Reprints and open submission became so common that some tabloids opened up not only "letters from readers" or "Q & A" columns but the entire paper to freelance and amateur writers. *Yuehai Literary & Art Tribune* [*yuehai wenyi bao*] advertised in 1985 calling for contribution to all major columns, including (1) news on the literary field in China and abroad; (2) interviews and editorial reportage on domestic and foreign writers; (3) literature by well-known writers home and abroad; (4) prose, essays, commentaries on culture; and (5) painting, photography and comic strips (*Yuehai Literary & Art Tribune, 4*, 1985: 4).

Regular demand of numerous tabloids encouraged many to be part-time writers. And a proliferation of night schools and remedial classes in Guangzhou since 1979 further encouraged off-hour learning, vocational training, and self-education. As informal sources for newspapers, however, freelance contributors tended to submit across provincial territories to whichever publication seemed fit. Hu Haizhou, a self-educated peasant from the southwest (inland) province of Yunnan, had been publishing articles in multiple tabloids, including *Southern Weekend,* of different provinces and eventually became qualified to join the local writers' association (Hu, 2006).

The ready repertoire of non-news content, especially popular literature, film, and TV stories, at once nourished the tabloid boom and relocated journalism toward cultural journalism. In an

interview with *Modern Mankind* [*xiandai ren bao*], a tabloid founded by the Foreign Trade Association in 1985, Huang Wenyu emphasized that the diversification of subsidiaries was one major approach to the post-Mao press reform since "news [*xinwen*] remained the most difficult ground of change" (*Modern Mankind,* 4 Dec 1985: 1). Popular cultural forms and activities, instead, became a convenient repository to break from the "fake, grand, and shallow" [*jia da kong*] journalism of the Party dailies. A glance at the title of tabloids established in the early 1980s would also give us an idea of such a collective "cultural turn" in tabloid journalism: *Weekend Pictorial* [*zhoumo huabao*]*, Stage and Screen* [*wutai yu yinmu*], *Guangdong Police Pictorial* [*Guangdong fazhi huabao*], *Guangdong TV Weekly* [*Guangdong dianshi zhoubao*], *Intro to Film & TV* [*yingshi jieshao*], *Youth Art* [*shaonian wenyi bao*], *Story Weekly* [*gushi zhoubao*], *Cultural Reference* [*wenhua cankao bao*], *Chinese Poetry* [*Huaxia shi bao*], *China Modern Pictorial* [*zhongguo xiandai huabao*], *Coastal Culture* [*yanhai dawenhua bao*], etc. A study by the Municipal Propaganda Department in 1984 reported that local tabloids printed "44% on martial arts fictions, 32% on detective stories; 9% on romance, 10% on supernatural stories, and 5% contained explicit sexual content" (Xin, 1986). "Fist and Pillow" [*quantou jia zhentou*], it concluded, became the major themes of the flooding tabloids.

Culture, that is, became an immediate stamp of mass appeal for the tabloids even though some exploited it more than others. An attempt to negotiate between "knowledge and fun" [*zhishixing, quweixing*] as well as "high and low culture" [*yasu gongshang*] characterized such a turn of tabloid production. *Modern Mankind* (est. 1985) boasted "no dogmatism, no official tone, including high and low, refreshing eyes and minds" on a full-page ad (1 Sept 1986: 6). *Golden Times*, the paper associated with the provincial Party committee of the Communist

Youth League, printed fiction, book reviews, humor, epigrams, and anecdotes from various sources. *Cultural References* [*wenhua cankao* bao] (est.1987), a tabloid co-sponsored by the Cultural Journalist Society of Guangzhou, the China Music Company, and a private electronic company, claimed to cover cultural news in and outside of China while featuring one page out of four for literature and another one on miscellaneous forms of "culture."

Keeping in mind the small size of production for most tabloids, the heavy reliance on reprints from other publications and cultural forms was unsurprising. Due to the flexibility of timeliness, the general turn to cultural materials perpetuated the trend of reprint. The newspaper drew regularly on writers outside its own newsroom, soliciting writing pieces from journalists in central media institutions as well as unemployed freelance writers. That also meant in most cases bylines were rarely used, acknowledgements casual, and pseudonyms were common as it has been for literary writers.

When licensed and commercially oriented printers took full advantage of their legal status and published subsidiaries, special editions, or simply extra copies for profit, there was a big and elusive collection of semi-official and underground publications. Semi-official tabloids here refers to internal publications that were temporarily tolerated in their adventure in public sales. *Red Bean* [*hong dou*], for instance, published by college students in the Chinese department of Sun Yat-Sen (Zhongshan) University in Guangzhou were printed at 3,500 copies per issue and sold at 0.35 Yuan a copy in downtown areas by students (Link, 1985: 244; Su, 2003: 168). Along with completely underground and more radical journals such as *People's Road* [*renmin zhi lu*] and *Life* [*shenghuo*] by young workers in the city calling for political reform, these student and unofficial magazines belonged to the bottom-up democratic movement started in the late 1970s

in multiple cities that was quickly quelled. They became, unsurprisingly, the least mentioned group of post-Mao newspapers (Liu, 1985). It was difficult to trace their circulation as a separate category now. Yet it is fair to suggest that most registered and underground prints found their final outlets on private newsstands, contributing to the tabloid wave in 1984 and 1985 when up to 80 tabloids were available in the city of Guangzhou (Bishop, 1985: 149)—a number 2 to 4 times larger than official records (CJY, 1986; *Guangzhou News Gazette*: 948-960).

1.3 Early Adventure of Party Tabloids

Many have recognized the divergence of Party journalism in post-Mao newspapers, one reminiscent of Party journalism in the previous decades while its pilot project experimented with the market vigorously (e.g. Lee, 1994, 2000; Zhao, 1998). Commercialization of the newspaper or the integration of the newspaper into an emerging system of market relations here has three senses: first, newspapers now disseminated market news such as prices current therefore promoting the development of the market; by introducing advertisers as an income source, it also directly serves the sales of products and services in the market; and lastly, the newspaper promoted itself as a commodity for sale (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001: 71). Before the end of the Cultural Revolution, none of these functions existed while newspaper was primarily serving a highly nationalized political life within a command economy or Mao's socialist project of modernity. As mentioned before, newspapers before the 1980s were predominantly consumed through public subscription and delivered by the post-office, so-called *youfa heyi* or the integration of distribution with postal services.

Except for a couple of special tabloids, the response of Party dailies in Guangzhou to the market was generally cautious (Song, 2009: 21-22; CJY, 1988: 435). Major Party establishments did not break the ice until the mid-1980s or the height of the non-Party tabloid wave. Instead, three provincial campaigns were launched by the Guangdong Propaganda Department to license both open and internal publications in 1980, 1982, and 1984 (*Development and management,* 1986). Further restriction was imposed in late 1985 by the Central Propaganda Department, halting new licenses except for economic publications (Ibid). Even though these regulatory measures were ineffective in curbing tabloid publication as a whole, it did make unlicensed publications more vulnerable to punitive campaigns. In April 1985 alone, 350,000 copies of 11 tabloids were directly confiscated; regulatory mandates were issued later the same year (*Circular 79,* 1985) and multiple distribution portals for tabloids, such as railway stations, piers, downtown terminals, and major hotels were targeted for regular surveillance and irregular raids commanded by the office of Social and Cultural Management under the Municipal Cultural Bureau (Xin, 1986).

Regardless, the emerging market still offered increasing space that accommodated the top-down mandate to curb tabloids while advancing reform policies on marketization in general. Special weeklies on market information, in particular, formed a strong current in newspaper making since the mid-1980s for both Party organs and non-Party organizations. Nineteen papers and periodicals on the topics of market and economy were established in Guangdong from late 1984 to 1986 alone in response to the top-down regulation (*Development and management,* 1986). For Party organs, many incipient experiments involved partnership with trading or commercial organizations. Quite often, their networks of co-sponsorship went across the

boundaries between governmental and private agencies. *Information Times* [*xinxi shibao*], published twice a week since January 1984, listed *Guangzhou Daily* as the publisher along with five other private and governmental organizations as co-sponsors, including an investment company, two local branches of national banks, an institute of economic research, and a governmental department (CJY, 1987: 462; 1990: 384). Similarly, the provincial *Southern Daily* teamed up with the Foreign Economic and Trade Commission of Guangdong [*Guangdong duiwai jingji weiyuanhui*] and published *Overseas Market* [*haiwai shichang*] in February 1984. *Canton-Hong Kong Information* [*yuegang xinxi bao*], published by *Yangcheng Evening News* since January 1985, allied eight organizations including the Economic and Trade Commission of Guangdong and a state-owned trade company registered in Hong Kong (Lin, 2004; Wu, 2010: 1177-1178).

Inter-departmental partnership in newspaper publishing was actively pursued to compete for advertising money especially from state-owned enterprises that were affiliated with the sponsors of newspapers. In practice, the lists of sponsorship could reach up to 20 different partners that suggested potential "rent seeking" behaviors as well as competition among government units for extra revenue. It also raised the question of financial arrangements and cooperation. Take the *Canton-Hong Kong Information* [*yuegang xinxi bao*] for example. Its sponsor, the Provincial Economic and Trade Commission of Guangdong, proposed to establish an economic newspaper in order to compete with the municipal-sponsored *Information Times* which, at the time, was in preparation. The Provincial Economic and Trade Commission proposed to fundraise 50,000 yuan from each of the eight co-sponsors but nobody else, except itself, did so. The only other contribution came from the state-owned company in Hong Kong, which gave a fax machine and

a van to the new establishment (Liu, 2000: 59). Therefore, it seemed unlikely that most co-sponsors served more than nominally in real production or editorial responsibilities. "They did not have any real commitments," a journalist commented, "the only incentive is the potential market of information. They did not want affiliated enterprises to give their advertising money to other governmental sponsored papers" (Ibid).

In comparison, most of these non-Party tabloids seemed to be affiliated with a smaller sponsoring network. And they also tended to rely more heavily on private business for financial contributions. *Hong Kong and Macau Economic Clippings*, for one example, was sponsored by the Research Institute of Hong Kong-Macau Economy and the Guangdong Research Center for Social and Economic Development. On its inaugural issue, the paper credited a local washing machine manufacturer for a half-page celebratory ritual, apparently an ad yet interestingly presented in the lingering style of the socialist age (27 Oct 1984: 4). In other cases, newspapers built up even closer ties to budding private enterprises of the local market. *Micro-economic News*, again a paper affiliated with a research institution of economy, invited to its third anniversary a list of rural entrepreneurs including farm operators, factory managers, county leaders as well as experts in related fields (15 Jan 1985: 1). On the same page of the anniversary announcement was an ad for a local hotel where the celebration was held.

Understandably, non-party tabloids of the mid-1980s emphasized "information" [*xin xi*] and "economy" [*jing ji*] as the buzz words in new establishments. To name a few: *Guangdong Price* [*Guangdong jiage* bao]*, Canton-Hong Kong Entrepreneurs* [*yuegang qiyejia bao*]*, Price Information* [*jiage xinxi bao*]*, Hong Kong and Macau Economic Clippings* [*gang'ao jingji jianbao*], *Ram City Information Times* [*yangcheng xinxi bao*]*, Southern Market Information*

[*nanfang shichang xinxi*]*, Micro-economic News* [*xiao jingji daobao*], and *Asian-Pacific Economic Herald* [*yatai jingji shibao*] (Appendix B). Even the Provincial Propaganda Department of Guangdong founded an economic tabloid *China Golden Herald* [*zhongguo jin bao*] (1989-1990). During the post-Tiananmen rectification of the print market, an attempt was made by the Provincial Propaganda Department to consolidate the major economic and market papers—*Information Times, Canton-Hong Kong Information,* and *China Golden Herald*—into the *South China United Times* [*huanan lianhe shibao*]. But the project aborted, in the end, as re-organization of leadership and staff across multiple bureaucratic ranks became extremely cumbersome (Liu, 2000: 59-60). These non-Party tabloids, in brief, were enabled by governmental units within market conditions yet also disabled by their double identities. This moment should be kept in mind for an interesting comparison with that of a decade later in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when top-down consolidation was imposed under a different market condition—and succeeded (chapter 5).

The turn to "culture" and "economy," finally, should not be seen simply as separate paradigms in tabloid production. Top-down regulation of the tabloid market clearly upheld economic development at the center of its policies. The legitimization of the market in post-Mao China starting from the south pointed to a process of "politicization of the economy" which, paradoxically, was in line with the de-politicization of national life that the cultural turn *could* potentially serve. While the emergent social life was increasingly discussed and understood in market glossaries, the definition and politics of culture also shifted. In one telling moment, the inaugural editorial of *Consumer News* [*xiaofeizhe bao*] supervised by the municipal consumer committee quoted a central government official that "serving the consumers *is* serving the

people" (3 Feb 1986: 2), a complete reverse of Mao's epigram. If the market orientation was not the dividing line between Party and non-Party publications, what was? This was among the questions that *Southern Weekend* faced.

1.4 The Birth of *Southern Weekend*

Southern Weekend grew out of the department of literature and art [*wenyi bu*] in *Southern Daily*. Its finance, advertising, and distribution were integrated in the corresponding departments of *Southern Daily* until 1993 (Hong, 2005: 28-31). Similar in size to other non-Party tabloids, the early weekend subsidiary was run like a sub-newsroom of *Southern Daily* during the tabloid wave of the 1980s.

At a glance, what *Southern Weekend* shared in its initial years with other popular publications in Guangzhou was its total abandonment of any national-political agenda. Despite its "noble bloodline" as a subsidiary of a provincial Party newspaper, the early face of *Southern Weekend* resembled those of the tabloids more than its parent paper *Southern Daily*. Its four pages were set as follows:

TABLE 1.1 Major Columns of *Southern Weekend* in the 1980s

Page	Major Columns
1	Weekend Interview [*zhoumo zhuanfang*], Weekend Teahouse [*zhoumo chazuo*], Cultural Info [*wenhua zhenwen, wenhua jianxun*]
2	Knowledge and Learning [*qiuzhi*], Family and Society [*jiating yu shehui*]
3	Sports Field [*tiyuchang*], Colorful Square [*caise guangchang*]
4	Art [*yilin*]

Similar to many other tabloids, the capitalization on "culture" was apparent for the early *Southern Weekend*. The inaugural issue on February 11, 1984 featured as cover story an interview with a well-known film actress who quit her career for a joint-venture business in Shenzhen, the first Special Economic Zone in Guangdong province. *Editor's Words* on the same page further elucidated its editorial menu of "wholesome entertainment" for weekend leisure:

> Here's the weekend again…*Southern Weekend*, the supplement of *Southern Daily*, is designed for popular demand and development of our society. We include what readers enjoy such as cultural news, popular science, the evolving southern culture, various artistic genres, academic and cultural debates, and answers to social and domestic questions…Overall, *Southern Weekend* provides our readers with wholesome and entertaining "mental food." We are aiming to be a close friend of our readers toward the construction of socialist spiritual civilization.
>
> (*Southern Weekend,* 11 Feb 1984: 1)

A few elements of the formula are worth attention. First, the temporal order of "weekend" unmistakably filtered out any grand narratives of national politics. Turning sharply away from Party news (mostly meeting news), SW catered to the popularity of star culture in the local population and filled the newspaper with "Three Stars" (singing stars, movie stars, and sports stars) and "Two Artists" (writers and painters) [*sanxing liangjia*]. Its cover stories were normally devoted to interviews with household names of stars or artists with a humanist perspective—that is, telling personal stories of them as ordinary people rather than as elites or authorities. Zhu Mingying, a singer who garnered her national fame in the 1984 Spring Festival Gala of CCTV, was interviewed for a cover story by *Southern Weekend* (20 Jul 1985). It was a timely and lengthy report (occupying a front page headline and the whole second page) coming at the time when the young artist became famous, got divorced, and was about to leave for America. Zhu's narrative revealed how her artistic pursuit was in conflict with the authorities of the Association

of Musicians as well as her family life. In a modest and sympathetic tone, the report celebrated the individualism of Zhu as both artist and mother.

In addition to star stories (usually on front pages), most of the page 4 spaces were devoted to domestic and foreign dramas and movies, serving a similar function as TV guides and movie weeklies. It included commentaries and feedback from readers on certain programs and previews of screening dramas. When the Japanese TV series *Doubtful Blood Type* [*xue yi*] was being aired on CCTV and received national popularity in 1984, *Southern Weekend* published notes and lyrics of its theme song as well as articles discussing the leading actress Yamaguchi Momoe. At times, *Southern Weekend* also introduced foreign TV shows that were not imported to China such as the American prime time series *Dallas* (e.g. 25 Aug 1984: 4).

Though dominant, stories of celebrities in the mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and western countries were not the only cultural categories that *Southern Weekend* captured in the 1980s. It shifted the dominant agenda, perspective and language from "Party and nation" to the "household." As the *Editor's Words* demonstrated, the qualification of "wholesomeness" was also critical. The double take on both "ordinary and healthy" lifestyle opened up a crucial realm for *Southern Weekend*'s journalism, resuming what Raymond Williams called "a whole way of life" (1958) previously touched on by evening papers yet denied entirely in Party dailies. But whose life(s) is it about now? Is there a gender divide, for instance, by attaching women with household affairs in achieving the domestic and cultural turn of the newspaper?

It did not seem like the case. Zuo Fang, the inaugural editor-in-chief of the newspaper, remembered his early encounter with readers in the newsstands that included "mostly young workers, cadre-like men…but not many students or women" (Zuo, 2008: 59). In response,

Southern Weekend set up columns that encompassed an even wider range of everyday life agenda such as *One Song Per Week*, *One Hair Style Per Week*, *One Book Per Week*, *Parents' Heart*, *Weekend Recipe*, and *Shopping Guide* for mass appeal. These popular columns and their inclusiveness, therefore, should be understood in market terms. Competing with the aggressive tabloids on the newsstands of the 1980s, *Southern Weekend* actively engaged with the "people-cum-consumers" in an all-embracing way except for its revolutionary connotation during Mao's era. If the pop songs and hairstyles were aiming at the youth, then the serial historical novels, cooking recipes and shopping guidelines were for their parents; anecdotes of literary figures, recent local art works, reading skills were for intellectuals and officials, and cartoons and TV stars for vernacular urban families.

In short, drawing on "culture" as the off-hour agenda, *Southern Weekend* departed from Party journalism which prioritized one's social (especially class) status rather than private identities. If the literary currents of the time such as "Scar Literature" [*shanghen wenxue*] presented personal and traumatic accounts of the past, this secular formula of the early *Southern Weekend* exemplified a similar humanistic approach to the contemporary. This is also represented in the suggestive tone of writing, as the inaugural editorial said, "being a close friend" with its readers instead of an omniscient voice-over of authorities.

Let us now turn to three aspects that distinguished *Southern Weekend* from other tabloids to further make sense of the dilemma of a Party tabloid in 1980s' Guangzhou: (1) the mixed temporalities; (2) the (rescaling) local lens; and (3) how both worked with a neo-authoritarian context of the "people".

The classical, the socialist, and the popular

It would be misleading to identify the early *Southern Weekend* with only humanism in editorial strategies to re-articulate its place into the popular realm. After all, the proliferation of tabloids and cultural journals in mid-1980s Guangzhou demonstrated an intense, if not overwhelming, reader-orientation on the booming newsstands. The question is: what was the *order* of the secular life on which *Southern Weekend* relied to compete with the tabloids or special interest journals when they shared a similar market mentality?

The page 2 topics, *Learning and Knowledge* and *Family and Society*, were composed of sub-columns of various kinds. Generally, they featured short and fragmented stories, anecdotes, and excerpts on domestic life. The miscellaneous collage of what *Southern Weekend* defined as "knowledge" here included classical literary culture (poems, reading skills, Chinese couplets), Western languages and social anecdotes, tips for everyday living (awareness of early education, nutrition facts, recipe, fashion trends, makeup, social delinquencies), humor and jokes, and the contemporary world in photography. The hybrid composition of information combined both "high and low" cultural elements in a hierarchical definition of "culture" that has yet to be resolved.

Perhaps this is more obvious on page 4, the topic of "art," which included columns such as *In-outside the Silver Screen, Film and TV, Words from the Audience, Gallery, Cartoon, Photography, Dancing, My Art Way, Calligraphy and Carving*. *Southern Weekend* published the "highest" forms of art in traditional Chinese culture such as calligraphy, carving, and ink painting on one hand and TV previews and theme song lyrics on the other. Indeed, the middle ground was more of a compromising effort than an editorial innovation. The wide spectrum of "culture"

loosely represented a hybridity of the classical (Confucian), the socialist (emphasizing mass education, learning, and "wholesomeness"), and the new "popular" from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and western countries (more on chapter 2), a mix of temporalities and cultural repertoire in restoring private identities at the "post-Mao" moment.

Localizing the "south"

For *Southern Weekend*, the shift from Mao's journalism on national politics toward the local was marked most clearly by a group of new columns organized around the geography of "south" or "Guangzhou." Best examples included the front-page column *Southern Trends* [*nanguo fengqing*], *An Outsider's Look at Guangzhou* [*waiburen kan Guangzhou*], *Social Lens* [*shehui liaowang*], and *Video of All* [*zhongsheng luxiang*], all of which capitalized on the "south" with a progressive undertone of the economic reform.

The early gaze of the regional and local was a mixture of old stereotypes and new changes from the eye of the outsider. *Southern Trends*, for example, introduced readers to downtown night markets, public parks, Cantonese cuisine, and fashion. These essayists' snapshots of local life were neither consistent nor investigative, resembling personal travelogues more than anything else. More stereotypical discussions could even draw on the biological features of Cantonese as a distinct group and talked about their height, longevity, and number of native talents in comparison with other provinces. It should be pointed out, however, that the local orientation had its national significance within the context of Deng Xiaoping's economic reform starting from Guangdong or the opening south. The south, simply speaking, was regarded as a national "south" that represented the future for the reform project nationwide. In chapter 2, I will

discuss in further detail the regional-national relations of the newspaper in policing the boundaries against the opening border.

An Outsider's Look at Guangzhou was one of the most long-lasting columns in the 1980s. The weekly column was written by Andi, a correspondent of a Shanghai newspaper in Guangzhou who had shown enormous enthusiasm in comparing the everyday life of the two cities. The column was first named *A Shanghainese Look at Guangzhou* [*ala kan Guangzhou*]. Topics revolved around what the (re)introduction of marketplace had brought to the daily life of local residents within a dualistic framework of the "have-s" in Guangzhou and the "have-nots" or "have-less" in Shanghai. The proliferation of entertainment in the city such as dancing halls, teahouses, video and movie theaters, and gaming centers captured much of the author's attention. Even though Shanghai was the commercial center of the country dating back to the late nineteenth century, the socialist reform under Mao condemned the history of "old Shanghai" for its bourgeois culture and decadent colonial legacies. The Shanghai journalist did not conceal his celebratory and nostalgic sentiments in writing about how foreign trade was revived and experienced in the post-Mao south. When Guangdong exceeded Shanghai in export trade in 1988, the writer exclaimed that "Shanghai is not No. 1 any more!" (15 Jan 1988).

Overall, the column addressed changes in everyday life, including in language (from "comrade" to "Mr./Ms."), shopping experiences (use of the credit card and the professional smile), leisure practices (from lovers wandering in street to multiple commercial spaces), and a seemingly new civic culture (change in the sense of time). Based on personal observation, the columnist championed the abundance, convenience, and egalitarianism the market had brought into the city of Guangzhou. Unlike Shanghai and elsewhere in China, he wrote, not only

foreigners, overseas Chinese or Hong Kong and Macau visitors but *anyone* could go into a five-star hotel in Guangzhou (2 Jan 1987); taxi service was reliable (29 Apr 1988); and the Cantonese had shown no sense of nostalgia (25 Aug 1989).

In the semi-tourist gaze of Andi, however, not all local identities of Guangzhou were celebrated by outsiders without reservation. Complaints arose when differences invoked exclusion. The Cantonese speakers in Guangdong and Hong Kong have been notorious for their Mandarin, the official language of China, not to mention their own diversities in dialects. Without longer immersion and learning, most out-of-town Chinese in Guangdong felt excluded in daily life and cultural identification. Most broadcasting programs in Guangdong, including local TV stations and radio channels, used Cantonese instead of Mandarin (more in chapter 2). Even though Mandarin education in Guangdong elementary schools resumed in 1984 after the Cultural Revolution, Cantonese remained the dominant speaking language in social interaction for local residents, especially the older generation. The press, though localizing, was probably the most inclusive way of communication in the local environment. While a rising "south" was distinguished to represent the direction in the central project of economic reform, its pioneer status could hardly be tolerated *if* it turned against the national. Rather than a departing south, its regional distinctiveness was presented with a national orientation.

Post-socialist continuities and disruptions

For *Southern Weekend*, the mixed and fragmented style of cultural journalism was rooted in institutional settings. Born from the cultural department of *Southern Daily*, *Southern Weekend* did not have its own reporting team until 1997 (Hong, 2004: 23). Running with eight editorial

staff in 1984, *Southern Weekend* shared even more with non-Party tabloids in newsroom production. It relied heavily on external contributions such as reprints, informal (though sometimes long-term) collaboration, and frequent interaction between readers and the newspaper. Journalists in larger news institutions also wrote for hungry papers—including cover stories—for extra income or personal reciprocity. All these practices, as discussed previously, indicated a relatively decentralized model of production and wide circulation of texts in tabloid markets across regions. The reliance on external authorship explained well the individually hybrid yet collectively similar form of tabloid journalism in the 1980s including *Southern Weekend*.

Formally, the press called for submissions by holding writing competitions for major columns. This was, in part, to cultivate qualified authors as well as to expand topics without staff journalists. In 1986 and 1988, *Southern Weekend* launched year-long competitions on editorial interviews [*zhuan fang*] for its front page stories. Sponsored by a local pharmaceutical company, the newsroom asked for "readable, in-depth and novel reports" which would be evaluated, in the end, by a team of local writers and editors (28 Dec 1985; 18 Dec 1987). Published pieces from external writers automatically entered the competition for prizes which included, for the top six in 1986, a 20-inch color TV set, two double-door fridges, and three washing machines (5 Apr 1986: 1).

Informally, sporadic submission and the habit of "newspaper clipping" editorship could at times recycle materials involuntarily. A reader wrote to *Southern Weekend* and complained about two such cases in 1985. As the disgruntled reader noticed, one piece was published at least twice in 1984 by two newspapers from other provinces and once by *Southern Weekend* itself about six months ago with only minor revisions (28 Sept 1985: 2). However, he did not blame the editors

more than the plagiarists [*wen chao gong*] as the pieces were credited under different authors. His opinion, which the newsroom immediately echoed, could attest to the widely accepted role of external authors in newspaper production.

Like many other tabloids, the fragmented style of *Southern Weekend* was also visually represented. Most notably, it combined both vertical and horizontal layout in its printing format throughout the 1980s. The vertical format is normally associated with traditional Chinese book printing and is used only when classical literary genres or works are involved. Together, the inclusiveness of "high and low" cultural forms, decentralized sources, and the mixture of visual layout provided its readers with many entry points—instead of a suggestive order—in reading *Southern Weekend*. In the effort to further differentiate itself from Party dailies, light-hearted illustrations and other book-like typography were added to accompany or segregate individual columns, making visual and textual components interact with each other. Except for the front page, *Southern Weekend* did not have a visual editor until the new millennium (Yang, 2009: 15). The relatively loose organization in content and style symbolized a moment of transition, "the scattered yet lively pre-Tiananmen growth of a Chinese version of civil society structure" of the 1980s (Zha, 1995: 106).

Though *Southern Weekend* presented "culture" in an all-embracing style, it was presented with an interest to police the new boundaries. Some regular columns such as *Law Counseling* [*fa lü guwen*], *Youth Mailbox* [*qingnian shenghuo xinxiang*], *Learn a Lesson* [*houche zhijian*], and *Must Read for Young Girls* [*shaonü bidu*], all under the page 2 topic of *Family and Society*, explicitly spelled out the "wholesome" orientation in everyday social life. The first two columns published legal or personal questions from readers and provided feedback from newspaper

editors. The latter two exposed dramatic cases, normally involving the death of a person (including suicide), to demonstrate the moral behavior of involved subjects (a young girl who lost her virginity for vanity, a woman who incurred dispute to family by gossiping, a beautiful girl who confused herself by watching too much Hong Kong pornography, etc.). By displaying transgressing individuals (with an emphasis on young people and especially young women), these columns consistently promoted a set of moral guidelines on romance, marriage, inter-personal relations that underlined a combination of moral codes from Confucian ethics (the intense surveillance on the virginity of women being a prominent example) and socialist ones (work over life enjoyment, national over personal value, the dichotomy of socialist/ capitalist culture).

Here, I am not suggesting a well-defined division between two sets of moral value, many indeed overlapped. But we can at least identify how *Southern Weekend* highlighted the morality of ordinary *individuals* in approaching social problems. The problematization of individual subjects represented a strong continuity of the top-down approach to culture under Mao, which emphasized transforming subjective consciousness, "the nature of man," instead of socio-economic conditions in achieving social change. It can be argued that even though *Southern Weekend* abandoned the national-Party agenda and adopted a humanistic perspective to everyday lives in the city, there were visible continuities of Party discourses imposed upon individual lives in its journalism. In the end, the weekly newspaper did seem to be negotiating a space between Party principles and the new popular culture printed by non-Party tabloids without moral concerns.

Conclusion

The chapter describes how tabloids—Party and mostly non-Party ones—became major players in the post-Mao print market of the 1980s. The structural decentralization of the press released the right to print from Party committees to administrative departments and semi-social organizations. Compared to the pre-Cultural Revolution period (1949-1966), media liberalization in the 1980s featured overall structural diversification rather than the professionalization of journalistic practices. From production to distribution, tabloids took advantage of the emergent market with minimum respect to territorial, licensing, or content limits.

Many official newspapers went ahead to publish soft supplements as income-generating devices. The limits of newsroom productivity at the time for both Party and non-Party tabloids, however, considerably confined their practices to reprint and informal submissions. From cultural to economic papers, I found no significant editorial markers separating Party and non-Party tabloids except for the moment of top-down regulations—a practice adhered to the licensing system and central political rubrics.

For *Southern Weekend*, the transitional approach to journalism from production to representation resembled non-Party cultural tabloids in the market yet added moral anxiety to supervise private lives under new social conditions. First, there was a trend of secularization of social life that shifted the focus of newspaper production toward the individual and the quotidian. Its humanistic perspective revolved around the “household" and, in effect, helped restore various aspects of private identities of post-Mao individuals while deconstructing the prioritization of “class” under Mao. The drastic shift, no doubt, pointed to the popular consensus on abandoning the radical leftist politics of Mao especially during the Cultural Revolution and a strong

aspiration to "a normal life." In this sense, the cultural turn of *Southern Weekend,* along with other tabloids, rightly responded to and articulated the "structures of feeling" at the post-Mao moment.

Second, starting as a Party subsidiary trying to accommodate social change, *Southern Weekend* offered a tentative and compromising prescription within an embracing spectrum of cultural forms across temporalities (ancient and contemporary), spaces (domestic and foreign), and genres (high and low culture). The restoration of cultural life based on the traditional, dominant and emergent forms of "culture" could be seen as negotiating a transitional space without leading it—an intermediate sense of "popular" (Williams, 1985: 49).

Third, *Southern Weekend* signified the adaptability of Party dailies or the most arduous part of news reform in China. Aiming for mass appeal, *Southern Weekend* displayed an embarrassing identity triangulating between its Party affiliation and market expectations. Nevertheless, the self-identification of "south" and "weekend" was not yet the kind of conscious or professional identity for which it would be widely acclaimed in the late 1990s (chapter 3 and 4). But still, the synthetic and apolitical journalism of *Southern Weekend* was marking out a popular zone on the "south" both within and outside the top-down hegemony of economic reform. Hong Bing argued that the secular expression of *Southern Weekend* in the 1980s was meaningful because it heralded the gradual acceptance of popular culture in the mainstream discourses in the mid-1990s (2004:13). As we have seen, by mobilizing multiple cultural resources, *Southern Weekend* did acknowledge and elaborate on post-socialist subjects as individuals in the private realm.

Pursuing the available and expanding spectrum of cultural forms, finally, *Southern Weekend* remained active in drawing boundaries for individual practices at the reform moment. Insisting

on its “wholesomeness” or a paternalistic take on culture, it shown not only “an intuitive grasp of the reviving humanity of the time and the diversification of insipid life from the past” as the autobiographical rhetoric briefly justified many years later (Yang, 2009: 95). It also shown a continuity of Party journalism and politics in trying to contain social-cultural changes. It is important to ask, at a time when the cultural influx of TV series and radio programs from Hong Kong were offering rich cultural resources to Guangdong areas across the border, how local media outlets—including the Party newspapers—responded to the cultural input.

CHAPTER 2
A SOCIALIST CITY IN TRANSITION: THE GUANGZHOU PRESS AND ITS HONG KONG CONNECTIONS

"Chimney, cable, fishbone antenna
Kitting their net in the broken sky."

—From poem *Dusk Star*, 1981 (Shu, 2007: 63)

Up until the Tiananmen democratic protest in 1989 and, more accurately, the souther tour of Deng Xiaoping to the SEZ Shenzhen in 1992, market reform in post-Mao China had been mostly regional and experimental. Mainland China in the 1980s was characterized by "Cultural Fever" [*wenhua re*] among intellectuals when wave after wave of reflexive and outward-looking literature, music, scholarship were created, introduced, translated, and discussed in the popular realm. Within this context, Guangdong province was an exception where economic reform and market exchange advanced quickly along with the cultural craze. What the local press faced was not only reviving cultural and social life but simultaneously an emergent market when the immediate border opened to the outside. For Guangdong more than elsewhere, post-Mao cultural formation was charged with the marketization of media institutions.

Border reopened

Deng Xiaoping's open reform since the late 1970s meant to re-integrate China to the global economy. In the reformist blueprint, China needed to expand its contact with foreign countries and, in particular, take advantage of increased commerce with other countries to learn from their technology and experiences. For Guangdong, the southmost province, this meant opening its door to Hong Kong. Despite several conservative rollbacks during the 1980s, the reformist

principle of "pouring out the dirty water but not everything foreign" [*paiwu bu paiwai*] generally kept the open policy in place for the province (Gold, 1993; Cheung, 1994). Without spelling out "dirty water," however, the guideline in practice served more as a negotiating ground in the transitional period.

As a national lab for the post-Mao reform, Guangdong was given more independence to respond to its own needs and moved boldly in introducing market practices in almost all areas of social life. In the following decade and after, Guangdong remained one of the fastest developing regions in China with its per capita GDP growth at an average rate of 11 percent annually from 1978 to 1990 (Sung, 1995: 204). Within this context, how the Party press responded to radical social change in Guangdong is one useful entrance to understanding post-Mao newspaper culture and politics.

Hong Kong had been part of Guangdong until the Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1856-1860), after which it was ceded as a British colony. By the time Beijing and London signed the "Sino-British Joint Declaration" in 1984 and confirmed the return of Hong Kong sovereignty to China in 1997, the separation between Hong Kong and mainland Guangdong had lasted for more than a century. Unlike the instant re-connections of kinship and business investment, the reopening border had encountered a much-checkered story in cultural integration. The strong presence of Hong Kong culture in Guangzhou as well as further north provoked immense pressure and controversies in the 1980s. Even though my focus is the press, the most controlled media institution compared to TV and radio, it is impossible to ignore the audio-visual influx from Hong Kong that strongly transformed the local cultural environment.

To be sure, Hong Kong was not the only cultural source of post-Mao China. The popular term *Gang-tai*, an acronym coined for "Hong Kong (and) Taiwan," indicated that both places became centers of cultural production in the post-Mao society. As one of the world's biggest port cities and financial centers, British Hong Kong also displayed hybrid forms of culture between the local and the global. What I call Hong Kong culture here, therefore, does not refer exclusively to cultural products that were produced in Hong Kong and consumed in the mainland. It includes cultural forms and products of various origins. But from the perspective of Guangdong residents, all of them came from or through Hong Kong, the major source of and portal to the global society for mainland China in the 1980s and 1990s. This chapter studies how the Hong Kong-Guangdong links were mediated by the Guangzhou press to understand the relationship between post-Mao media and social change. In the following discussion, I first outline the influx of Hong Kong culture in Guangzhou, followed by a focused analysis of how *Southern Weekend* dealt with the Hong Kong factor, and then ask how its approach informs us about the politics of what I call "Party-popular" newspapers within the local and national contexts.

2.1 The Hong Kong Factor

Li Ziliu, the Party leader of Shunde County, a major satellite town south of Guangzhou, visited Hong Kong for the first time in 1980 with nine colleagues. It took them more than six months to get the travel documents approved. This kind of *danwei* trip, group visits organized by governmental units and institutions to Hong Kong, quickly proliferated and normalized in Guangdong (Sung, 1995: 188). But for Li Ziliu, who later served as the mayor of Guangzhou in

the 1990s, the experience was above all eye opening. He recalled, many years later, “Hong Kong is not a capitalist hell, it is great” (*Southern Metropolis News*, 20 Jun 2013: GA12).

The role of Guangdong, along with the Fujian province, in moving “one step ahead” in market reform in the late 1970s bears strategic significance for the post-Mao reform nationwide. Aside from broad historical connections with overseas Chinese communities, its geographical, linguistic (Cantonese), and cultural proximity to Hong Kong offered an immediate access to international connections. Politically, it was far enough from the power center of Beijing to avoid any unrest. Meanwhile, the role of Guangdong in the national economy had only been modest in Mao's command economy. And finally, the future reunion with Hong Kong and (most arguably) Taiwan, where the population had their family ties predominantly in Guangdong and Fujian respectively, could expect more popular support from renewed social connections (Vogel, 1989: 82). The open policies, indeed, pointed to regional interests with a national implication.

The economic integration between Hong Kong and Guangdong in the post-Mao era has been extensively documented (e.g. Kwok and So, 1995; Rao and Chen, 2006; Chen, 2011). Emphasis has been on the role of Hong Kong as a major financier, “middleman,” and trading partner in initiating a large amount of small investments in Guangdong (Sung, 1995). The general “front shop, back factory” [*qiandian houchang*] pattern indicated the massive northbound movement of Hong Kong manufacturing facilities across the border, relocating labor-intensive production to counties and towns in the immediate bordering Pearl River Delta for its export-oriented industries (Vogel, 1989: 445-6; Lin, 1997: 172-7). From 1979 to 1990, actual utilized foreign investment in Guangdong amounted to U.S. $8 billion or 37% of the national total, among which 64% or $5 billion were from Hong Kong (Sung, 1995: 183). The

"south window" [*nanfeng chuang*] soon became a popular reference of opportunities and sources for change in Guangdong and nationwide.

The Guangdong-Hong Kong reconnection could be felt well beyond economic integration. The cross-border train connection between Guangzhou and Hong Kong resumed in April 1979 and reduced a one-day trip to three hours. By the early 1980, airlines, ferries, and shuttle buses between the two cities all resumed service under bilateral agreements. Organized tours to Hong Kong were open to the general public in Guangdong via travel agencies in the mid-1980s (27 Apr 1985: 1). *Sheng-gang*—literally (Guangdong) province and Hong Kong—sponsorship was soon initiated in cultural exchanges such as Cantonese opera, soccer games, and other cultural and academic activities (Guldin, 1995; Ma, 2012: 69-70).

The TV "drama"

But not all renewed contacts were embraced with consensus. Most notably, the TV and radio signals spilt-over from Hong Kong became a thorny issue for local and national Party officials in the decade to come. With UHF antennas and amplifiers sold in hardware stores, the four Hong Kong television channels (TVB Jade, TVB Pearl, ATV Home, and ATV World) could be watched within 100 miles of the border. Starting from the immediate bordering Special Economic Zones (SEZ) of Shenzhen and Zhuhai, self-made antennas in the shape of a fish bone quickly popped up across the Pearl River Delta pointing at Hong Kong (Chan, 2000: 249; Vogel, 1989: 66).

The bottom-up reception of Hong Kong TV in Guangdong, however, was not an urban phenomenon. In 1988, 83.2% of rural families in the Pearl River Delta owned TV sets (either color or black and white) (Zhou, 1990: 39). In Guangzhou, there were 72.69 color TV sets and

44 black and white TV sets per one hundred households (Ibid). In villages and urban district counties noted for a high number of overseas connections (with relatives abroad), almost every household had a TV set equipped with UHF reception (*"Vulgar TV,"* 1982). Dongguan, a satellite county between Shenzhen and Guangzhou, had 112 color TV sets per one hundred households in the early 1980s (Lin, 1997: 183). The popularization of TV sets, in fact, was correlated with the pattern of economic development in the region where industrialization and urbanization occurred no less vibrantly in the countryside particularly between or around major metropolitan centers (Ibid: chapter 6).

In March 1980, a young man in downtown Guangzhou reportedly died from a fatal fall from the top of his nine-story apartment building while setting up an antenna (*Yangcheng Evening News*, 30 Mar 1980). A long debate over Hong Kong television began to surface (Ou et al., 2006: 7). Within two months of the front-page report, a top-down ban on Hong Kong television was in place (*Yangcheng Evening News,* 26 May 1980: 1). Later, *Yangcheng Evening News* (YEN), the municipal Party evening newspaper, published three articles debating the reception of Hong Kong TV. Chen Shunzhi, a deputy director of the provincial cultural department, denounced Hong Kong TV programs as "mental cancer" [*xinling de aizheng*] and avidly approved the ban (*Yangcheng Evening News*, 8 Jun 1980). Huang Shusen, a literary critic and editor of a non-Party newspaper *South Wind* [*Nan Feng*], advocated instead a more liberal approach, "Hong Kong television also has healthy and serious programs…we should not regard people as dupes, socialism as vulnerable…we need to reform our own institutions and learn from Hong Kong critically" (*Yangcheng Evening News,* 7 Oct 1980; Huang, 2010: 43).

Huang's article confused many local Party cadres in Guangdong who followed the ban and had flung themselves into demolishing “fish bone” antennas, an exhausting project for both firefighters and local police. Later, the provincial Party committee sent out investigative personnel to the YEN newsroom for inquiry. Partly a line toeing move, YEN published a lengthy response from Chen Shunzhi, again the cultural official, reinstating the conservative position on the pernicious effects of Hong Kong and foreign influences (*Yangcheng Evening News*, 18 Oct 1980).

The debate halted, at least in Party newspapers, but it did not represent the unfolding reality. Though state regulations against bottom-up TV reception were constantly implemented, they were also resisted inconsistently in time and institutional spaces. In Shunde County, an oral sanction on “fish bone” antennas was practiced except for government buildings (*Southern Metropolis News*, 2013). But jamming signals were sent out whenever top-down investigation was in town. Hence the “snowflakes” (the snowy noise image) on Hong Kong TV programs soon came to signify such censoring moments for local residents. In Guangzhou, many local residents adopted the guerrilla strategy of Mao and put up their antennas only after dinner, an ironic inversion of the daily flag-raising ritual in schools and other public institutions (Li, 2009). In brief, while formal channels of opinion were at the disposal of (and controlled by) higher-ranking Party officials and intellectuals, the practices of passive resistance by many local officials and residents remained a visible force in dealing with conservative—not necessarily national—initiatives.

Though on and off, “fish bone” antennas continued to spread despite constant regulatory efforts. For Guangdong residents, especially those in the Pearl River Delta, there were no

linguistic or technological barriers to receiving TV programs from Hong Kong during in the 1980s. They watched live sports games that normally took up to two days for the local channels to relay, picked up cheap music cassettes from streets for Cantonese popular music ("Cantopop") they heard on the radio, and familiarized themselves with Hong Kong pop stars from television programs such as TVB Jade's popular *Foon Lok Gum Siu* [*huanle jinxiao*] or *Happy Tonight*, an imitation of the American Tonight Show. Through TV and radio input, Hong Kong popular culture came to be the defining factor of cultural life in Guangzhou.

Guarded reception

In history, popular culture [*liuxing wenhua*] had its linkages with the urban culture in major cities of mainland before 1949, which was denigrated as "bourgeois individualism" in the CCP's revolutionary ideology during the 1920s and 1930s. Now *tongsu*—a new term for "popular"—was coined to avoid the negative connotations of *liuxing* from the past (Baranovitch, 2003: 10-15). Similarly, the word *dazhong*—literally "big mass"—gained increasing currency while *qunzhong* (common people), previously used in the Maoist lexicon as opposed to "cadre" [*ganbu*], Party members [*dangyuan*], and "comrade" [*tongzhi*], quickly faded from everyday language to political jargon. Semantic changes, however, did not solve the problem. As the flooding "fish bones" indicated, they signified the points of tension when "people" were rediscovered as readers and audience who had alternative sources of information and entertainment.

The strong presence of Hong Kong media, with its popular music and TV programs in particular, imposed immense pressure not only on conservative Party members and intellectuals

but also local media professionals. In response, the Guangdong television station (GDTV) started to broadcast *Wanzi Qianhong* ("A Blaze of Colors") in 1981, the first variety show in China and a direct imitation of TVB Jade's *Foon Lok Gum Siu* (Keane, 2012: 314). TV anchor [*zhuchi ren*], a completely new position, was initiated and began to *talk* instead of following pre-scripted narrative [*bao mu*] in television programs. In 1985, *Wanzi Qianhong* adopted multi-camera recording and live broadcasting after a learning trip to TVB's headquarter in Hong Kong. Coming from the Cultural Revolution with chaotic paucity in cultural life, there were indeed miles to go without violating the ambiguous guideline of "pouring out the dirty water but not everything foreign."

In 1994, the whole television "drama" that lasted for more than a decade was settled with conditional reception by incorporating all four Hong Kong channels into local provincial and municipal cable TV systems (Ou et al., 2006: 8). Soon noticed by the local audience, however, the reception was controlled and domesticated with any unwanted news reports censored and Hong Kong advertisements replaced with local commercials. With increasing sophistication over time, the censoring moments took the forms of still pictures, local ads, and pre-recorded local news. Regardless, Guangdong has become the only province in China—up until today—where Hong Kong TV programs are legally and structurally accessible, a distinct aspect of the media ecology in Guangdong (Ma, 2011: 161).

2.2 Symbol of Modernity

In sharp contrast to TV and radio, the Hong Kong factor in print media was much more restricted. Hong Kong newspapers and magazines were efficiently banned from import by border

customs. Exceptions included a few mainland-affiliated newspapers such as *Ta Kung Pao* [*da gong bao*] and *Wen-wei Po* [*wen hui bao*], which were subscribed by governmental units and hotels (*Guangzhou Postal Gazette,* 1994: 50). Hong Kong visitors brought with them copies of other newspapers to read on their way to Guangdong. And it was not uncommon that mainland tourists to Hong Kong would smuggle a newspaper copy or two on their way back, which normally passed on to a few more hands after they arrived but was very unlikely to go any further (Cheng, 1995: 44-45).

Though contained on the ground, the local print culture was greatly informed by the sweeping audio-visual influx from Hong Kong. In 1985, there was only one Guangzhou-based magazine—*Hong Kong Style* [*Xianggang Feng Qing*]—that consistently covered the lives and culture of Hong Kong (Ma, 2012: 67-69). But no one could ignore the spate of knight errant [*wuxia*] fictions written by Hong Kong writers and promoted by private bookstores, which exceeded the state-owned bookstores in five years between 1985 and 1989 in mainland China (Liu, 2007: 29). Non-Party tabloids, too, were among the avid hunters for popular culture from and about Hong Kong. *South Wind* [*Nan Feng*] began to serialize the novel *Tale of a Silver Haired Witch* [*baifa monv zhuan*] by Liang Yusheng—a leading *wuxia* writer in Hong Kong—since 1981. *White Cloud Collection* [*baiyun jijin*], another non-Party tabloid, adopted various "Hong Kong elements" and printed in its inaugural issue Liang Yusheng's *wuxia* fiction *Love of a Jade Archer* [*Yunhai yugong yuan*], a biography of a Hong Kong pop star Wang Mingquan, and a Hong Kong travelogue by a Guangzhou writer (*Southern Weekend*, 27 Oct 1984: 1).

From what we learnt in chapter 1, it is quite possible that Party tabloids like *Southern Weekend* would handle the Hong Kong factor differently from non-Party tabloids. Since Hong

Kong influences on local print culture in the 1980s were predominately mediated by the local press rather than direct competition, the following discussion is based on a close examination of how *Southern Weekend* covered Hong Kong from 1984 to 1991 (before its first expansion from four to eight pages in 1992). I sampled 182 copies of *Southern Weekend* or every other issue of its publication during this period to offer my observations.

A number of lenses

Between 1984 and 1991, the majority of Hong Kong stories published in *Southern Weekend* covered cultural activities that quickly proliferated across the border. These stories often made their way to front-page stories, page four on *Art* and a major column on British Hong Kong and the Portuguese colony Macau. In particular, Hong Kong pop singers who travelled northbound and held their concerts in the mainland were normally covered in front-page interviews (e.g. 18 Feb 1984; 29 Sept 1984; 16 Mar 1985). Other cultural exchanges between Guangzhou and Hong Kong such as co-productions in TV and radio programs, though still sporadic, were also reported yet with brief treatments. In August 1985, for example, Liu Jiajie, an English educator from Hong Kong, started a daily radio program teaching advanced English skills on three channels of the Guangdong People's Radio Station (27 Jul 1985). The short news was printed on page two under "Knowledge and Learning" of *Southern Weekend*.

Another cluster of the Hong Kong factor in *Southern Weekend* could easily be found on page four of "Art" [*yilin*], where television programs, films, music from Hong Kong and other forms of popular culture claimed an increasingly larger share. Within the craze for Hong Kong television programs in the 1980s, GDTV imported a number of Hong Kong television dramas

such as *Thousands of Rivers and Mountains* [*Wanshui qianshan zongshi qing*] from TVB Jade and *Huo Dongge* from ATV Home to lure the local audience (a large number of self-relying "fish-bone" users) back to domestic channels. Probably imagining a significant overlap between local TV audience and its own readers, *Southern Weekend* published synopses of upcoming episodes on the "Art" page during GDTV's season like a TV guide (e.g. 16 Feb 1985). Without direct competition with Hong Kong newspapers, popular newspapers in Guangzhou capitalized on Hong Kong cultural input which, in turn, continued to gain its influences across the border.

However, popular *wuxia* novels embraced by non-Party newspapers hardly made their way to *Southern Weekend*. Beginning on May 22, 1985, *Southern Weekend* had serialized a novel by the popular Hong Kong *wuxia* writer Liang Yusheng for ten months. But this was the only exception among the literature printed by *Southern Weekend* between 1984 and 1991. From 1986 onward, in particular, *Southern Weekend* published predominantly "reportage literature" [*jishi wenxue*], a genre between journalism and literature, on the major events or political figures in Party-state history since 1949 and was ardently embraced by Party officials and intellectuals (Hong, 2004: 23; Laughlin, 2002).

Running with eight staff in 1984, *Southern Weekend* did not have any journalists to dispatch to Hong Kong but heavily relied on external writers and publications. Among those who paid to visit Hong Kong for work or as tourists, many wrote about their experiences in the newly open territory. This kind of impressionistic essays on border-crossing experiences became a major genre of how Hong Kong was reported by *Southern Weekend* most visibly under the column called "Glancing at Hong Kong and Macau" [*Gang'ao yi pie*] (later "Glancing").

The column "Glancing" was started in late 1984, not long after the inauguration of *Southern Weekend* (22 Dec 1984). Over the course of the 1980s, it had a relatively stable representation on the front or third page of *Southern Weekend*. Due to its collective authorship across institutions and professions, "Glancing" provided a good sample of a relatively large group of writers on how they wrote about Hong Kong for a Party subsidiary. Based on the 182 samples I collected, which included column entries and others freelance submissions, the following discussion will be structured around the polarized representation of Hong Kong I found between an affluent and a sinful city.

An affluent society

For those who travelled to Hong Kong in the 1980s, it was difficult to ignore the huge gap of living standards between Hong Kong and Guangzhou (*Guangzhou Statistical Yearbook,* 1985: 155; *Hong Kong 1981 Census*: 37, 50). Huang Shusen, the literary critic and advocate for Hong Kong television programs, attempted to buy an imported electric fan in the SEZ Shenzhen but soon found out that his monthly salary as a newspaper editor was about one third of the price (Huang, 2010: 47). Looking at the gigantic gap of living conditions across the border, the meta-narrative of "capitalist hell" began to falter.

The first group of writings depicted Hong Kong in the 1980s as a prosperous modern society. Most conspicuously, material affluence and urban infrastructure struck the post-Mao visitors despite decades of socialist education on capitalist ills. Indeed, the open reform was initiated in Guangdong and Fujian a decade before the Cold War ended. Even though diplomatic relations between China and Western countries started to thaw in the early 1970s, the

informational and ideological gaps between socialist and capitalist societies were so huge that it provoked much bewilderment and amazement for many. As one writer pondered in his short travelogue: "no one in Hong Kong wears the same clothes…I wondered if they designed their own" (23 Feb 1984: 3).

The huge differences between the two cities invoked the discourses of the "have-s" in Hong Kong and "have-nots" in Guangzhou as well as emulative initiatives. Differences of the two cities in everyday life tended to be understood as the very representation or even causes of falling behind. For instance, the highly dense yet efficient public transportation system in Hong Kong started to raise questions about bicycles used in Guangzhou, the major vehicles for everyday transportation in most mainland cities of the time. A writer complained that "both bikes and cars jammed the roads during rush hours" and suggested that "public transportation, not bicycles, should be promoted" (12 Jan 1985: 3). In other cases, emulative projects were justified if an example were witnessed in Hong Kong. The proposal for an underwater tunnel in Guangzhou between Huang Sha and Fang Cun districts was praised in reference to the submarine tunnel in Hong Kong (16 Mar 1985: 3). Similar to the case of TV, the Hong Kong factor became *the* legitimacy for many reformist projects in Guangzhou for approval from the government (Chan, 2000: 266).

The developmental narrative of comparison drew on another theme, namely, economism in defining the post-Mao project of modernity, which posited economic growth as its own end. The merits of submarine tunnels in Hong Kong were evidenced by the fact that "investment was returned in only five years" (16 Mar 1985: 3); and the Hong Kong subway company was applauded for "producing its own merchandise and installing retails shops in terminals to brand

itself while making money" (12 Jan 1985: 3). Social space and development, in short, were understood in Deng Xiaoping's apothegm of "getting rich is glorious" without presupposing either the subject (who is getting rich?) or object (for what/whom?).

The market, in particular, was seen as the indispensable engine of development that brought in material wealth and consumerist modernity. There appeared no difficulties for post-Mao visitors to admire the prosperity of trading activities in their various forms. Consumer marketplaces like "Men's street" [*nanren jie*] and "Ladies' street" [*nüren jie*] in Hong Kong were recommended as a "must-go" shopping paradise for visitors. (8 Jun 1985: 1). The very existence of a tertiary sector as well as chances of self-employment in Hong Kong also offered desirable images of a modern lifestyle—however vaguely defined—yet to come for mainlanders (27 Jan 1989: 3).

Sites of ambivalence

Moving beyond the conspicuous affluence in material life and public infrastructure, there were increasing points of ambivalence in interpreting the differences. The pace of living in Hong Kong, for instance, was palpable to tourists even from observing the walking speed in the street, and aroused much misgivings. "No one is strolling," one writer reported, "and people are speeding as if they all had a full bladder. You cannot see any sauntering lovers, at least much less visible than in Guangzhou" (8 Jun 1985: 1). Though tentatively, the author continued to question whether people in Hong Kong had any time for romantic relationships. "A relative told me that friends and families don't normally visit each other in Hong Kong. They just give a call instead even on holidays. So young people follow suit and "boil the telephone lines" [*bao dianhua*

zhou].” The altered sense of time, noticed more deeply with mixed feelings by many of those who immigrated to Hong Kong from Guangdong in the 1980s, pointed to the strong disciplinary power of modernity yet to be grasped (Ma, 2012: 27).

Religious activities, condemned as feudalist superstition in Mao's socialism, incurred tremendous difficulties in experiencing Hong Kong's modernity. The prevailing worship of the “God of Wealth” [*caishen ye*] and “Goddess Guanyin” [*guanyin pusa*] in households, shops, and factories in Hong Kong was seen as incompatible with a modern society. After visiting a dozen of friends and families who had shrines at home, a mainland writer did not hide his confusion,

> [I]n mainland, even people living in rural areas don"t perform daily rituals of worshipping except during traditional holidays like the Spring Festival or Tomb Sweeping Day [*Qingming*]. It is unbelievable that these activities exist here in Hong Kong, such a high-tech place.
>
> (6 Jul 1985: 3)

Another writer, similarly, discussed the prosperity of modern temples in Hong Kong, the popularity of choosing a “propitious time” [*ji shi*] and lucky numbers in everyday activities (such as for car license plates), and how a teacher friend converted to Buddhism. In their attempts to explain the perceived “contradiction,” both writers fell back to almost a textbook description on capitalism under Mao. One concluded with a tone of confidence:

> Hong Kong is a playground for adventurers. They play capital games on real estate and the gold market, they gamble and they rob. Many become millionaires overnight while others go bankrupt and commit suicide. Horse racing, lotteries, and all types of gambling activities made people believe in luck. On the other hand, frequent traffic crash, fire in slums areas, and crime activities perpetuate the belief that life is precarious as if some supernatural forces were at work. Superstition comes right in place.
>
> (Ibid)

This explanation obviously was not what the writer experienced but from the political language of the previous era. In Mao's socialist modernity, religious worship was attached to feudalism and superstition—the residual culture—while socialism and science point to the

future. The epochal divide between spiritual activities and modernity was so deeply entrenched that a "modern temple" was oxymoronic within the Maoist ideology. In the most empirically grounded piece I found, the author reviewed the major religious groups in Hong Kong (Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, Christianity, and Islam) and their contemporary developments especially in providing educational, medical, and other social services (30 Nov 1985: 1). Still, the article concluded with a sarcastic tone on the modern "veneer" of religion. The author armed the final point with further observations:

> The Taoist temple in the New Territories [*xin jie*] was now presided by young and beautiful nuns instead of the traditional Taoist priests…During off-hours, these nuns would dress up with their curly wigs and fashion clothes, and descended back to the mundane world. Most ridiculous are those Buddhist monks who collected donation in downtown areas with a portable radio chanting for them and filled their pockets quick and full…
>
> (30 Nov 1985: 1)

Here, no distinctions among religious institutions, everyday practices, and (perhaps) mountebanks were made. Such seeming contradictions between modernity and "regressive" religious lives, therefore, are suggestive of how modernity was imagined by many writers of a Party subsidiary. In addition to the legacy of Mao's atheist modernity, these contradictions also indicated a monolithic understanding of culture that, even in its anthropological definition to include everyday life practices, was subject to top-down scrutiny.

2.3 City of Sin

Aspiring to material modernity yet still captured within the Maoist taxonomy of feudalism, socialism, and capitalism, the implicit reservations on Hong Kong's success easily lapsed into moral accusations whenever its social problems came into focus. Even in explicitly admiring the

professional practices of Hong Kong journalists, for instance, the author of "The Hardworking Hong Kong Journalists" linked their professionalism to the prevalence of crime in Hong Kong:

> In this tiny place [*danwan zhi di*] with a population of only about five million, there are 50 newspapers, 520 journals, 10 radio stations, and 2 television networks. These numbers told us a lot about the fierce competition in Hong Kong's news front [*xinwen jie*] especially when the society is highly dysfunctional [*yanzhong jixing*]. Murder, mugging, rape, drug dealing, smuggling, fire…all kinds of accidents and human tragedies [*tian zai ren huo*] abounded. It would be real news for Hong Kong if no speeding police cars with a blaring honk were seen in one day.
>
> (12 Sept 1986: 1)

The sinful depiction of Hong Kong by mainland writers is arguably more imaginary than experienced. Far from what its Chinese name Hong Kong, literally "fragrant port," indicated, in the mainland history Hong Kong represented the debacle of the Qing dynasty against colonial power in the nineteenth century as well as the capitalist West in the Cold War era. After more than a century of segregation in the political order between Hong Kong and mainland China, the historical representations of Hong Kong as the ideological other were actively at work for mainlanders that even reformist-minded officials and intellectuals would not easily challenge.

Chen Canyun, the head of the Guangdong Writers' Association, led a group of local writers to Hong Kong in August 1985. A writer and Party member himself, Chen used to work in Hong Kong in the 1930s and 1940s when the Chinese Communist Party organized its united front in Hong Kong against the Nationalists (KMT). Linking his memories to what he saw years later, Chen talked favorably about British Hong Kong as "a prosperous metropolis" [*fanhua dushi*], "a civil society" [*wenming shehui*], and "a world of entertainment" [*wanle shijie*] with the exception of one thing: it was also "a market of sex trade" [*seqing shichang*] (7 Sept 1985: 1). In a front-page interview in *Southern Weekend*, Chen mentioned the titillating pictures he saw on Hong Kong newsstands. The author then echoed Chen's argument about the international market of

"human flesh" [*renrou shichang*] in Hong Kong as a prominent social problem, and ended the story with a standard bash on the capitalist ills, "the class divide in a prosperous city was huge; for the weak-minded who could not withstand poverty, alienated human relationships, and the temptation of consumerism would probably be trapped (into sex trade). The underworld is a pushing hand of evil" (Ibid).

The debauched and the incorrigible

Sex trade and pornography, or "yellow poison" [*huang du*] in the socialist parlance, were both recurring themes in the coverage of Hong Kong. In a column article titled "A World of Kaleidoscope," an author recalled his experiences in a Hong Kong bookstore where "of more than a hundred titles of magazines on sale, all of them could use anything but naked women on their covers" (3 Aug 1985: 1). Although this might sound as an exaggeration, at the time when hand-drawn illustrations for a Party subsidiary like *Southern Weekend* were part of the reformist initiatives, it is not difficult to understand why visual sensation hardly failed to sensitize mainland visitors.

The "yellow poison" of the capitalist world, on the other hand, was deemed incurable in most mainland writers' accounts. While the writer of "A World of Kaleidoscope" admitted that the debasing effect of "yellow poison" had gained significant attention in Hong Kong, he argued, without any explanation, that "In a capitalist society, it is impossible to eliminate it." In conclusion, he qualified the hopeless outcome by using the "majority vs. minority" dichotomy in the socialist parlance, "Even in Hong Kong, the majority of youth are healthy and progressive… only those weak-minded would be captivated by the insidious and vulgar." In differentiating

readers between the good majority and the corruptible minority, a line between "healthy-progressive" and "insidious-vulgar" publications was invoked. The dualism in imagining both readership and newspapers of the time, again, was consistent with the permanent class struggle between "people" and "enemies" in Mao's political language.

In another piece I found with an explicit focus on Hong Kong publications, "Newsstands in Hong Kong," the author reported that an adult magazine *Dragon Tiger Balm* [*Lung Fu Pao*] had one of its issues accused of being "partially inappropriate" [*bufen neirong buliang*] by a district court in Hong Kong (8 Mar 1986: 1). After the litigation and amercement, the dissatisfied author complained that "the magazine was still openly sold on newsstands though packaged with a white plastic cover now." He then argued that the problem reached far beyond where the law enforcement stopped:

> In fact, almost every issue of this magazine (*Dragon Tiger Balm*) was inappropriate. There are so many more out there! Lots of magazines had similar content with *Dragon Tiger Balm*, stuffing their stories with sexual depictions and titillating pictures of naked women… Newsrooms in Hong Kong have been calling for attention on the pernicious impacts of pornography on teenagers. According to a Hong Kong newspaper, a member of the Regulatory Committee on Pornographic Publication [*seqing kanwu guanzhu weiyuanhui*] stated on December 7 last year that "the impact of porn on teenagers has reached an astounding level. Besides psychological disturbance for many, there has been incest that involved young girls having abortions in the fifth or sixth grade!" Another newspaper commented that "there are not many good solutions to these publications."

Without clear references to the two Hong Kong newspapers or the member he quoted, the emphasis of the report was on the prevalence of pornographic publications in Hong Kong and its alarming effects on teenagers. More implicitly, as the last quote from a newspaper indicates, there was an unasked question why Hong Kong had no good solutions to the debasing social problems of "yellow poison" or, in short: why were not these publications banned?

In contrast, *Southern Weekend* reported on underground publications in Guangzhou with a different light. The growing private network of printers, wholesalers [*bao kan tou*], book dealers, and individual newsstand owners in mainland cities like Guangzhou—the unofficial "black market"—was covered within the context of capitalist influences and (effective) legal crackdown. Among the stories in *Southern Weekend*, the problematization of unofficial publications and the derogatory tone were in strong resonance with the voices of demolishing the "fish bone" antennas. Let me give an example to illustrate this collective stance.

"Shedding light on the 'Black Spiders': the Black Market of Illegal Publications on Dongyuan Road in Guangzhou" (11 Sept 1987: 1) reported on the rectifying movement of the local police department aiming at the underground printing markets. The story began with the arrest of a book dealer "Su something" [*su mou*]—a combination of the last name and an anonymous cover of his first name—in his apartment of Guangzhou. Along with Su's arrest, readers were informed that "more than 10,000 illegal publications and 8,000RMB illegal income were confiscated," which "served as the opening scene of the legal movement against the black market in Dongyuan Road."

The story, running slightly shorter than the second half of the front page, was organized around three subtitles: "Networks of spiritual opium" [*jingshen yapian*], " 'Black spiders' in action," and "Craving for money." The writer reported on the thriving unregulated printing market, which involved both public and private-individual dealers:

> [T]here are (in Dongyuan Road) ten distributors of public institutions [*danwei*] and twenty black market *bao fan tou* (newspaper wholesalers) who had interprovincial connections with *ban fan tou* in other provinces. Each *bao fan tou* connects with dozens of individual newsstand owners and supplied with them various illegal publications. In good seasons, hundreds of book and newspaper dealers were congregating here in Dongyuan Road, riding bicycles, three-wheelers, and even driving cars to distribute bags after bags of illegal publications to elsewhere. In an incomplete survey [*ju bu wanquan tongji*],

> many vulgar publications—more than ten titles of pornographic magazines including the *Dragon Tiger Balm*—were occasionally found. That's why people said: "Dongyuan Road is a network of spiritual opium."
>
> This "network of spiritual opium" is indeed an underground network of distribution. The *bao fan tou* here not only had their wholesale spaces, but also suppliers, storage spaces, printers, retail outlets—all connected together and spread toxin [*du su*] to people. It is not uncommon that a tabloid printed yesterday in other provinces was on Guangzhou newsstands today.

From the incomplete investigation or vague terms like "occasionally" [*bu shi*], it is unclear to us who distributed what in Dongyuan Road along the public-private divide and the proportion of pornography in circulation. The differences between "vulgar" [*yong su*], "pornographic" [*yin hui*], and "illegal" [*fei fa*] remained undefined, if not used arbitrarily. And even though ten out of thirty distributors mentioned in the report were public institutions [*danwei*], the focus was clearly on individual or private wholesalers and especially those involved with pornography or the "black spiders":

> Some people called these black market book and newspaper dealers "black spiders," knitting the underground network of distribution with their dirty black wires. How do these "black spiders" work? Let's look at a few examples. Wang Quan, a *bao fan tou* nicknamed "Human King" [*ren wang*] got a call from Hunan province. "Hello? Human-king? I have some stuff here. Do you want them? All right, that's the deal. I"ll send you telegraphy when they come." A week later, Wang Quan and his partners picked up the illegal publications from Guangzhou railway station and immediately wholesaled them to dozens of newsstand owners in contact.
>
> Another "black spider" Su something [*su mou*], teamed up with a woman named "Fat-woman Lian" [*fei-po Lian*], was previously arrested and fined by the police department for distributing pornographic publications. Last January, Su something bought in 47 issues of *Dragon Tiger Balm* at the price of 13.5RMB per copy and sold them for 15RMB or 17RMB each. He was detained for 15 days and fined 1,500RMB but continued his business in Dongyuan Road with "Fat-woman Lian."

The narrations of individual wholesalers—especially on "human king" Wang Quan and his phone call with suppliers in Hunan—were no doubt imaginary. The omniscient perspective and, in the case of "Su something," the derogatory nickname of his partner "Fat-woman Lian" both fulfilled the purpose of story telling, making it more interesting and relatable to readers. The arbitrariness in addressing the private distributors using their real name, formally disguised

name, and sobriquet was also suggestive of their social status as criminals—the immoral minority—in the story.

In the last section, "Craving for money," the author began to questioned the ten public institutions involved. Even though individual cases mentioned above made the connections between the private wholesalers and pornography, there was no indication what types of publications those public institutions distributed. But it was apparent that the participation of public institutions in the unofficial network of distribution disturbed the dichotomy of the "public vs. private" divide:

> It is not accurate to call Dongyuan Road an underground distribution network of illegal publications because, as previously mentioned, there were not only individual distributors but also ten distributors of *danwei*. Some of these distribution sites belonged to cultural institutions but some were completely irrelevant. For instance, the Guangzhou Scale Equipment Plant [*Guangzhou tianping yiqi chang*] had a distribution outlet in Dongyuan Road. Another magazine, which had its distribution site in south Zhixin Road, relocated it to Dongyuan Road to "join the craze" [*gan re nao*].

Acknowledging a messy picture of major players in the bottom-up network of distribution, the story was completed in condemning market orientation while celebrating the triumph of law enforcement:

> Why are these *danwei* so obsessed with wholesaling illegal publications? It is, above all, about money making. The participants or leaders in these *danwei* reek of the money odor of the capitalist class [*zichan jieji de tongchou*].
>
> In a week since July 15, the police department had arrested 16 illegal book wholesalers, raided 15 storage sites, and confiscated more than 96,000 copies of illegal publications and 27,000RMB illegal income. The illegal market in Dongyuan Road is now crumbling. And the "black spiders" who sold spiritual opium without conscience but the craze for money only destroyed themselves in the end!

It can be argued that, in the case of the print market, law enforcement worked hand in hand with moral discourses in maintaining the boundary between mainland Guangdong and Hong Kong. Compared to the problems of TV reception, the defense in print was even stronger and

more successful partly due to the underdevelopment of bottom-up production and distribution by domestic players. Unlike Hong Kong TV programs, I found no debate or concerns on a comparable level about the (debasing) value of unofficial prints. In chapter 1 I discussed how the "curious case of southern newspapers" in Guangzhou aroused national concerns and how *Southern Weekend* maintained "wholesomeness" as its identity within the thriving non-Party tabloids. The report on Dongyuan Road by *Southern Weekend*, too, indicated where the newspaper stood.

Again, opposing the illegal publications as a solvable problem in China and an insolvable one in Hong Kong worked to reinforce the ideological buttress against the open border. This moral stance could not be more telling when the incorrigible social ills in Hong Kong were treated in mainland. A cover story in July 1985 reported that a few Hong Kong drug addicts were detoxified in a Guangzhou hospital by traditional acupuncture (27 Jul 1985: 1). Titled "Hong Kong Drug Addicts and the "Super Needle" of Guangzhou*"* [*xianggang yinjunzi he Guangzhou shenzhen*], the front-page feature unmistakably drew a line between drug use and cigarette smoking as geographical: "Acupuncture brings good news to Hong Kong drug addicts as well as smokers in mainland."

Finally, the dour depiction of social problems in Hong Kong was most revealing in stories about Hong Kong police and law enforcement. In September 1985, *Southern Weekend* reprinted a short article from *New Evening News* [*Xin wan bao*], a Hong Kong newspaper and indeed very rare source for *Southern Weekend*. The article "The Family Tragedy of a Hong Kong Policeman" reported on the personal predicaments of a low-ranking police officer, who had a wife with a gambling problem, a son who turned into a rapist, and a daughter befallen by the porn industry

(28 Sept 1985: 3). Omitting all background information, the story of the misfortunate police family exemplified almost all major social problems of Hong Kong, including sex trade, gambling, and a failing legal system—almost like a metaphor.

In less dramatic accounts, the Hong Kong police were often associated with corruption and colonial governance. Within the double mechanism of socialist and nationalist discourses, the Hong Kong police were seen as institutionally flawed and morally deplorable. "The Multiple Faces of Hong Kong Police" column essay in 1986, pointed out the explicit racial line in Hong Kong police administration: "Of course the British occupied high-ranking positions… things only began to change in recent years after the Sino-British talk" (12 Apr 1986: 1). In addition to racial inequalities, Hong Kong police were also seen as battening on the underworld of crime and prostitution. The intertwining network of law and crime, the author explained, "is why the sex trade has been so prosperous" and "why Hong Kong police tried so hard to improve their public image" (Ibid). In another revealing case, the well-acclaimed ICAC (Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption) was introduced to readers yet in a skeptical tone. Acknowledging their recent achievements, the author of "The Thorny Rose of Hong Kong" concluded, almost self-contradictorily, that "In capitalist Hong Kong, ICAC cannot solve the problems of government corruption, not to mention other social depravities. But the fact that it is welcomed by the general public has some useful lessons for us" (16 Jun 1989: 3).

Boundaries revamped

In addition to prostitution, drug dealing, corruption, gambling and various kinds of organized criminal activities—all outlawed in mainland China as well as in Hong Kong—were

distinctively attached to the colonial territory. For Macau, the Portuguese colony where casino gambling was legalized and became a major sector for the local economy, gambling became almost the infallible vantage point in the mainland travelogues. From what I examined from *Southern Weekend*, in general, there were a consensus on both the prevalence and debasing effects of the gambling industry in Macau. But there were points of divergence on its relations to the local culture. While some took the lens of "the good majority" and expressed a strong distaste for the "bad apples," others might see a more complicated picture. One author argued that neither the casinos nor the brothels were where the "ordinary Macau residents" went for leisure (25 Jan 1986: 1). Another one, contrarily, saw gambling attracting both global tourists and the local labor class [*laogong jieceng*] (28 Nov 1986: 3; 10 Feb 1989: 3).

The instability of these accounts had many sources. Again, the coverage of Hong Kong in *Southern Weekend* in the 1980s was mostly from short-term mainland visitors, whose experiences depended largely on their hosts and itineraries that, in turn, correlated with their social status back home. There were more frequent writers whose professional positions demanded constant border crossing to Hong Kong or Macau. But for *Southern Weekend,* there were no hired writers who could report as journalists. These mediated accounts therefore represented the continuity of Party journalism in covering non-political stories, carrying on the "truth" from the past more than the present—what Dough Young called "a surrealistic Pollyana-esque glow" (2013: 12).

For the opening province of Guangdong, Hong Kong indeed came to be the immediate representation of capitalist culture. But the defensive ground, as we have seen from the war on TV and the superficial coverage of Hong Kong by *Southern Weekend,* did not only include top-

down initiatives. If the flourishing “fish bone” antennas, resistance to regulatory practices, and the heavenly depiction of Hong Kong constituted the embracing forces of Hong Kong culture; the central and provincial ban on self-made antennas, demolishing teams of fire departments, and the sinful discourses on Hong Kong represented the conservative front. In brief, the push and pull within the cultural influx were practiced on both institutional and representational levels. The dramatic struggle ranging from policy making to grassroots practice and individual accounts in the 1980s also indicates the lack of consensus on the difficult question of what exactly defined “dirty water” in the vague guidance of “pouring out the dirty water but not everything foreign.” While the question remained unsettled, the paternal impulse within the Party as well as among intellectuals to a “prescribed popular” (Link, 1987: 155) continued to assert its place in the formation of a post-Mao society for cultural and ideological leadership.

These individual and often contradictory observations, swinging between Hong Kong as heaven and hell, were clearly filtered through the ideological baggage formed during Mao's socialist era. Wang Fang, a mainland journalist working in Hong Kong, published an anthology in 1986 called *The Various Tastes of Hong Kong Living* (Wang, 1986). “Hong Kong is neither heaven nor hell.” Wang Fang's closing remark in the book was a symbolic gesture to intervene in the superficial antagonism. However, while the imagined boundary between the national-political community of mainland and British-capitalist Hong Kong continued to claim its power in the changing social map, the cultural front could not but be charged with an active marginalization of Hong Kong despite its role in economic and social re-integration. In the next section, I will focus on the last “sin” of Hong Kong—culturelessness—and discuss what

contributed to the symbolic sources and material conditions of the defensive project. In other words: how did *culture* come to the front of journalism?

2.4 The "Cultural Desert"

Among the many "sins" of Hong Kong, *cultureless-ness* is probably the most historically invested one. The spatial bias of Chinese culture or "Central Plain Syndrome" [*da zhongyuan xintai*] prioritized unity in the making of national identity and history while suppressing internal differences (Fu, 2003: 67; Lee, 2002: 169-181). Xenophobic especially in late imperial history and beyond, Chinese culture has regarded regional formations and meanings as opposed to national integration and hegemony thus suppressed them both materially and discursively. The historic "south" in China emerged less as a defined place than as a process of mobility, experience, and difference (Cartier, 2001: 31). In the long sweeping course of dynastic China, the larger south or "land of savage" [*nan man zhi di*] was barbarous [*man*] under the scourge of pirates and sinful aliens [*yi*] in the literary writings of scholar-officials in exile. The cession of Hong Kong to British rule further subjected the southern islanders, in particular, to "non-Chinese" or "foreign slaves" [*yang nu*] who acclimated to the colonial power against their homeland.

During the political turbulences of the twentieth century, the discursive formation of the south as a "cultural desert" on the south was further reinforced by intellectual migration and wartime politics. When WWII broke out, tens of thousands of mainland refugees moved to Hong Kong in the 1930s and 1940s, including many educated elites—so called "southbound literati" [*nanlai wenren*]—from big cities (Su, 2001). Yearning for a strong nation yet dislocated

by war, southbound intellectuals recognized Hong Kong as more or less a "non-place," either a temporary shelter or a cultural front of mustering popular support for mainland politics (Ip & Choi, 2001). Within the context of mainland politics and family segregation, expressions like "southern kingdom" [*nan guo*] and "cultural desert" both came to communicate the collective feeling of cultural displacement within this community of expatriate intellectuals.

Since the late 1970s, Hong Kong popular culture had inserted a strong presence in not only Guangdong but also further north (Gold, 1993). Despite its apolitical and individualistic orientation, for mainland Chinese the light-hearted Hong Kong (and Taiwan) popular entertainment was an instant release from the political culture that strictly suppressed personal interests. Even though *tongsu* (popular) songs and singing styles were gradually assimilated by official performances (Baranovitch, 2003: 15), the culture from the "cultural desert" stood out as a controversial point of reunion.

Returning to the "central kingdom"

The most explicit form of "central plain syndrome" in post-Mao journalism reported Hong Kong singers as overseas Chinese with "a heart for homeland." Since the signing of the Sino-British Declaration in September 1984, a number of Hong Kong singers were invited by the CCTV Spring Festival celebration to perform songs with nationalistic themes (Zhang, 2010: 45). Within the framework, returning to mainland China became an emotionally charged moment of "root searching" [*xun gen*] for the popular artists as well as for the business community. Homecoming, either to perform or invest, came to represent resuming an essential identity for Chinese expatriates.

Southern Weekend followed these homecoming stories closely and coherently within the nationalistic lens. When the Hong Kong popular singer Lo Man [*Luo Wen*] held his mainland concerts in Guangzhou in 1985, the event took the front-page headline on *Southern Weekend* titled "Lo Man's Ultimate Dream" [*Luo wen de su yuan*] (16 Mar 1985: 1). The author introduced Lo as a globally successful pop star dreaming to perform at the Sun Yat-sen Auditorium of Guangzhou. "Lo confided to me," the author wrote, "Guangzhou is my hometown, a place I never forgot where I watched performances as a kid while the seeds of art were sown in my heart. I have been hoping to return for years because I think performing at the Sun Yat-sen Auditorium is the symbol of one's status and ability."

Referencing mainland China as the unchanged center for Hong Kong and diasporic Chinese communities constantly depicted the overseas experiences, if ever mentioned, as intensive personal and professional struggles, foreign lands as places to work but not to live. The narratives of cultural nationalism positioned Chinese culture as the essential source of one's identity and, quite often, the (secret) formula of secular success. Patriotic businessmen, represented by Hong Kong tycoons like Li Jiacheng whose biography was serialized in *Southern Weekend* in 1988, was one case in point. The son of a school principal in western Guangdong, Li and his family were wartime refugees to Hong Kong in 1940. He named his first manufacturing shop in Hong Kong after the Yangtze River [*chang jiang*], as highlighted in the biography, which came to evidence his outstanding vision and a well-grounded Chinese identity (5 Feb 1988: 3).

In fact, for the early Chinese business communities returning to Guangdong, their investment in the mainland was repetitively seen as a patriotic act rather than for personal interests. Expressions such as "I was in Hong Kong yet with my mind in mainland" [*ren zai*

xianggang, xin zai zuguo] echoed strongly with the ages-old "Central Kingdom" sentiment while justifying the renewed economic contact between the mainland and overseas Chinese. Chen Zhihe, an interior decorator raised in the Philippines and working in Hong Kong, started his joint venture in Guangzhou in 1984 (23 Jun 1984: 1). Similar to those returned singers, Chen was reported by *Southern Weekend* as a patriotic expatriate [*aiguo huaqiao*] who gave up his inheritance in the Philippines to "fill the blanks of lighting decoration in China so *we* soon can lead the global trend as well" (my emphasis). Along with the report, a passport style photo of Mr. Chen completed the nationalistic narrative by showing an amiable Chinese face in suit without noticeable foreign references.

No doubt, highlighting the Chinese "roots" of Hong Kong singers and businessmen united the new members on the national stage. But it functioned at the expense of the differences that might categorize their cultural membership otherwise. The moment of *re-discovering* the national identity of Hong Kong people for renewed contact worked hand in hand with the denial of their experiences or identities outside the national border,"a double mechanism of inclusion and exclusion" (Hall, 2006: 228). In 1986, a few Hong Kong residents joined a summer camp of folk dancing in Guangzhou. The news report was a dramatic explication of such imagination. "They are still Chinese and love Chinese food…[I]t is difficult to find authentic folk dancing in Hong Kong" (19 Sept 1986: 4). Likewise, a review on Hong Kong film studies made a concluding remark arguing that "even though they live in a colonial society and studied western film theories, but they are standing on the rich ground of Chinese culture!" (22 Jun 1990: 4)

The discourses of *cultureless* Hong Kong, on the other hand, were fueled by the "high vs. low culture" dichotomy. With the increasing share Hong Kong culture claimed in the mainland

market, resistance strengthened the gatekeeping of high cultural forms particularly in *Art* the theme of page four on *Southern Weekend*. "[I]f Hong Kong is a cultural desert, then the art center is the oasis." A writer started his piece with an unmistakably elitist "common sense" after paying a visit to the Hong Kong Art Center (29 Apr 1988: 4). A cover story in 1986 reported on a joint performance of a Guangzhou pianist with Hong Kong musicians. The warm reception, the author wrote, "proved that Hong Kong people still could understand mainland music." To the surprise of the author (as well as his imagined readers), however, "Hong Kong in fact has quite a few groups performing orthodox [*zhengtong*] music regularly" (19 Sept 1986: 1).

Among the gatekeeping frontline against "low culture" from Hong Kong, film was perhaps the form that encountered most the critical review. After watching a horror movie in Hong Kong, a mainland film critic launched a vehement attack on the fact that a female ghost who drowned in the story was from mainland. He used the example to question the resurgent argument that there was no "social consciousness" in entertainment. "Isn't the very fact that this drowned ghost was a mainland girl [*dalu mei*] the reflection of some kind of social consciousness?" The criticism, in particular, echoed Mao's cultural policies dating back to his talk in 1942 that art and literature—both high and low—are class-based and that their political functions prioritize aesthetic features (Mao, 1975: 30-32). With the emphasis on the educational role of culture, the value of entertainment and individualistic expressions were both suppressed as capitalist instead of serving the proletariats. In literary and art criticism, Mao pointed out, it is by social effects [*shehui xiaoguo*], not one's own claim, that the creative motive of the author could be justified as politically progressive or otherwise.

Indeed, the Maoist cultural critique on Hong Kong popular films was in line with the sinful imagination of Hong Kong. In the residual critical framework, producing entertaining content irrelevant to national politics could be seen as regressive or anti-revolutionary. Likewise, portraying a mainland girl drowned dead could indicate an anti-mainland or separatist politics, a centrifugal movement against the return of Hong Kong. Ironically, however, Hong Kong since the 1970s had witnessed the rise of local identity when the "local" instead of the "remote" China started to become a point of reference for especially the locally-born generation (Ma, 1999: 35). Between "central plain syndrome" unchanged in mainland China and de-sinicisation in Hong Kong, the battle over "culture" at the point of reunion was deemed unavoidable.

The decertifying south

As the economic integration between Guangdong and Hong Kong took off and accelerated, the anxiety over culture of the south rose up to the surface. Partly the backlash of the Cultural Revolution when culture suffered excruciating purges in political struggles, "culture" in mainland China of the 1980s came to the center of social awareness. As a few Beijing-based intellectuals recalled, it was an age of "cultural renaissance" in the post-Mao period, a decade when discourses of humanity came to the front of the public (Zha, 2006: 7-9). Within the elitist discourses of "cultural fever," however, both Guangzhou and the adjacent SEZ Shenzhen were problematized as the "cultural desert" for national concern. I now group the collection of writings on this topic into three positions to briefly mark this expansion of anxiety in the post-Mao press.

The first group of writings questioned the absence or paucity of "high culture" in Guangzhou, an extension of the problematic we have seen on Hong Kong earlier. The incoming cultural forms were questioned as opposed to art. "Why is there no 'Yellow Earth' in Guangzhou?" for instance, interrogated the limited audience for the internationally awarded art film [*yishu dianying*] in Guangzhou (27 Jul 1985: 1). "Why no one dance ballet in Guangzhou," questioned whether disco was taking the place of art in the southern city (19 Apr 1986: 1). "Is the 'leg' a bit shorter?" asked why literature and art works in Guangzhou won many fewer national awards compared to other big cities, and whether romantic and martial art novels were taking the place of literature (3 Apr 1987: 1). In 1989, *Coastal Culture News* [*yanhai da wenhua bao*], a non-Party tabloid, opened up a debate on "Culture: is Guangzhou decertifying" and called for responses to the crisis.

The skepticism on the cultural identity of Guangzhou was often raised with implicit attack on its localism. Le Di, the column journalist from Shanghai, wrote "Guangzhou people should know themselves within a bigger picture" on the differences among Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. In a descending order, he concluded, the three cities differed on their spatial imagination of daily references (2 Feb 1989: 1). While people in Beijing tended to think and speak "globally," Shanghai people shrank it drastically to the relationship between Shanghai and the rest of the nation. For Guangzhou people, Le Di wrote, "[T]hey have an even smaller purview and mostly attended to their own city…Many Shanghai friends, like me, feel that Cantonese do not really know much about the country. So they cannot think from a national or global perspective."

Understandably, these criticisms against Guangzhou were raised when 80% of its population watched Hong Kong television instead of national channels. The economic integration with the outside—mostly Hong Kong—also indicated the outward orientation of social formation in Guangdong. The "south wind," similarly, suggested how Hong Kong became the immediate social and economic reference for Guangdong. The tension of going "one step ahead" yet as a national project created a peculiar space for the southern province. As it quickly resumed its Hong Kong connections, its cultural identity as a socialist city came into question regarding its connections with the nation state.

The second position on Cantonese culture involved many questions (and confusion) on whether the flooding cultural commodities qualified as "culture" yet, in general, expressed some willingness to understand the nature of Cantonese culture in the making. The mildly defensive side, interestingly, also relied on the same cultural hierarchy even though "low culture" is being redefined as "mass culture" [*dazhong wenhua*] or, like the case in music, *tongsu* culture. "Who said Guangzhou is cultureless?" for one example, argued tentatively that mass culture, including movie theaters, libraries, bookstores, and newsstands in Guangzhou, all made one "feel as if walking in a modern city" (6 Oct 1989: 1). In justification, the author cited the 66 radio stations and 31 TV stations of Guangdong in 1988, ranked the first and second respectively in number nationwide, and argued that "culture does not belong to the few."

Again based on observation, another writer pointed out that the shrinking audience of elite culture was only a relative pattern in comparison to the emergent popular culture. "There are a couple of classical music concerts every week and usually a full house for ballet performances, but none of these could compete with the craze for Hong Kong pop singers like Mei Yanfang" (7

Apr 1989: 4). Recognizing the diversification of cultural consumption, this position allowed a loose (and overlapping) definition of "culture" but also called for order:

> A friend from Beijing wrote to me and suggested, "…for the current status of Guangzhou culture, the propaganda department shall direct them back to history and to think about the subject of human nature"... We do not hope Guangzhou culture remained as what it is right now; the government shall encourage the rich enterprises in Guangzhou to invest in cultural production.
>
> (*Southern Weekend*, 17 Feb 1989: 1)

Legitimization of the "new popular" also borrow power from the past. Huang Wenyu, the editor-in-chief of *Southern Daily* in the 1970s, justified the emerging popular culture with Mao's "mass line" [*qunzhong luxian*]:

> *Tongsu* (popular) culture is, as Mao previously defined, "the elementary forms of art and culture; they can easily be accepted by most people and influence millions of families. This is what advanced culture cannot compete. Just as Lu Xun characterized *tongsu* fictions as "primarily heart lightening and occasionally edifying," in our own language, this is called "education coated with entertainment."
>
> (Huang, 1986)

The last group of writings on *Southern Weekend*, finally, confirmed popular culture in Guangdong areas as constituting an alternative and—in acute contrast to being cultureless—a more progressive cultural space. Jin Zhaojun, a writer of *People's Music* [*Renmin Yinyue*], quoted a Guangzhou official and echoed that "reviving culture did not mean resuscitating the old forms even for traditional culture" (Jin, 1987: 2). In "The Backbone of Southern Culture," the author contended that there was no coincidence that a few TV journalists in Guangzhou founded the first anti-suicide NGO in mainland China: "this, indeed, represents a better culture" (15 Jul 1988: 1).

Despite the differences, however, all three positions belonged to the same "problematic" which acknowledged the distinctive formation of southern culture in Guangdong. This discursive

explosion in the mid- and late 1980s over "culture," as we have seen from *Southern Weekend*, was fueled by a set of conditions. The historical marginalization of Hong Kong and its post-Mao northbound economic movement created a gap within the "central plain syndrome" mentality. Meanwhile, the coming return of Hong Kong sovereignty to China in 1997 also confirmed the status of political periphery for Hong Kong and further mobilized the repertoire of cultural nationalism. Finally, within the intellectual backlash in the wake of Cultural Revolution when "culture" regained unprecedented currency in post-Mao social life, the speeding integration of Guangdong province and Hong Kong at the southern border inevitably triggered a defensive cultural elitism.

Conclusion

It is helpful for us to remember that all the writings discussed above from *Southern Weekend* were produced within its mass authorship during the 1980s. Decentralization in newspaper production represented the post-Mao release from the meta-narrative of revolution and a collective call to resume a life outside of political mobilization. While the press was driven to the market for financial independence and resumed its connections with readers and the outside world, the connections were being made in an uncharted realm of social and cultural changes. Without clear official prescription, the culture of the post-Mao society in fact became a relatively open ground of contestation at least for the moment. Huang Wenyu, again the editor-in-chief of *Southern Daily* in the 1970s, commented upon the fifth anniversary of *Southern Weekend* in 1989 that pointed to the moment when—for the press—social life was unleashed for discursive formation and overlapped with its market orientation:

> Though *Southern Weekend* discussed various kinds of social issues, its major coverage was on cultural development that encompassed many different fields. It included education, technology, literature, art, journalism, publication, TV, radio, hygiene, sports, and libraries… A cultural newspaper cannot talk about everything. But if it tried to cover as much as possible, then it could satisfy all kinds of readers and therefore be well received.
>
> (Huang, 1988)

In Guangdong, the post-Mao reconnection with readers by newspapers had a re-territorializing dimension, which powerfully shaped the contours of the new local culture. In this chapter, I have reviewed one thread of newspaper production by *Southern Weekend* regarding, namely, the "problem" of Hong Kong culture. Despite the national consensus on economic and open reform, at no time during the 1980s was there a fresh ground for the incoming Hong Kong culture. Instead, a strong link between the past and the present was actively at work during the process of social integration to defend an imagined *boundary* against the blurring *border*. As in history, the overriding order of temporal continuities upon spatial differences has been embedded within China's communication bias. In this contemporary case, as we have seen, the cultural front could not but be charged with active marginalization of Hong Kong despite its role in economic and social re-integration.

The problematization of Hong Kong culture in both TV and newspapers, on the other hand, cannot be simply grouped within the oppressive forms of state censorship or top-down intervention. It can be argued that the moral stance taken up by *Southern Weekend,* indeed, represented a national—including the Party-state—concern of the opening south in rapid economic reform. Such national orientation of *Southern Weekend* could be testified not only in its journalism but also distribution, a happy convergence of ideological continuities and economic incentives for the newspaper. Dissatisfied with the overloaded postal system, *Southern*

Weekend set up regional printers in Shanghai in 1987 and Hainan in 1988 for the eastern and southern readership (e.g. 5 Dec 1986:1; 6 Nov 1987: 1; 4 Dec 1987: 1). In January 1990, *Southern Weekend* started to print locally in Beijing under the auspices of *People's Daily,* the central newspaper, for its northern market. By March 1991, the circulation in Beijing alone reached 150,000 copies, a ten-fold increase from 14,000 copies in 1985 (through postal subscription) in the capital city within six years (“*25 Years,” Southern Weekend,* 30 Nov 1980: 1). By 1992, *Southern Weekend* had reached out to most provinces across the country. Its retail sales and postal subscription claimed equal shares in circulation, with 95 percent of its subscription coming from individuals or families rather than public institutions (9 Oct 1992: 1).

In the last few months of 1991, *Southern Weekend* called for readers’ input on its coming page expansion. From the selected letters published later, only three out of thirty were from Guangdong province. Self-promotional concerns aside, the national interest in the changing south now in contact with the outside world were unmistakable. As a government official from Hebei province commented, “…the only complaint I had about *Southern Weekend* was that it did not really take advantage of its proximity to Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. I hope these areas would be introduced more including the people, society, ethos, economy, and culture” (20 Sept 1991: 1). “We need to know more about the life in Special Economic Zones, Hong Kong, and Macau,” another reader from a high school of Anhui province suggested, “the ‘south’ should embrace the nation, expand our horizon by introducing the world of today and future” (6 Sept 1992: 1).

To know more about the “south,” in sum, became a nationwide concern in the post-Mao society as related to reform and the global society. Yet the decentralizing production and national

distribution of *Southern Weekend*, as the readers of northern provinces responded, went hand in hand with the cautious mediation in its journalism. While some read it satisfactorily as the "tastes of southern kingdom," the informational gap between the newspaper and the "reality" others felt was apparent. For Guangdong residents, it was most likely the TV programs from Hong Kong in the air and personal connections on the ground instead of Party tabloids that fed the informational needs. Up to the 1990s, Hong Kong television still compared favorably for Guangzhou audiences with newspapers even in terms of depth, contradicting the newspapers universal excellence in this area (Chan, 2000: 260). For *Southern Weekend*, then, the shift from Party politics to popular culture could not simply be read as a regional formation as opposed to national concerns. Similar to the pioneering economic developments of the province, the defensive "Party-popular" in journalistic production pointed to a moment when national interest —both from the past and the present—became symbiotic with the opening south.

PART II

The 1990s in China's newspaper history was a time of radical changes as market reform became the national agenda while political debates silenced. Certainly not for everyone, it was also a time of "getting rich without talking [*mensheng fa dacai*]," as Deng Xiaoping's successor Jiang Zemin once famously put. After the backlash of Tiananmen massacre (1989-1992) when numerous outspoken newspapers during the democratic movement were shut down, there had been a steady recovery and further commercialization of newspapers nationwide. While "culture" receded along with ideological debates, the post-Tiananmen reform of the printing press came to a full scale and installed the wheel of commerce on the institutional level.

This section attempts to understand the paradigmatic change of post-Mao journalism again in a "zoom-in" manner: chapter 3 locates the macroscopic conditions of the printing press in Guangzhou during the early 1990s, and discusses how these particular sources of change, including policies, institutional networks, and newsroom production, constituted a crisis for *Southern Weekend* and its previous model of journalism. Chapter 4 captures the responses of *Southern Weekend* in pursuing a new journalistic paradigm, investigative reporting, during the late 1990s as the convergence of external and internal interests.

CHAPTER 3
THE ROAD TO NEWS:
SOUTHERN WEEKEND AND THE GUANGZHOU PRESS IN THE EARLY 1990S

Since Mao's time, Chinese newspapers have been located at the center of Party politics, performing as instruments of a top-down model of communication to synchronize the understanding and practices of central policies at all administrative levels. When the right to print was extended to various state institutions on most bureaucratic levels after the Cultural Revolution, the process of decentralization—or what some others called deregulation (Stockmann 2013: 8)—had the potential to pluralize press culture. It had prompted optimistic speculations on its democratizing power (e.g. Lynch 1999; Wu 2000), but skepticism soon increased as the process of press conglomeration took off in the late 1990s (e.g. Zhao 2000; Lee et al. 2006).

To a lesser degree, some argue that the exponential growth of popular media contributed to political indifference, cynicism, a global consumerist culture, or even postmodernism (e.g. Dirlik and Zhang 2000; Zhang 2008). In either case, a historical question remains largely unsubstantiated: when and what accounted for the gradual marginalization of the propagandist model in popular journalism in mainland China? Major connections need to be made between the structural transformation of the press and an evolving journalism culture in the post-Mao context. Suspending the teleological assumption that media marketization leads to Western-style democracy in post-communist countries (Sparks, 2008), I suggest that rather than the emerging commercial activities of the press, it was the changing relationship between the press and the

public which began to shift the fundamental notion of "news" for popular newspapers around the mid-1990s.

The following discussion has three parts addressing both the continuities and ruptures of Guangzhou press at the turn of the 1990s, a transitional period toward the corporate stage of Chinese newspapers. The first section discusses the organizational reform of Party and non-Party newspapers within the context of press commercialization. The second part deals with how *Southern Weekend* can be located within such trends toward a modern press, and how that informed its journalism. The final section examines two legal cases involved *Southern Weekend* in the early 1990s to suggest an inherent crisis it faced which paved the way to the factual orientation in journalism.

3.1 Party Press in Renewal

Party-state policies continued to push newspapers and the press toward financial independence in a top-down manner. Two major policies in the late 1980s, in particular, accelerated the establishment of economic machinery within the press. Despite occasional government attempts to curb unexpected outcomes, the staggering market development of the press was not an ironic by-product of post-Mao economic reform but, instead, deeply rooted in deliberate policymaking as much as reform initiatives that, together, gave rise to the continuous expansion of the post-Tiananmen press.

In March 1988, the State Press and Publication Association (SPPA) and the State Administration for Industry and Commerce (SAIC) co-issued a directive which sanctioned the economic activities performed by newspapers, periodicals, and book publishers (*Press and*

Publication Law of PRC, 1949-1990: 529-30). The list broadly approved commercial activities in advertising, consulting, commercial conferences, cultural activities, printing, reader services, training courses and other educational activities, and paper supply, etc. The only limit was that the press could not run any business "unrelated to its own areas" which, as exemplified in a follow-up directive, was defined by the content of the publication. "For example, a professional newspaper on fashion has the right to run fashion related businesses but not unrelated areas such as agricultural, electronics, food, etc." (Ibid 532). The criteria of doing business based on the areas of journalism no doubt favored comprehensive Party dailies more than special or professional newspapers. In Guangzhou, as will be seen, it was the Party press which led the second round of press expansion on multiple fronts in the 1990s.

As state subsidies diminished since the end of the 1970s, how to run the press as a business had been imperative. The initial stage of pushing Party newspapers to the market in the 1980s led to a mobilization for external sponsorship. It was encouraged, often with financial incentives, for press, including newsroom, workers to make contact with local enterprises and beyond. This overlapping function between the newsroom and marketing was more prominent in smaller newspapers especially in the 1980s. For newspapers initiated within the bureaucracies, in particular, the market and Party-state principles seemed most ironic to outsiders as the editor-in-chief, usually the Party leader of the sponsoring unit, was also the general manager of the newspaper. Thus, mobilizing the newsroom for financial independence had led to "paid journalism" and other forms of corruption (Zhao, 1998: 72-93). But before editorial and business departments were fully separated, occasional top-down campaigns against demoralized journalists proved to be futile, serving no more than the political correctness of the Party. The

ways in which "corruption" was defined also lent power to the amply staffed Party press against small post-Mao publications.

The economic freedom now endorsed by the central government drove the press to re-organize in order to instigate comprehensive changes. Beginning in the 1990s, the departmental division between the editorial and business side of the Party press took off. In accordance with the Party line, a consensus was reached among press leaders and in academia on the importance of understanding the press as a business and so—as a central metaphor—"two wheels need to reel together." As Liu Tao, the Party director of *Southern Daily,* unambiguously put it: it was necessary to hold "one hand on the newspaper, the other on dollar bills" (Liu, 1996).

Generally, the organizational reform took three steps to institutionalize the economic mechanisms of the press. First, individual accounts were set up for the previously peripheral departments such as reader services, photography, and distribution, and held them financially accountable. Then new enterprises in related areas—paper supply, photo technologies, printing, and information service—were established. And finally, the press also ventured into other booming industries such as real estate, tourism, hotels, restaurants, and public relations. In *Guangzhou Daily*, most supporting departments extended their services into the marketplace by establishing affiliated companies. These business departments, in turn, were elevated in bureaucratic ranking within the press (Li, 1993; He, 1995). As "press economy" [*baoye jingji*] came to be a buzzword in the early 1990s, the relationship between newspaper making and its economics consequently became a heated topic in press circles (Han, 1995; Liu, 1996; Ma, 1996; Huang, 1996).

The other wheel of commerce, once installed, brought the scope of market activities of the Party press to a frenzy. Before 1992, *Southern Daily* was already running two hostels and another two companies. Three years later, it was part of more than thirty new companies in various areas, partnering with various domestic, Hong Kong, and foreign enterprises (Han, 1995). *Guangzhou Daily* not only established semi-private companies in news image services, technologies, paper supply, printing services, and public relations, but also invested enormously in hotels, real estate, and restaurants, including a joint beauty studio with a Hong Kong company (ibid). Its business plans reached out to adjacent areas of the Pearl River Delta and even Hainan province. *Yangcheng Evening News*, perhaps the least aggressive among the "newspaper trio" in economic expansion, was also involved in more than a dozen joint ventures, running four advertising companies by the mid-1990s including one with Hong Kong and the other with Japan (Ma, 1996). All these market practices had eluded the eyes of those who mourned the decline of Party dailies judging solely by market share in newsstand circulation.

The institutional reform of the Party press culminated in the introduction of the general manager as a parallel position to editor-in-chief. *Yangcheng Evening News* and *Southern Daily* pioneered in adopting the new leadership structure in the mid-1990s. The two posts reported to the director [*she zhang*], and the trio—director, editor-in-chief, and general manager—constituted the power center of a press committee or the highest echelon of the institution, which usually had around ten members. *Guangzhou Daily* set up a general manager in 1983 but kept bigger power in the hands of editor-in-chief, who played a similar role to the director in the other two newspapers. By 1995, it had established an editorial board and a managerial board under the general press committee (Tang & Li, 2012: 200). Elevating the head of the growing business

departments to equal bureaucratic ranking with editor-in-chief, finally, institutionalized the dual wheels of the press in the market economy.

As all these changes outlined indicate, the narrative of a failing Party press could not withstand even a casual examination of the entrepreneurial endeavors, not to mention the skyrocketing advertising sales of the Party press in Guangzhou. The municipal *Guangzhou Daily* expanded from four to eight pages as early as 1987 in order to double its advertising space, which took in an annual income of 10.45 million RMB that single year (Guangdong Local History Editing Committee, 2000: 230). Taking advantage of its municipal jurisdiction which now could be conveniently translated to a booming urban economy and wealthier readership, its advertising income doubled in just another three years and reached 20.5 million RMB in 1990 while circulation slightly dropped from 274,100 in 1987 to 249,000 in 1990 (Ibid). *Southern Daily* had its advertising revenue leap from 0.4 million RMB in 1979 to 15 million RMB in 1989, a handsome thirty-seven-fold increase in the first decade of the economic reform while its circulation fluctuated mildly between 660,000 and 850,000 (Guangzhou Local Gazette Editing Committee, 1999: 979; *China Journalism Yearbook 1988, 1989, 1990*). Similarly, *Yangcheng Evening News* started to publish a four-page advertising subsidiary—*Golden Page* [*jin ye*]—in 1993 exclusively provided for readers in Guangzhou areas at no extra cost. Advertising sales had replaced newspaper distribution to be the major income source for *Southern Daily, Guangzhou Daily*, and *Yangcheng Evening News,* respectively, by 1988, 1990, and 1992 (Guangdong Local History Editing Committee, 2000: 186; Guangzhou Local Gazette Editing Committee, 1999: 976; *Yangcheng Evening News History* Editing Group, 1997: 384). Consequently, the former definition of "big papers" [*da bao*] based on bureaucratic hierarchy, spatial jurisdiction, and

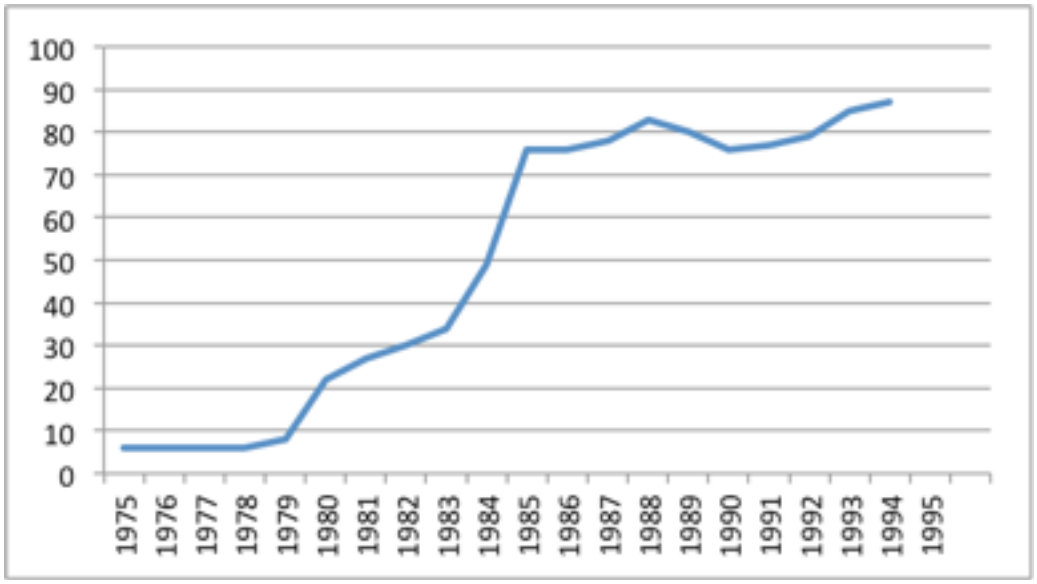
circulation was fundamentally shattered. The national paper *Worker's Daily* in Beijing, for instance, had a circulation of 1.72 million and 10 million RMB in advertising sales in 1991 while *Shenzhen SEZ News*, a municipal paper, took in 30 million RMB from advertisers with a circulation of 138,000 or less than one tenth of *Worker's Daily* (Cai, 2006: 321). The rise of urban centers like Guangzhou and Shenzhen, in brief, was restructuring the Chinese press by their financial health on the market. From a local-urban perspective, the Party press had unquestionably managed to renew its structural dominance.

Dong Tiance (2007) suggested that it was between 1987 and 1995 when economic reform on organizational, editorial, distributional, and managerial levels of the press came to full scale in Guangdong (91). Soon, the central mandate of press conglomeration began in 1996, hand-picking *Guangzhou Daily* to be the first one in the country to organize a news group. It can be argued that the lasting discourse of a declining Party press suggests, at least partly, an out-of-date measurement of newspaper development with its central concern on circulation, and therefore failed to capture the novel practices adopted by the Party press. The Party press in urban areas, as I outlined above, were quick to follow (if not exploit) the economic freedom deliberately authorized by state policies including, for instance, that the price limit was lifted in January 1989 for most Chinese newspaper, and the power of setting the price for both retail sales and subscription was devolved to the sponsoring department or the press itself (Fang, 2000: 2212; *Yangcheng Evening News History* Editing Group, 1997: 381). How other non-Party papers responded to the aggressive development is the focus of the following section.

New printers, old system

The growing pattern of Guangzhou newspapers from the late 1970s to early 1990s generally resembled the national situation identified by previous scholars (Esarey 2005: 9; Stockmann 2013: 56). Except that the post-Tiananmen crackdown was remarkably less dramatic, the number of newspapers surged around the mid-1980s, curbed during the Anti-Bourgeois Liberalization Campaign in 1987, dropped in post-1989 crackdown, and then slowly recovered in the 1990s.

Figure 3.1 Number of Guangzhou Newspapers in Print, 1975-1995



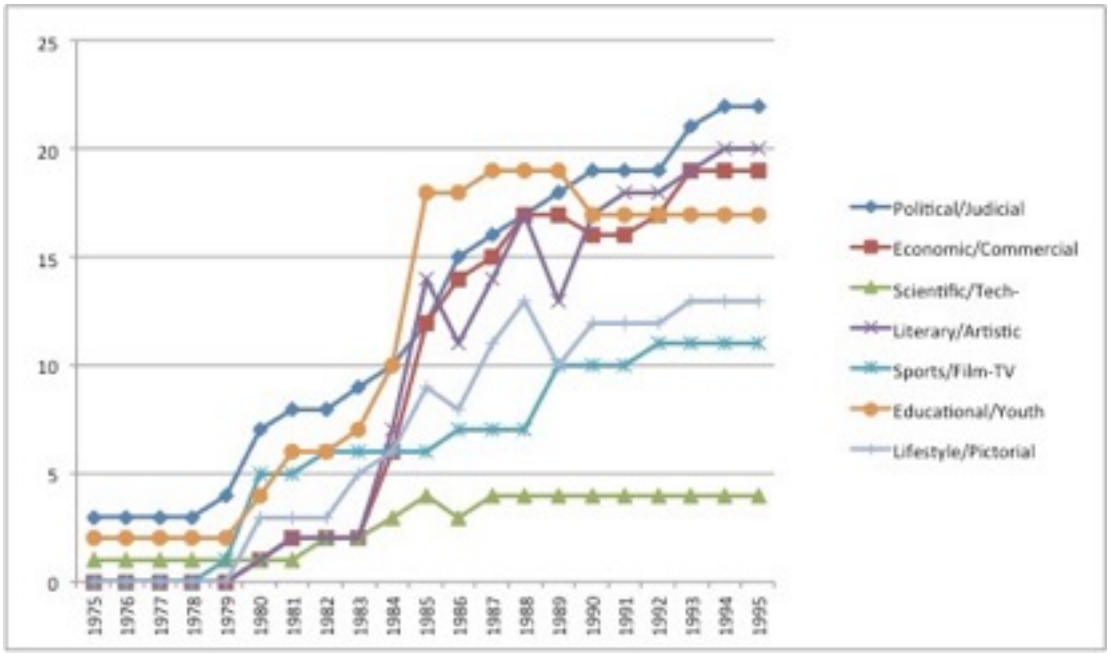
(Source: *Guangzhou Municipal Gazette, Guangdong News Gazette*)[1]

However, the number above is insensitive to the structure of the press or types of newspapers entering and exiting the market. Nor is it informative about the qualitative changes

[1] Here, the numbers of circulating newspapers come from the listed titles entered and exited the market each year. They represent the newspapers I was able to identify in the municipal and provincial gazettes, not statistics directly from official numbers.

among them especially in the 1990s. To get a closer look at the share of various newspapers over the years, I sorted them by genre:

Figure 3.2 Number of Categorized Guangzhou Newspapers in Print, 1975-1995



(Source: *Guangzhou Municipal Gazette, Guangdong News Gazette*)

From the second chart, it is clear that while the previous longitudinal mode still applies to most types of papers, their development was far from "natural evolvement" but marked by structural intervention. Three types of the newspapers—economic, literary-artistic, and educational newspapers—accounted for the biggest press growth in the mid-1980s, and contributed to the "cultural turn" of the print market. It was also clear that two genres—literary and lifestyle newspapers—suffered the most in the post-Tiananmen shutdown as well as the local regulatory campaign in 1986, when economic papers were promoted. Growing steadily throughout the 1980s, finally, political and judicial newspapers [*fazhi* bao] were the only type of

newspapers unaffected by the post-1989 shutdown and they also became the major contributor in post-1992 establishments.

What I meant here by "political-judicial" referred to the non-Party papers that, while not affiliated with Party committees, were sponsored by various administrative departments on governmental as opposed to cultural, economic, technological, and educational affairs. The five new papers founded between 1989 and 1994, for instance, all reflected the increasing governmental concern with the emerging labor market and rapid changes of local population.[2] The rise of these papers indicated strong political concerns that were inseparable from the expansion of the post-Tiananmen press.

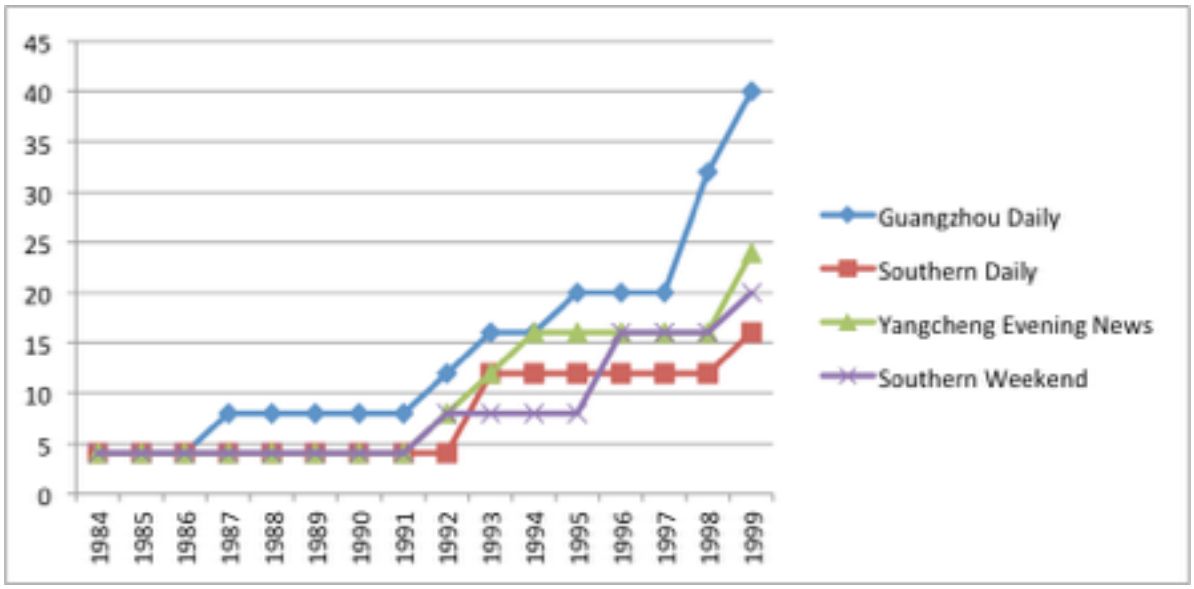
Heedless to the structure of the print market, the first picture above is also insensitive to the internal expansion of newspapers, a conspicuous strategy adopted by the Party press at the turn of the 1990s. This seemingly mild wave of press expansion in the early 1990s took place rather radically *within* extant papers by page expansion. Unlike the "cultural turn" of the mid-1980s, literary, artistic, educational, and lifestyle newspapers were no longer the powerhouse of the popular press as they were quickly imitated by Party newspapers in their newly added weekend editions. The municipal Party paper *Guangzhou Daily* took the lead in expanding from four to eight pages in 1987 when all other Chinese newspapers, Party and non-Party alike, were still printed in the four-page format. In fact, before the"weekend craze" in the early 1990s, the Party trio in Guangzhou all added weekend pages in 1988 and 1989 to expand coverage on social and cultural life as well as advertising spaces. If the structural decentralization of the 1980s had

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[2] The five newspapers were *Population Observation* [*renkou guancha bao*] (1989), *Guangdong Transportation and Security* [*Guangdong jiaotong anquan bao*] (1990), *Guangdong Labor News* [*Guangdong laodong bao*] (1993), *Guangdong Population* [*Guangdong renkou bao*] (1993), and *Southern Workers* [*nanfang gong bao*] (1994).

achieved, at least to some degree, pluralism in content, there was increasing evidence to show that such a trend, what Hallin & Mancini called "external pluralism" (2004) or pluralism achieved on the level of the media system, started to turn to "internal pluralism" as Party dailies began to target at the largest possible audience.

Figure 3.3 Page Expansions of Party Newspapers in Guangzhou, 1984-1999



(Source: *Guangzhou Yearbooks*, *Yangcheng Evening News History, 60 Years of Guangzhou Daily*)

In 1992 and 1993, all Party papers, including *Southern Weekend,* thickened their pages. The first page expansion of *Southern Weekend* took a similar approach of internal pluralism for mass appeal. The four added pages—*People & Law* [*ren yu fa*], *Readers' Digest* [*wen hai ji ying*], *Grass Land* [*fang cao di*], *The Globe* [*huan yu*]—and two added columns of *Family Life* [*jia ting sheng huo*] and *Medicine and Health* [*yiyao yu baojian*] were clearly informed by the most marketable newspapers and sought-after content of the time: judicial papers, readers' digest, and

the best selling magazines *Family* [*jia ting*], and *Family Doctor* [*jiating yisheng*] (Zuo, 2014: 233).

Both external and increasingly internal, the structural expansion of the press was coterminous with their extended collaboration especially for non-Party newspapers. Though structurally contained within Party-state institutions, the founding units often collaborated within and across the bureaucratic system in mobilizing resources, including personnel, licenses, printing facilities, offices and distribution support within their command, for the new publication. This expansion bespeaks extensive interests of Party-state institutions—the legitimate printers—in entering the marketplace.

This contained expansion and cross-sponsorship of the press had two forms: vertical and horizontal. Vertical expansion refers to the alignment among sponsoring units across bureaucratic ranks. Horizontal expansion, on the other hand, involved institutions on the same administrative level which therefore were organized by economic interests more than bureaucratic command. The two models of coalition, as exemplified by *China Golden Herald* [*zhongguo jin bao*] and *Modern Mankind* [*xiandai renbao*], were eventually opted out in newspaper making. But they nonetheless represented part of a complicated picture within the structural decentralization of newspapers until the late-1990s, when the printing press re-centralized around Party dailies.

The economic newspaper *China Golden Herald* (1989-1990) was sponsored by the Provincial Propaganda Department of Guangdong, *the* powerful political-ideological institution. As the supervisory department, it mobilized a group of media institutions mostly within its administrative power to form a small newsroom. Less than twenty well-trained staff came from a variety of Party dailies and Party bureaucracies, including *Shenzhen Special Economic Zone*

News, *Southern Daily*, *Guangzhou Daily*, the Pearl River People's Radio Station, and the Provincial Party School of Guangdong (Chen, 2003: 97). All the contributing units involved—newspapers, radio stations, propaganda departments, and Party schools—were within the jurisdiction of the provincial propaganda department and therefore represented a vertical mobilization in newspaper making.

Horizontal alliances, on the other hand, were also performed within the Maoist institutions in newspaper establishments. *Modern Mankind,* for example, was founded in 1985 in Guangzhou by the South China Book Corporation [*zhongguo nanfang tushu chuban gongsi*] (SCBC), which was a newly-minted enterprise organized by four major publishing houses—Guangdong People's Publishing House, Guangdong Science and Technology Publishing House, Huacheng Publishing House, and Lingnan Fine Arts Publishing House in Guangzhou. Relying on their institutional networks within the publishing system, the proposal of founding a domestic joint venture in publishing attracted more than a hundred publishers across the country, from whom 20 million RMB was amassed. As for newsroom staff, SCBC adopted a dual-track employment model and organized its newsroom both from the sponsoring publishers and the open labor market.

Essentially an economic venture, SCBC also adopted bureaucratic practices to mobilize economic and political sponsorships, absorbing resources from across public and private sectors. Upon the approval by the Provincial Propaganda Department of Guangdong, the proposal of SCBC was taken to the Central Propaganda Department and other publishing and governmental units in Beijing and Shanghai to build its supporting network. And even though its financing scheme [*jizi fang'an*] was geared toward domestic publishers, it also opened to investment from Hong Kong, Macau, and foreign countries. Somewhat surprisingly, though, the first application

for a share of 400,000 RMB came from People's Publishing House of Yunnan, a state-owned publisher of a southwest province known for its economic underdevelopment.

Despite disparate organizational backgrounds and scale, *China Golden Herald* and *Modern Mankind* both spelled out the market initiatives released within the old institutions. In both cases, the connections of funding sources and labor force between sponsoring departments and the newspaper were remarkably high, an aspect that tends to be underrated in theorizing the market reform of Chinese press.

In brief, both the internal expansion of Party newspapers and bureaucratic coalitions among non-Party departments offered the organizational foundation of post-Mao press development. The expansion of the basis on one hand diversified the press structure to an unprecedented degree in the history of PRC, but the invariable high degree of organizational and financial connections between the Party-state and the printing press also compounded press development with bureaucratic principles on the other. While Party newspapers quickly grew and reorganized from within, ambitious non-Party printers aligned, mobilized resources within their reach, and yet remained vulnerable to targeted regulations. This entanglement of Maoist institutions in post-Mao commercialization thus bears strong authoritarian characteristics of state capitalism (Lee, 2000). Continuities aside, let us look at how the labor force, a strong variable of the post-Mao press in Guangzhou, was mobilized in shaping the newsroom and journalism culture.

3.2 Locating the Itinerant Journalists

The press was part of the state-owned enterprises under Mao, the dominant economic sector which absorbed eighty percent of the urban labor force (Ngok, 2008: 47). Like the urban

population in various industrial and governmental work units, all press workers—in the newsroom, the printing plant, or the dining hall—were state employees who had their jobs assigned and, along with it, lifelong job security and comprehensive welfare packages of housing, health care, child care, training, and a pension. For journalists and printing workers alike, the press was fundamentally a Party-state organ, the only source of their livelihood and subjective identification.

This unified scenario of labor conditions and social status gradually broke down for press workers as new employment models were adopted and enforced. Initially a response to the massive unemployment at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, socialist labor policies have gradually been replaced by contract-based employment and an open labor market over the past three decades. In the 1980s, jobless youth were encouraged to be self-employed, selling small consumer goods from newspapers to street food or fixing bicycles in the street. The emerging trading activities and new employment opportunities eventually lured not only the jobless but also a growing number of state employees to "jump into the sea" [*xia hai*] of the market economy especially when state institutions began to adopt new labor policies, firing unqualified workers, and mobilizing competitive mechanisms to enhance productivity.

By the early 1990s, a highly elusive group of "itinerant journalists" [*liulang jizhe*] migrating from elsewhere to Guangzhou and other big cities started to capture public attention. Unlike millions of peasant workers [*min gong*] seeking manufacturing jobs in township and village enterprises (TVEs) in Guangdong, the itinerant journalists concentrated in urban Guangzhou, where the newspapers and periodicals proliferated. Also known as "three-without" individuals [*sanwu renyuan*]—people without local residency [*hukou*], stable employment, and any social

benefits just as other migrant peasant-turned-industrial workers in coastal factories—migrant laborers, rather than local Cantonese, constituted the first generation of professional journalists in the PRC. Any cultural explanation of the distinctive southern press, which explains the particularities of post-Mao Guangzhou newspapers through an essentialist southern culture, should be alert to this fact.

Southern Weekend published its first job advertisement at the end of 1992. The listed qualifications captured quite well the stereotype of the itinerant journalists of the time:

> Male, 38 or younger, healthy, has college education (can be exempted in exceptional cases) and at least three years of reporting experience.
>
> (6 Nov 1992: 1)

Compared to newsroom staff today who are mostly hired as new graduates from well-known universities, these journalists of the early 1990s seemed significantly older and perhaps insufficiently educated. Even in comparison to their senior generation who had been assigned to the press and then stayed (happily or not) thereafter, these migrant journalists came with much more diverse and humble experiences. It was not uncommon to find among them formerly underpaid school teachers, writers, workers, and the unemployed in inland areas as well as journalists in struggling news institutions elsewhere. Formal college educated or not, many of the migrant journalists had not worked in the newsroom before. Zhao Shilong (b. 1967), who was hired in the early 1990s by *Modern Mankind*, the non-Party newspaper founded by the publishing system in 1985, had left his working unit as a technical worker in Hunan province and stayed jobless for almost two years. Like Zhao, a lot of the itinerant journalists in Guangzhou had previously worked in state-owned enterprises and yet were deeply demoralized in the

floundering institutions which continued to be plagued by stagnant wages, bureaucratic nepotism, over-staffing, and lack of social mobility. For the unemployed and recusants in their twenties or thirties, the growing print market in urban centers became an attractive, if not involuntary, option.

Personal backgrounds aside, the migrant journalists encountered quite an unexpected working and living environment in the expanding urban press, which worked to deepen their socio-economic differences from the pre-reform press workers. With shrinking state subsidies for the press, tenured workers or those who could remain on state payroll stagnated. And most previous labor policies and benefits were suspended for the new comers by default. "Old policies for the old, and new for the new" [*laoren lao banfa, xinren xin banfa*] became the common practice in news organizations. In studying the labor policies of a Shanghai newspaper, Zhao Xiaojun (2011) found that media workers within the same institution were deeply stratified along the various employment models, all of which worked in favor of the previous generation with formal appointments (11-16). As a result, Zhao argued that the market reform of the press did not compromise the interests of "the old" or institution leaders but instead, institutionalized the pre-reform group as beneficiaries of marketization without exposing them to its risks.

Like other hiring newspapers in the early 1990s, *Southern Weekend* was unambiguous in spelling out the inferior status of the new recruits from its standing labor force, who secured the tenured "iron rice bowl" at least for the time being. Again in the job advertisement:

> Monthly salary is above ¥1,000 (approximately 120 USD, my calculation) and negotiable; no formal appointment [*diao dong*] or residency relocation [*qian hukou*], no medical benefits (unless caused by work). Labor contract is renewable, and those who demonstrate exceptional performances during employment can apply to be formal [*zheng shi*] newsroom staff.
>
> (*Southern Weekend,* 6 Nov 1992: 1)

Similar to *Southern Weekend*, the post-Mao press created a *de facto* dual-track employment system which was comprised of both tenured and contracted journalists. As a Party subsidiary, the first eight editors of *Southern Weekend* were all appointed by and from its parent paper *Southern Daily* (Zuo, 2014: 194). In preparing for its first expansion in 1992, *Southern Weekend* increased its editors also by formal appointment (Ibid: 234). Though limited, its continuous capacity to provide tenured jobs as a provincial Party subsidiary was utilized as an award mechanism to attract experienced journalists on the market until tenured jobs were eventually marginalized.

Therefore, one significant aspect that defined the post-Tiananmen urban press was the changing composition of its labor force. For the migrant journalists, the structural differences between the two groups in the newsroom had defining consequences in their working and living experiences. Income and benefits aside, only in rare cases until the 2000s would migrant journalists be granted a journalist pass [*jizhe zheng*], the official identity proof to get permission for interviews or even just going through the security check of a governmental institution. Zhao Shilong, who started in *Modern Mankind* in the early 1990s as a migrant journalist did not get his journalist pass until 2000 (Bai: 2011: 128). In flexible employment with quite often an unheard publication and at best dubious identity proof, it was not uncommon for migrant (mostly male) journalists to take up freelancing jobs and constantly negotiated for a more stable position with some kind of social benefits. *Xinwen mingong,* literally "news peasant-workers," prevailed as a metaphor in self-identification among itinerant journalists (Ibid: 127).

Coming from a diverse social background with high mobility in job placement and lower identification with their tenured seniors in the newsroom, itinerant journalists distinguished

themselves, for the first time in the PRC, as a group with a new relationship with the printing press. "These itinerant journalists are now competing with the 'welfare journalists' [*fuli jizhe*] on stories, topics, and even jobs" (8 Oct 1993: 1; 27 May 1994: 1). Exaggeration aside, they did toil for alternative news sources and styles to compete with Party dailies, which continued to rely on local correspondents and bureaucratic support from various levels in news production. As a group, itinerant journalists ceased to exist around the turn of the century as labor contracts became the norm for all press groups. But the early migrant journalists in the 1990s, in sum, bore with them socioeconomic and symbolic resources that contributed to an emerging journalism culture.

Limited commercialization of Southern Weekend

A subsidiary of *Southern Daily, Southern Weekend*'s affiliation with the provincial Party paper was arguably a blessing in respect to organizational growth. The economic initiative, while constrained on the institutional level, was channeled through its small editorial room and alternative practices. With diminishing support for newspapers as the growing trend, *Southern Weekend* shared in many aspects with other non-Party papers of similar size in struggling for their financial health and readership especially after a separate account from *Southern Daily* was set up in 1993 (Hong, 2005: 29). The practical arrangements of its newsroom had a strong imprint on its journalism of the time.

Since its inauguration, *Southern Weekend* had been actively taking advantage of the rising market in Guangdong in almost every possible way. The most visible form, no doubt, was advertising. Yuezhi Zhao found among the samples she collected in three cities outside of

Guangzhou in 1994, *Southern Weekend* devoted the most space, approximately 20 percent, to advertising (1998:132). Here I would like to discuss other important forms of market initiatives adopted by *Southern Weekend* in commercial sponsorship, sourcing, and distribution.

For *Southern Weekend*, advertisers penetrated far beyond the increasing advertising spaces. Commercial sponsorship had been a prominent approach for *Southern Weekend* to connect with advertisers, freelancers, and readers in the form of writing contests. In 1986, 1988, and 1990, for instance, Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical Company became a sponsor for *Southern Weekend* in its open call for reportage that was "readable and lively, with insightful themes and refreshing topics." All accepted submissions printed on *Southern Weekend* throughout the year would automatically enter the final competition judged by "renowned literary critics and journalists" (4 Jan 1986, 18 Dec 1987). In 1990 alone, six major columns of *Southern Weekend* were sponsored contests, calling for reportage, essays, and photos from external writers and readers.

This sponsoring approach had several ramifications, sometimes enlisting jingles for a sponsored product (6 Oct 1984; 24 Jul 1987), quizzes (31 Jul 1987; 26 Feb 1988), film reviews (8 Apr 1988), photo contests (19 Jun 1987), and prose (1 Dec 1989). Before the advertising department was fully separated from the newsroom, this kind of commercial sponsorship represented a direct penetration of advertising into news form, both relying on informal sources, the readers, for production.

The assimilation of external contributors was further normalized in the attempt of the newspaper to expand its network of authors without expanding much of its work force. Wu Qinying, a journalist from *Guangming Daily* in Beijing, started to write for *Southern Weekend* upon requests and reported on Beijing-based artists and writers (29 Aug 1986, 28 Nov 1986) and

fashion-related topics in the capital city (12 Sept 1986; 12 Nov 1986; 20 Mar 1987; 13 May 1988). Two of Wu's fashion reports won the writing contests sponsored by Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical Company in 1986 and 1990 (20 Mar 1987; 22 Mar 1991). And her investigative report on domestic human trafficking (2 Sept 1988) won the first award sponsored by the same company in 1988 (20 Jan 1989). Like Wu, a number of award-winning writers came from frequent contributors and so their affiliated identities with *Southern Weekend* strengthened.

Externalizing news sources from beyond local areas, on the other hand, meant that "news" was rare. Hong Bing argued that the connections with outside sources and authors played an important role in the development of *Southern Weekend* after 1995 as it gradually built up its own reporting teams (2005: 28). Before this, as Hong aptly pointed out, there were hardly any exclusive stories on *Southern Weekend* due to its heavy reliance on external writers. And only in rare cases would journalists send stories to *Southern Weekend* when their own newspapers rejected them. The identity of the "weekend" newspaper was, at least partly, defined by these "peripheral" materials.

Slow in hiring new labor, *Southern Weekend* sought to cultivate qualified authors, but it also opened to a larger pool of informal contributors beyond geographical and institutional boundaries. By 1993, a year after its first page expansion, its eight pages were still filled with a mixture of staff editing and writing, and large amounts of external submissions. This informal network of sourcing included freelancers, string reporters, and writers across the country, who contributed to the prevalence of pseudonyms and the rare practice of bylines that blurred the boundaries of their geographical and institutional identities. In a sense, *Southern Weekend* was not only the subsidiary of *Southern Daily* but also a subsidiary of established Party dailies in

general. In 1994, as the newspaper reached 835,000 in circulation (CJY 1995: 876), the total number of its employees—including the newsroom staff, advertising, and distribution—was only 27 (Ma, 2009). The newspaper was replete with external submissions that sustained the small newsroom and, as we will see later, soon triggered the change of its journalism.

Distribution of the press was also open to market forces which, as it advanced the territories of circulation, contributed to its expanding network of sources. As the post office required a minimum of 100,000 in circulation for service, none of the post-Mao papers were qualified to join when they first started. Consequently, in the course of mid-1980s to 1990s, independent networks of distribution expanded quickly, encompassing not only new establishments but also the increasingly market-oriented Party newspapers. In Guangzhou, the exponential growth of publications in the 1980s led to sluggish and expensive delivery by the post office. In response, *Guangzhou Daily* retreated from the post office in 1990 and started to build its own distribution network of local retail stores, transportation vehicles, and eventually the establishment of its own distribution company in 1993 (Tang & Li: 2012: 70). In fact, 128 out of 300 municipal Party papers in mainland China had retreated from the post office and established their own retail networks by 1990 and about 500, approximately one third of Chinese newspapers, had done so (CJY 1991: 124). *Southern Weekend,* on the other hand, adopted a "dual-track" in distribution and relied on both post office subscription and individual newsstand dealers, which reached more than 2,000 in downtown Guangzhou by 1993 (Yang, 1994: 321). As it had reached 260,000 in circulation since 1985, *Southern Weekend* was qualified for post office network (CJY, 1986: 317).

For *Southern Weekend*, a few connections could be made between the open newsroom and its style of journalism at the time. As many contributors came with a literary background as professional or amateur writers in various institutions, they followed the convention of using pen names to represent their literary identities. For regular journalists and editors in news institutions, the use of pen names or pseudonyms could avoid overexposure. It was, for instance, easier for journalists in a Party newspaper to write more outspoken commentaries for a popular one. Party-state officials might do the same for political or economic interests (or both). Non-tenured migrant journalists, finally, quite often used pseudonyms for outside submissions in order to increase their income without alerting their own newspaper.

Informal sources also came with multiple forms of authorship during this period. Regardless of how it was signed—either in full name or pseudonym, the piece could come from one's own writing, clipping [*zhai*], editing [*bian ji*], and "translating and editing" [*bian yi*]. These variations further blurred the line of formal and informal sources. Except for submissions requested through personal networks of editors, the newspaper was open to those with literary qualifications without discriminating in their geographical and social status. This openness and option for anonymity continued to give a lively feel of multivocality for the newspaper—similar to a public display of newspaper clippings. As a general trend especially after 1987, however, stories were getting longer as more news was incorporated. If we look at the average number of items—including writing and photos—per page during the decade, there was a steady decrease from 1985 to 1995, when longer genres like feature [*te xie*], serial literature [*lian zai*], and visual manipulations gradually took over the space occupied by earlier and shorter forms.[3]

[3] I sampled *Southern Weekend* quarterly—four issues per year—between 1985 and 1995 and counted the average number of items of each. Over the decade, it dropped from 12.5 in 1985 to 5.2 in 1995.

The other aspect of multiple authorship and openness of the newspaper was the rare usage of bylines, which accounted for less than 4 percent of published items until 1993. The very few exceptions I found in samples represented two types of relationships with the newspaper: experts and outcasts. Experts supplied the newspaper with authoritative voices as informal correspondents in public institutions. "Scholars & Professors on Reading" [*xuezhe jiaoshou tan dushu*], the advice column on page two of "Knowledge" [*qiu zhi*] where the experts introduced learning skills for the general readership, was one of the major spaces that bylines were used. Outcasts, on the other hand, could not be more revealing when letters by inmates were published in late 1989 (29 Sept, 13 Oct, 27 Oct, 10 Nov 1989), all of which printed under the column "Monologues from Death Row" [*siqiu de zibai*]. The explicit moral voice of Party journalism, both in its positive form of teaching and learning and the negative form of law and punishment, continued to find expression in popular journalism.

Finally, institutional and symbolic continuities between the Maoist and post-Mao press also manifested financially. Though direct state subsidy was vanishing for Party dailies, other forms of subsidies were still made available to them. From 1983 to 1989, *Southern Daily* was granted a tax-exempt policy by the provincial government of Guangdong to help finance its new 16-story office building, to which the press relocated on 1 July 1989 (*Southern Daily History*: 114-5; Cai, 2006: 309). These favorable treatments were not, if ever, extended to non-Party papers despite their popularity in the retail market. As the Party press quickened its financial, industrial, and institutional reform in early and mid-1990s, the prospects of non-Party papers began to dim. However, for *Southern Weekend*, the disparity between its official identity and the structural "popular turn" of Chinese press soon came to a point of crisis.

3.3 A Propaganda Model in Crisis

Timothy Cheek had pointed out long ago that "propaganda" [*xuan chuan*] in Chinese is more closely related to its original meaning in English, a neutral term indeed, as "propagating what one believes to be true" (1989: 53). The Enlightenment tradition in political journalism or what he called *educational journalism* has more powerful roots in Chinese popular and elite society historically than *informational* or *critical journalism*. In Mao's socialist China, the tension between the two continued to be manifested in CCP's Party journalism which, in theory, meant two-way communication between the Party and the people yet in practice instrumentalized the press as a form of top-down political communication (Zhao, 1998: 24-29). On the institutional level, it followed the *Pravda* model of the Soviet Union and co-opted newspapers and intellectuals within the Party-state bureaucracy, which fundamentally changed the relationship between the press and the state. Ideally, the top-down communication system functions to promote social values and behaviors that would facilitate material production and cultural formation of socialism. In serving this ultimate goal, newspaper journalism was meant to educate rather than to inform, to guide public opinion in line with Party politics rather than to offer alternative views. Like the Soviets, the system guarded against competing information or deviation from the "Truth" provided by the Party-state.

Such guiding principles and legitimacy of Party journalism have practical implications in reporting styles which began to be confronted by post-Mao conditions. Throughout the 1980s, however, even though the newly founded newspapers like *Southern Weekend* turned to cover various aspects of social life—family, leisure, entertainment, art, sports—and eschewed Party politics as news sources, the fundamental break from the propaganda model toward facticity or

informational journalism in reporting had not yet been in place. Regarding the form of news, the cultural turn I discussed in chapter 1 did not simply mean depoliticization but in fact a continuation of the reporting model in uncharted areas. Both sides of the debate on Hong Kong television across the 1980s, as I traced in chapter 2, were charged by the moral concerns of foreign programs over the mass population regarding the fate of socialism and were still highly didactic and openly value-oriented. The governing ideology of news as "mouthpiece" of a national life under elite supervision had not yet shifted. It was over the course of the 1990s that newspaper journalism started to incorporate some news orientation. How that happened—sources that directly triggered this transformation—is the focus of the following discussion on two cases.

The case of Chen Maya

The transition from the model of Party journalism to news orientation was tied to the rise of the reporter, instead of editor, moving to the center of newspaper journalism. It was, however, not a progressive invention from within the newsroom. The process toward a preoccupation of accuracy in constructing a story was closer to what Timothy Cheek predicted as "muddling through"—no press law, seesaw swings between "retrenchment" and "relaxation," and a continued stalemate between reformers and conservatives in journalism (Cheek, 1989: 73). The process can be demonstrated by two cases in *Southern Weekend* in the mid-1990s.

On September 13, 1991, *Southern Weekend* published a story by Yu Daqing, a writer from Wuhan, Hubei province. Titled "From Journalist to Villain: an Interview with Actress Chen Maya," the 800-word piece was published on page four of *Art*. In a typical reporting style on

stars and artists, the story addressed the background and achievement of Chen Maya, who graduated from a prominent journalism school and had worked for Xinhua News Agency before she finally gave up her career as a journalist in order to become an actress in 1982. As common practice, a photo of Chen was placed right next to the title.

Clip 3.1 The report on Chen Maya, *Southern Weekend,* 1991



从记者到"反角专业户"

(*Southern Weekend*, 13 Sept. 1991: 4)

In January 1993, Chen Maya filed a lawsuit against Yu Daqing, the author of the story, and *Southern Weekend* for libel. The major evidence included a few inaccuracies in the report: instead of a journalism major from Renmin University, Chen never went to university; she "had worked for Xinhua News Agency but not as a journalist"; and she was only nominated for a TV award instead of winning it. And finally, the photo was published without her consent. Later, the lawsuit was settled in Wuhan in favor of Chen. *Southern Weekend* was fined ¥10,000 for

"defamatory acts" and infringing Chen's "right of publicity" [*xiaoxiang quan*] (¥2,000). Yu Daqing, along with another two newspapers that recycled the piece, received similar penalties.

The trial invoked an angry outcry from the newsroom. In defense, *Southern Weekend* soon published a signed article titled "Get Out of Misleading Zones: Afterthoughts on Our Recent Lawsuit and Other Press Litigation" (10 Sept 1993: 5). Using a rare byline "staff reporter" [*benbao jizhe*], the full-page diatribe rebuked, quite bitterly, the rationality of the court:

> In brief, an encomiastic piece replete with admiration, respect, and celebratory enthusiasm on the struggling experiences and spirit of a young actress eventually "defamed" her merely due to a few "overstatements" and so led to her loss.
>
> (10 Sept 1993: 5)

Though neither press legislation nor law enforcement is my focus here, Chen's case represents the rising conflict against the press since the early 1990s, an indication of a significant change of the press in its relation to the state and its readership. *Southern Weekend,* for instance, hired its first legal consultant during the trial of Chen Maya (23 April 1993: 1). The question is: what explained how "an encomiastic piece" by *Southern Weekend*, which was by no means an exception in its reporting agenda, became "defamatory" for Chen? And what can this inform us about the popular press in transition to emphasize facticity—prioritizing accuracy over moral education—in news making?

The inherent contradiction, it seems, lies between a lasting model of Party journalism and the structural expansion of the popular press. Whether Yu Daqing was a professional journalist or not, it would be difficult to overlook the habitual treatment in portraying Chen Maya as a role model, a paragon [*dianxing renwu*], of her profession. As a genre in Party journalism, promoting paragons or so-called positive reporting [*zhengmian baodao*] is to exemplify certain desirable

qualities of a moral example for the majority to emulate especially during political campaigns. In reporting moral examples, neither the editors nor writers and readers devoted much attention to accuracy but a *gao da quan*—literally, tall, big, and good—image of the chosen individual. To propagate the underlying values, this mode of reporting often adopts literary devices in storytelling for better pedagogical effects. It was not uncommon, for instance, that the author would switch to first person perspective at some point to reveal to the readers the psychological activities or even conversations of the protagonist. So "truth" in this news model, is *the* ultimate truth as seen through the lens of Party-state politics. The point, again, is to educate rather than to inform their readers. And journalism, as well as the role of the press, is to foster the Party line.

This Soviet or *Pravda* model of journalism, not far from what the *Four Theories of the Press* characterized (Siebert et al., 1956), is deeply rooted in an authoritarian society where the central state and a scholar-literati class dedicate to setting up norms on virtually all aspects of social life. This worldview and its subsequent practices are different from the corporatist tradition such as in ancient Athens in that it is not open to democratic processes of public communication (Christians et al., 2009: 21-22). During Mao's time, this model of journalism was made possible when a small number of media institutions were closely following the central newspaper. But as the press decentralized and content diversified, the legitimacy of the press as the "mouthpiece" of Party-state politics retreated. For the press, the loss of "aura" was liberating perhaps as much as frustrating. The lawsuit against *Southern Weekend*, a post-Mao Party subsidiary, is indicative of such a moment in the press-public relationship when, despite institutional affiliations with the Party-state, the previous legitimacy and power of the press began to be questioned.

Moving out of politics as a Party subsidiary, *Southern Weekend* found itself on the defensive over a conflict in Chen Maya's case. It argued that there was no subjective intention of the newsroom to "defame" Ms. Chen. Instead, "our newspaper intended to propagate [*xuan chuan*] and praise Ms. Chen Maya" since

> [O]ur newspaper is the subsidiary of *Southern Daily*, the organ of Guangdong Party Committee. It is a component of the Party press. Promoting the artistic achievements and personal qualities of an actress is the legal responsibility of Party newspapers. Apropos the author who mistaken some facts without careful interview but instead using a few published reports, it is a question of moral rather than legal issues.
>
> (*Southern Weekend:* 10 Sept 1993: 5)

Justifying the "overstatements" by the moral responsibilities (and power) of the Party press, the defense of *Southern Weekend* revealed a serious conflict between the context of post-Mao press expansion and the model of Party journalism, a "body-and-soul" split between its economics and newsroom identification. As discussed above, the economic machinery of the Party press was installed from a convergence of bureaucratic decentralization and market incentives. After a decade of economic reform, the press had already changed how newspapers met their readers. From free copies in working units to a commodity on newsstands and a growing long list of titles in post office begging readers' attention and pocket money, the political role of newspapers—the legitimacy of Party journalism—seemed to have collectively lost.

On the practical level, the model of journalism production now opened popular newspapers to external authors further delinked journalism and Party-state politics. Reading through the myriad of light-hearted pieces written and (un)signed by a large group of individual authors, it is very unlikely for one to imagine a story on Ms. Chen Maya as a signal of another political movement. The structural absence of Party-state news in popular newspapers and the general

turn to softening ideological control in the wake of the Cultural Revolution discouraged such a reading.

For popular newspapers, mass authorship invited to the newsroom a loose control over the editing process. Editors could barely verify the details of external submissions from a variety of sources (even when they claimed or tried to do so), not to mention orchestrating a collective voice for the newspaper. The question here, however, is whether the editors wanted to. In other words, was the idea of accuracy a goal in the newsroom? As the angry newsroom argued:

> The court argued that "the press is responsible for what is published." This is true in theory, especially when the report was written by our own journalists. In practice, however, it is impossible for the press to verify every detail in the large amount of daily submissions, most of which sent from external writers. If so, how many journalists should the newspaper feed? At what cost? After all, news is a timely matter.
>
> (*Southern Weekend:* 10 Sept 1993: 5)

However, the ground of practicalities was hardly defendable. Page expansions by Party dailies, for one thing, were continuously supported by its former network of local respondents and public subscriptions (Zuo, 2014: 285). Journalists in *Southern Daily*, for example, were still received and accompanied by news secretaries [*xinwen mishu*]—a position installed in every county of Guangdong during Mao's time—who assisted their local interviews and data collection. The monopoly on the bureaucratic system of communication could not be extended to other popular newspapers. The turn to external authors, in this sense, was a remedial rather than long term tactic.

Constrained by a relatively small newsroom and an editing mode of news production, finally, the crisis of Party journalism in a radically different media environment also manifested itself in how to understand the commercial nature of the newspaper. For the author(s) of the

diatribe, the newspaper was not at all "profit driven." Against the preliminary verdict that "the newspaper is profitable," the defense again resorted to the newsroom identification with the Party press and its legitimacy:

> Yu Daqing's article was an interview, a popular genre in journalism. Publishing an interview with a photo of the interviewee (including working photos and life portray) is the most common practice—"text with image" [*wen pei zhao*]—in propagandist [*xuan chuan*] work which has nothing to do with profit driven practices.
>
> Regardless of how Ms. Chen Maya may take this personally, she—a 36-year-old actress—is no top-tier star among the Chinese film and TV talent pool. Publishing one of her photos does not increase our circulation or other financial income.
>
> Granted, the newspaper is making money. But that does not mean our newspaper is profit driven. Not to mention publishing a photo of Chen Maya. Just as cars are capable of killing people and yet it would be ridiculous to argue that car producers "meant to kill people by making cars" therefore should be prosecuted.
>
> (*Southern Weekend:* 10 Sept 1993: 5)

A week after the defense, *Southern Weekend* published a full-page compendium of a symposium where a group of local senior editors and lawyers convened to discuss the case (17 Sept. 1993: 5). One of the agreements reached among these attendants was that publishing a photo of Chen did not infringe her right of publicity. Chen Lin, a Guangzhou lawyer who was hired in April 1993 by *Southern Weekend* as legal consultant, argued that "just as the court charging money for litigations does not submit it to a profit driven institution, there is no reason to criminalize the press for this (profit driven motive) even when personal agreement is in absence (in publishing one's photos)." Clearly, the idea that "Party press was inherently non-commercial" was so entrenched that even in acknowledging the different financial sources between the press in Guangdong and elsewhere, Zhang Zong, the chairman of the Guangdong Journalists' Association, insisted:

> Party newspapers are not profit driven. To be sure, Guangdong newspapers have more ads due to a prosperous market economy in this area, but this does not categorize them as commercial newspapers.

> Many newspapers in inland China are still subsidized by state money. Can we say that they are not profit driven whereas Guangdong newspapers are? Nonsense.
>
> (*Southern Weekend,* 17 Sept. 1993: 5)

Here, the gap between the economics of the press and its newsroom ideology seemed huge. In October 1993, around the controversy of Chen's case, *Southern Weekend* reached one million in circulation for the first time ("*25 Years of Southern Weekend"*). In the same year, it established its own departments of accounting, distribution, and advertising, and reached an agreement with *Southern Daily*, the mother paper, to retain 10 percent of its annual profit for staff bonuses (Hong 2005: 29). Meanwhile, the ideal of Party journalism—its political role, social responsibilities, and public or non-commercial nature—had remained in place. The tension between the two aspects contributed to a dubious relationship between the newspaper and its readership. The significance of the case here, therefore, is irrelevant to whether the defense of *Southern Weekend* was merely rhetorical, but pointed to the absence of alternative legitimacy of the popular press.

The case of "Police Raid"

The case of Chen Maya was not an exception but neither the dominant scenario when newspapers relocated outside of Party-state politics. There were greater areas of convergent interests between the model of Party journalism and the rising economic interests. After all, the post-1989 agenda for propaganda work nationwide especially after 1992 was to help Chinese people to come to terms with the new economic order (Brady, 2008: 3). When Party journalism shifted its focus from political mobilization to Deng Xiaoping's economic modernity, such "positive reporting" and promotional news about reform achievements became instantly

desirable not only for regional Party officials as credits for their bureaucratic career but also, and increasingly, for entrepreneurs as free advertising—neither of which, unchecked by the press or other sociopolitical forces, had yet held public accountability as their own professional principle.

Happy stories aside, the rising number of press litigations in the early 1990s was suggestive of the contradiction between a widely circulated newspaper, its heavy reliance on external sources, and the persistent reporting mode of Party journalism had led to new afflictions. But the disastrous point was somewhere else. In the following discussion, I will further trace the tension between the mode of journalism production and Party journalism, as represented by another case on *Southern Weekend*, which contributed to the evolvement of its news form.

Even though the standard form of news in Party journalism focused on policies and achievements of the Party state in a positive light, there has been an alternative form of Party journalism, so called negative or critical reporting [*fumian/piping baodao*]. Normally, negative news about social problems especially when involving Party officials went to internal publications [*nei can*] for the government before (if ever) being granted external publication. When published, this form of critical report, also known as *yulun jiandu* or "supervision by public opinion" is, in essence, a government mandate for the press, by using an official frame, to monitor official power (Cho, 2007: 4). Compared to the classical liberal theory of the press, however, it is not a call for a free press or independent journalism. The legitimacy of the press, again, lies on the ground of Party politics instead of principles.

Stories of scandal expose, similar to the promotional stories on economic enterprises, had considerable potential in the marketplace within the post-Mao context. The popularity of judicial papers on crime reports, most conspicuously, represented such a commercial exploitation of

Party journalism. *Southern Weekend* included *People and Law* in its page expansion in 1992 to publish crime stories in tabloid styles from various sources, where the problem of facticity bore the most devastating scenario.

In July 1993, *People and Law* published a full-page story on a sanguinary murder of two corrupt policemen who were involved in blackmail (30 Jul 1993: 5). Without revealing any background information—time, place, identities of the involved individuals, the author only identified the story happened at "B city" which was located "at the crossroad of three provinces" and presented the story in a lurid style. It later transpired that the author Liu Yushun, who used the pseudonym of Yu Yang, was a freelance writer in Nanchang, Jiangxi province and wrote the story based on local rumors and his own creativity. Upon an inquiry from the Ministry of Public Security for further details, the fabricated story was found out and led to an outraged push from the Ministry of Public Security to the Central Propaganda Department to shutdown the newspaper. In the end, the crisis was resolved after tortuous negotiation among the provincial government of Guangdong, *Southern Daily*, and the Central Propaganda Department.

The crisis following the report *"Police Raid"* [*xi jing an*] was documented in detail by Hong Bing and Cho Li-fung (Hong, 2005: 74-8; Cho, 2007: 141-147; 2014: 183-185). In addition to power struggles between the central and regional bureaucracies, the ensuing six months became a moment of "soul searching" for the press, publishing multiple apologies on the newspaper by both the newsroom and the author. Hong Bing emphasized that, by ordering a direct shutdown, the regulatory approach by Party-state was in serious conflict with *Southern Daily*, as its parent newspaper, which insisted on containing the problem in professional rather than external—i.e. Party-state—disciplinary measures (78). Concerned primarily with the

development of newsroom professionalism, similarly, Cho (2007) argued that the crisis forced the newspaper to "articulate its standards of reporting both internally and externally and to clearly commit itself to reporting based upon verifiable facts, documentation and solid proof" (147-148).

What I would like to draw attention to, however, is the difference between the cases of *Police Raid* and Chen Maya, which took place in the same year among increasing lawsuits against the press. In the case of Chen, when the conflict was invoked between the press and an individual, the newspaper defended itself primarily on the legitimacy of the Party press; but when it came to the case of *Police Raid* in which the coverage involved the power struggle within the Party-state (the powerful Ministry of Public Security in this case), the legitimacy of Party journalism, which assumed a united and rational Party leadership, ceased to protect the press and exposed it to the vagaries of power struggles within China's extensive bureaucratic system.

On the other hand, the crisis of *Police Raid*, like the case of Chen, underlined the problem of heavy reliance on external writers and the "fax-driven" journalism of *Southern Weekend* at the time. It also illustrated the market potential of Party journalism. According to the newsroom, the fabricated story of *Police Raid* eluded the editors since "the writer was out of town when we called and he had also been writing for our newspaper for quite a while so had built up his credibility" (29 Oct 1993). However, the very decision to publish the story without verification, in the end, bespoke a shared ground between the writer and editor on the value of the story driven by a combination of propagandist impulse and market pressure. On the front-page self-criticism, the newspaper admitted that "the craze for readability led to our irresponsible

mistake…We had worried that other newspapers might publish the piece before us…and so decided to take the risk." In the author's self-criticism, in contrast, Liu Yushun explained that

> [I]n writing *Police Raid*, I succumbed to a passing thought that perhaps I should change my normal approach of writing positive coverage on heroes and their achievements, which did not seem very effective, and try using negative examples of corrupted individuals to promote positive themes. Perhaps this might have a bigger "effect"?
>
> (*Southern Weekend,* 26 Nov 1993: 1)

It is clear that the consideration of Liu Yushun, a freelance writer, revolved around the two major genres of Party journalism—positive and negative reporting—with a priority on pedagogical concerns. It was different from the market concerns with readability and timeliness by the newsroom, but as he seasoned the story with palatable elements—an act largely acceptable in morally charged Party journalism; it also fell nicely within the editorial strategies of the popular press now capitalizing on the readability of non-political content. In other words, while popular journalism and propaganda seemingly belonged to two different ideological realms, they converged on their persuasive devices for mass appeal even though, ultimately, diverged on their legitimacy of doing so. While Party-state departments like the powerful Ministry of Public Security could file grievance against the inaccuracies within the political system, still, it is difficult to find an easy channel for individuals and groups less resourceful than an actress like Chen Maya, who initiated the first lawsuit against *Southern Weekend.* But the two cases discussed here, after all, represented not the exception but increasing dilemma the newspaper was confronted with.

Conclusion

In retrospect, decentralization of newspaper production since the 1980s was initially conducive to diversifying the press system when its institutional sponsorship expanded to governmental organs and semi-social organizations through sponsorship and co-sponsorship. It was this institutional liberalization, by granting rights to public institutions to print, which opened the gate of post-Mao newspaper expansion. After a decade of the Cultural Revolution and chaotic paucity in both cultural and economic lives, the decentralization or "the dispersion of power to run the press happened along the path flowing from the political centers to those administrative departments" (Wu, 2000: 51) evoked tremendous interests in printing as a new post-Mao enterprise.

The decentralizing process indeed created a system of limited competition among printers across bureaucratic rankings. For the Party trio in Guangzhou, the municipal *Guangzhou Daily* demonstrated no less mobilizing power in competing with the provincial *Southern Daily* and *Yangcheng Evening News* when the market economy took root in urban centers. For non-Party papers, similarly, multiple institutions and departments competed in a certain area of expertise and shared comparable potentials through co-sponsorship. It was, however, along the lines between Party and non-Party newspapers where the hierarchy of bureaucracy was translated into most unequal means of production. In spite of their collective popularity in retail sales, post-Mao newspapers outside the parameters of the Party press fell far behind the development of the Party press in almost every aspect of production, distribution and governmental support.

It is true that competition brought in some editorial innovations, as we have seen in the open and multi-vocal *Southern Weekend* of the time. It was another question, however, whether this

could lead to pluralism especially due to the continuous power of Party-state institutions over funding sources and formal employment. In addition, the active assimilation of popular genres and content in the print market by Party papers also increased the degree of homogeneity in journalism that, in turn, provoked regulatory attempts on non-Party papers to reduce redundancy. A proposal to merge all economic newspapers in Guangzhou to form *South China United Times* [*huanan lianhe shibao*] was raised by Situ Jiongchang, the director of *China Golden Herald* in the wake of 1989 crackdown. This was perhaps the first alternative proposal in regulating newspapers in addition to license control, direct closure, and rectification since the open reform. Complicated by the bureaucratic rankings of personnel involved, however, the proposal was strapped in administrative impasse when re-organizing the stakeholders in the new enterprise (Liu, 2000). This, on one hand, attested to the limited liberalization enabled within the extensive bureaucratic network of Party-state, and it also reflected the disabling authoritarian forces that prioritized hierarchical privileges and power over professional values on the other.

Finally, the integration of bureaucratic institutions and newspaper commercialization created fundamental problems in newspaper journalism in extending its coverage to social life outside national politics. As suggested in the litigations of *Southern Weekend*, the link between the legitimacy of the Party press and its assumed public—the consensual majority of Mao's regime—was dissolving in the changing media environment. To establish an alternative relationship was largely the task and challenge of the generation of migrant journalists, who ascended to the center of the press and public life in the late 1990s and developed a well-acclaimed form of muckraking journalism in negotiating between the legacies of critical reporting in Party journalism and role of traditional intellectuals.

CHAPTER 4
THE *RIGHT* STORY: INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM OF *SOUTHERN WEEKEND* IN THE LATE 1990S

Information is a genre of self-denial, the story one of self-indulgence.

(Michael Schudson, 1978: 119)

A reader wrote an essay titled "Afraid of Living" [*bugan shenghuo*] in 2001 and described her experience of reading *Southern Weekend* as the following:

> After reading *Southern Weekend* for a long time, I all of a sudden wanted to stop reading it once and for all because I had an ambiguous feeling of fear deep inside my heart that has made me afraid of living in the world.
> I am afraid of going to the hospital even just taking a walk or visiting patients. Heaven knows what was in the minds of those lab-coat wearing and self-claimed angels…
> I am afraid of going to the streets. The outside world is nice but not as good as home. The polluted air, severe sand storm, just name a few…
> I am afraid of buying commodities. As most of us are not experts, we never know whether the electric heater we are using had passed quality control, the beer we are drinking explosive, and the hygiene practices that produced our roasted chicken or bread…
> I am afraid of using the phone. Sometimes it cost you an arm and a leg even for dialing a wrong number…
> I am afraid of living in high-rise buildings, not knowing whether the elevator might fall like a free object, the concrete wall really contained steel instead of newspapers…
>
> (Hua, 2001: 79)

Paranoid in tone, the piece presented an alternative reading of *Southern Weekend*'s journalism in the late 1990s and early 2000s, a period widely celebrated as its "Golden Age" by newsroom staff and many readers for its investigative reporting. However read, it was clear that by the late 1990s, *Southern Weekend* was no longer a light-hearted cultural "weekend" paper as it was in the 1980s and early 1990s. A wave of investigative reporting became associated with this southern newspaper nationwide. Despite its popularity, however, the rise of critical exposure of social ills was not a phenomenon unique to newspaper journalism. *Focus Report* [*jiaodian fangtan*], the news program of CCTV launched in April 1994, labelled itself investigative

journalism [*diaocha baodao*] and received national attention. On the national level, that is, a bigger trend of social news began to move to the forefront of journalism in the mid-1990s and offered a world of redefined "reality" as the ground of public discourse. *Southern Weekend*, in this sense, was a leading voice but not an exception in the development of the late 1990s' news culture.

The "social" turn of weekend journalism and media culture in general had multiple sources. The Chinese government adopted the five-day working week in 1995 and reduced labor time from 48 to 40 hours per week in public institutions and state-owned enterprises. This on the one hand accentuated leisure and consumption as a legitimate component of the increasingly urban-based market economy; it also, on the other hand, encroached on weekend culture as a distinct temporal space outside of Party journalism. As an editorial policy, "weekend" journalism was quickly expanding and open to a broader social life.

Changes within the print market also contributed to the re-structuring of journalism production. Weekend newspapers increased rapidly in the early 1990s during the "weekend craze" while Party dailies followed up (Zhao, 2002). In 1993 alone, more than 150 Party dailies added subsidiary pages or weekend editions across the country (Hu, 2004: 8). Meanwhile, the Party press trio in Guangzhou all extended their foothold in the booming urban economy: *Southern Daily* started another subsidiary—*Southern Metro News* [*nanfang dushi bao*]—in 1995; *Yangcheng Evening News* launched a metro daily *News Express* [*xin kuai bao*] in 1998; *Guangzhou Daily,* hand-picked as the first press conglomerate in 1996 (chapter 5), grew aggressively from 20 pages in 1995 to 40 in 1999 and led in advertising revenue among media institutions nationwide throughout the 1990s (Fan, 2009: 281-98). Along with these accelerated

expansion of weekend newspapers and Party subsidiaries, how to redefine weekend journalism became an urgent question for *Southern Weekend*.

To be sure, the transition of *Southern Weekend* to investigative journalism involved a set of internal and external conditions of the printing press. Its paradigmatic shift in journalism grew with the formation of a national market, the rapid rise of metro newspapers, the specialization of labor division in the newsroom, structural development of the newspaper, and the renewed role of the intellectual in political participation. All of these transformations and renewed conditions had in one way or another contributed to a distinct form of popular journalism—investigative reporting, when the newspaper jumped from 8 to 28 pages between 1995 and 2001.

The following discussion will be organized into three parts: the first one traces the infrastructural and market developments of *Southern Weekend* during the rise of investigative journalism; the second describes the diversification of newsroom labor in response to the macro transformations; and the last one outlines the characteristics of investigative reports in reference to the above conditions. In the end, my discussion revolves around how all these changes came to explain the sources of journalistic paradigm, a new form of "popular."

4.1 Conquering the National Space

The year 1996 was a significant moment of change for *Southern Weekend* signaled by its second page expansion from 12 to 16. The newspaper initiated a series of institutional transformations that, eventually, established itself as the benchmark of Chinese journalism in the post-Mao era. In about five years, it built up its own reporting team, broke into numerous unprecedented topics and geographical areas, and became a profitable newspaper known for its

consistent production of investigative reports. By 2001, *Southern Weekend* was a 28-page weekly newspaper with a national circulation above 1.3 million (CJY, 2001: 526). At one telling moment of its ascending popularity, the central newspaper *People's Daily* bought half a page on *Southern Weekend* to advertise its fiftieth anniversary edition sale in 1998 (26 Jun 1998: 16).

Although the journalistic change of *Southern Weekend* in the late 1990s was an active exploration toward a new journalism, the paradigmatic shift did not happen exclusively in the newsroom. The content bias normally downplayed the other areas of changes especially in business investment, distribution, and other infrastructural development. Why did *Southern Weekend* come to choose cross-provincial investigative reports as its main news genre? Before discussing the characteristics of its new journalism, three interconnected conditions should be traced in reference to the ascendence of investigative report: a national market, a small and democratic newsroom, and the transformations of the newspaper in editorial structure.

Selling it to the nation

Southern Weekend was not external to the dramatic re-ordering of the institutional and market conditions on the national and regional level. In the early 1990s, one common problem shared by more than 600 weekend newspapers was that there was, indeed, not much "news" in weekend journalism (Zhong, 1994). Meanwhile, many daily newspapers were adding pages of popular content to incorporate weekend journalism. To make things even worse, most weeklies, like *Southern Weekend,* relied on external writers who often submitted to various papers and therefore further homogenized the market of weekend newspapers. How to enhance

newsworthiness [*xinwen xing*] became imperative for weekly newspapers especially when state subsidies were no longer an option.

The discussion on newsworthiness, however, underrated innovations outside the newsroom, reducing the popularity of the newspaper to merely editorial innovations. In practice, distribution and advertising were both raised—along with editorial innovations—as the "three wheels" of the press in 1996 (*Southern Weekend* advertising board, 1997). For *Southern Weekend* in the mid-1990s, marketization meant selling the newspaper as a commodity across the country as well as selling its newspaper spaces to advertisers for the national readership. By 1995, the year before its page expansion to sixteen and its retail price increased to ¥1 Yuan, the newspaper had already reached 950,000 in national circulation (CJY, 1996).

The national distribution of *Southern Weekend* was exceptional comparing to the fast-growing metro newspapers in Guangzhou. Beginning in the early 1990s, *Southern Weekend* started to expand its printing infrastructure out of the province to reduce delivery time. By 1996, it had established eight regional printers outside the Guangzhou headquarter and the number had grown to fifteen by 2003 to cover major urban areas across China. Even though *Southern Weekend* relied on both postal subscription and retail sales for national circulation, the establishment of printing branches across the country considerably reduced its dependency on the postal system.

For *Southern Weekend,* the development of distribution in these regional printing branches relied heavily on Party press facilities as well as private distributors. Just as *Southern Daily* opened its printing plant for out-of-town newspapers for profit, the central newspaper *People's Daily* became its printer in Beijing, the *Shaanxi Daily* in Xi'an, *Fujian Daily* in Fuzhou, and

Zhejiang Daily News Group in Hangzhou. In Shanghai, its first and only regional printing branch established during the 1980s, *Southern Weekend* hired one staff for distribution who, eying the profitable Shanghai market, later proposed to work on commission instead of a fixed salary (Zhang and Liu, 2004). They soon, like in Guangzhou, collaborated with private distributors as well as regional wholesalers, who enjoyed longer-and-better terms in contract with the press to market the weekly newspaper into the local distribution networks. By the end of the 1990s, *Southern Weekend* had set up a two-tier national network of distribution: wholesalers at the provincial level (including mega cities like Beijing and Shanghai), and second-tier wholesalers within provincial regions. In 1998, *Southern Weekend* adopted satellite technologies to synchronize printing time for the ten regional printers—hence a national space of the weekly newspaper (*25 Years of Southern Weekend,* 2009).

Unlike *Guangzhou Daily* and other metro newspapers which relied exclusively on independent distribution around the affluent Pearl River Delta in Guangdong, *Southern Weekend* kept itself alive on the postal network despite higher and non-negotiable fees and well-known inefficiencies (Wu, 2013: 244). It was likely that that it stayed with the postal system to ensure its distribution especially for remote or less connected areas. In 2001, circulation of *Southern Weekend* grew more rapidly outside Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (Zhang and Liu, 2004: 23). Even though the dual-channel distribution combining postal and private networks was not uncommon among post-Mao newspapers, *Southern Weekend* had a rare place for its national orientation in comparison with Party newspapers that were contained within their administrative jurisdiction and the booming metro newspapers hovering exclusively around urban centers.

The aggressive expansion in national distribution had to do with the fact that, unlike the "Party trio" which all had relied on advertising revenue as the major income by 1992, advertising did not become the financial backbone for *Southern Weekend* until the late 1990s. In early 1995, there were only 2 to 3 people working in its advertising department (You, 2013; *Southern Weekend* advertising board, 1997). Though the relationship between circulation and annual revenue soon reversed when advertising became the largest income source for the newspaper (Li et al., 2001), the national market of *Southern Weekend* made possible the renewal of the national "imagined community" in news production.

Laboring the newsroom

The growing consensus of relocating journalism toward contemporary social life did not directly translate into a new form of journalism. Before restructuring the newsroom and production, the newspaper had to rely on freelancers and editors who often traveled to cultivate new authors (chapter 1). Compared to other popular newspapers founded in the 1980s, the process of opening its newsroom for *Southern Weekend* to the emerging labor market was slow and was not put into practice until its hiring power was devolved from *Southern Daily* in 1996 (Hong, 2005: 61).

The first journalist to join *Southern Weekend* under a labor contract was after its second page expansion in 1996. Before that, Zhu Defu was the only reporter, who was transferred from *Southern Daily* in 1991 in preparation for the first expansion of *Southern Weekend*. The number of reporters grew to 25 by the end of 1997 and 36 by 2000, when economic news was set up as a news department. The newsroom experienced the biggest growth from 36 to 103 staff in 2001

after its editor-in-chief Jiang Yiping was removed (*Southern Weekend,* 26 Dec 1997: 16; 28 Dec 2000: 31; 27 Nov 2001: 26-27).

The growth of newsroom staff also came with a re-organization of labor division. Within five years, reporting and editing went from porous to formal separation. Editors' work became more desk-based instead of traveling and making contact with external authors. Chen Juhong, who joined *Southern Weekend* in 1995 as a fresh journalism graduate remembered well how the newsroom was organized during the transitional period:

> There were no proofreaders, no visual editors (Zhang Xiangchun only worked for the front page and the "art" page). Many editors were just trained to work on the computer. Whenever the two computer assistants were occupied, editors would do all the work from typing out the articles to proofreading by ourselves. It was overwhelming but I learnt the whole working procedure quickly and later abandoned paperwork once and for all. I simply started on the computer and managed to complete a satisfying page by myself.
>
> (Chen, 2005: 267)

Editorial re-organization in *Southern Weekend* could also be seen from the spatial arrangement of the offices. At the end of 1997, the newspaper had five offices in the 16-story building of *Southern Daily.* Each office was shared by editors and reporters working for the same page (*Southern Weekend,* 26 Dec 1997: 16). By 2000, the 36 staff were divided into three formal departments: News [*xin wen*], Economics [*jing ji*], and Supplementary Sections [*fu kan*] (28 Dec 2000).

In addition to its small size and enhanced autonomy in recruitment, the newsroom of *Southern Weekend* was much less hierarchical between the non-tenured journalists and senior leadership in both editorial work and the renumeration system (Cho, 2007: 151-9). Though the first generation of investigative journalists came as both tenured and non-tenured labor (*Southern*

Weekend, 20 Jan 1995: 1), *Southern Weekend* reformed its salary system in 1997 to minimize the institutional discrepancies between tenured and non-tenured staff especially in income. Jiang Yiping, the editor-in-chief between 1996 and 2001 remembered how, before the reform, "an embarrassing situation emerged in *Southern Weekend* when we practiced income inequality on one hand yet promoted justice and equality on the other" (Jiang, 2013). The new renumeration system, instead, subjected all newsroom staff to the same criteria—a basic salary plus bonus that was related to work load and quality rather than terms of employment. The policy change generally doubled the monthly income of non-tenured track journalists to over 10,000 RMB despite the two groups still differing in other benefits and job security. Nan Xianghong, a veteran journalist in Xinjiang province who wrote for *Southern Weekend* in the late 1990s as an external author, made from 4,000 to 5,000RMB for one in-depth story, approximately six-month of her income in Xinjiang as a journalist (Wang, 2013). Unlike later labor policy changes that subjected journalists to a much more hierarchical system (Zhong, 2009), these efforts toward a democratic newsroom in labor relations attracted quite a few veteran journalists in other provinces and institutions, like Nan Xianghong, to join the newspaper during the late 1990s.

Covering the "society"

Little has been said about the structure of the newspaper beyond its well-known investigative reports. In cases like *Southern Weekend,* it seems even harder for one to pay attention to its journalism beyond what it has made its name for. It is true that not everyone read every story of a newspaper. But it is important to note that for a specific newspaper, every reader holds and flips through the same object despite their own selections. What remains common for all, then, is the

editorial structure of the newspaper that persisted over a much longer period of time than its stories.

Southern Weekend has gone through a total six page expansions since its inception in 1984, four of which took place between 1996 and 2001. As discussed in chapter 1, the first expansion from four to eight pages was an extension, instead of a break, within weekend journalism. It was organized by a populist strategy of incorporating several best-selling genres on the market. Four years later, *Southern Weekend* grew to sixteen pages in 1996, twenty in 1998, twenty-four in 1999, twenty-eight in 2001, and finally thirty-two in 2004 (Appendix C). It was over the period of frequent page expansions and restructuring in the late 1990s and early 2000s that *Southern Weekend* ultimately marginalized the initial weekend journalism while social news rose to the center.

Instead of a separate move, however, the widely acclaimed investigative reports indeed evolved from a series of earlier explorations toward social news. On 11 December 1992, less than a year after its first page expansion, the added page "Readers' Digest" was replaced by "Economy and People" [*jingji yu ren*], which signified the transition toward stronger socio-economic life. In the second page expansion in 1996, this social turn was more clearly spelt out. *Southern Weekend* added pages such as "News" [*xin wen*], "Society" [*she qing*], "Fashion" [*shi shang*], "International Economy" [*guoji jingji*], "Sports" [*tiyu*], and "Current Affairs" [*shishi zongheng*], all of which distanced the newspaper further away from the cultural orientation it started with in the mid-1980s.

Over the years, the actual page changes have been fluid and also complicated, reflecting an active process of selection and exploration in defining the identity of the newspaper. Both the

order of pages and amount of printed stories fluctuated, often due to advertising placements; and there were experimental pages and columns that disappeared over time or morphed into stable sections. The whole new section of "New Life" [*xin shenghuo*] in 1999, for instance, took its earlier form under "Trial Section" [*shiyan tekan*] in 1998. But gradually, news reporting gained its dominance by ten pages in 2001, including the front-page, "Trend" [*dong xiang*], "The World" [*tian xia*], "Focus" [*chuanmei zhongdian*], "*Southern Weekend* Investigation" [*diao cha*], "Law and Order" [*fa zhi*], "Observation" [*guan cha*], "People" [*ren wu*], "Current Affairs" [*shishi zongheng*], and "Consumer Square" [*xiaofei guangchang*].

The relocation of the newspaper toward social news, in addition, can also be seen from the pages abolished over time. "Serial literature" [*lian zai*] was gone in 1997; "Medicine and Health," "Sports," "Fashion," and the "Cartoon" page [*wu yang jiao*] were given up while "Journalists Observatory" and "*Southern Weekend* Investigation" [*ben bao diao cha*] were added in 1998. Beginning in January 2001, the newspaper has been printed on Thursdays instead of Saturdays (Feb 1984 - May 1986) and Fridays (Jun 1986- 2000), and literally shredded its "weekend" identity regarding the time of publication.

The rapid expansion in news production has also meant the specialization of news reporting in market competition. When the rising metro newspapers began to embed themselves into the everyday urban life to highlight the local, the informational, and news as services for the urbanites (Sun, 2004), weekly newspapers began to explore depth, perspective, planning, background, and even knowledge in reporting (Song and Wang, 1999: 51). After all, weekly papers had not comparable advantages to compete with the metro dailies in timeliness; but the national readership of the weekly newspaper nonetheless created a unique space for in-depth

reports with a domestic purview and an interpretive impulse. “A new 'cultural map' is needed when information proliferated beyond people's empirical world” (Huang, 2001: 12). Investigative reporting, from this regard, was as much a result of market calculation as a continuous intellectual enterprise in revealing the “truth” for the people.

4.2 Lenses of Truth

The transformation of journalism in *Southern Weekend* began as the role of editors diversified. Starting with eight in 1984, the number of editors did not increase dramatically while news sources and journalism practices evolved during the mid-1990s. As the labor division with the reporters formalized, however, newspaper editors began to take a more active role inside the newsroom. All kinds of writing contests, for instance, which opened the newspaper to external writers, diminished quickly along with commercial sponsorship of specific columns. The trend toward specialization began to take shape in the newsroom.

Among other things, two major editorial approaches—one old and the other new—were amplified during the page expansion in 1996: the traditional commentator and the surveyor. In particular, the role of news commentator took the page of “Current Affairs” [*shishi zongheng*], a news digest combined with scholarly and readers’ opinions. The new approach adopted was the survey method in representing social changes and public opinion. Both approaches developed along with the growing reporters whose social status rose to a profession in the late 1990s.

The commentator

News commentary is not new to Chinese newspapers. Political participation of scholar-officials [*shi da fu*] was institutionalized in Imperial China through the national exam system [*ke jü*] which selected young men (not women) well-versed with the Confucius canon into the bureaucratic ranks. In the late nineteenth century, the ideal and practices of traditional intellectuals speaking for the (mostly illiterate) people continued in political newspapers and journals in fighting against the crumbling Qing Dynasty and also colonial power. The end of the imperial examination in 1905 and the Xinhai Revolution in 1911 after which the Republic of China (ROC) was founded further drove traditional literati to find their way into the press and publishing (MacKinnon, 1997; Wang, L. S. 1994; Wang, 2012). The origin of the modern press in China has been charged with the marginalization of traditional intellectuals while news commentary, as a result, has become their new form of political participation.

Both political parties, the Nationalists (KMT) and the Communists (CCP), utilized newspapers for political mobilization in wartime China. The Communist Party had been actively publishing newspapers since its early formation and during the Civil War (1946-1949) for popular support against the KMT. Mao's new China and the project of socialist modernity, however, fully integrated news media into the bureaucratic ranks of the Party-state. In Mao's journalism, the editorial of *People's Daily* represented *the* voice of the Party-state if not Mao himself. Even though readers' letters were also published and emphasized especially in light of Mao's "mass line" journalism [*qunzhong luxian*] (Zhao, 1998: 24-30), they were handled not by the newsroom but a separate department—literally, the mass work department [*qun gong bu*]—

where the letters were selected for publication either in Party dailies or for internal references (Hong, 2005: 109).

The tradition of news commentary was revived in the 1980s in the booming popular newspapers and journals. One example was the editor-in-chief of *Yancheng Evening News* Xu Shi (1919-2004), who began to use the pseudonym Wei Yin—literally, a micro voice—and kept a front-page column called "Talk of the Street" [*jie tan xiang yi*] in the following three decades. Xu Shi had been a veteran journalist since the 1940s in the Guangdong area and worked for the CCP's newspapers in both Vietnam and Hong Kong. To represent voices from below, Wei Yin was known for his regular visits to a downtown teahouse-restaurant in Guangzhou and sat among local residents during the morning tea (and dim-sum) hour, a daily ritual for Cantonese seniors and family weekends, when many read newspapers and chatted. Though limited, Wei Yin's vernacular account and writing style on everyday urban experiences of ordinary people represented perhaps the best practice of the intellectual tradition and the "mass line" of Party journalism in "speaking for the people."

For *Southern Weekend,* similarly, the intellectual tradition also found its way to the front-page column "Weekend Teahouse" [*zhoumo chafang*] since its inauguration. Normally a 300-word long opinion essay from an external writer (including veteran journalists like Wei Yin), the short piece was not necessarily based on news stories published by the newspaper. The topics could range widely from everyday experiences to cultural or historical phenomena. Wei Yin criticized, for instance, the corrupted manipulation in entertainment awards (7 Mar 1987: 1) and the problems of (lousy) musical concerts burgeoning in the city (27 Mar 1987: 1). These

practices of channeling bottom-up voices can be seen as the early efforts in post-Mao journalism to break away from the monopoly of the Party in addressing social changes.

The column "Weekend Teahouse" stayed throughout the late 1990s, but its significance was largely replaced by the new page "Current Affairs" established in 1996. Edited by Yan Lieshan (1952-), a newspaper editor from *Yangtze Daily* in Hubei province and an external author of *Southern Weekend* earlier, the new page became a pioneer in publishing intellectual news commentaries in various forms. The inaugural page included five components: a column of four to five news digests with short comments [*xinwen pingdian*], two or three longer abstracts from other newspapers with the editor's comments [*te bie tui jian*], a forum for readers' letters [*baixing chafang*], a scholarly column, and an editorial column written by Yan Lieshan himself [*zong heng tan*]. Rather than an alternative voice against Party journalism, according to Yan, "Current Affairs" was aiming for a common ground between Party policies and popular concerns. "We should be accepted from above (complying with Party policies and directives) and below (concerning with social reality and express how people feel" (Yan, 1997). He further characterized the new page of *Southern Weekend* in direct reference to Bai Jüyi, a Tang Dynasty poet known for his involvement in the New *Yuefu* Movement, which emphasized social and critical engagement in poetry writing.

In practice, "Current Affairs" indeed worked to go beyond reviving intellectual discourses by bringing news into an interpretative framework from scholars, editors, and also its readers. But the division between intellectual and ordinary people was never resolved. "Civic Teahouse," the forum for readers' letters was later developed into a full page in October 1997 when "Current Affairs" became gradually dominated by experts. The separation was, on the one hand, an

expansion of both; but it also reinforced the gap between the two groups in sociological imagination on the other. Unlike the op-ed page adopted later on many metro newspapers, "Civic Teahouse" and its later derivative "Civic Notes" [*baixing jishi*] on stories from readers moved into the cultural section and illustrations were added. The symbolic conversation among experts, journalists, and the reading public eventually retreated.

The sociological lens

Another fresh approach in representing the society in the weekly newspaper was signaled by the page "Social Observatory" [*shehui guancha*] also added in 1996. Taking up the lens of sociological survey, it was a significant shift in channeling social realities in journalism beyond individual purview and intellectual discourses. Though eventually dropped in 1998, "Social Observatory" can be seen as one alternative approach to "society" in the journalism history of *Southern Weekend* that should not be overlooked.

In fact, *Southern Weekend* was not the pioneer in adopting survey methods in news production. *Modern Mankind,* a non-Party popular newspaper closed down in 1994, was a much earlier leader in this respect. Also a weekly founded in the mid-1980s, *Modern Mankind* indeed adopted a much more "modern" approach, using opinion polls in reporting domestic politics and organizing its content around pro-reform themes. Its inaugural issue on 20 September 1985, for instance, printed a cover story titled "Reform was received favorably by the public" [*gaige shende renxin*]. Seemingly a self-serving headline by Party dailies speaking for the people without real inquires, the story was instead a survey conducted by the newsroom with one hundred anonymous interviewees, asking how living standards in the family had changed since

the economic reform and how they perceived the obstacles of the reform, etc. The survey reported "20 voted for 'significantly improved,' 75 for 'slightly improved,' and 5 for 'no improvement.' " As a follow-up question, the household durables recently bought by the family were also inquired among the 100 interviewees, reporting "TV set (78), fridge (40), washing machine (56), radio (68), VHF (1), Nothing bought (16)." Regarding the major barriers of the open reform, 27 people voted for "Party corruption" [*dangfeng buzheng*], 22 for "ossified ideas" [*sixiang jianghua*], 7 for "the 'leftist' residues," 17 for "poor management," 4 for "the money mindset" [*yiqie xiang qian kan*], and 22 unspecified.

For *Southern Weekend,* early explorations of social science research were conducted, but for the purpose of reader survey rather than news production (e.g. 4 Dec 1992: 3). The new page "Social Observatory," instead, normally organized columns of "social research," "focal point," "statistics," and "research trend" on a selected topic. In the trial version, the leading article was written by a sociologist, Wu Pengsen, on migrant peasants (3 Nov 1995: 10). The topic was complemented by a commentary from the historian Qin Hui about the social problems invoked by the massive domestic migration, a photo of migrant peasant-workers in the city, and statistics on consumption and income levels in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Sichuan province, and Gansu province.

"Social Observatory" covered a variety of topics on social changes especially within the urban environment. Topics included literary reading among young people (29 Mar 1996), income level (10 May 1996: 7), experiences with airline service (12 April 1996), definition of "privacy" (15 Aug 1997), etc. Some of the studies were partnered with survey companies (e.g. 26 Apr 1996), others done by researchers, teachers, and also journalists. While the content was

still divided between external and newsroom labor, the lens of social science was nonetheless coherent, representing the reading public by demographic categories of region, gender, age, income level, and profession rather than "people" [*ren min*] of the national-political community.

A byproduct of the changing approach to news was the lasting importance of editors, who orchestrated authors, research agencies, and other complementary materials such as statistics and opinion pieces closely around a planned topic. Unlike the 1980s when editors' work concentrated on literary values and readability of individual submissions, the gravity of editorial work shifted to setting the agenda and manipulating the relationship among individual pieces. Under a stronger role of the producer, editor's notes and comments emerged regularly as a governing device to guide readers. "Consumer Square" [*xiaofei guangchang*], a new page added in 1996, set up a column called "editor's word" [*bianji ganyan*] where the page editor Cao Xihong wrote his own commentary. Zhang Mei, the editor of "Family Life," added "Producer's word" [*cehua ren yu*] on top of the page. The voices from various freelancers in previous news production became outweighed by that of the editor, who organized individuals and institutions in revealing a "big picture" of social life.

"Social observatory" was abolished in 1998 along with cartoon, fashion, family, and medicine and health while the pages "Journalists observatory" and "*Southern Weekend* Investigation" were added. For the weekly newspaper, reporting eventually dominated the work of journalism.

The birth of reporters

It can be argued that the editorial approaches, news commentaries and sociological research, were both within the efforts of *Southern Weekend* to improve accuracy and accountability in the mid-1990s. As represented by the crisis of *Police Raid* in 1994, the problem of credibility was still haunting as *Southern Weekend* went into the expansive areas of social life yet with ambiguous relationship with the Party press. The aggressive expansion of the newspaper in the marketplace was heavily charged with the ongoing explorations of its own legitimacy as a popular newspaper.

Some of the considerations to enhance credibility were direct and conspicuous. On March 11, 1994, editors began to sign their names on each page, signaling an increasing sense of accountability in the newsroom. But the representation of credibility was eventually outweighed by that of the reporters as their work increased in both old and new pages. "Journalists Observatory," the cover page, "People and Law," and "Consumer Square" regularly published in-depth stories written by its own reporters. The new page of "*Southern Weekend* Investigation [*benbao diaocha*] launched in 1999, in particular, was devoted exclusively to investigative stories written by *Southern Weekend* journalists. The increasingly frequent byline of "our journalist XXX" [*ben bao ji zhe*], which was close to zero before 1996, indicated the rising status of reporters and the importance of credibility for the newspaper.

The development of reporters also brought in a growing emphasis on news sources. Instead of following the official Xinhua News Agency or governmental agenda, *Southern Weekend* set up its correspondent posts in Beijing and Shanghai, and dispatched regional reporters there in 1994 and 1995 respectively. News hotlines were soon opened to the general public in 1995 one by one

in Guangzhou, Beijing, and Shanghai with telephone numbers printed on the front-page. In 1996, the sixteen-page *Southern Weekend* publicized a total of eight telephones lines, one each for the general office, computer room, visual editors, journalists, distribution office, and three for the advertising department. In addition, a telephone number was printed under the heading of each page and directly opened the sixteen editorial desks for public contact. Most desks shared a telephone number with at least another one, which indicated sharing office space. But exclusive lines were reserved for two major news pages: "Economy and People" and "Current Affairs."

Opening the newsroom through telephone lines considerably changed the scope and types of incoming stories. For one thing, direct contact between news sources and editorial desks eliminated the mediation by individual freelancers. More importantly, the circuit no longer supported the previous relationship between the newspaper and local governmental offices in relaying a reported problem from the readers. The "problem-solving" framework did not work, in particular, for cross-provincial stories because the newspaper and its sponsor had no direct administrative power or contact over the governmental departments in another province even on a lower level. When the link between government and an out-of-town press was at least temporarily interrupted, the newsroom was released from its identity as the affiliated paper and shifted its focus of work onto reporting for its readers instead of as internal references for government departments. Such an unexpected irony between the Party-press relation and an empowered newsroom in reporting opened up an unprecedented social space for perhaps the most important genre of post-Mao journalism.

Now that in a telephone call away, the relationship between newspaper readers and the newsroom changed. Readers began to call for a variety of reasons. "Some provided stories and

help, some gave feedbacks, some pointed out our mistakes, and some told us the injustice they experienced…" (29 Dec 1999: 16). Rao Lüfei, a journalist of *Southern Weekend,* found it quite often that she could not even understand the dialects of the readers, which indicated a large proportion of cross provincial or at least translocal calls. At the time when "Party corruption" rose up to the top popular concern, as the opinion poll on *Modern Mankind* showed, it is reasonable to suggest that a weekly newspaper with national circulation and an open newsroom from Guangdong became a channel to file social grievances especially for readers in inland cities or rural areas with underdeveloped markets and press investment. CCTV's *Focus Interview*, the investigative program endorsed several times by central leaders, was well-known for having visitors from across the country lining up in front of the TV station to file their cases (Zhang, 2002: 226). It is not surprising that an external newspaper, out of direct control by the local government, served as an alternative resource.

The national market of *Southern Weekend* also created a potential channel for journalists in other provinces to get their stories out in case of local censorship. In such cases, local journalists might offer their work in progress as well as assistance to *Southern Weekend* reporters so that their efforts would not be wasted. In 2000, for instance, a case of collective plagiarism during the national college entrance exam in Jiahe, Hunan province was censored by the provincial government. Though the story was first reported by a Hunan TV station, showing an under-covered video tape taken during the exam, media outlets in Hunan were later requested to drop any follow-up investigation and printed only the official account from Xinhua News Agency. By the time of the ban, however, Liu Xianghui, an entrepreneurial journalist from *Changsha Daily,* had already finished an in-depth report. While local outlets were shut down, his work was

published on *Southern Weekend* in full (14 Jul 2000: 1, 6). Though excluding most freelancers or part-time writers in the previous decade, the open newsroom of *Southern Weekend* therefore became an alternative channel not only for cross-provincial readers but also journalists, promoting horizontal connections between media outlets in news production.

Relying on the national market of *Southern Weekend,* then, such cross-provincial collaboration in reporting strongly disrupted the power relationship between the corresponding governmental supervisor and affiliated media in controlling information (Chan, 2003). In fact, it soon became a prominent approach to investigative news reporting for the newspaper. Cho Li-fung found that, for investigative journalism targeting governmental power or what she called watchdog journalism from 1996 to 2001, 21.3% of the watchdog stories covered malfeasance occurring at a national level, 12.3% in Guangdong province, and 66.4% outside of Guangdong province in a specific region (Cho, 2007: 191-2). That means over 85% of the watchdog news reports on *Southern Weekend* between 1996 and 2001 were stories located outside Guangdong. The increasing mobility and specialization of the working reporters, whose labor could no longer be replaced by editors, also fostered socialization among investigative journalists and the formation of a professional community that reinforced their connections and the rising prominence of reporting as an occupation. Despite the common criticism that it was only "swatting flies and dead tigers" and "flexing muscles within boundary" (e.g. Zhao, 2004), such horizontal flow of news stories on the national level was a remarkable breakthrough in the centralized and top-down model of China's public communication since Mao and should not be easily discredited on the the ground of theories.

4.3 Bad News, Good Tellers

By the end of the twentieth century, weekend journalism based on light-hearted entertainment and popular culture was virtually marginalized. Though investigative reporting was not dominant, in its place was no longer cultural activities but broader social news reporting and the rising metro newspapers which focused on the everyday life and politics of the urban population. For *Southern Weekend,* news reporting grew in number and length as its pages increased. The structure of the front-page, for instance, stabilized around 1998 with only three major items: the cover story, a commentary, and a reading guide highlighting a few news stories inside. In August 2000, a senior reader wrote to *Southern Weekend* and complained that "your newspaper should avoid long stories" (17 Aug 2000: 20). Later, another reader sent in an letter and argued that "in-depth reports not only give the information but also answer the question 'why'" (21 Sept 2000: 27). In response, the editor commented on the second reader approvingly that "in-depth reports should be the major goal of weekly newspapers."

Varied in length, target, and degree of investigation, not all long and in-depth stories were watchdog journalism in "documenting the activities of government, business, and other public institutions in ways that expose little-publicized or hidden activities to public scrutiny" (Bennett and Serrin, 2005). But the trend was clear. The development of this newspaper has indeed been against the popular assumption that the commercialization of the press brought in shorter and more fragmented stories. While metro newspapers, the other form of popular journalism in the late 1990s, developed its news as a companion of urban life for the booming population, *Southern Weekend* relied on the growing journalistic techniques as well as the popular moral concerns of the rising social conflicts of market reform.

The journalistic truth

Journalism in twentieth century China has yet been an autonomous profession. Lin Yutang (1895-1976) lamented in the 1930s that only a small circle of writers tended to flaunt their knowledge yet without "using their legs" hindered the advent of more democratic flow of information (1937: 161). Financial constraints further aggravated this matter, according to Lin, so "current magazines are generally from poor writers living in garrets in the terribly inhuman residences of Shanghai alleyways called 'terrace houses' who can spin out long yarns of grandiloquent discussions on abstract theories or collect their material by quotations from quotations from books ancient and modern" (Ibid). This, Lin Yutang commented, "has a dangerous tendency of cutting off periodicals from the real life of an evolving society" (Ibid).

Mao's press solved the problem of the struggling writers in Republican China by integrating the printing press within a centralized Party-state bureaucracy. Journalism became essentially a model of centralized political communication serving first and foremost Party politics in mobilizing consent and mass participation for national integration (Liu, 1971). It maintained a national political community and the role of Party-state as the dominant public voice on all issues of national importance. Journalists of the Party press derived their authority to address social reality from its institutional affiliation with the Party. As we have seen in its long shadow cast on Hong Kong culture in the 1980s, Party journalism during Mao's time resided within the political language of the CCP.

Early post-Mao efforts tried to legitimize journalism as a conveyer of information outside of the Party mandate of class struggle. The reformist Marxists or Old Left inside the Communist Party such as Liu Binyan and Hu Jiwei, for instance, became open critics against Mao's remnants

in propaganda apparatuses and tried to justify journalism on the basis of people's interests (Lee, 2000). In addition to inner-Party struggles, they also found a popular channel in reportage literature [*baogao wenxue*] or literary journalism to expose Party corruptions, a tradition that can be traced back to the left-wing culture the CCP aligned with in the wake of the May Fourth movement in 1919 (Laughlin, 2002).

The first decade and a half in post-Mao China decentralized newspaper production within the Party press structure (chapter 1). For newspapers, still, it was not until the mid-1990s when reporters gained their institutional status to cover social lives that were potentially outside the Party agenda. On an increasingly regular basis, journalists began to spend days and weeks or even longer for a story which may or may not alert local Party committees and governmental officials. Their growing presence and labor began to relocate journalism within a social life which used to be ignored or dominated by political discourses, impressionistic accounts, and literary narratives. Contrary to their previous forms during the twentieth century, newspaper journalism became rooted in the work of the reporter rather than the writer's literacy or the Party's public speech.

In light of this rough historical account, it should be clear that professional codes of Chinese journalism were only a recent construct. In just a few years, reporters began to take up news production within the post-Mao press and actively honed their skills in the expanding social spaces. In 1996, six pages out of sixteen on *Southern Weekend*—including the front page, "Economy and People," "Consumer Square," "People and Law," "Weekend News," and "Social Observatory"—were consistently devoted to news stories produced by its own reporters. Two years later, again, "Journalist Observatory" was launched to replace "Social Observatory," which

signaled a more conscious exploration on the role of reporters in journalism. Soon became a major outlet for news stories on *Southern Weekend,* the bi-weekly page printed a short note next to its heading that read "Tell the public by your own action: I am a journalist" (8 January 1998: 7).

"Journalist Observatory" was edited by Shen Hao, a front-page editor since 1992. And it was open to journalists from other newspapers. The inaugural page published two external submissions, one from *Economic Daily* in Beijing and the other from *Yunnan Daily,* the Party daily of Yunnan province. The two stories shared the page in half under two vertically symmetrical sections of "Journalist's Witness" [*jizhe muji*] and "One Type of Reality" [*xianshi yizhong*]. The first story, "Inertia in the Fog," reported the chaotic service of the Beijing airport in foggy weather; the other one, "The Last 16 Hours of Death Row Inmates," was a feature story on eight death row inmates in Yunnan before their execution. A news event and a human interest story respectively, both stories highlighted the reporter's presence as a third person. As Jiang Yiping, the editor-in-chief, wrote in the short introduction for "Journalist Observatory":

> This is an experiment, a page reserved exclusively for journalists. As the definition of journalist by the society and their self-identifications are complicated enough, we don't plan to define the duties of the profession. We only hope to see how journalists see the reality in their unique perspective… As long as you are a journalist, wherever you are, we hope to see your work. Raise your professional spirit and submit to *Journalist Observatory*.
>
> (*Southern Weekend,* 9 Jan 1998: 1)

The exploration of journalistic practices made the page an establishing ground for news reporting. Professionalism [*zhi ye jing shen*] or what Jiang Yiping called professional spirit began to develop. In July 1998, "Journalist Observatory" printed the following four stories written by *Southern Weekend* reporters:

"Bacteria in Shenzhen Women & Children Hospital: an Unprecedented Epidemic involved at least 130 women and babies" (3 July 1998: 16);
"Running toward 'Minimum Affluence': Poverty in Sifang Jing Village" (24 July 1998:7);
"The Fight" (Two drunk drivers in Guizhou tricked their entry into a college and killed a student on campus; one of them was beaten to death by the angry students) (31 July 1998: 6);
"Get on the Public Payroll" [*chi huang liang*] (Nepotism in a small town of Hainan province led to a semi-open sale of high school teacher positions to get public paycheck] (31 July 1998: 6).

The four stories differed in length, target, and scope of investigation. What seemed coherent, however, were the practices of on-site inquires by the reporter as an outsider, who investigated primary sources involved in presenting a social problem. Similar to the inaugural page, the last two stories were printed on the same day and were relatively short. Two of the stories, poverty in the Sichuan village and a bloated public payroll in Hainan, targeted government corruption. In the case of hospital infection, the most thoroughly investigated one, two *Southern Weekend* journalists gathered information from multiple victims, the Municipal Bureau of Public Health in Shenzhen, local media, the supplier of concentrated disinfectant, recent purchase records of the hospital, and their own investigation of lab practices in the hospital. The final revelation that the concentrated disinfectant was diluted to a ridiculously low density due to malpractice pointed to the dysfunctional management of the hospital rather than, as the hospital earlier claimed, a wrong delivery by the supplier. The evidence based on independent inquiries by the journalists strongly defied the explanations given by the hospital and supported an alternative judgment to be taken up by the readers.

Previous research has provided rich accounts of such "deviance" from Party journalism, highlighting the genre of investigating reports as stretching the role of *yulun jiandu* or "supervision by public opinion" within the circuit of Party-state power. To emphasize its historical origins in Party journalism, Sun Wushan defined the critical reports as essentially a

governing technique of the Party-state in exposing regional problems and tackling local protectionism (2005). CCTV's *Focus Interview*, again, was openly visited and endorsed by three Party leaders for its efforts to bring social concerns to critical spotlights. The practice of investigative reporting, one may suggest, is internal supervision turned public without real public participation.

In practice, this particular form of "Chinese muckraking" shared similarities with its Western counterparts especially from the perspective of reporters when they were working out-of-town against bureaucratic and business interests (often both) to uncover information. But the differences were also apparent. Within the general trend of decentralization of governance during the post-Mao economic reform, regional governments had their own interests in patronizing affiliated media whereas the central government also had an interest in exposing regional problems to channel public opinion (Tong, 2010). A convergent area of central and regional interests, then, was cross-provincial reporting. This was, as discussed earlier, facilitated by the absence of direct administrative connection between a regional government and an out-of-town press. However, the highly imbalanced economic and media development in mainland China also created a new sense of inequality as most provinces did not have a *Southern Weekend.* At times of bureaucratic backlash in various forms, as will be seen later, it is not uncommon for newsroom leaders to turn to their governmental sponsors in order to defend the newspaper against punishment from higher political pressure. This relationship based on shared interests in facing potential political risk from above, however, also came with a price. When institutional and even personal bonds between press leaders and local government strengthened, it made the intervention in news production easier—and an imperative—for local propaganda officials yet

demoralized newsroom staff and cultivated self-censorship. Without newsroom autonomy or press law to define the boundaries, therefore, journalistic endeavors of the popular press navigated precariously within the political network in their pursuit of market share and public accountability.

Investigative practices gradually penetrated other news pages in *Southern Weekend*. Later in 1998, the news page of "*Southern Weekend* Investigation" [*ben bao diao cha*] was added, printing predominantly full-page investigative reports written by *Southern Weekend* journalists. The next year, *Southern Weekend* morphed into three sections, covering "news," "culture," and "life"; and regularly devoting 7 to 10 out of 24 pages to news reporting across the country. Cross-provincial reporting became the major approach to news for the weekend newspaper. The basis of its journalism has come to gravitate around the "truth" produced by journalists rather than that from Party mandates.

The editorial voice

In line with the consistent output of investigative reports, *Southern Weekend* began to bring in a social picture which otherwise could only be read between the lines in central policies and isolated critical reports in Party dailies if not from one's own experiences. The popularity of these stories, on the other hand, was deeply rooted in the prevailing "righteous indignation" upon the "Dickensian inequality and injustice" (Sun, 2001: 14) of post-Tiananmen Chinese society. Even though the growth of reporters and development in reporting techniques enhanced popular journalism in accuracy and accountability, it did not suppress the moral impetus of intellectuals or install impartiality as the norm of journalism. The editorial voice was, on the contrary,

reinvented. Perhaps similar to the late Qing tabloids that relied on social criticism for popularity, the invested interests of the commentator continued to evolve and offered the news reports an interpretive framework—a popular *truth*—that the newspaper shared with its readers.

The double development of public accountability and moral leadership in the newsroom could be read from the editorial written by Jiang Yiping, the editor-in-chief, in 1999:

> Looking back to the past 365 days and nights, all our efforts have been building on the commitment that "I am a journalist"…The duty of the journalists is no more than paying the debt to the public…Just as the life of plants are represented by their green leaves, the life of news is justified by its truthfulness…The eyes of the journalists not only open up to seek the truth, but also quite often close gently while touched by true emotions.
>
> (*Southern Weekend,* 1 Jan 1999: 9)

In this much-acclaimed New Year editorial, Jiang Yiping emphasized "truthfulness" [*zhen shi*] as *the* principal of journalism in reference to public interests. But she also pointed out how "truth emotion" [*zhen qing*] and justice played perhaps no less important a role for working journalists. In fact, the voice of editors like Jiang Yiping who emerged out of the development of the newsroom was a significant aspect in shaping the newsroom culture and a collective identity of the newspaper.

Within the anti-corruption discourses of the Party-state and rising grievances about the rent-seeking bureaucrats and institutions, the stance of the newsroom was so articulate that it quickly built up its reputation in the newspaper market. To one end, some of its pages were close to the radical role of advocacy journalism in offering a space for the otherwise voiceless in their separate struggles with state departments and private companies. "Consumer Square" [*xiao fei guang chang*], a new page added in 1996, had been edited with a coherent agenda in support of consumer rights as opposed to market malpractice (Hong, 1998). By following cases of

consumer activists fighting against bootlegs, *Southern Weekend* became a participatory force in organizing a larger community of consumers in an undisciplined and authoritarian marketplace. By following the brands and commodities endorsed by trade associations and promoted by CCTV, Hong Bing argued, *Southern Weekend* raised critical questions against the misleading rating system that relied on the authority of governmental departments and the central media.

The intervention of *Southern Weekend* in consumer campaigns did not stop short at the popular accusation of "swatting flies but not tigers," reporting on lower ranking power holders rather than their supervisors. Even though the risk of questioning higher ranking governmental institutions increased, targeting the wedded network of state departments which turned into natural monopolies in the process of marketization was at times unavoidable. As will be seen in the following case, the editor worked as the *de facto* leader in representing activists and deploying reporters in an organized struggle for consumer rights.

On March 20, 1998, "Consumer Square" featured the case of Shen Hongjia, a retired professor and member of the Political Consultative Committee of Ji'nan, Shandong province, who questioned the legitimacy of telecommunication service fees. This was the third case "Consumer Square" published on the same topic in three months (see also 30 Jan 1998; 27 Feb 1998). Before writing to *Southern Weekend* in January, Shen Hongjia had filed his inquiry to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication (MPT, later Ministry of Information Industry or MII) and other governmental departments but did not get any answers. Cao Xihong, the editor of "Consumer Square" wrote an editorial titled "Questioning the Telecom Industry" where he drew attention to another two activists and additional complaints about telephone charges to interrogate the monopoly of the state department in the telecommunication industry. In addition

to a short piece from Shen Hongjia on his own findings and opinion, the page also printed a piece by Du Weidong, a reporter of *Southern Weekend,* who reported on another three complaints the newsroom received from Xinjiang and Hunan provinces.

In the following issue, "Consumer Square" carried on the topic and presented an exemplar of public discussion on behalf of public interests (3 Apr 1998: 12). Readers' responses in support of Shen Hongjia were edited into a short piece, including Shen's contact information upon his consent. The side column added seven other complaints from readers of six provinces—two in Guangdong, about telecommunication service fees. The heart of the page featured the voices from Shen Hongjia and an anonymous government official calling for revoking the telephone installation fee; a master student from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications arguing against both; and the editor Cao Xihong's short telephone interview with the MPT. Headed "Listen to the Voice of the MPT," the short piece informed the readers that the editor's inquiry was met with answers like "we don't read your newspaper," "we are too busy with restructuring the department," and "sue us if they want." Also included in the "Background" column was a short piece titled "Incoming Minister of the MII," where readers were told that the incoming minister of the MII was the head of the MPT. The piece further pointed out that the new establishment should be expected to function as the regulator other than direct participant in the telecommunication industry. In this multi-vocal discussion, in sum, the editor orchestrated a bottom-up challenge against the monopolistic power of the MPT without hiding his own opinion. Instead of a light-hearted street show of weekend journalism, the newspaper page was a presided chorus with an agenda.

In addition to the role of producer, the editorial voice also emerged in "foreword" [*bian qian yu*], "editor's words" [*bian zhe de hua*], and "afterwords" [*bian hou yu*] (e.g. 9 Feb 96: 1; 2 May 1997: 16; 7 Apr 2000: 9). But it perhaps took its strongest form in New Year editorials printed on the front page of the last or first issue of the year. In the first year-end issue of 1997, Jiang Yiping wrote a signed editorial on the cover page (26 Dec 1996). Jiang addressed readers as "thousands of strange 'you'" and exhorted the strength of "the powerless." The practice presented its formal debut in 1999, where the New Year editorial was printed on top of the cover page and signed with the collective byline "Our Newsroom," a ritual that has lasted until today.

Titled "The Strength that Never Fails to Bring Us into Tears," the piece later became the widely quoted statement of *Southern Weekend* on its journalism of the time. Written in an essayist style and sentimental in tone, the short piece raised "truth" [*zhenshi*], "justice" [*zhengyi*], and "love" [*ai*] in three consecutive paragraphs opened by the identical sentence that "nothing can truly touch people except." The word *remen*, plainly the plural form of "human," was used instead of *renmin*, the one used almost exclusively in referring to the national political identity (e.g. Chinese people). More importantly, the notion of social justice was invoked in addressing the powerless and a moral community in the post-1989 Chinese society:

> We are rooting for you because your hope is our hope and your hardship our hardship. We saw you raising your hue, we saw you laboring with your scythe; we saw you sweating all day, we saw you filling up your own barn; we saw you drifting from place to place, we saw you grieving in tears; we saw you fighting against all odds, we saw you rebuilding your own home; we saw you being laid-off, we saw you crunching your teeth; we saw you going through the storms, and we saw you showing a smile…we were watching you and rooting for you because we are part of you.
>
> (*Southern Weekend*, 1 Jan 1999: 1)

The well-claimed editorial indeed gave a snapshot of the "realities" *Southern Weekend* produced and popularized during this time. The powerless in the row of six scenarios, including peasants, migrant workers, the involuntarily re-located, and laid-off workers, represented the disenfranchised social groups in the rapid social stratification within China's rising state capitalism.

As the editorial voice gained increasing weight in the newspaper, ironically, the legacy of literary intellectuals speaking for the disenfranchised yet using a different language was revived. The noticeable dichotomy between "you" and "we" in this editorial also hinted at elitism. This was, indeed, the other end of its popular journalism in addressing the ordeals of ordinary people when the historical consciousness of intellectual-officials was invoked. A reader who wrote to *Southern Weekend* in the year of 2000 seemed to be expressing such an irony:

> Since last year or this one, I have felt that the news section is less friendly and vivid as it used to be. Your news is going to the right direction, but your tone is arrogant. On the Aug 24th issue, for example, the captions of the headline photo made me uncomfortable where it printed "anger and eulogy," "confession and boundaries," "president and soldiers," "loyalty and betrayal," "war and peace"… The seemingly noble language is indeed sensational.
>
> (*Southern Weekend,* 26 Oct 2000: 30).

The development of the newsroom in *Southern Weekend* in the late 1990s*,* in sum, relocated the newspaper from the cultural realm toward the center of national life and grounded it by the investigative work of reporters. Compared to the Party dailies, its "politics of compassion" (Sun, 2001) addressed the changing society in much more substantiated and humane details. In just a few years, it won its popularity among post-Mao intellectuals, government officials, university students, the politically informed, and also marginal social groups in "worrying about China" (Davies, 2007) at the national level; compared to the rising metro newspapers that

situated journalism within everyday urban life from weather forecasts to water supply, *Southern Weekend* maintained a national purview and the moral energy of traditional intellectuals, making it closer to a "China's weekend" (9 Feb 1996: 15) than other regional newspapers.

Returning to "news"

Investigative reports faced all kinds of resistance. Pre-publication resistance mostly came from the investigative process since official sources and statistics, if available, were notoriously unreliable in China. Zeng Huaguo, an investigative journalist from Xinhua News Agency, recalled that the most reliable informants were local taxi drivers while information obtained from governmental departments was scarce if not misleading (Zeng, 2006: 35). In most challenging situations, journalists could face a hidden alliance between profiteering local bureaucrats and private interests as well as a silenced local media. Investigative techniques, in a sense, were essential to uncover stories and information when "most governmental officials are not yet used to being supervised; most media are not yet used to if not afraid of doing the work" (Zhang, 2002: 67). Though some investigative work rode on governmental initiatives in top-down campaigns—so-called killing the "dead tiger"—and seemed opportunistic in winning public accountability and market appeal at the same time, regular production of investigative reports was indeed a precarious and expensive enterprise.

Post-publication resistance, on the other hand, came from both private interests and the Party-state. The most visible yet probably the least harmful one was retail buyout as a means to control or disrupt the distribution of the newspaper. In July 1999, *Southern Weekend* published an in-depth cover story on the booming network of private STD clinics in Taiyuan, Shanxi

province (9 Jul 1999: 1). The story was written by its reporter Guo Guosong as a follow-up to a local newspaper *Urban Life* [*dushi shenghuo*] in Taiyuan, which first broke the story and received a death threat. Guo's report unveiled the connections among the overwhelming STD clinic ads in local media, the tacit endorsement of the local government, and the rent-seeking public hospitals and research institutions. As soon as the newspaper was published, the newsroom received telephone calls from Taiyuan readers to complain that either they could not find the newspaper on newsstands or it was sold at a raised retail price. The distribution department, too, began to receive similar complaints from subscribers in Taiyuan area about the abnormal delay of delivery. In response, editor-in-chief Jiang Yiping wrote an editorial in the following issue. Titled "Whose feathers were ruffled by *yulun jiandu,*" her column also revealed a similar case in 1997, when *Southern Weekend* investigated a heavily advertised thermo massager and was later bought in wholesale in multiple cities as soon as the copies got on newsstands (16 May 1997: 1).

Compared to retail control, backdoor censorship from the Party-state and post-publication punishment were much less known in comparable details. After all, it is possible to justify investigative reports against private interests, like Jiang's editorial suggested, by the rationale of *yulun jiandu* in Party journalism. These occasions could also serve as marketing strategies for the newspaper. But it was out of the question to publish any complaints on state censorship. However, news reports with verifiable information may have arguably contributed to backdoor censorship since they could not be as easily falsified on the ground of accuracy as the case of *Police Raid* in 1994. The battle with the MII at the point of its establishment, for instance, came with a top-down request to replace Cao Xihong and other two editors (Yan, 2007). Both Cao

Xihong and Yan Lieshan began to use pseudonyms with the acquiescence of the newsroom since late 1998. For the general public, such backdoor struggles and negotiation with central governmental departments were usually signaled by the relocation of senior editors. In 2000, Jiang Yiping was removed from her leadership in *Southern Weekend* by the Provincial Propaganda Department of Guangdong. The purge, soon involving the interim editor-in-chief Qian Gang and deputy chief editor Chen Mingyang, was widely considered as "the end of an era" for investigative journalism of the weekly newspaper. Later, Jiang Yiping was appointed to take charge other subsidiaries within the news group, including *21st Century World Herald* [21 *shiji huanqiu baodao*] and *Southern Metro News,* and was removed from her posts in 2003 and 2008, respectively, under top-down pressure.

On the other hand, bureaucratic resistance from regional levels was easier to discern than from the central one. Backed by institutional support and a protective leadership, the national distribution and political influence of *Southern Weekend* in the late 1990s invoked frequent backlash from the targeted departments. As seen in the case of Taiyuan STD clinics, the external investigation was a potential threat to local officials and their bureaucratic careers. Local protectionism, as many have pointed out (Cho, 2007: 210-215; Zhao, 2004), was a formidable barrier to cross-provincial reporting despite the market appeal of such stories and strategic endorsement from the central government. In such new reporting space, the absence of institutional contact or norm between the press and cross-provincial governments also brought the power struggle to different channels. When it stayed within the political system, like the case of *Police Raid,* complaints from targeted departments would most likely be sent to central departments which exerted direct political power to punish the press; if the conflict entered

judicial procedures, similar to the case of Chen Maya, chances were dubious for the "intruding" journalists and press when the local court, neither an autonomous institution from the Party state yet, was sandwiched between an out-of-province newspaper and local political and economic interests; in extreme cases involving criminal or other social groups with even less legal, economic, or bureaucratic connections, investigative journalists could find themselves under violent threats against their personal safety. Some such stories later went into crime fictions written by former investigative journalists (e.g. Guo, 2014; Shi, 2011).

Compared to external predicaments, much less discussed were the struggles from within the press on investigative reporting. Yan Lieshan, the editor of "Current Affairs," had expressed similar feelings with a paranoid reader:

> Two years ago when I started the column of news commentary, I thought that I was raising new and unique questions in writing pieces like "Power Capital," "The Red and the Black," "Professional Killer" and felt anxious about being accused. By now, however, the exposure on governmental corruption and judicial failure had fed our appetite to an unprecedented degree; bureaucratic transactions, assassinations, collaboration between police and criminals…seem to have become the normal social scenario…What should intellectuals like us do? I have no answer.
>
> (Yan Lieshan, 2002)

It is possible to suggest that the "normal social scenario" of corruption in popular journalism was losing ground partly due to its own market success and political influence. In a few years, its moral voice seemed to have exhausted its explanatory power if not market appeal. Despite its narrative strength and increasing accountability, it was reminiscent of the perennial story between the corrupted official [*guan*] and the powerless people [*min*] in voluminous literature produced in Imperial China. The ability of speaking for the powerless as traditional intellectuals in promoting social change, in the end, was powerless without either the imagination or channels

of civil engagement. Yuezhi Zhao (2004) might have gone too far in arguing that in the absence of alliances from independent citizen groups and oppositional parties, investigative journalism could only lapse into a lapdog if not underdog in the final analysis. After all, critical exposure had offered a distinctly different social picture—an alternative basis of public discussion—for an extended readership. But it is still revealing when a reader wrote to *Southern Weekend* in 2001 and expressed similar sentiment with the editor Yan Lieshan: "You are my favorite newspaper. However, I have not been reading it for a long time because I have no ability to help any of the ill-fated people you have reported except for praying for them…You have all done what you could do by reporting on it" (21 Jun 2001).

Finally, the growing emphasis on professionalism also began to question the "truth" as filtered by the moral voice of *Southern Weekend.* In 2002, Zhao Jing (also known as Michael Anti), a journalist and later independent blogger, criticized narrative journalism represented by *Southern Weekend* for its subjective voice and intellectual politics. Unlike Jiang Yiping's editorial published only three years ago which juxtaposed "truthfulness" and "true emotion" in journalism, Anti's subscription to Western standards instead called for a radical departure from the moral tone:

> [They] remind me of the reportage literature of the 1980s…That's why the technical standards in Western journalism on verifiability and balance are important; in such a quickly changing society, facts are noble and sexy par excellence without any literary touches…The era of Confucius journalists [*xinwen rujia*] has past. We are in a complicated world with all kinds of interests groups and struggles. Journalists have no more power and are only a group of lonely practitioners looking for truth in the jungle.
>
> (Anti, 2002: 69)

Such criticism against the investigative reporting of *Southern Weekend,* however, was controversial. The moral obligation of journalists does not have to advance at the expense of the

technical standards in Western journalism on verifiability and balance. Journalists' value judgments can reflect the community consensus on values; it can also represent active moral agency in individual news stories as empirically grounded observation—what Glasser and Ettema had called "objecification of moral standards" (1989). If journalists of *Southern Weekend* drew on the historical moral order of Confucius intellectuals, what Jiang Yiping later called "an unconscious defect" (Zhang, 2008), which community Michael Anti's criticism was speaking to should be further examined.

Southern Weekend embarked on a few radical adjustments in 2002. The most visible one was the establishment of the new section of "City" [*cheng shi*], which was only distributed in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, the three megacities. The urban shift in journalism and distribution signaled the final stage of its paradigmatic transformation toward a new genre of national and political journalism in a much more controlled style of writing. As Xiang Xi, the successor of Jiang Yiping commented, "Excessive moral judgment made us a 'media bible'; we are aiming at a return to news" (Shi, 2002).

Conclusion

Compared to the 1980s, it seems ironic that editors found its critical voice on *Southern Weekend* when the newsroom was quickly dominated by reporters, whose work turned *yulun jiandu* in Party journalism and reportage literature into institutional practices without changing much of its moral impetus. *Yulun jiandu* or the "supervision by public opinion" in Party journalism justified the exposure of social problems; political role of traditional intellectuals renewed its critical lens in observing and interpreting the changing Chinese society; and the

national market of the newspaper also made cross-provincial reporting a possible strategy. In essence, investigative reporting is a form of non-fictional storytelling that displayed a close moral distance with the powerless in social conflicts; it extended the social world well beyond average Chinese's daily experiences in consistent accounts. Collectively, investigative journalism became a panorama of "bad news" in verifiable details and was made accessible to a national readership.

The compassion and sense of social justice that spelt out in the collective efforts to cover the various powerless groups in an insufficiently regulated market economy also indicated a critical moment of cultural change. Despite their diminishing voices, the readers served by *Southern Weekend* in its cross provincial investigative stories were better informed about the price of the post-Tiananmen market reform; they knew it from the hard-won and well-told stories, and they also felt it from the voices filled with "true emotions." These were, no doubt, the "right" stories for readers who shared similar moral indignation with the newsroom. The construction of a moral community caring for the powerless, on the other hand, renewed the role of the intellectual in public life as the legitimate speaker. In spite of its instant market success, reader disaffection and professional development over time as well as—and perhaps most importantly—its vulnerability at times of political and market censorship prompted reconsiderations of editorial strategies for future development of the press.

PART III

The urban press by the early 2000s had become powerful media institutions. Supported by state policies, the Southern Press Media Group (formerly *Southern Daily* News Group) and the other two Party press groups in Guangzhou invested heavily to maintain their structural dominance in the regional and national market. Institutionalization of the Party press, on the other hand, coincided with the divergence of metro news and more serious political reporting. Ironically, *Southern Weekend* shifted away from "speaking for the powerless" while turning to the last uncharted realm of post-Mao popular journalism: politics.

Chapter 5 deals with the contemporary Guangzhou press again within its social conditions; it analyzes political reporting in relation to the intensifying regulatory power, market concentration, and corporate control over news production. In the end, it leads up to the final discussion on "Party-popular" that, within three decades of marketization, whose voice(s) and experiences the press has been organizing around and what determined that.

CHAPTER 5
MAKING THE NEW MAINSTREAM PRESS

Compared to the first decade and a half of the post-Mao reform, the turn of the twentieth century for the Chinese press has been marked conspicuously by state regulation in consolidating the newspaper sector. Beginning in 1996 when *Guangzhou Daily*, a most profitable media institutions since 1992, was hand-picked by the SPPA to establish the first news group in mainland China, newspaper commercialization entered the stage of conglomeration centered around the profitable Party press (Zhao, 2000; Lee et al., 2006). Both of the other two Guangzhou Party newspapers, *Southern Daily* and *Yangcheng Evening News,* followed suit in 1998. By the end of 2004, 39 newspaper groups were founded in China, accounting for 17 percent of total newspaper titles nationwide yet printing 56 percent of Chinese newspapers (Min, 2006).

In 1999, follow-up campaigns on press regulation continued, requiring structural shutdown or hand-over [*hua zhuan*] of smaller newspapers to local Party papers and press groups (SPPA, 2001). For the "newspaper trio," the new century began with a blessing.

5.1 Regulations and Deregulations

In 2003, the central government began a national campaign to regulate the newspaper market further toward centralization that, in a few years, legitimized the Party press groups as the major players in the newspaper market (GAPP, 2006: 465-472). The directive issued in June by the General Administration of Press and Publication or GAPP (formerly SPPA) problematized subscription by public institutions that, in practice, has been imposed as taxing categories on

subordinate departments and deteriorated the financial health of lower level Party-state units especially in rural areas. The new policy stipulated that, as a form of state subsidy, public subscription would be made available only to two central titles, two provincial titles for each province, and one municipal newspaper for each municipality. Newspapers sponsored by various governmental units and departments below the municipal level—rarely financially afloat—were either to be shut down or handed over to Party press groups. The campaign involved 1,452 newspapers and journals; 677 of them, including 282 newspapers, were shutdown (*Southern Weekend,* 21 Aug 2003; *Ten Headlines,* 2004).

The policy package toward a re-centralized model of newspaper production intensified in 2003, on the other hand, included further relaxation for these media groups to deepen market practices. Thirty-five media institutions, including four newspapers (groups), were selected to experiment with cross-provincial mergers and cross-media production. *Beijing Youth Daily,* for instance, had set up a joint firm with Beida Jade Bird Group, a state-owned high-tech company affiliated with Beijing (Peking) University, to take charge of its distribution, advertising, and branding; and later became the the first Chinese press listed on the Hong Kong stock market (Zhang, 2014).

The trend of capital investment, acquisition, merger, and diversifying financing schemes, however, went beyond the selected few. *The Beijing News* [*xin jing bao*], for example, was co-founded in 2003 by *Southern Daily* News Group and *Guangming Daily* Press Group in Beijing as the first cross-provincial newspaper venture in mainland China. The *First Financial Daily* [*diyi caijing ribao*], similarly, was a joint venture launched by three news groups including *Guangzhou Daily,* Shanghai *Wenhui-Xinmin* United Press Group, and *Beijing Youth Daily* in

2004, targeting urban areas of Beijing, Tianjin, Yangtze River Delta (Shanghai area), and the Pearl River Delta (Wu & Zhu, 2006). Media marketization, if still largely initiated in a bottom-up fashion in the first two decades of reform, the unleashed interests of its forerunners seemed to have increasingly converged with top-down mandates in having "bigger and stronger" media institutions within Party control. As Yuezhi Zhao argued forcefully in her early observation, the press conglomerate was viewed as "the ideal organizational form for optimal integration between propaganda and business" (Zhao, 2000: 16).

By 2005, top-down regulation of the newspaper market and institutional reform had been extended to the cultural sector as a whole. For the press nationwide, state policies further categorized newspapers and journals into two major groups: (1) the Party press and other political publications would stay as social enterprises [*shi ye*] and continued to receive state support; (2) newspapers and journals with non-political content such as culture, art, lifestyle, and science will move toward market enterprises [*qi ye*] (Hu, 2006: 15). Press regulations, while replete with temporary directives for over two decades under Deng Xiaoping's template of "groping the stones while crossing the river" in advancing economic reform, was again quick to catch up with media development on the ground (SPPA 1991, 1997).

At the end of 2005, "Regulations for the Administration of Newspaper Publication" [*baozhi chuban guanli guiding*] was issued to replace the temporary regulations of 1990. In general, the new regulation adopted a much more technical approach (and language) in rationalizing licensing, publishing, management, and legal responsibilities of the press. In order to reinforce the state (sponsor)-press (publisher) relationship regarding especially the increasing cross-provincial initiatives, the 2005 regulations added that in case of multiple publishers [*zhuban*

danwei], there should be a *major* publisher [*zhuyao zhuban danwei*]; and it must be a subordinate department of its governmental sponsor therefore within the same administrative jurisdiction. This policy, simply put, worked on the institutional level to strengthen bureaucratic affiliation with market expansion of the press. On the editorial level, similarly, the central government reinstated in multiple documents and proceedings to ban cross-provincial reporting especially on breaking news, and to make sure that media institutions comply with administrative boundaries in news production (Cui, 2006). It should be noted, however, that these regulatory efforts were largely supported by, if not came from, regional governments. Earlier in 2005, seventeen provincial and municipal governments, including Guangdong, signed a joint petition to ban cross-provincial reporting (Wang, 2009: 150-153).

Among other things, it was clear that the potential alignment of interests between major news groups and the central and regional governments increased. In particular, as small and unprofitable publications were being weeded out, their licenses were handed over to local news groups at no cost. In the case of Guangzhou, *Guangdong Price* [*guangdong jiage bao*] and *Modern Sports* [*xiandai tiyu bao*] were given to *Southern Daily* News Group; *Guangzhou-Hong Kong Information Daily* [*yuegang xinxi ribao*], *Guangdong Commerce* [*guangdong gongshang bao*], and *Guangdong Manufacturing* [*guangdong jianshe bao*] went into the hands of *Yangcheng Evening News* Group; *Information Times* [*xinxi shibao*] and the well-known magazine *Southern Window* [*nanfeng chuang*] were absorbed by *Guangzhou Daily*. By August 2010, 49 press groups have been founded in mainland China with *Guangzhou Daily* Press Group and Southern Press Media Group ranked the first and fourth, respectively, most profitable press groups in China (*CJY*, 2011: 489-491). The Southern Press Media Group, in particular, was

ranked the third among the 500 Top Chinese Brands in 2010 following only CCTV and Phoenix TV, and was followed by *People's Daily* in the estimated value of its brand name. Approaching the fourth decade of the post-Mao reform, the market had installed its legitimacy not only in national policies but also material and symbolic orders.

The news monitoring network

Top-down consolidation and deregulation of the media sector, in addition, have been accompanied by a parallel development of control in news production. In contrast to the well known fact that Chinese newspapers are under censorship, how censorship works and has changed has eluded serious attention until recently (e.g. Brady 2008). The common negligence has supported a seemingly ironic "two sides of the same coin" story regarding governmental actions in unleashing market liberalization on one hand and restricting content diversification on the other; but it has failed to explain that, in fact, the growing network of censorship has been an evolving institutional environment of the press—and just like the press—within the similar logic of post-Mao modernization since the 1990s.

There are two regulatory bodies of the press, the propaganda system and the administrative departments of press and publication, which embodied the joint power structure of the Party-state. On the central level, the two systems were represented by the Central Propaganda Department (CPD) and the GAPP even though the latter, in fact, was headed by the former (Brady, 2008: 11).

In the post-Mao era, the propaganda departments have transformed enormously toward a "modern, systematic, standardized system of control in the propaganda sphere" especially during

the post-Tiananmen period (Brady, 2008: 49) as a response to the rapid expansion of media outlets. In the 1980s, as discussed in chapter 1 on the tabloid "scandal" in Guangzhou and, in chapter 2, the private publishing market and Hong Kong TV, regulatory efforts were constant but often approached in a case-by-case or campaign manner. The crisis of *Police Raid* experienced by *Southern Weekend* in 1994, for example, caught the eyes of the Ministry of Public Security, not any regulatory units, who followed up with the press and later urged the CPD to issue the shutdown. You Yanling, then the editor-in-chief of *Southern Weekend*, recalled that the heavy-handed punishment was partly because "we have not introduced our newspaper to the officials in the CPD" and so quickly set himself on such a mission to Beijing (You, 2013: 164- 173). The whole struggle around the crisis in 1994 involved press leaders, Guangdong officials in the provincial government, the provincial propaganda department, the provincial press and publication administration [*xinwen chuban ju*], and the CPD. None of them, however, played the exclusive role as an institutional censor.

Looking at its post-1989 development, Brady (2008) made a strong case on the "rebirth" of the propaganda system in China. In addition to the growing personnel and internal units, the CPD began the "news monitoring groups" [*xinwen yueping xiaozu*] in 1994, where retired party members who formerly held positions in propaganda, media, cultural or publishing institutions were re-employed to monitor news content in media. The news monitoring group selectively surveyed newspapers on central and regional levels, published the *News Review* [*xinwen yueping*], and sent it to Party officials on central and provincial levels (Liu, 2012). Since 1997, news monitoring groups have also been set up in regional propaganda departments to follow similar practices in post-publication monitoring. In 1998, the CPD officially changed its English-

language translation to Central Publicity Department and began to use more and more terms like "political communication" or "information" instead of propaganda [*xuan chuan*] (Brady, 2008: 71-2).

The CPD also oversees several administrative offices, including the Ministry of Culture, the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), and the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT). The press, as mentioned above, was supervised by both the regional propaganda department and regional offices of the GAPP, which have developed a close relationship with the local press in day-to-day production under the guidelines of the CPD and the GAPP. As early as 1988, the SPPA required its regional branches to set up "readers" [*shendu yuan*] to monitor newspapers, periodicals, and books under their own jurisdiction (GAPP, 2006). The regional press and publication bureaus were asked to submit a reading report [*shendu baogao*] every six months to their corresponding units of the SPPA. Later, the discourses and practices of censorship gradually became more and more elaborate. On March 20, 1995, the SPPA issued the "Regulatory Criteria on Newspaper Quality" [*baozhi zhiliang guanli biaozhun*], and adopted a grading rubric on a one-hundred point scale to evaluate newspapers. Newspapers without a passing grade (60 points) in annual evaluation would face immediate probation or shutdown. The rubric contained five general categories:

> (1) Editorial policies and guidance of public opinion (30 points);
> (2) Publishing qualifications (20 points);
> (3) Overall evaluation on newspaper content (30 points);
> (4) Quality of advertising (10 points);
> (5) Social reputations (10 points).
>
> (GAPP, 2003: 151-3)

While most of the categories above remained largely vague (i.e. what defines "social reputations"?) and resembled the 1988 regulation, the only category broken down into grading criteria was in content (No.3), which contained qualifications in accuracy, readability, proportion of news, language, column/page setting, proofreading, and printing quality. For the proportion of news, broadsheet newspapers were required to reach a minimum of seven news items (including news, photos, and features) per page and at least ten for the front page; tabloid-size papers should have an average of five news stories with no less than seven on the front page. What required some more attention in the 1995 mandate, nonetheless, is that newspaper circulation was incorporated into the evaluation as a prerequisite or "life or death" qualification. After an initial two years of publication, circulation was required to reach 100,000 for provincial newspapers, 30,000 for municipal papers, and 10,000 for county papers. "As a mass medium," the rationale went that, "newspaper circulation should reach a proportional level of readership regarding its professionalization and target audience."

The institutionalization of regulations, personnel, and finance of news censorship was organized through several other pushes in the early 2000s. The reviewers informally hired in the 1990s became formal positions on the regional level in 2001 and 2002 (Ruo, 2006). In the 2005 regulation of newspaper publication, the current document in use, news monitoring was officially installed in the annual evaluation process of newspapers in legislation. Reading reports became the legal responsibility of the GAPP (entry No. 48); and reader-censors [*shendu yuan*] were required not only in the regional branch of the GAPP but also inside the press, which in fact imposed pre-publication censorship on news production. The new regulation of 2005, in sum, instituted systematic censorship, which was previously guided by sporadic directives, into day-

to-day news production. For the bigger and richer Chinese newspapers, increased market concentration has been constitutive of—not external to—state control in its institutional evolvement.

5.2 Corporate Initiatives

Not surprisingly, the top-down mandate of press consolidation was welcomed and pushed aggressively by the Party press groups and their growing subsidiaries. Newly-added titles of newspapers and magazines were largely dominated by investment within press groups. Founded in May 1998, the *Southern Daily* News Group had taken advantage of the granted dominance and began to expand its media outlets at a dazzling speed. While *Southern Weekend* and *Southern Metropolis News* were its only post-Mao establishments during the pre-corporate stage, it founded 6 newspapers and 10 magazines between 1998 and 2011 (Figure 5.1). In 2003, *Southern Daily* News Group aligned with *Guangming Daily* Press Group in Beijing to establish the first cross-provincial newspaper enterprise, *The Beijing News* [*xin jing bao*] (Zhang & Liang, 2004, Han, 2004). In July 2005, *Southern Daily* News Group further integrated the multiple subsidiaries now across media sectors and changed its name to Southern Press Media Group [*nanfang baoye chuanmei jituan*] (Fan, 2006), which by now owns 11 newspapers, 10 magazines, 6 websites, one publisher, and a dozen new media apps.

Table 5.1 Major Publications of *Southern Daily* News Group (Southern Press Media Group since 2005)

	Publication	Year of Est.	Content/Type
Newspapers	*Southern Daily*	1949	Provincial Party daily
	Southern Rural News	1963	Rural newspaper
	Southern Weekend	1984	Weekly subsidiary
	Southern Metropolis News	1997	Metro newspaper
	21st Century Business Herald	2001	Business newspaper
	New Beijing News [*xin jing bao*]	2003	Daily newspaper, joint-venture with *Guangming Daily* in Beijing
Magazines	*Southern Metropolis Weekly* [*nan du zhou kan*]	2006	News and entertainment
	Trend Weekly [*feng shang zhou bao*]	2006	Fashion, urban culture (ceased publication in 2014)
	Money Weekly [*li cai zhou bao*]	2007	Financial news
	City Pictorial [*chengshi huabao*]	1999	Youth culture
	Agriculture Fortune [*nong cai baodian*]	2001	Agricultural market news
	Mangazine [*ming pai*]	2003	High-end men's magazine
	Southern People's Weekly [*nanfang renwu zhoukan*]	2004	News & interviews of political, economic, and other social elites
	21st Century Business Review	2004	Business news magazine
	South [*nan fang*]	2006	A monthly journal of the provincial Party Committee
	Business Travel [*shangwu lüxing*]	2007	Consumption magazine
	The First Consumption [*di yi xiao fei*]	2009	Consumption magazine, free distribution
	China Fortune [*zhongguo caifu*]	2011	News on non-profit organizations in China
	Across [*chuan yue*]	2011	Monthly magazine on tourism

In stark contrast to the rapid expansion of media groups, the total number of newspaper outlets in mainland China stagnated. On both national and provincial levels, that is, the growth of newspapers stabilized around the early 2000s. Newspaper production was characterized by internal expansion within the press groups by merging, collaboration, or establishing subsidiaries. For *Southern Daily* News Group, the first three post-Mao subsidiaries—*Southern Weekend, Southern Metropolis News,* and *21st Century Business Herald,* all developed their second-tiered subsidiaries and brands. A degree of internal diversification of news content within news groups, indeed, has been prompted by the market considerations of the corporate press.

Voice of the publisher

The establishment of news groups led by the Party press in Chinese urban areas has tremendous implications. In Shenzhen and Shanghai, the printing press acted quickly to eliminate local competition. No longer merely a mediator between its popular subsidiaries and governmental sponsor, news groups became active decision makers that coordinated the newsroom with its growing business departments and initiatives. Corporate branding, for the most obvious, was introduced to negotiate an integrated identity for the multiplying subsidiaries and stratifying readership.

Now a member of the news group, similar trends have been noticeable in *Southern Weekend* since the early 2000s. The public image of the newspaper, for instance, became increasingly manipulated outside its newsroom based on market considerations. The weekly newspaper set up a branding office in 2002, which later expanded into a marketing department, to initiate marketing campaigns since, according to its director, the newspaper "is not modern

enough" (Liu, 2003; 2004). The branding campaign began in 2002 invested nearly 10 million Yuan (approximately $1.5 million) to "upgrade the brand" [*tisheng pinpai*]. A set of advertising strategies were developed to manipulate the publicity of *Southern Weekend* as well as to cross-promote other subsidiaries of the news group. In September 2002, for instance, a quarter-page advertisement addressing to "6,000,000 intellectual readers" was released, portraying its readers for the first time in unprecedented detail. The upper market appeal was spelled out in four sentences: "our readers think; our readers take responsibilities; our readers have resources; our readers shape the development of China." (*Southern Weekend*, 26 Sept 2002: D28). The news group, rather than editors or journalists, gained a louder and louder voice in the newspaper and in connecting to its readers.

Other marketing measures went beyond the advertising spaces to promote the newspaper as a commodity in urban life. The long-term middle columns printed between two pages, including the one for readers' letters [*du bian wang lai*], were eliminated, leaving the newspaper with more blank spaces as part of its visual style. In crimson color and a double frame, its masthead and section titles were all printed as stamped by traditional seals to signify "perseverance, passion, depth, and rationality" (28 Mar 2002: 24). To become a "modern" newspaper, *Southern Weekend* also followed *Southern Daily*, the parent paper, and narrowed the width of the newspaper in 2002 to 680mm. It was explained in the front page column that "the current ratio of length and width…is the closest to the 'golden ratio' among domestic newspapers. This 'golden newspaper size' [*huangjin baoxing*] has been adopted by many well-known foreign newspapers." (24 Oct 2002: A1). The benefit, as it explained, was that "now you do not need to fold it like reading the

previous broadsheet newspapers; it is more comfortable to read in limited spaces such as on the plane, in subway or on a bus. Meanwhile, the newspaper stays straight in your hands."

The considerations of changing social spaces for newspaper reading (no longer in the study room of Party officials or other domestic spaces) spoke to a desirable attachment with an urbanizing society and lifestyles. The marketing metaphor of "staying straight," on the other hand, also alluded to journalistic integrity. In the following issue, *Southern Weekend* printed excerpts from readers' letters that praised the new paper for "standing up straight…as it always has been as a newspaper with social responsibilities that tells the truth without 'bowing' to any distortions" (31 Oct 2002: C24).

For the newsroom, corporate considerations brought in new initiatives most evidently in establishing second-tiered subsidiaries. *Southern Weekend, Southern Metropolis News,* and *21st Century Business Herald*, the three major subsidiaries of *Southern Daily,* turned to be the incubator of a third generation newspapers and magazines and began to develop their own line of branding strategies. *Southern Weekend* launched Ma*n*gazine [*ming pai*], a high-end lifestyle magazine for men in 2003, and *Southern People's Weekly* [*nanfang renwu zhoukan*] in 2004 that became known for its in-depth interviews. The development of the newspaper, in short, was incorporated into the considerations of the marketing department and corporate strategies.

The urban turn

A side effect of press conglomeration beginning in the late 1990s was in its socio-spatial reconfigurations of news production. Normally established in capital cities during Mao's time, Party press groups and the increasingly elaborate system of regulation have contributed to the

urban bias in newspaper production and distribution. In fact, the urban turn in the post-Mao economy since the mid-1990s was so significant that some described it as taking a separate path from the reform beginning in the late 1970s (Huang, 2008). In 1998, 36 newspapers (groups) accounted for more than 70 percent of national advertising sales; among them, the press in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province alone accounted for more than 48 percent of the national share in 2002 (Xu, 2002; Jia, 2003). After the regulatory campaign in 2003, in particular, county-level newspapers dropped to unprecedented insignificance. By 2005, the majority of Chinese newspapers were provincial (41.8%) and municipal (44%) rather than of the central (11.3%) or county level (2.8%). Guangdong, especially, printed one hundred titles or the most newspapers among all provinces (Wang, 2005). The rising urban-based economy of China has become a defining factor of newspaper development and expansion.

The urban turn, on the other hand, is further aggravated by Party-state bureaucracy in which the press has been kept. In cities where a single governmental body resided, in particular, the trend of re-centralization has encountered even less difficulties (Lee, ..). In both Shenzhen and Shanghai, mergers of major newspapers under top-down mandate resulted in a glaring degree of concentration—if not monopoly. In Shanghai, after the merger of *Wen-hui* and *Xin-min* newspaper groups in 1998, the "newspaper duo"—Wen-Xin and Jiefang Press Group—accounted for 90 percent of local advertising sales (Xu: 2002, Wu & Zhu, 2006). In Beijing and Guangzhou, where official sponsorship of newspapers was split between central-municipal and provincial-municipal levels, competitions intensified among the few oligarchies. The Guangzhou Party "trio" had all become multimedia conglomerates in publishing newspapers, magazines, books, and also news websites.

The increasing urban and rural divide in press development was seen most conspicuously with the rise of metro newspapers as a response to the growing urban populations and a market society. Income disparities in China's post-Mao industrialization drove not only the surplus rural labor but also university graduates of rural origins to look for a place in urban spaces. As the migrant population increased, how to navigate the sprawling city became an immediate agenda for both local residents and migrants. In Guangzhou, the *Southern Metropolis News* launched in 1995 and the *New Express* [*xin kuai bao*] founded by *Yangcheng Evening News* in 1998 were both such attempts to situate journalism within a changing urban population of both locals and migrants. Unlike Party dailies or evening and weekly newspapers, metro newspapers provided their readers with an unfolding landscape of urban living as a "department store of information" (*China Newspaper Industry,* 2005). *Southern Metropolis News*, especially, had expanded quickly from 16 to 88 pages on timely reports of city news and lively entertainment. A sharing identity of "urbanites" [*shi min*], including local and migrant residents or "ultimate individuals with self-interests" and their everyday life, began to be articulated by the metro newspapers (Sun, 2001; Sun, 2008).

Reporting the immediacy of urban life had led to the expansion of reporting areas that targeted predominantly the urban regions. As a pioneer, *Guangzhou Daily* set up a page on the Pearl River Delta in 1996 to extend its news reporting from Guangzhou to central Guangdong areas. For *Southern Metro News*, regional news and life-style sections targeting Shenzhen and other cities in the Pearl River Delta were added rapidly since the early 2000s (Zhang, 2006: 31). In 2002 *Yangcheng Evening News* began to publish separate bi-weekly sections for Foshan and Dongguan, two satellite cities near Guangzhou. The provincial Party paper *Southern Daily*

established its Pearl River Delta News Center as a separate department in 2003 to expand on regional reporting. Even the central newspaper *People's Daily* responded by publishing Eastern China [*hua dong*] and Southern China [*hua nan*] versions in the mid- and late 1990s. Headed by the metro newspapers and supported by the corporate press, the urban turn of newspapers manifested in newspaper journalism a rapidly stratifying society and imbalanced economic development of China in the post-Tiananmen era.

5.3 Newsroom in Control

As the most recent genre of popular journalism since the mid-1990s, metro newspapers displayed distinctive market appeal and geographical distribution. Beginning with *Western-China Metro News* [*huaxi dushi bao*] launched in Chengdu, Sichuan province in 1995, metro newspapers grew exponentially with the growing population in urban areas (Huang, 2001). *Southern Metropolis News* [*nanfang dushi bao*], launched in 1995, was the second subsidiary of *Southern Daily* that won immense market success after *Southern Weekend.* By 2005, there were 132 metro newspapers nationwide; and 62.6 percent of Chinese newspaper publishers located in 36 major cities across the country (Zhou, 2006: 419).

Compared to Party dailies, evening newspapers, and weekend papers, a prominent aspect of metro newspapers was their aggressive page expansions in competing for urban advertisers and eye-catching news stories. The war on numbers quickly involved other newspapers in the city. In February 2004, for instance, the average published pages for major Guangzhou newspapers were: *Yangcheng Evening News* (35p); *New Express* (20p); *Guangzhou Daily* (56p); *Information Times* (64p); *Southern Daily* (23p); and *Southern Metropolis News* (88) (Deng, 2005: 11).

Among them, *Southern Metropolis News* was the most aggressive in page expansion, integrating almost every aspect of urban life and advertisement into its pages. On March 31, 2004, it set a record of 304 pages with 92 full-page of advertising and was still sold at 1 Yuan for retail (Lin & Zhu, 2004). A friend of mine, a loyal reader of *Southern Metropolis News,* once confessed that she had stayed with this newspaper partly because it was the only title thick enough to keep her doghouse thoroughly dry everyday. The urban printing press, indeed, has entered the era of industrial production and mass consumption (Li, Y. 2004).

The style of metro journalism also differed considerably from that of others. Its fast-growing pages required a different way of organization so that readers could easily find what was appealing to them. Metro newspapers no longer expected readers to read everything but instead, select from the salad bowl what fits their appetite. In its supermarket mode of editing, a new organizing device, "section" or "stack" [*die*], was introduced as the primary indexing tool. Each section of the newspaper was folded individually with its own cover page and all folded within the major news section. Most of the sections were printed weekly, showing up only on a fixed day of the week—like a mini-magazine—to cover less timely topics on leisure, entertainment, IT, stock market, telecommunication, lottery, automobile, real estate, education, tourism, interior design, and job market, etc. *Southern Metropolis News* printed five sections in 2002, numbered from A to E, to organize local news, international/sports/entertainment news, economics, lifestyle, and regional news.

The birth of weekly sections in metro newspapers largely resolved the limits of license for the press groups in multiplying content and expanding readership and advertising market (Cao, 2004). It also, on the other hand, divided its readers as well as journalists into smaller groups

while the newspaper grew thicker. Professional journalists began to develop along the lines of trade journals and specialized. Junior journalists sometimes complained that the narrow agenda they were assigned—writing obituaries for a local district, for example—could harm their professional development. It is not uncommon, in other cases, that they could become so well-connected in a lucrative "line" and were offered to work for their former sources in the industry or simply built up their professional fame in the professional community of journalists (Lu & Pan, 2002). The metro newspapers, in general, stretched their muscles deep into the urban market economy, enriched from it, and harbored mixed politics in relation to the urban public (Lee, 2010). As the leading form of journalism, metro dailies provoked further questions for other newspapers on how to adjust themselves in the regional or national newspaper market.

The urban-national

The editorial transformations of *Southern Weekend* initiated in the new millennium manifested several aspects of the newspaper culture evolving toward urban economy and population at the time. It began to print, for example, an additional eight-page section called "City" [*cheng* shi] in 2002 which circulated exclusively in three urban centers of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. For readers outside the three urban clusters, the national edition shared the other 24 pages with a 12-page news section followed by "Economy" (4p) and "Culture" (8p).

The new "City" section of *Southern Weekend*, however, was nothing ostensibly consumerist. Half of it was a four-page special report, publishing in-depth stories of various social and cultural issues in Chinese cities. In 2002, for example, it covered "New Urban Poverty," "The Crusade

from Peasantry to Urbanite," "Korean Wave in Beijing," "The Life of Working Units" [*danwei rensheng*], "A Personal History of Sanlitun" (a pub area in Beijing), "Office Politics," and "The Era of New Neighborhood," presenting a sociological lens grounded by interviews and investigation that stayed largely consistent with the national edition. The other four pages, "Walking" (introducing global places), "Talking" (a column page by mostly foreign urban writers), "Online" (Internet writers and topics), and "Gaming" (a miscellany of light-hearted stories), in general, were charged with transnational cosmopolitanism.

The geographical divide between three mega-cities and the rest of the country—the urban versus the national readership—turned out to be transitional. But it did, as expected by the press, boosted its circulation and shifted the focus to major cities (Zhang & Liu, 2004). At the beginning of 2004, a 32-page edition was reinvented to cover the national market, abolishing the "City" section and the distributive divide. Meanwhile, the retail price was doubled from ¥1 Yuan to ¥2. The new national edition had three sections: News (16p), Economy (8p), and Culture (8p). Gone with the "City" section was only half of its content. The in-depth coverage remained and was relocated as "Special Report" [*tebie baodao*] in the news section. In-depth reporting on domestic affairs subsequently became the dominant form of the newspaper.

News as planned

As noticed by many, the tone of *Southern Weekend* had changed from "fighter" to "sage" (Jiang & Xu, 2008) in presenting a world that is increasingly rational, calm, and orderly. How that style of seriousness was acquired, in part, had to do with the changes in news production that emphasized pre-publication planning. Indeed, it goes against common sense that

news can be planned ahead of its actual happening. Even though experienced journalists and editors can often predict what might happen especially in a chain of events closely related to each other and deployed reporters accordingly, it is hardly conceivable that anything printed in a newspaper comes out of the initiative of the newsroom before it happens.

News planning [*xinwen cehua*], the various practices of initiating reporting activities by the newsroom outside of routine reporting, became an emergent approach in newspaper journalism when competition intensified among the news groups. As a term, news planning in China had its origin in the burgeoning field of public relations in the early 1990s (Dong, 2002). Its introduction into journalism and following academic debates on its definition began in the mid-1990s regarding, especially, the legitimacy of planning in journalism. While it remains a controversial notion, the press, generally speaking, was no longer satisfied with digging into even exclusive news sources and happenings; it began to participate what happened as "news."

The increasing control over news production, partly, had to do with the growing reporting team as well as the improved abilities of the newsroom in organizing reporting activities across time and space. Follow-up reporting on selected news stories previously published, for the most obvious, represents one of such efforts. The new year edition of *Southern Weekend* in 1999, for example, followed up on twenty-six investigative stories reported in 1998 (1 Jan 1999: 9-11). In a few brief paragraphs, the original reporters updated with readers the recent development of the stories. Many cases had justice restored while some others continued to mire. The infection in a Shenzhen hospital I discussed in chapter 4 for example, had 120 of the victims filing a collective lawsuit against the hospital. But as presented in the new year edition, the twenty-six follow-up

stories spoke loudly to, as the title suggested, "Power of the News" [*xinwen de liliang*] or what the newspaper wanted its readers to remember.

The new year edition, in particular, became a special issue where the newsroom produces its content ahead of time for the holiday seasons when only a smaller number of staff would be at work. With advertising becoming the major financing source for the press, it is unwise to reduce newspaper pages when urban readers are on their leisure time. Yet as *Southern Weekend* has been expanding its news sections since the late 1990s and eventually shredded its "weekend" and subsidiary identity, leisure and entertainment could hardly fit in its hard-won reputation through investigative journalism. The new year edition, inaugurated in 1999, was invented as a distinct space where the newspaper showcased the best journalistic practices of the year most conspicuously by setting up various journalism awards and ratings. Since 2001, the "Annual Awards for Media Breakthrough" [*niandu chuanmei tupo jiang*] and various "Journalism Excellence in Chinese Media" [*zhongguo chuanmei jiechu biaoxian*] have been elected by a group of media researchers and veteran journalists once a year. The award evaluated journalism of newspapers, TV, radio, and news websites to acknowledge outstanding performances by both individuals and institutions. These practices on one hand contributed to the formation of professional identities of journalists taking shape; it also, on the other hand, regularly served the marketing interests of the news institutions.

The planning over space in news production, on the other hand, could be exemplified by the "50 Miles West" [*xiang xi wushi li*] reporting initiative in the new year edition of 2003. Starting from five major cities in eastern China, *Southern Weekend* dispatched its reporters to travel 50 miles west from Shanghai, Yixing, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shenyang to cover stories they

found within assigned topics (1 Jan 2003: 5-24). The twenty-page series reports published 15 stories with themes on "Fortune," "Rights," "Education," "Employment," and "Welfare" in the five locations respectively. Each of the themes was organized around a number of individual stories that highlighted acute social inequalities in income levels, civil rights, educational opportunities, job market, and the social welfare system.

The reporting initiative was well acclaimed (Zhou, 2003). The five themes cut straight into popular concerns with carefully chosen cases. Traveling west—instead of other directions—from major cities, similarly, pointed incisively to the glaring urban bias in economic reform as well as in media representation favoring southeastern and coastal China. Together, these stories presented a sociological map of the disturbing process of China's economic reform without equality. The Beijing stories on education, for instance, started with the heavily invested Beijing No.4 Middle School in downtown, and then covered a high school for migrant students in suburban Beijing, a middle school of rural Beijing, a struggling private high school, and finally the prominent People's University. In reporting the job market of Guangzhou, the starting point was set in a small food stall initiated by a few laid-off workers in town, and followed by the frustrating story of a middle-aged unemployed ("77 Job Interviews"), the grave job perspectives for university graduates ("Graduates in the Bazaar"), and migrant laborers in suburban Guangzhou ("Living on the Peripheries"). Perhaps not as critical as investigative reports *Southern Weekend* published in the late 1990s, the editorial planning of the newsroom and its politics in reporting deployment should not be underrated. The role of the reporter, once prominent as the heroes (rarely heroines) advancing to unveil the covert truth, seemed to have been replaced by the newsroom, a group of editors, who were aiming at revealing a greater order.

The exclusive stories, in other words, did not rely as much on the skills of journalists as the knowledge of editors.

The increased organizational control by the newsroom of *Southern Weekend* across both time and space, finally, can be illustrated by an ambitious project that, at approximately the same time of each year between 1998 and 2007, reporters were sent out to visit three chosen places: a town in western China, a village in central China, and a street on the eastern coast. The annual reports, titled "Here and There" [*zhe'er yu na'er*], generally resembled anthropological research on individual stories as well as social changes happening around the local environment. With a few individual focuses, the stories of the only postal staff in Bailu town of Sichuan province, an underpaid young woman who later embezzled subscription money of newspapers for her own business, were traced throughout the decade; Xiaochang Zhuang, a village in Henan province, witnessed a railway constructed over the decade and the introduction of market mechanisms into agricultural production; Chenggong Road, the coastal street in Fujian province, had its first Internet cafe in 1999 and a soaring number of netizens of more than 2,000 the next year. The longitudinal report ended in January 2008, where the initial group of reporters were invited to revisit the three locations and wrote about their observations (3 Jan 2008: 21-28).

In explaining the innovative approach, the inaugural editorial made it clear that "we chose these places randomly…they are not the ideal or pioneers but the most ordinary places—social structures in mainland China. Therefore, we are aiming at a meaningful history of a decade, the most truthful stories of the Chinese people" (1 Jan 1999: 24). The "medium shot", to borrow a cinematographic term, focused on some long-term yet uneventful changes of a Chinese society that were underrepresented or at times different from official accounts. In Xiaochang Zhuang

village, for instance, the abolition of agricultural taxes in 2005 did not seem to have helped local peasants much since the market price of productive materials soared and public services such as medical and educational resources continued to suffer; it did, ironically, ameliorate the relationship between local Party bureaucrats and the peasantry. In Chenggong Road, the introduction of international stores in town had significantly raised the rent of commercial spaces and deprived local business. What these chronological reports unfolded, in sum, was a first-hand socio-spatial scenario of the post-Mao society pointing to the ordinary—instead of the under-covered—"truth."

For *Southern Weekend,* coverage like "50 Miles West" and "Here and There" represented a set of recent journalistic shifts in its corporate era. The sources of news, once pursued aggressively with an open newsroom and investigation, were again relocated from outside the newsroom back to the inside. In doing so, the newsroom not only demonstrated greater abilities to control news production in both temporal and spatial dimensions, but it also guaranteed exclusive stories without subjecting news production to the unpredictable flow and competition of routine reporting. In other words, none of these places or stories would have received any attention from a national weekly otherwise. If investigative stories in the late 1990s had offered first-hand documents for case by case litigations, the in-depth reporting like "Here and There" and "50 Miles West" presented a broader social context within which those previous cases were set. Compared to the informational and urban-based metro newspapers, this form of journalism on *Southern Weekend* has been characterized by its exclusiveness, a broader national purview, and greater editorial control.

Professionalism on the rise

Greater editorial control by the newsroom also means, at the same time, the rise of a professional culture within the press. Xiang Xi, the successor of Jiang Yiping and editor-in-chief since 2001, explained that the evolving slogans of *Southern Weekend* represented "a deepening process of understanding journalistic professionalism" (Xiang, 2010). He also laid bare the market orientation behind such a shift that "media is information provider; to create value is the essential market mission and the less available the value is, the more valuable the media is. What is the least available value in contemporary Chinese society? China needs to complete its modernization in 40 years which took hundreds of years in western countries. The changes of society and humanity have been so huge that people in or outside the country cannot be sure of the changing status quo and logic. 'Understanding China' is the scarcest value available hence the goal of *Southern Weekend*" (Ibid).

Even for the most careless readers, it is not difficult to tell that the critical tone of the weekly newspaper gradually faded in the new millennium. It has become controlled, cold, or to cite the editors, "awaken from the responsibilities of the ideal literati to professional consciousness" (Deng, 2008). In order to cultivate its sources in the political world, journalists and editors had to negotiate with political leaders whom, in the late 1990s, they did not even care to contact. Instead of "speaking for the powerless," the discussion on professionalism increased significantly both among journalists and also within academia. In the year-end editorial of 2002, titled "We Don't Talk, They Do," the newsroom was seen wrestling with the rising sense of professionalism in emphasizing neutrality and balance, and a lasting intellectual ideal of moral and political obligations:

> We insist the basic principles of journalism: rational and level-headed reasoning, objective and balanced reporting. But we do not hide our emotion, our anger, our sighs, our passion or enjoyment. We won't hide our stand point or attitude. We displayed our anger to the morally deprived, respect to the rich and benevolent, and our passion to the intellectual minds that also are grounded in practice…
> We no longer care how much we should talk or how we should talk. We already know that, regardless, people are talking. They talk by mouth, expressions, bodies, and one's own life trajectories. They 'talk' in all kinds of ways.
> We realized that we do not need to do the talking. We only need to fulfill the basic responsibility of the media: record.
>
> (*Southern Weekend,* 26 Dec 2002: 1)

In addition, *Southern Weekend* published multiple internal guidelines to discipline professional performances (Lang & Chu, 2007: 326-329) and established the Press Occupational Standard Commission [*xinwen zhiye guifan weiyuanhui*] in March 2006 to institutionalize evaluation and independent investigation on journalistic performances (Zhou et al., 2009: 45). It is reasonable to suggest that, while the moral sentiment stayed, a more balanced mode of journalism emerged in which the newsroom refrained from making explicit moral judgments in order to pursue a more sophisticated account on the presumably complicated Chinese reality. Righteous indignation can no longer be invoked whether in its "high-end" interviews or macroscopic analyses on national policies and institutional changes. "The time and social context for aggressive reporting have passed," a journalist commented, "the fundamentalist [*yuan jiao zhu yi*] news value can only be contained in our hearts; and 'balance' summarizes the surviving wisdom for us to keep reporting the truth within confined boundaries" (Fu, 2006: 127). In 2004, the annual media awards for feature writing went to a story of a controversial Party leader in a small city (5 Feb 2004). The three-page in-depth report was acclaimed for "setting up a suspense that pushes the readers to inquire and presenting ongoing conflicts from both sides; even though it offered no conclusion, it provokes multiple relevant themes in the transitional Chinese society

such as means versus ends, personal authority versus citizenship, the rule of people versus the rule of law, etc." (20 Dec 2004)

This rise of a professional culture with an emphasis on balanced reporting, however, has yet to be the dominant ideology of working journalists. Recent evidence shown that the shift is far from being clean. In surveying journalists of the major newspapers in Guangzhou, Fen Lin suggests that the literati value still coexists with both the modern professional and Party journalism value during the current journalistic professionalization (Lin, 2010). Most of the the journalists, now "younger, better-educated, and more likely to be female and contracted journalists," are dissatisfied with the current lack of autonomy of the newsroom, welcome commercialization, and yet are "inactively liberal." Lin argued that neither professional nor commercial concerns were strong enough to oppose political concerns when journalists faced severe political issues. Among the investigative journalists, similarly, Bai Hongyi (2011) found that the increasing emphasis on professional values of objectivity and impartiality cannot be simplified as a voluntary identification but rather, a helpless move that echoed what Tuchman called "strategic ritual" (100).

5.4 (Re)turning to Politics

The orderly *Southern Weekend* in the new millennium has received mixed and at times controversial acclaim. For readers who have been following the newspaper especially since the late 1990s, the sense of disappointment was more than palpable when the newspaper changed its journalistic paradigm toward national politics. "Understanding China Here," as its 2007 slogan

claimed, the newspaper had been trying to reach a more sophisticated account about the status quo where simple moral judgment cannot be easily made.

Within the editorial framework which aims at understanding rather than questioning the changing Chinese society, in other words, the question is raised again about who the newspaper —and the news group in general—are targeting in public communication. How should one evaluate what Zhao and Guo (2012) called the "upscaling movement" of the provincial newspaper working for national influence?

The last cake

Political news, sometimes called "hard news" or, in Chinese, *shi-zheng baodao*—the combination of "current" [*shi*] (affairs) and "political" [*zheng*] reporting [*baodao*]—has been rooted in the origins of Chinese journalism and continued to be the canonical form since the rule of the CCP. It is ironic that, regarding it being the most recent area of reform in the post-Mao era, the academic attention to the role of Chinese media in political communication has shown its signs of displacement (Sparks, 2012). The obsession to diagnose political freedom even in entertainment TV shows such as *Super Girls* (Hunan TV, 2004-2011), for instance, was in embarrassing contrast to the belated development of political reporting that only began to occupy a small fraction of Chinese media in the twenty-first century.

Chinese politics in the post-Tiananmen era, indeed, has been an area with belated journalistic endeavors. Traditional ways of reporting continued in Party dailies and many other media outlets, where meetings and other activities of governmental departments and political leaders were publicized, national policies announced and explained, and the regional and individual

experiences exemplified. National news institutions such as the Xinhua News Agency largely reserved its monopolistic status in national and especially international news production while regional newspapers, on the other hand, were much restricted.[4] The lasting approach to politics without much variation in representational patterns and degrees of independence in coverage or public discussions, therefore, reproduced the dominant official sources, styles, and also the authority of national news outlets. The so-called "Xinhua style" [*xinhua ti*], in particular, maintained its currency in political reporting (Lin, 2008: 140-144). "If we erase the dates of today's political news, " Li Liangrong wrote in the early 2000s, "and compared them to those in the 1950s, there are not any differences" (Li, 2004: 240).

Such persisting continuities in political reporting point to where the political and economic interests of the post-Mao press radically diverged. For at least some commercial newspapers, political reporting was considered the "last cake in the market" (Feng, 2012: 1). However, since newspapers were affiliated with governmental units, the bureaucratic identity of media, be it central, provincial, or municipal, also defined the levels of political activities they are given access to in news production. Central media institutions such as CCTV and *People's Daily* have been enjoying their administrative vicinity to political activities on the national level mostly located in Beijing; provincial and municipal media outlets, on the other hand, were very much contained within their administrative boundaries and relied on central sources and governmental releases for news above their levels of affiliation. When it comes to political news, in brief, the

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[4] Regional newspapers do, however, worked around the convention to compete in the market. In fact, it has become common practice for popular newspapers to translate, rewrite, and edit news sources from both domestic-official and foreign sources without giving itemized credits. I worked for the Department of International News at *Information Times,* a popular subsidiary of *Guangzhou Daily,* for seven months in 2007. The working experiences attested to the claim above.

natural affiliation with the Party-state sustained the bureaucratic hierarchy in news production. National politics has remained as the last untouched area for popular newspapers after their earlier endeavors in cultural and social news.

This bureaucratic grip of Chinese newspapers has, in fact, been broken first in distribution and later in journalism. In political reporting, there were some special magazines devoted to it but they remained rare. Pioneers of the press in political reporting set off in the early 1990s. During the CCP's Fourteenth National Congress in 1992, *Guangdong-Hong Kong Information Daily* [*yuegang xinxi ribao*], an economic newspaper affiliated with the Economic and Trade Commission of Guangdong Province [*Guangdong sheng jingji maoyi weiyuanhui*], became one of the two regional media outlets reporting in Beijing (Liu, 2000: 65).

In the case of *Southern Weekend,* the turn to social news, especially through investigative journalism in the late 1990s, indicated the growing attention to socio-political transformations in Chinese society in the popular press. Here, politics can be understood broadly as the conflicts of stratifying interests often involving power abuse in social life. In cases of investigative reports involving legislative and other governmental departments, the stories normally shed critical light onto specific Party-state units and, as discussed in chapter 4, invoked explicit or implicit forms of bureaucratic and market retaliation. An investigative report on the "Zhang Jun" case in 2001, in particular, directly led to a top-down replacement of more than ten editors and journalists—including the editor-in-chief—in *Southern Weekend* (Fa, 2008). In July 2001, the new leadership led by Xiang Xi proposed a different goal for the newspaper toward "a comprehensive and serious weekly with a good taste," responsible for "recording the progress of the era," and pursuing journalism with "more rational and scientific qualities" (Zhu, 2004: 38). For stories

with individual officials involved, in other words, a different and more defensible approach in reporting was needed.

Reporting the center

In its narrow sense, politics can also mean, the words and actions of the professed politicians or having something to do with the nation-state whose power can shape the law of the land (Pye, 1963: 3). Like the cultural and social turn in journalism in the 1980s and 1990s, the turn to political reporting had not been an isolated practice among Guangzhou newspapers. Though not yet a prominent genre, more than a dozen weekly newspapers and magazines specializing in current affairs have emerged especially since the 2000s (Chen, 2009: 48). Various pages and columns on politics were set up in other newspapers as well. Even the national network of CCTV launched a "high-end" talk show since 1998, later renamed "The Decision Makers Said" [*jüecezhe shuo*] in 2005, interviewing government officials at and above the ministry level. For *Southern Weekend* and other commercial publications, the assumption seemed similar: Chinese readers are, indeed, interested in politics. Though the definition remained largely vague, an emerging market for "serious newspapers" [*yansu dabao*] or "mainstream newspapers" [*zhuliu baozhi*] was actively in discussion and practice in the early 2000s.

For the Southern Press Media Group, what seemed interesting was that the turn to political reporting took off almost at the same time for both its Party daily and popular subsidiaries. Falling behind in journalistic innovations for almost two decades, the parent paper *Southern Daily* had realized that Party-state politics might have a place in the newspaper market and began its editorial reform in August 2002, devoting one out of its three sections to "Politics." "Height

Defines Influence," the new slogan claimed (Peng, 2003, Gu and Chen, 2003). "Our political advantage comes from mainstream reports, authoritative sources, and in-depth analyses; our authoritative advantage comes from propagating policies, guiding public opinion, and *yulun jiandu*" (*Southern Daily,* 6 Aug 2002). "High-end readers" [*gaoduan duzhe*], in particular, became its targeted readership. "If you are a leader or decision maker, a manager or researcher, an investor or business person—in other words, if you are a governmental staff, a businessman, or a professional, do choose *Southern Daily* that specially tailored for your needs" (Ibid). Politics, simply speaking, was posited as the common interests of social elites as a whole.

It can be argued that political reporting, by taking on the national and structural changes, was partly a response to the vigorous expansion of metro journalism in its "downward" movement emphasizing the urban everyday life. But it was not a defining factor between the Party and non-Party newspapers. The vibrant *Southern Metropolis News,* for example, also began to tackle political reporting as early as 2000. But as a five-year old metro newspaper, its political page [*zheng yao*] had a hard time approaching political officials and was eventually withdrawn (Wei, 2012). For metro newspapers, the identity of "tabloid"—judging either by its institutional affiliation or its spicy entertainment news and visual styles—continued to be marginalized despite its commercial success in the urban market. Milder attempts were made later, as reporting on current affairs grew within the section of "Domestic News." Nine years later, the page "Politics" [*shi ju*] finally became an independent section at the beginning of 2009.

Like *Southern Metropolis News,* the evolving process of political reporting on *Southern Weekend* does not seem to be any easier. In 2001, the "The Second Page" [*di er ban*] changed to "Trend" [*dong xiang*] where the distinction between "politics" and "society" was still vague.

Two years later the page "Politics" [*shi zheng*] was launched, normally occupying page three and four, where *Southern Weekend* started to explore themes and reporting styles on politics and to cultivate its sources in the political world. In March 2003, *Southern Weekend* published a special edition reporting on premier Zhu Rongji at the time he was leaving his five-year term (6 Mar 2003). The special 24-page report, however, was done without interviewing him in person. "A Letter to Premier Zhu," instead, was printed at the bottom of the cover page and laid bare the political distance of the newspaper from the political center:

> Dear Premier Zhu Rongji:
>
> Hello!
> We are far away in the south. Within the current institutional settings, we are not qualified to join your press conference or conduct interviews while you are working. We are out of your radar indeed. Because of this, however, we can watch you from the angle of the ordinary people…
>
> (*Southern Weekend,* 6 Mar 2003: 1)

Without access to direct political sources, the early reporting style or "*Southern Weekend* formula" [*nan zhou ti*] was compromised and known as "Xinhua New Agency /follow-ups on major websites + interviews with lower ranking officials or experts + research" (Fa, 2008: 50). But it changed quickly as new sources expanded. In 2006, *Southern Weekend* landed its first interview with Party leaders on the provincial level (19 Jan 2006: 5-8). By 2008, it had published more than 30 interviews with provincial or central leaders (Lin & Guo: 2008). Government officials and their voices began to gain more and more attention on the popular newspaper.

In most cases, the interview set out to clarify a hot topic or social issue related to Party-state policies. Bo Xilai, at the time the director of the Ministry of Commerce, was interviewed to talk about the rising accusation of China's neocolonialism in Africa (15 Mar 2007: A8); Yu Youjun,

the Party secretary of Shanxi province, discussed the problems of labor conditions in the coal mining industry (20 Jul 2006: A1-3; 5 Jul 2007: A1-3); Liu Zhongde, former deputy director of the Ministry of Culture, was interviewed to discuss ideological management (3 Aug 2006: A3); Ye Xiaowen, director of State Administration for Religious Affairs, talked about the tension between religion and the political context of socialism (13 Mar 2008: A7-8). In 2007, both major national political conferences, the National People's Congress (NPC) and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) granted access to *Southern Weekend*. By the end of the year, the brand new four-page section "Politics" [*shi ju*] was eventually launched.

In addition to interviews, *Southern Weekend* had also inherited the in-depth reporting styles from the previous era and combined it with increasing editorial planning in covering politics. Macroscopic reporting and analyses had emerged and offered bigger pictures of political changes. Some of these stories included, for instance, "Four Years of Transformation in China's Public Security" (4 Jan 2007); "Alumni of Peking University in the Political World" (14 June 2007); "A Survey of Official Think Tanks in China" (11 Oct 2007: A1); "Institutional Transformations of the Chinese Communist Party in a Historical Perspective" (11 Oct 2007: A4). In 2008, in particular, *Southern Weekend* had published four special editions on the Beijing Olympics and two issues on the thirtieth anniversary of Deng Xiaoping's open reform (Chen, 2009: 22-26). By shifting to political reporting and analyses, *Southern Weekend* and other similar publications significantly expanded the scope of political communication in news media, bringing greater transparency to Chinese politics that has long been crowded by official accounts on one hand and tabloid stories on the other.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the major transformations in state policies, market conditions of the press, and newspaper journalism in relation to changes of *Southern Weekend* since the new century. A few questions can be raised here regarding, again, the politics of the popular press and its sources of changes.

Under the convergent interests of state regulations and the press, the newspaper industry has moved toward rapid concentration after a decade and a half of decentralizing movements. There have been no major conflicts in the double development of news monitoring network or state censorship on one hand, and the that of press conglomerates on the other. The Party-engineered market consolidation, as Yuezhi Zhao argued, indicated that "the age of a privately owned, independently operated, and market-supported competitive press has bypassed China" (2000: 22). Despite the high drama at times of outright intervention and resistance, which I will discuss in conclusion, state intervention and concentration of the media market went hand in hand to shape the dominant structure of Chinese press on both regional and national levels.

Regarding newspaper journalism, the new corporate press invested heavily in establishing new publications most successfully in daily metro newspapers, which located along China's urban areas. Paying close attention to urban life and everyday news, the metro newspapers have easily aligned with advertisers; but they also challenged state power at times when their investigative reports on "small" social problems contradicted with Party-state interests most conspicuous in environmental, infrastructural, and other aspects of urban living (Huang, 2001). Such "downward" movement has filled up the long-term absence of journalism, as Sun Wei argues, in addressing everyday life of individuals who now rely on their own knowledge, rather

than articulations of elites or Party-state propaganda, as living in the urban space (Sun, 2008: 81).

Led by the metro papers, the urban turn of the press also signified a general pattern of news production that has been increasingly directed by corporate maneuvers. In Shanghai, the impact of recentralization and press conglomeration has been driving off newspaper vendors, important as they were in the 1980s and early 1990s, by corporate chain booths (Zhao, 2000: 19). *Southern Weekend,* similarly and also ironically, became the cradle of several third-tier publications that included a high-end male magazine for commercial elites. If "speaking for the powerless" was at least partly a bottom-up reputation for the weekly newspaper in the late 1990s, public perception of the newspaper in the 2000s has been heavily marked by the initiatives of its own branding office and advertising campaigns.

The rise of metro journalism, on the other hand, coincided with another bifurcation in popular journalism toward more serious newspapers. Political reporting, regarded the last unreformed area of Chinese journalism, became the more recent adventure of a few. For *Southern Weekend,* the "upward" movement was evident, expanding political sources from central media institutions to individual Party officials. Such efforts had brought politics and political leaders down with a human face and on a more equal relationship with the general readers.

So, what are some of the benefits and cost of such a journalistic shift? Lin Chufang, one of the editors of *Southern Weekend,* suggested that political reporting helped expand readership within the bureaucratic ranks; it also, by getting political leaders as sources, reduced the risk of political retaliation; and finally, political reporting has been a response to market competitions

where metro papers turned more and more to in-depth stories and Internet information has overwhelmed the media environment (Lin & Guo: 2008). Political reporting, that is, had its own basis of popularity and *can* be both profitable and politically defensible.

However, the upward movement toward political life in news production also raised critical questions against the newsroom. For the most obvious, how does the newsroom defend against the accusation that, by casting increasing attention to governmental affairs, it has betrayed its own credo in the previous era as speaking for the powerless and "standing up straight" to the powerful? This has been a shift that palpable even from the marketing slogan of the newspaper: "Empowering the Powerless, Backing the Pessimists" (1999), "Go Inside the Depth of Achievements" (2001-2002), "Record the Epochal Progress" (2003-2006), and "Understanding China Here" (2007 to present). With greater control over news production, though, the newsroom also deployed its reporting activities more efficiently across temporal and spatial boundaries. Despite the individual(ized) interviews, developing expertise still serves a vital role in bringing contexts to Chinese politics that, despite its continuities of authoritarian rule, had been undergoing transformations that need to be known. "Some 'thinking weapon' has taken shape such as placing a news event within the 'longer period and bigger space' in analyses against which the context of reform is considered" (Deng, 2008). Becoming a wise observer instead of a fighter could promote expertise in the newsroom, emphasizing technical standards instead of moral responsibilities of journalism. The newspaper became more informed and defensible at the expense of leaning toward those who had no immediate struggles in life.

The Guangzhou press, in brief, has been under stronger intervention from the Party-state (de)regulations, corporate initiatives, and rising professionalism since the new millennium. The

increased editorial control and expertise over news production, the shift to political reporting, and institutionalization of self-discipline suggested a much more complicated power map of journalism than normally assumed and evaluated.

CONCLUSION

Home to one hundred newspapers in 2010, Guangdong province remained the biggest printing center in mainland China. The three newspaper corporations, Southern Press Media Group, *Yangcheng Evening Newspaper* Group, and *Guangzhou Daily* Group, printed a total of 32 newspapers and 20 magazines and continued to dominate the regional market in Guangzhou and major cities of the Pearl River Delta. For the daily newspaper market between 2005 and 2009, the municipal *Guangzhou Daily* took over 50 percent of the share while *Southern Metropolis News* and *Yangcheng Evening News* accounted for around 20 percent each (Cui, 2009: 78; Tian, 2009). This matches the general pattern of the print market in major Chinese cities, where the competition was mostly fought between the two popular subsidiaries of the provincial and municipal Party papers. The market distribution was similar too. The municipal subsidiary normally shows a local advantage in the capital city while the provincial one takes a better share among cities nearby. The southern press, again, was not an exception.

As regional markets take shape, national weeklies have become a relatively small but no less concentrated niche market. A few initiatives to establish news weeklies in Wuhan, Chongqing, and Chengdu were launched but eventually failed (Liao et al., 2007). The average circulation of *Southern Weekend* in six cities—Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Xi'an, and Chengdu —alone reached above half a million during the third quarter of 2004 and continues to be a major news weekly on the national-urban market (Ibid: 5).

Gaining its foothold in urban readership cross-provincially, on the other hand, has coexisted with continuous upward market movement of *Southern Weekend* since the new millennium. During the economic crisis in 2008 when advertising sales plummeted and pulp prices soared,

Southern Weekend raised its retail price from ¥2 to ¥3 along with many other Chinese newspapers (Guo, 2008). In October 2014, its retail price was again raised from ¥3 to ¥5, which significantly closed the price gap with magazines, and became the most expensive newspaper in mainland China at a time while Internet users, mostly mobile, reached 632 million in the country (CNNIC, 2014: 4). Newspaper reading, it seems, has retreated from the social space *Southern Weekend* had tried hard to blend in in the early 2000s, and become an upscale—if not again private—activity. In 2009, a newspaper of special interests, the *China Press Journal* [*zhonghua xinwen bao*], was shut down due to dwindling resources from either market return or its official sponsor, the All-China Journalists Association. The closure, as the first case among newspapers of the central level, invoked tremendous discussion within the professional community on the death of Chinese newspapers (Fan, 2009; Tong, 2009). To use this as the end point of my story, what has the trajectory of this weekly newspaper informed us on post-Mao press development in the past thirty years? Regarding, in particular, the ongoing discussions on press theories in non-Western countries (e.g. Lee, 2000; Zhao, 2012), how does the case of *Southern Weekend* add to the conversation? Following a chronological order, I'll review the structural transformations of the press in Guangzhou, its forms of journalism and politics, and extend the discussion to recent development and challenges to provide some answers.

From Tabloid to Corporate Press: the 30-year "U" Turn

Press reform in post-Mao China has certainly produced its own dynamics in the past three decades. For many who celebrated the possibilities introduced by the market mechanism, optimism has been dwindling since the late 1990s. Perhaps this is not surprising. After all, China

has been gradually incorporated into the world economy and become a prominent member among the global turn to neoliberal policies since the 1980s (Harvey, 2005). Deregulation of governmental control has prioritized market competition in Western countries and brought the media sector to increasing concentration by a smaller number of multinational media groups. In China, as seen from the case of the Guangzhou press, the end point seems highly similar: three news groups dominate the local market and, though not yet multinational ones, have decidedly moved across media and economic sectors domestically. But the historical process, as will be outlined below, should oppose such generalization.

Decentralization of the right to print and sell newspapers in the late 1970s and early 1980s was the defining factor for a reviving print market at the time (chapter 1). Fiscal crisis in public institutions at the end of the Cultural Revolution, the pioneering role of Guangdong in market reform, and the re-connections with Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities all contributed to the liberalization of cultural production and consumption in the southern province and beyond. The opportunity to print and seek profit in the urban market for governmental departments and units also came at the time when many intellectuals were reinstated and secular culture, as opposed to radical politics, came to the center of social life. Within such contexts, the establishment of *Southern Weekend* as the provincial subsidiary was loaded with convergent interests of the national, regional as well as that of the general public to restore social order and to experiment with the post-Mao project of market modernity.

Therefore, decentralization of the press in China should be distinguished from the general deregulation of media sector in western countries. Unlike the United States, for instance, the number of post-Mao newspapers grew most rapidly during the 1980s. It was the democratization

of press structure from within the bureaucratic ranks; and it recruited a large number of individual writers-journalists as the major source of newspaper labor. In short, they popularized the secular turn to private life and identities, introduced external cultural resources to the public domain, and they expanded, instead of shrinking, the cultural spectrum as far as invoking ideological controversies with cultural authorities at the time.

As marketization was officially endorsed by Deng Xiaoping and his reformist colleagues in 1992, commercialization of the press was pursued more aggressively nationwide. Heavy infrastructural investment and institutional expansion favored Party subsidiaries over non-Party newspapers in various aspects. *Southern Weekend,* for instance, installed its translocal printing centers by taking advantage of the Party press facilities across the country. In other words, former bureaucratic resources were turned into stratifying means of development in media market competition. This attests to what Colin Sparks called "institutional continuity" in post-communist countries (Sparks, 2010).

To be sure, the internal competition between Party and non-Party establishments had disrupted the formerly power structure based strictly on bureaucratic ranks. Municipal departments and units, for example, at times were more responsive and no less resourceful than their provincial counterparts materially. But it was very unlikely that non-Party alliance could compete with the Party press. Among other things, they had to face more crippling bureaucratic complications in organizing resources for the new establishment (chapter 3). For these establishments, bureaucratic connections often became organizational barriers rather than advantages. More research, indeed, should work on the details how, especially during the 1990s, the press turned institutional resources into the means of market development.

Starting from 1996, the state-engineered consolidation of the press market took off and expedited its concentration around the Party press (chapter 5). The Guangzhou press witnessed another around of rapid establishment of popular subsidiaries yet mostly within press groups. More comprehensive policies announced in 2003 further shut down 677 non-Party newspapers nationwide mostly on the county level, and drove the survivors to join the newly-established news groups (Ge, 2004; Chen, 2005). Since 2008, the GAAP began to push unprofitable newspapers to exit the market and redistributed their licenses to those markedly savvy (*Southern Weekend,* 10 June 2010: 9, 11). The continuous top-down efforts toward "bigger and stronger" press groups [*zuo da zuo qiang*], which enabled the proliferation of tabloids in the 1980s, became the power to consolidate the current concentration of press groups.

From commercialization to conglomeration, then, market reform of the post-Mao press has been contained within legitimate institutional and ideological boundaries (Zhao, 2000). The top-down approach, again distinct from the U.S. experiences, renewed the authoritarian dominance of the Party press in market competition while maintaining its bureaucratic connections with the Party-state. The process of media reform in post-Mao China, in short, has not been a one-way journey.

Deconstructing the "Party-popular"

The project sets out not only to understand the trajectory of press transformations, but also the types of journalism evolving in the weekly newspaper in relation to cultural changes that, as Stuart Hall put it, are "a polite euphemism for the process by which some cultural forms and practices are driven out of the center of popular life, actively marginalized" (Hall, 2006).

Newspaper journalism is, according to Stuart Adam, "the primary method of framing experience and forming the public consciousness of the here and now" (Adam, 1993: 45). For *Southern Weekend,* the meaning of popularity for its journalism had certainly evolved in the three decades the study covered. From a cultural tabloid to a national news weekly, what has the history of *Southern Weekend* discussed informed us about the culture of the post-Mao popular press?

The popular press in post-Mao China started with the secular turn of the post-revolutionary society. Hong Kong popular culture, characterized by its urban and localizing traits (chapter 2), offered a great deal of the cultural forms and resources for popular tabloids of the 1980s to articulate the return of a secular life. The rapidly growing tabloids at the time, as mentioned above, were produced in a decentralized model of the newsroom, relying on an extensive network of external readers, writers, and the reinstated intellectuals in various cultural institutions. The early *Southern Weekend,* as one example, represented the cultural turn by opening the four-page paper to a variety of cultural forms from Hong Kong as well as informal labor across regions. It was, essentially, a populist enterprise that revived the reader orientation. While the content of journalism did not originate from the Party-state anymore, however, the newspaper and most of its contemporaries stayed within the general consensus between state and intellectuals on restoring order and reaffirming the value of personal lives. The only difficulty, it seems, was the degree of censorship against the cultural input.

The relative openness of the newsroom in the 1980s had also arguably homogenized the popular newspapers as a whole and blurred the line between Party and non-Party newspapers in production. The expansive print market invited the press to a national audience beyond its original administrative boundaries. The lively reading public now choosing and buying

publications from urban newsstands anonymously and reading them at home allowed some room for voices of dissent. Calling for deeper political changes and reform against bureaucracy and corruption, some bottom-up journals such as *People's Road* and *Life* printed by young workers in Guangzhou were among the radical current of the post-Cultural Revolution social formation that went beyond a secular turn. These voices, though quenched quickly, were among those—such as the famous non-Party *World Economic Herald* in Shanghai—that contributed to the democratic movement culminating in the 1989 Tiananmen protest. Eschewing politics on reform and marketization, then, cultural tabloids like *Southern Weekend* stood squarely outside these radical strands. The Chinese press, therefore, generally diverged along the political lines *within* the Party-state on further reform initiatives.

Political divisions subsided in the following decade in government and also the press. The post-Tiananmen Chinese society canonized "socialist market economy" as the project for modernization once it silenced the dissidents and possibility of political reform. The increasing social conflicts in the inexorable process of marketization without formal channels of political expression had to find its way in a new form of popular journalism. The rise of investigative reporting in the mid-1990s in television and newspaper journalism cannot be simplified within the classical liberal framework. It has its historical constituents from within Party journalism as well as authoritarian governmentality. In its earlier form, negative reporting in Party journalism combined with market orientations on readability, as seen in the case of *Police Raid* and Chen Maya (chapter 3), suggests a potential shared ground between the often suppressed line of Party journalism and reportage literature. As the newsroom grew with reporters and news sources, cross-provincial investigative reporting became the establishing form of popular journalism in

the late 1990s (chapter 4). Reporting on corruption and power abuse in unaffiliated and mostly lower-ranking governmental departments and officials reduced the chance of bureaucratic retaliation from the top; and it also, at least to some extent, articulated the prevalent social grievances in market reform. The circulation of investigative journalism, in other words, forged a moral community nationwide, winning its popular support from the overlapping interests of the central government to channel public opinion, political participation of the intellectuals, the living experiences of the "powerless and the pessimistic" and, more arguably, the compassionate gaze from urban middle class readers. In its best practices, the newspaper facilitated public participation and struggles as we have seen in consumer campaigns (chapter 4). But it eventually exhausted bureaucratic tolerance if not market appeal—not to mention the constant resistance from regional government and targeted enterprises.

Retrospectively speaking, the critical space of investigative journalism was decisively facilitated by the strategic compromise of the Party-state as well as more flexible labor relations between the first generation migrant reporters and the press. It expanded the reporting spectrum of the Party press from cultural to social issues. But cross-provincial stories have also, perhaps ironically, on one hand deepened Party-market clientelism on the regional level (Lee et al., 2007; Liu, 2013) and further distanced itself from local life on the other. The rise of metro newspapers in the mid-1990s could be seen as the renewal of the secular culture in the press since the 1980s but bringing to everyday life an urban and commercial twist.

Finally, the conglomeration of press groups beginning in the mid- and late 1990s further emphasized the income level rather than the size of readership for the Chinese press. The renewed interests in political reporting, for *Southern Weekend,* no doubt contained the profit

orientation in repackaging its readership toward the class of social elites. Selling at a top price among Chinese newspapers since 2014, *Southern Weekend* today clearly speaks to the translocal, if not yet transnational, domestic elites. "Party-popular" at the moment, one may say, finds its sources in the language and consciousness of the well-educated, whose lives and benefits have genuine interests in state policies. One may also argue that, ironically, its journalism has become politically removed once it moved to political reporting.

From negotiating a cultural forefront, channeling a strategic stance for social grievance, to offering analyses of state policies and current issues, the 30-year trajectory of the weekly newspaper has unfolded a tortuous story of the "Party popular" in contemporary China. The articulated consciousness by these journalistic paradigms, in my opinion, has all been serious attempts to live *within* the dominant Party-state hegemony. Returning to the question of the "popular," while the market or commercial definition of the term runs true in all three decades for the press, the newspaper has never been oppositional to Party-state polity even at its height of liberal oriented professionalism. Unlike the political journals published throughout KMT's authoritarian dominance in Taiwan (Lee, 2004: 135-163), *Southern Weekend* and the like have not been the outlet for articulating political alternatives despite its genuine efforts in pushing the envelope of Party censorship. As Party subsidiary, it resembles the mainstream commercial newspapers during KMT's authoritarian regime in Taiwan: "sharing the same dream but sleeping on different beds" with the political journals [*yi chuang tong meng*] (ibid: 161).

Old Battles and New

In early 2013, *Southern Weekend* stirred national and global attention with its latest episode of struggle with the Provincial Propaganda Department of Guangdong. Its New Year editorial, originally titled "Chinese dream, the Dream of Constitution" [*zhongguo meng, xianzheng meng*], had been partly revised by its editor-in-chief who reportedly did it under the dictation of a propagandist official. As the new year edition had already been through multiple pre-publication negotiation and finally submitted by the front-page editors, the additional round of revision behind their back provoked a newsroom outcry the next morning and later developed into a high-profile strike demanding the removal of the chief editor and of pre-publication censorship in the press. The antagonistic moment of the rebellious newsroom against a "lame duck" chief editor and the suppressing propagandist official again exemplified a classic liberal situation of state-press relationship.

There has been, indeed, sufficient room for the liberal critique throughout the past three decade of press reform. State control of the press during the 1980s remained lax but regulatory campaigns were not uncommon especially against bottom-up market initiatives from outside the bureaucracy. The development of the news monitoring network since the mid-1990s that institutionalized censorship in and outside the press, and the establishment of Party committee inside *Southern Weekend* and all of its second-tiered subsidiaries in March 2005, similarly, both maintained the critical relevance of the liberal discourses in mobilizing for newsroom autonomy. Continuous struggles of the newsroom against its supervising power can reasonably be expected in the future. For investigative journalists or the most political strand among the newsroom, professional network such as the "Blue Shirt" [*lan yi*] (formerly *xiao dao* or "small knife")

founded by Deng Fei, a *Southern Weekend* journalist, in 2004 has shown more organized energies in initiating charitable projects like "Free Lunch for Children" in rural areas. "Righteous indignation," it seems, bears more potential fruits outside the newsroom.

No less explicit than its political intervention has been state power in instrumentalizing the market as means for social control. Among others, press regulations which subjected newspapers to reach a minimum circulation in annual evaluations, foreclosure of unprofitable newspapers, recentralization of press structure and redistribution of licenses favoring Party press groups have all demonstrated what the historian Zhu Xueqin has called the "visible foot" of the state rather than the "invisible hand" of the market (2000: 489). For Chinese journalism, the continuous presence and penetration of Party-state power in market reform, Chin-chuan Lee rightly argued, is both "enabling and disabling" relative to the market and the "'socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics' is undoubtedly state capitalism with authoritarian characteristics" (Lee, 2000: 563). Such dynamics continued to be seen in recent attempts of press groups in capital investment and stock market initiatives.

Even so, however, this project also shows that one should not ignore the continuous expansion of Chinese journalism since the early 1980s covering from cultural to social and political lives of the post-Mao society. This has been real growth of journalism as experienced in social life which, from my cultural materialist perspective, could not be readily reduced to narrowly-defined politics at any given period or society. For instance, even though the post-Mao media space remained "improvising performances" [*jixing* biaoyan] within institutional boundaries (Pan & Wu, 2008: 39), its best practice in investigative journalism over the course of the late 1990s and early 2000s manifested the re-appropriation of Party journalism in channelling

social grievances. For another often neglected example, *Southern Weekend* also received positive feedbacks from the Central Propaganda Department for its coverage on various issues (e.g. 10 Dec 2014; 3 Oct 2006; 20 Apr 2007). Such seemingly contradictory features indeed remind us of the starting point of studying popular culture, according to Stuart Hall, as "double movement of containment and resistance" (Hall, 2006).

Technologies and the newsroom

More fundamental changes happened within the major social relations of the press now under new conditions. For the rising attention to new media and Internet technologies, I would like to draw the attention to the developments again in modes of news production and the media ecology of the press: the big newsroom, and the struggling formation of a national public sphere.

The printing press in China has been actively incorporating computer technologies much earlier than the Internet became popular. The printing and then editing systems of the press have been computerized in the 1980s and mid-1990s respectively. Meanwhile, electronic devices such as personal computers, sound recorders, and cameras had gradually been used as technologies of reporting; satellite technologies had synchronized the transmission between the newsroom and all its printing branches; and finance and advertising management of the press also computerized to improve efficiencies (Liao et al., 2007). As the Internet developed since the mid-1990s, however, computer technologies have extended from means of production to other areas of the press. It was considered as a new distribution outlet beyond geographical boundaries, as the press started to establish its own websites and moved the print version in HTML format online. Later, the form of the newspaper has also been digitized in PDF format, now a dominant practice for

major newspapers in Guangzhou, and released the news portals to other functions in advertising, branding, and reader survey, etc. *Southern Weekend* launched its new media department in 2006, the news website infzm.com at the end of 2007, and the first mobile reading app among Chinese media in 2009. In addition to printed content, infzm.com also included opinion polls on a variety of topics and published real-time results.

More recent explorations to integrate information and communication technologies (ICTs) with newspapers brought in extensive transformations in reporting and newsroom collaboration toward the big newsroom or so-called "the central kitchen," where the original boundary between the print version and new media content in news production began to be taken down. *Guangzhou Daily,* which established its news portal dayoo.com in 1999, built up its all-in-one [*quan mei ti*] newsroom in 2014 as a cross-medium editing center to consolidate reporting, editing, digitization, and multi-media production and distribution. Real-time reporting on breaking news, as a result, has been broken down into different formats. Journalists are required to send in a 140-word blurb within 10 minutes, 500-word with photos and other audio-visual materials within 2 hours, a complete news format—length depending on its nature of the event—after all the interviews are done, and finally an in-depth report by the end of the day for the print version. It should be further evaluated, again, how such mode of news production has reshaped the form of journalism in relation to the readership, and how journalism culture shifts accordingly.

Formation of a national public?

Internet technology not only reconfigures the temporal order of newspaper production and its format, it also, unlike the regional printing press, breaks down geographical boundaries radically in news consumption to facilitate the making of a national and even transnational public. As news institutions publish increasing content online, news reading becomes no longer a daily or weekly consumption but endures longer periods of time while multiple voices from media institutions, individual journalists, and netizens are involved across regional boundaries. News commentaries and public discussion, most prominently, have been greatly empowered on social media when news institutions—including various newspapers—can be easily accessed, archived, searched and compared across time and place.

The archival nature of the Internet has assisted the circulation of information for public discussion on a national scale. Major Internet platforms such as *Sina Weibo* and *Wechat,* though still not free from political or market regulations, have become the public arena for unofficial and potentially disruptive voices against the Party mainstream. During *Southern Weekend*'s struggle on the New Year editorial in 2013, individual accounts from a number of journalists and editors on the social media *Sina Weibo* became the major sources of real-time report of the struggle and mobilized public participation both online and offline. *Global Times* [*huanqiu shibao*], the popular subsidiary of *People's Daily,* soon published a highly controversial editorial on the event (7 Jan 2013) which questioned the credibility of *Southern Weekend* journalists, and claimed that Chen Guangcheng, the dissident civil rights lawyer who escaped his house arrest and exiled to the United States in 2012, was one of the group's supporters. The Central Propaganda Department later mandated newspapers and websites to reprint this editorial yet encountered

delay and resistance from a few newspapers, which further escalated and externalized the political struggle nationwide.

Assisted by capital investment and cross-media integration, the corporate press in Guangzhou and other major cities are quickly experimenting another round of expansion in the digital world. But how much of their endeavors are related to the production of quality journalism is yet another question. Their expansions, for one thing, are mostly national oriented and consumer based now. It remains to be seen how the revived public discussions on politics (in its broadest sense) can be integrated with the changing economics of news production, political continuity, and cultural reconstruction in contemporary China.

APPENDIX A: NEW PUBLICATIONS IN GUANGZHOU, 1980-1981

Name	Affiliation	Inauguration	Topics/format
Pharmaceutical Economy [*yiyao jingji bao*]	State Bureau of Pharmaceutical Administration, Information Center for Pharmaceutical Economy	Jan. 1980	weekly
Football [*zu qiu*]	Guangzhou Daily press, Guangzhou Football Association	Jan. 1980	Bi-weekly, changed to weekly in 1984
Stage and Screen [*wutai yu yinmu*]	Guangzhou Institute of Literature and Art Research	Feb. 1980	Film and television, bi-weekly
White Cloud Collection [*baiyun jijin*]	Center for People's Art [Guangzhou qunzhong yishu guan]	Mar. 1980	Cultural news, literature, folktales, bi-weekly
Chinese Weekly [*yuwen yuebao*]	Municipal Bureau of Education, Guangzhou	Aug. 1980	Language and learning, monthly
Stamp Collector [*jiyou jia*]	Guangzhou Post Office	Sept. 1980	Monthly magazine on stamp collecting
Intro to Film & TV [*yingshi jieshao*]	Guangzhou Performance Company [Guangzhou yanchu gongsi]	1980	Film and TV news
Flower Land [*Baihua yuan*]	Guangdong Playwright Association, Guangzhou Branch	1980	Star news, weekly
Weekend Pictorial [*zhoumo huabao*]	Guangdong Lingnan Art Publishing House	1980	Weekly pictorial
South Wind [*Nan feng*]	Guangzhou Literature Association [Guangzhou wenlian]	1981	Bi-weekly
High School Students [*zhongxuesheng bao*]	Guangdong Normal College [Guangdong jiaoyu xueyuan]	Jan. 1981	Weekly
Youth Art [*shaonian wenyi bao*]	Guangdong Writers' Association	Jun. 1981	Cultural weekly for high school students
Legal Pictorial [*fazhi huabao*]	Guangdong Legal Press [Guangdong fazhi baokan she]	Jun. 1981	Weekly

(Source: Guangzhou Municipal Gazette-the Press)

APPENDIX B: SELECTED TABLOIDS IN GUANGZHOU, 1979-1988

Name	Sponsor	Inauguration
Guangdong Pictorial [*Guangdong Huabao*]	Guangdong Pictorial Press [Guangdong huabao she]	1979
Weekend Pictorial [*Zhoumo Huabao*]	Guangdong People's Publishing House [Guangdong Remin Chubanshe]	1980
Stage and Screen [*Wutai yu Yinmu*]	Guangzhou Cultural Bureau [Guangzhoushi wenhua ju]	Feb. 1980
White Cloud Collection [*Baiyun Jijin*]	Guangzhou Popular Art Center [Guangzhou qunzhong yishu guan]	1980
Golden Times [*Huangjin Shidai*]	Provincial committee of the Communist Youth League [Gongqingtuan Guangdong shengwei]	1981
Guangdong Police Pictorial [*Guangdong fazhi huabao*]	Department of Justice, Guangdong [Guangdong sifating]	1981
Guangdong TV Weekly [*Guangdong dianshi zhoubao*]	Guangdong TV station [Guangdong dianshitai]	May. 1982
Modern People's News [*Fengliu Renwu Bao*]	Guangdong Writers' Association [Guangdongsheng zuojia xiehui]	1983
Guangzhou Youth News [*Guangzhou qingnian bao*]	Guangzhou committee of Communist Youth League [Gongqingtuan Guangzhou shiwei]	1984
HK & Macao Economy Clippings [*Gang'ao jingji jianbao*]	Guangdong Research Center for Social & Economic Development [Guangdong shehui jingji fazhan yanjiu zhongxin]	1984
Overseas Market [*Haiwai shichang bao*]	*Southern Daily* & Foreign Economic and Trade Commission of Guangdong [Guangdong duiwai jingji weiyuanhui]	Feb. 1984 - 1 Jan. 1990
Canton Information [*Yangcheng xinxi bao*]	Canton Information Press, Guangzhou Youth Information Center [Yangcheng xinxi baoshe, Guangzhoushi qingnian xinxi kaifa zhongxin]	Dec. 1984
Story Weekly [*Gushi zhoubao*]	Guangdong Popular Culture & Art Center [Guangdong qunzhong wenhua yishu guan]	1985
Micro-economy News [*Xiao jingji daobao*]	Guangdong Micro-economy Research Association [Guangdong xiaojingji yanjiu hui]	1985
Modern Mankind [*Xiandairen bao*]	Foreign Trade Association & China Southern Book Company (SCBC)	1985
Cultural Reference [*Wenhua cankao bao*]	Guangzhou Cultural Journalist Society [Guangzhou wenhua jizhe lianyihui]	1985
Chinese Poetry [*Huaxia shi bao*]	Guangzhou Literature & Art Association [Guangzhoushi wenlian]	Jan. 1985
China Modern Pictorial [*Zhongguo xiandai huabao*]		Apr. 1985

Consumer News [*Xiaofeizhe bao*]	Guangzhou Consumers' Committee [Guangzhou xiaofeizhe weiyuanhui]	1986
Canton Culture & History [*Yangcheng wenshi*]	Guangzhou Institute for Cultural History [Guangzhoushi wenshi yanjiu guan]	1987
Coastal Culture [*Yanhai dawenhua bao*]	Coastal Culture Press [yanhai dawenhua baoshe]	1988

(Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangdong, Special Collection, May 2013)

APPENDIX C: PAGE EXPANSIONS OF *SOUTHERN WEEKEND*, 1984-2004

	1984	1992	1996	1998	1999	2001	2004
Pages	4	8	16	20	24	28	32
1	Weekend Interview	Weekend Interview	In-depth	Front Page	Front Page	Front page	Headline, Opinion
2	Family & Society	Reader Digest/ Economy & People	Current Affairs	Weekend Topic	Page Two	Event	In-depth
3	Colorful Square	Medicine & Health	China Economy	Sports	The World	The World	Politics
4	Art	Art	Art	Sports	The Week	Focus	Politics
5		People & Law	People & Law	Portray	People & Law	Investigation	Investiga-tion
6		The Globe	Faces	Current Affairs	SW Investigation	Law & Order	Law & Order
7		Serial Literature	Social Lens	Advertising	Special Report	Observation	The World
8		Grass Land	Portray	Consumption	Advertising	Faces	The World
9			Fashion	Advertising	Consumption	Economy	**B News**
10			The Globe	People & Law	Declassified	Finance	Special Report
11			Serial Literature	Family Life	Declassified	Industry	Special Report
12			Grass Land	Grass Land	Advertising	IT	Science
13			Sports	Reading	Current Affairs	People	Civil Life
14			Information Times	Journalists Observatory	Civil Teahouse	Recommenda-tion	Lens
15			Information Times	Information Times	Grass Land	Current Affairs/ In-depth	Public Opinion
16			Family Life	The Globe	Computer	Consumer Square	Portray

17				Advertising	New Life	Science	**C Economy**
18				Cartoon	Left-Column	Declassified/ Health	Conversa-tion
19				Economy & People	Right-Column	Civic Teahouse/ Civic Notes	IT
20				Economy & People	Back-Family	Creativity	Economics
21					SW Finance	Culture	Industry
22					Financial News	Reading	Finance
23					Opinion	Writing	Opinion
24					Focus	Entertainment	Auto
25						New Life	**D Culture**
26						Column	Film
27						Column	Criticism
28						Travel	Television
29							Civil Notebook
30							Reading
31							Writing
32							Geography

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