

Notes and Comment

Chinese Newspapers in Chợ Lớn, 1930–1975

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In the mid-twentieth century, Chợ Lớn was a powerhouse of Chinese newspaper publishing in Southeast Asia. A number of the major Chinese newspapers published there during that period are available in the Chinese Library of the National University of Singapore. The contents of these publications — editorials, commercial advertisements, personal advertisements, serialized novels — will be of interest to scholars of Sinophone studies and of modern Vietnamese history.

Keywords: Chợ Lớn, Chinese newspapers, Republic of Vietnam, Sinophone press.

In quality and quantity, the Chinese press in Chợ Lớn was the best in Southeast Asia [in the 1960s], and third in Asia behind Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Man Man (漫漫 2012, p. 47)¹

For nearly three decades [after 1945], Saigon continued to play a unique role as Vietnam’s forum of independent debate... From the dictatorial rule of President Ngô Đình Diệm (1955–1963) to the reign of President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu (1967–1975), the Saigon newspaper village survived notwithstanding state censorship and the ensuing mass production of commercial media.

Philippe Peycam (2012, p. 220)

In the mid-twentieth century, Chợ Lớn (堤岸) — Vietnam’s Chinese-dominated city — was a powerhouse of Chinese newspaper publishing in Southeast Asia. During this period, the proliferation of

Chợ Lớn Chinese newspapers meant that it ranked only after Taipei and Hong Kong as a centre of the Chinese-language press. In its heyday during the era of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN, 1955–75), fourteen daily newspapers circulated there (Man 2012, p. 45). At the time of the fall of the RVN on 30 April 1975, eleven Chinese dailies remained in circulation (Man 2012, p. 9). This research note gives a brief overview of Chợ Lớn's Chinese periodicals. I highlight the content of some of the newspapers available to researchers. Chợ Lớn Chinese periodicals are a rich resource for several fields of scholarship, including — but not limited to — Sinophone studies, Chinese diaspora studies and modern Vietnamese history.

Located some three miles from Saigon (Sài Gòn), Chợ Lớn emerged in the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries as a result of the mass migration of Chinese into Southeast Asia during the seventeenth century. In the century following its emergence, Chợ Lớn — along, more broadly, with southern Vietnamese coastal towns — was part of maritime Southeast Asia, integrated into the trade routes traversing the South China Sea (Li 2004). Important institutions founded during this period included the Suicheng congregation (穗城會館), whose majestic building served the Cantonese community as a place of gathering and of worship.

The most significant influx of Chinese into Chợ Lớn resulted from the opportunities that arose from the French colonial presence in Indochina from the 1880s onward. Its members working as merchants, middlemen, labourers and practitioners of other occupations, the Chinese population of the city grew. According to one European travel writer, some sixty thousand Chinese lived in Saigon and Chợ Lớn in the 1880s (*The French in Indo-China* 1884). This number increased greatly; by the 1930s there were some three hundred thousand Chinese living in southern Vietnam (*Việt Báo* 1945). Over the next four decades the total would grow. Following the Geneva Accords of 1954, many Chinese moved from the northern Vietnamese cities of Hanoi (Hà Nội) and Haiphong (Hải Phòng) and resettled in both Chợ Lớn and in resettlement villages located just outside the city. In 1957 some one million Chinese lived in southern Vietnam, and this number grew to 1.2 million in 1972 (Marsot 1993, p. 6).

Of this total, some eight hundred thousand lived in the Saigon–Chợ Lớn metropolitan area, where they represented more than a quarter of the inhabitants (Bích 1972, pp. 29–30).

Historical Overview

Prior to the 1930s, several Chinese newspapers operated in Chợ Lớn. The first Chinese newspaper published there was the *Nanqin Ribao* (南圻日報),² launched in 1918. Two years later, on 10 October 1920, a second Chinese newspaper, the *Huaqiao Bao* (華僑報), was founded. The *Huaqiao Bao*'s owners included Cen Qibo (岑琦波), Yu Qunchao (余群超) and others. The *Huaqiao Bao* was later renamed the *Huaqiao Ribao* (華僑日報), but it stopped publication in 1925, when Yu decided to start the *Qun Bao* (群報). That latter year was also the one in which China's direct entanglement with Chợ Lớn's press started, when the Kuomintang (國民黨, KMT) established the *Guomin Ribao* (國民日報) (Man 2012, p. 32).

The 1930s proved a watershed in the development of the Chợ Lớn press. The number of newspapers published there burgeoned, and periodicals ranged across the political spectrum, from leftist papers like the *Quanmin Bao* (全民報, 1939–40) to right-leaning papers like the *Zhongguo Ribao* (中國日報, 1930–65). Some fifteen titles circulated among a population of only some three hundred thousand Chinese in French Indochina (*Việt Báo* 1945). These included the *Minguo Ribao* (民國日報, shortened to *Minbao* 民報), the *Qun Bao* (群報, later *Zhonghua Ribao* 中華日報, and *Gonglun Bao* 公論報), the *Zhen Bao* (真報), the *Shi Bao* (時報), the *Huanan Bao* (華南報), the *Huanqiu Bao* (環球報), the *Saodang Bao* (掃蕩報), the *Qunxing Bao* (群星報), the *Fendou Bao* (奮鬥報), the *Yule Bao* (娛樂報), the *Baile Bao* (百樂報), the *Zhengqi Bao* (正氣報), the *Qiaozong Bao* (僑眾報), the *Zhongguo Ribao* (中國日報), and the *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* (遠東日報, *Yuandong Ribao*, 1940–75).

While many of these publications were short-lived and had very limited circulations, the last two became, with minor interruptions, the two longest-running daily papers in Chợ Lớn. The *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* also had the largest circulation in Chợ Lớn from the 1950s

up to 1975. William Skinner (1951) reported that in 1950 it had a circulation of some ten thousand copies, while *Zhongguo Ribao* had a circulation of three thousand copies. These two newspapers were widely distributed beyond Chợ Lớn (Skinner 1951, pp. 21–22). In addition to their having distribution agents in various towns in Vietnam, personal advertisements in the papers suggest that they also reached major towns in Cambodia and Laos. Both papers became central to the life of Chinese communities in these territories in the mid-twentieth century, important drivers fostering “imagined communities” in Indochina and beyond (Man 2012, pp. 34–35). It is important to note that the circulation numbers of these periodicals understate their reach; newspapers were often passed around in smaller towns, or read aloud to audiences.

The Second World War and the accompanying Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia had an impact on the circulation of the press among Chinese communities in the region. Although French Indochina presented a unique case, in which the overt Japanese seizure of power from Vichy authorities only occurred in 1945, the Japanese presence there nevertheless had the impact of curtailing activity of the Chinese press. The *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* and other periodicals suspended publication for the duration of the war. That paper resumed publication only on 11 September 1945.

In addition to older publications like the *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* and the *Zhongguo Ribao*, the post-1945 decade witnessed the birth of some important new Chợ Lớn publications. On 10 October 1946, the *Funü Ribao* (婦女日報), founded by Madam Zhang Ruifang (張瑞芳), appeared. It was intended for a female audience, and its columns featured material catering to its ideal reader. They treated, for instance, women’s health, women’s fashion and related subjects. However, the limited readership of the *Funü Ribao* led it eventually to try to broaden its appeal through a change of its name to *Shijie Bao* (世界報, *World News*) in March 1952, while maintaining its original unique features. In 1950 the *Funü Ribao* had a circulation of around five thousand (Man 2012, p. 41; Skinner 1951, p. 22). Other titles that appeared during this period would come to dominate the Chợ Lớn press scene. These included the *Yazhou Ribao* (亞洲

日報), established in February 1955. At six pages per issue, it was in the 1950s the bulkiest paper of the era; other dailies consisted of just four pages (Man 2012, p. 42).

The establishment of the RVN presented both opportunities and challenges for the development of the Chinese press. New newspapers were founded during the two decades between 1955 and 1975, and older papers also expanded from simple four-page affairs to full spreads of sixteen pages on special occasions like the Chinese New Year. An example of a newspaper founded during the RVN period was the *Cheng Gong Ribao* (成功日報) — started in September 1961 by Guo Depei (郭德培), one of the founders of the *Yazhou Ribao*. Furthermore, journalism as a profession also developed during these decades. The number of Chinese journalists in Chợ Lớn grew to the point that in 1959 they formed a union for Chinese journalists in Vietnam (*Shijie Bao* 1959).

The Cold War and censorship on the part of the Saigon government led both the Chinese press and the Vietnamese press to exercise circumspection in what they published. Chợ Lớn's Chinese journalists had to sidestep the censors in their coverage of politics, particularly to avoid the image of being left-leaning. Furthermore, the Chinese press was also subject to the vagaries of changing RVN policies towards local Chinese. The situation was both a boon and a bane. When antagonism towards local Chinese ran high, the Chinese press was subjected to additional scrutiny. However, under regimes more focused on monitoring the Vietnamese press, the Chinese press often evaded the watchful eyes of censors.

This research note focuses on newspapers in circulation during the RVN period. In particular, its description of these dailies' content highlights materials available in the microfilm collection of the Chinese Library of the National University of Singapore.

Chinese Newspaper Titles from the Republic of Vietnam Era, 1955–75

During the RVN era, the number of Chinese daily papers in circulation in Chợ Lớn fluctuated, but at the end of the period the

group included eleven papers. Some papers from the 1930s and 1940s continued during the RVN era. These were the *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* (1940–75), the *Zhongguo Ribao* (1930–65), and the *Shijie Bao* (formerly the *Funü Ribao*, 1946–75). Several other titles were founded during the RVN era. The *Chenggong Ribao* (成功日報) was launched in 1961; it ran the largest number of pages at the time. Other titles to appear during this period included the *Jianguo Ribao* (建國日報, started 1965) and the *Yuenan Kuaibao* (越南快報, 1964–75), to name a few.

In the later part of the RVN period, the readership of the Chinese press of Chợ Lớn had expanded to the point that there was a niche for several evening papers — the *Luntan Wanbao* (論壇晚報, from 1965), the *Xinsheng Bao* (新聲報, date of first publication unknown), the *Xinyue Wanbao* (新越晚報, started 1959), and the *Yuehua Bao* (越華報, started 1955). Several of these evening papers were the evening editions of morning papers. For instance, the *Luntan Wanbao* was the evening version of the *Xinluntan Bao*.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Smaller publications had limited runs. Furthermore, several titles were also subject to forced mergers under some governments, only later to split to reflect their respective foci and target readerships.³

Censorship and Political Leaning

During the RVN era, both the Cold War environment and the Saigon regime circumscribed the activities of the press. There were limitations to press freedom. All publications had to toe the government line in discussions about politics. These limitations notwithstanding, Philippe Peycam labels this period one of two periods of press freedom in modern Vietnamese history, along with what he terms the “Saigon newspaper village” of the 1916–30 period (Peycam 2012, p. 220). He argues that the experience of participation in Saigon’s public sphere during the colonial period equipped journalists with tools to continue the “resilient tradition of open contradictory expression” until April 1975 (*ibid.*). In effect, newspapers in the RVN were allowed to discuss a range of topics as long as they sidestepped

political discussions that crossed the prescribed boundaries, or at least used creative means to hold such discussions.

Such restrictions also applied to the Chinese newspapers published in Chợ Lớn. Developments on the other side of the Iron Curtain could be discussed, but in an acceptable tone. For instance, in writing about China, acceptable discussions included coverage of Mao Zedong's ruining China, or of the fact that natural disasters like floods were the result of mismanagement on the part of the government of the People's Republic of China. Failure to comply with these rules would lead to the closure of newspapers. In mid-1963, Ngô Đình Diệm shut down the *Yazhou Ribao* for more than five months. Its editors had published an historical item about the invasion of Giao Chỉ mounted by Han dynasty commander Mã Viện (馬援). The government construed the piece as an attack on the Trung sisters and hence on the president's sister-in-law and de facto first lady Madam Ngô Đình Nhu.⁴ The result was a five-month ban on its publication (Man 2012, p. 56).

Despite this political context, editors exercised some agency in the political orientation of Chợ Lớn's Chinese periodicals. That context was not the sole reason for the political stance of several of the periodicals published during this era. For instance, a right-leaning editor helmed the *Shijie Bao*, and its contents reflected her political persuasion.

Further, there were often ways around censorship. The supervision of a periodical's chief editor and the actions of RVN censors might not in fact prevent alternative viewpoints from being printed in the papers. Some journalists were left-leaning. While the news sections of the papers were censored, publications featured other sections, not least serialized novels. Some journalists serialized novels by leftist writers, and these evaded RVN censorship, as they did not appear in the news sections.

Chợ Lớn's Chinese press also faced additional challenges from the government, particularly under Ngô Đình Diệm between 1955 and 1963. He made attempts to limit the use of Chinese in the newspapers. In 1963 he decreed that one third of the content of

Chinese newspapers must be in Vietnamese (Man 2012, p. 54). In compliance with the decree, Chinese newspapers gradually introduced Vietnamese in their pages. For instance, advertisements contained Vietnamese in addition to Chinese characters. By October 1963, Chinese newspapers managed to incorporate a full page of Vietnamese in their editions, with content on topics like citizens' education (*Công Dân Giáo Dục*) and Vietnamese translations of episodes from classic Chinese novels like *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (紅樓夢) (*Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* 1963). This brief experiment ended with Ngô Đình Diệm's assassination in November 1963, and the Chinese press went back to full Chinese content with some Vietnamese used in advertisements.

Access

The *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* is the most accessible Chợ Lớn daily. While there is no complete collection, it is possible to access editions from many years in libraries in the United States, Australia, China and Singapore. The National Library of Australia in Canberra has many issues of the physical paper from the June 1967 to March 1975 period. In the United States, both the Echols Collection in Cornell's Kroch Library and the Harvard-Yenching Library have it on microfilm, while Stanford's East Asia Library holds several years of the physical copy of *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao*. Harvard has 1969, Cornell has parts of 1966 and 1967, and Stanford has 1956 and 1968 to 1974. The Chinese Library of the National University of Singapore has complete holdings covering from 1959 to 1972 on microfilm. In China, the National Library in Beijing has physical copies of an almost complete collection covering 1940 to 1975. It is missing the years 1945–50 and some issues from other years.

The *Chenggong Ribao* is accessible in Singapore and China. The National University of Singapore holds microfilm for 1971 to 1975, while the National Library in Beijing has two months from 1962.

The Chinese Library of the National University of Singapore has a limited selection of the *Nhật Báo Luận Dân*, the *Xinluntan Bao*,

and the *Shijie Bao*. It holds the years 1971–75 for both the *Luntan Wanbao* and the *Xinluntan Bao*, while it holds the years 1959–61 for the *Shijie Bao*.

Beijing's National Library has a limited selection of the *Wanguo Wanbao* (萬國晚報) — two months from 1957.

Online searches to determine the availability in libraries on Taiwan of Chinese Newspapers published in Chợ Lớn proved unsuccessful.

Major Chinese Newspapers Published during the RVN Period

Yuen Tuong Jit Pao (遠東日報, *Yuandong Ribao*, Far East Daily), 1940–75

The *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* (henceforth *YT*) began publication on 29 March 1940 to commemorate the martyrs of Yellow Flower Mound (黃花崗). It was started by a Chaozhou (Teochew, 潮州) merchant, Zhu Jixing (朱繼興), and its first chief editor was Cai Wenxuan (蔡文玄). It took a brief hiatus during the Second World War, before resuming publication on 11 September 1945 with Zhu Jixing's nephew Zhu Wenyi (朱聞義) at the helm. The *YT* had the widest circulation among periodicals published in Chợ Lớn. Although the *YT* was oriented towards the Chaozhou community, its readership went beyond community lines. It was widely circulated in the RVN and had readers from the seventeenth parallel to the Mekong Delta's southernmost towns — Bạc Liêu, for example (*Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* 1966).

The *YT* also kept Chinese communities in areas of the former French Indochina beyond the borders of the RVN connected with those in Chợ Lớn and Saigon. Chinese communities in those latter cities remained the centre of gravity for Chinese communities across Indochina. Chinese living in places like Phnom Penh and Vientiane bought advertisements in Chợ Lớn newspapers to announce significant life events to other Chinese. Deaths, engagement announcements and marriage announcements from Chinese communities in Cambodia and Laos would appear in the *YT* occasionally. To a lesser extent there was also awareness of the *YT* in places like Hong Kong, Macau,

the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC), and the United States. Educational institutions like Macau's Overseas Chinese University advertised their programmes in the *YT*, while relatives of Chợ Lớn Chinese living in Hong Kong also advertised for missing relatives there.

The *YT* had eight pages, running twelve pages on special occasions like the eve of the Lunar New Year. Its front page featured world news, with a small column for the editor. Editorials discussed a full range of subjects, from Chinese culture to politics. Page two usually featured a themed column, and the topic of discussion would depend on the day of the week. For instance, the Wednesday column focused on sports. Page three usually offered a more in-depth discussion of politics, both international and domestic, of interest to readers. On 1 November 1966, for instance, that page of the paper featured special content to mark the RVN's National Day celebrations (*Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* 1966).

Pages four, five and eight of the *YT* were usually dedicated to news of local interest, including political developments in the RVN or events in its various Chinese communities, while pages six and seven were reserved for instalments of serialized novels and short stories by both local writers and Sinophone writers living in Hong Kong or the Republic of China. The newspaper's finances relied heavily on advertisements, and these ranged from advertisements for schools, medical practices and consumer and commercial products to those for film screenings and personal advertisements.

Shijie Bao (世界報, *Báo Thế Giới*, World News), 1946–75⁵

Madam Zhang Ruifang (張瑞芳) founded the *Shijie Bao* on 10 October 1946. That date commemorated the start of the 1911 uprising that would lead to the establishment of the Republic of China. Initially called the *Funü Ribao* (婦女日報, *Women's Daily*), it started out as a weekly and then semi-weekly paper, before increasing its frequency to daily publication. Its initial audience was Chinese women in Vietnam. Some of its themes included the role of women in society and women's movements (*Shijie Bao* 1959).

Its name was later changed to the more neutral-sounding *Shijie Bao* to give it appeal to a wider audience. It was affiliated with *Wanguo Bao* (萬國報).

Regular editions of the *Shijie Bao* were comprised of four pages. The front page was filled with daily world news. The second page carried weekly columns. The third page contained serialized novels, and the last page focused on local news. Advertisements appeared on pages two to four. The paper's weekly column skewed towards light-hearted topics. For instance, readers who wanted to follow the life of actress Lin Dai (林黛) could learn of her purchase of a house in Hong Kong from the *Shijie Bao* (*Shijie Bao* 1959). On Mondays, page two discussed the role of women. The Tuesday column discussed education. Wednesday's column introduced medical knowledge to its readers. Columns in the latter part of the week discussed more light-hearted topics: Thursday's column featured film reviews, and Friday's column covered news regarding films and the entertainment industry. Saturday's column featured both news of the entertainment industry and coverage of events taking place in Chợ Lớn over the weekend.

Xinluntan Bao (新論壇報, *Luận Dân Mới*, New Tribune Daily), 1954–75⁶

The *Xinluntan Bao* was founded on 1 January 1954. It was the intellectual or ideological heir to the *Huanan Ribao* (華南日報), which was founded in the 1940s to support the KMT's anti-Japanese resistance efforts (Man 2012, p. 90). Its founder was Feng Zhuoxun (馮卓勛) and its editors included Liu Risheng (劉日升), Wang Jiezhi (王傑智), Su Ping (蘇萍) and Zhou Wenzhong (周文中). Liu would later edit the *Chenggong Ribao*. Certain special editions of the paper — for instance, that of 1 January — had twelve pages, available at the same price as four-page regular editions.

The structure of the *Xinluntan Bao* was very similar to that of other Chợ Lớn dailies. The front page featured important developments in the world and an editorial. One unique feature of the *Xinluntan Bao* was a short series of articles discussing Ngô Đình Diệm's rule of the RVN, translated from a Vietnamese-language daily and published in

1971. Page two was a continuation of world news, while pages three and four featured local news interspersed with advertisements. Page six featured a rotating column on various topics, while page seven was also dedicated to advertisements. Page eight was a mixture of advertisements, serialized novels, literary works and local news. The top of page nine contained cartoon strips and articles on diverse topics like commentaries on the modern novel. Page ten was filled with advertisements.

There was a weekly rhythm in the *Xinluntan Bao*, observed in the changing topics treated on page six. Topics discussed on page six recurred weekly. Monday's column was presumably targeted at women, and featured topics like the effect of sleep on beauty (甜睡有助美容) (*Xinluntan Bao* 1971). Tuesday's column featured literary works, like *Hometown's Winter* (故鄉的冬天) by the author Deng Wenlai (鄧文來). Wednesday's and Saturday's columns highlighted the lives of celebrities in the Sinophone world. Two individuals discussed on 6 January 1971 were actress Chen Baozhu (陳寶珠) and composer Gu Yue (古月), active in Hong Kong and on Taiwan, respectively. Science was the focus of Thursday's column, and some topics covered included the human body and bacteria (人體與細菌) and how to banish children's fears (如何消除兒童懼怕心理). Friday's column invited contributions from readers who wished to share their literary talents with the community. One example was a submission from Deng Ming (鄧銘), who wrote the short story *Soul's Scream* (心靈的吶喊) (*Xinluntan Bao* 1971). Sunday's special was a pen pal forum, in which individuals seeking pen pals wrote in with brief descriptions of themselves.

Chenggong Ribao (成功日報, Thành Công Nhật Báo, Success Daily News), 1961–75⁷

The *Chenggong Ribao* was founded in September 1961 by Guo Depei (郭德培), former principal of one of Chợ Lớn's major schools — Chongzheng School (崇正學校). The composition of its editorial staff, whose members had prior experience working as journalists for such ROC newspapers as the *Dahua Ribao* (大華

日報), reflected its strong ties to the ROC. Chief editor Guo Yucai (郭育裁), whose fortune was founded on trading Chinese medicine (Man 2012, p. 87), assisted Guo Depei. Other notable members of the paper's editorial staff included Liu Risheng (劉日升), who had worked as a journalist in the ROC, and Huang Ye (黃曄), who had left the ROC's *Chengong Ribao* (成功日報) to work on the paper of the same name published in Chợ Lớn.

The *Chengong Ribao* consisted of ten pages — with special issues like that published on New Year's Day, 1 January 1971, stretching to sixteen pages. It was thus the bulkiest of Chợ Lớn's papers. Its front page was similar to that of the *YT*, with the most important world news of the day along with a small editorial column to the left. The second page was devoted to discussions about literature. For instance, page two of the issue of 4 January 1971 featured a discussion of the poetry of the female poet of the Eastern Han dynasty, Cai Yan (蔡琰, AD 177–250). Page three was filled with advertisements, ranging from personal advertisements to those for the different Chợ Lớn private schools. Pages four and five interspersed mostly local news with some international news, though half of the space on these pages was devoted to wedding announcements. Pages six and seven ran more advertisements, ranging from those for restaurants to personal notices like obituaries. Finally, pages nine and ten carried short stories, serialized novels and other literary works, like *Hunduan Jiandi* (魂斷劍底) by Luo Tian (羅天). Advertisements also filled half of these two pages.

Luntan Wanbao (論壇晚報, *Nhật Báo Luận Dân*, Tribune Evening News), 1965–75⁸

The *Luntan Wanbao* was an evening daily paper published in Chợ Lớn, the evening version of *Xinluntan Bao*. In the 1970s its main editor was Lý Triều Quân. The paper consisted of four pages, and its reporting had a local focus. News that made its front page included “Overseas Chinese Groups Celebrate the Lunar New Year Together” (華僑華裔各大團體同賀新年) and government announcements, like one concerning the decree that those of fifteen years of age should obtain government identification cards.

Several features of the *Luntan Wanbao* set it apart from the other Chợ Lớn dailies. While those other dailies had editorials, the *Nhật Báo Luận Dân*'s editor abstained from running them. In their place, Lý Triều Quân translated a running discussion on the Ngô family taken from a Vietnamese daily newspaper in the space that other Chợ Lớn papers reserved for editorials. While the *Xinluntan Bao* featured Madam Ngô Đình Nhu, the *Luntan Wanbao* discussed Ngô Đình Diệm's brother, Ngô Đình Nhu. Also, the *Luntan Wanbao* did not have a weekly cycle of columns. Instead, it had a daily focus — carrying, for instance, the daily television schedule.

The first page of the *Luntan Wanbao* focused on local news and on news concerning the Chinese diaspora. For instance, some of the news that appeared on the front page on 4 January 1971 included “Military Deserter was Caught: Jumped out of Car to Escape” (逃伍軍人被拘, 中途跳車逃走), and news of the Sinophone world, like “Hong Kong Legalizes Prostitution” (香港異口同聲贊成娼妓合法化). Page two contained writing by generally less famous Chợ Lớn writers. These writings ranged from essays like “Remarkable Desire for Performance” (奇形怪狀的表演慾) by Wen Xiu (文秀) to a serialized novel with illustrations, *Seven Tiger Village* (七虎村) by Bo Yang (伯陽). The third page also contained serialized novels, but these were works by writers more famous in the Sinophone world. For instance, *The Legend of the Condor Hero* (射雕英雄傳) by Jin Yong (金庸) and *Two Peerless Heroes* (絕代雙驕) by Gu Long (古龍) were serialized on page three of the *Luntan Wanbao*. Pages two and three also contained advertisements, for new commercial products, medical practices and other things. The last page contained the daily television schedule, more local news, and advertisements, including personal advertisements.

Collectively, the Chợ Lớn periodicals discussed here shed light on Chinese communities in the former French Indochina during the three decades after 1945. They highlight the intricacy of these communities' networks and the ways in which those networks intertwined with other networks within Asia and beyond. The newspapers also provide insight into the various forces that Chợ Lớn had to reconcile. Tensions

among state-building, community-building, and transnationalism played out on the newspapers' pages, through articles, reports, leisure reading material and advertisements.

Advertisements in *Chợ Lớn* dailies are a rich resource, and they take up more than half of the total page space. There were two types of advertisements: commercial advertisements and personal advertisements. Commercial advertisements covered products ranging from rice cookers and toothpaste for individual consumers to heavy machinery for businesses. Entertainment and services were also advertised: film screenings, restaurants, medical practices, private schools and more.

The cultural products advertised — film screenings, performance troupes, serialized novels, and short stories — situate *Chợ Lớn* within the Cold War Sinophone world. Films from the United States and France were screened in several movie theatres in Saigon, while mainly Sinophone films, above all from Hong Kong, graced *Chợ Lớn*'s silver screens. As Cantonese formed the majority of the Chinese population in *Chợ Lớn*, *Chợ Lớn* shared a special affinity with the British colony, and Hong Kong films were particularly well received by *Chợ Lớn* filmgoers. Performance troupes, such as Chinese opera troupes, also made their rounds through the Cold War Sinophone world, making stops in towns under RVN control. Reading the *YT* highlights these cultural circulations within the Cold War Sinophone world. The paper featured writers like Hong Kong's Louis Cha (金庸) and the ROC's Qiong Yao (瓊瑤), who engaged readers' imaginations within the confines of their own homes. Other cultural imports from Hong Kong and the ROC included books, vinyl records, and similar materials.

Personal advertisements in *Chợ Lớn*'s dailies highlighted webs of social relations. Personal advertisements took up a total of at least one full page of each issue of these dailies, and these advertisements brought events in private life into the public realm. News of marriages and deaths and congratulations on various appointments were the most common personal advertisements; less commonly, items announced engagements, divorces, and disownment of family

members. Collectively, these personal advertisements illustrate the social networks in Chợ Lớn and among Chinese communities. They also demonstrate that private life was often of public interest. Through further study of obituaries, messages of condolence, and congratulatory notes, it would be possible to map the intricate web of social relations in Chợ Lớn for a better understanding of networks in the transnational Chinese world.

This cache of periodicals is a treasure trove for researchers. Attention to advertisements, articles, editorials and literature in Chợ Lớn's newspapers will further understanding of the Vietnamese dimension of the Sinophone world, the Cold War in Asia, and the Republic of Vietnam and its society.

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NOTES

1. Man Man was a Chinese journalist active in the Republic of Vietnam. He later worked as a journalist under the post-1975 Socialist Republic of Vietnam, before moving to the People's Republic of China. He retired to the United States and wrote a memoir highlighting the trials and tribulations of Chợ Lớn's periodicals and the journalists who worked in the Chinese press in Vietnam.
2. In transcribing Chinese, I use the *pinyin* system of transliteration. For various proper names, however, I use the most commonly known transliterations; for instance, *Kuomintang* for the Nationalist Party. For the various Chợ Lớn papers, I use their most commonly known names; for example, *Yuen Tuong Jit Pao* rather than *Yuandong Ribao*.
3. For a more comprehensive history of the Chinese press in Chợ Lớn and the periodicals in circulation during the period treated in this note, see Man Man (2012).
4. The Trung sisters, Trung Trắc and Trung Nhị, are two heroines in the Vietnamese national pantheon of folkheroes. They lived in the first half of the first century AD and are credited with successfully resisting China's invasion of Vietnam.
5. Note that this newspaper is filed in the Chinese Library of the National University of Singapore under its Vietnamese-language title, *Báo Thế Giới*.

6. Filed in the Chinese Library of the National University of Singapore under its Vietnamese-language title, given here.
7. Filed in the Chinese Library of the National University of Singapore under its Vietnamese-language title.
8. Filed in the Chinese Library of the National University of Singapore under its Vietnamese-language title.

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