

ISSN electrónico: 2172-9077

DOI: 10.48047/fjc.28.02.19

## LOCAL SPACE AND FREE SPACE: THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SOUTHERN SCHOLARS AND THE LITERARY PUBLIC SPHERE OF HONG KONG

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Fecha de recepción de la reseña: 10 September 2024

Fecha de aceptación definitiva: 04 December 2024

### Abstract

This work focuses on how Southern literati changed the formation and development of Hong Kong's literary public sphere during wartime. These intellectuals run away from political instability in mainland China, which is filled with coupled high-brow culture hence enriching the cultural potential of Hong Kong. The paper concerns cultural preservation and artistic freedom and shows two of the leading cultural personas, Hu Shi and Sa K'ong. By analyzing the newspapers, periodicals and the literary works of Xiao Hong, the research aim to emphasize the important role of the media as a tool for cultural interchange. Through engagements with Xiao Hong's literary works produced in Hong Kong, one can examine how the city served as a free space that fostered arts and culture. It seems to highlight the need for the reconciliation of the old and the new as well as the Southern literati's tradition in defining the literary Hong Kong. Future developments include examining relatively unknown scholars, and analysis of various cities during war and exile.

*Keywords:* southern literati; hong kong; wartime literature; cultural exchange; xiao hong.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This war also shaped a peculiar literary field in Hong Kong and constructed a makeshift cultural site given the immigration of the Southerners. This influx changed the cultural space of Hong Kong, where the tension between ‘nativeness’ and ‘freedom’ started to emerge gradually in the society. The meetings between the Southern literati and the Hong Kong’s literary public enabled the opening up of nativeness and the enhancement of the literary public sphere (Lee & Chou, 2018). Also, the freedom that Southern literati enjoyed thanks to Hong Kong was rather conducive to writing. This research will focus on this kind of interaction by having specific observations from Hong Kong Libao and the writer Xiao Hong. The formation of this culture in Hong Kong has gradually emerged since the late Qing Dynasty, due to the flow of writing clerks who escaped to Hong Kong. People like Wang Tao who established the initial Chinese newspaper supplement in Hong Kong kick-started such advancements (Forster, 2014). With the appearance of new literature, cultural stars like Lu Xun, Hu Shi, and Xu Dishan came to Hong Kong, steadily establishing its field with more extensive connections to the May Fourth Movement (Wang & Zhang, 2007).

Hu Shi’s speech at the Overseas Chinese Education Association in Hong Kong captured this burgeoning cultural landscape: “I wish the Hong Kong educators would embrace this new culture, and change the dominance by the old-fashioned forces through the non-violent means and transform Hong Kong into a new age cultural city in the south” (Hu, 2014). For the Shanghai Libao to start again in Hong Kong, its editor-in-chief Sa Kong said, “In the future, the Chinese cultural center will be in Hong Kong for at least a while more, this cultural center should be more shining than Shanghai because it will at the same time represent the Shanghai old cultural stream and the new cultural local stream of the South” (Shen, 2017). The discourse of cultural center “manufacturing” is rooted in the historical reality of numerous writers and scholars relocating to Hong Kong, primarily during two significant periods: Sino-Japanese War and the Civil War between Kuomintang and Communist Party of China. These Southern literati were not only observers; they were active participants in the creation of local culture. The political situation in Hong Kong was relatively ‘free’ for sometime, during which these literati were able to decide their careers, voice out, and participate in cultures.

The lack of a gap within the political structure and Hong Kong’s relative tranquility provided a precious respite and the school became a safe haven for Southern literati who were escaping chaos in the Mainland. This freedom allowed them to assume clear responsibilities and provide their opinion, even though they were displaced southward. The open immigration policy and the strategic decline of the British Empire carry out the “coming south” phenomenon, furthering the growth of the “quite complete model of intellectuals from the south” (Wang, 2007). The establishment of the Hong Kong Cultural Center is closely related to the backing of the Southern literati, and prosperous of this centre was throwing the favorable circumstances to the literary and cultural activities of the southern literati. The depiction of urban space and group practices serves as the framework for explaining the location of literature and local imagination in Hong Kong before delving deeper into the relationship between the two.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Cultural Center and Southern Scholars

After the late Qing Dynasty, Hong Kong’s cultural construction was greatly impacted by scribes who fled to Hong Kong for asylum, resulting in the infusion of traditional culture and new culture. It is possible to discuss the definition of cultural Leaders, for example Wang Tao, who launched the

first Chinese newspaper supplement in Hongkong. New literature grew to prominence, and prominent cultural elites like Lu Xun, Hu Shi, and Xu Dishan were paying visits to Hong Kong; it took some time, and thus, the cultural field of Hong Kong gradually intertwined with the May Fourth Movement (Forster, 2014). Such visits, albeit short, revealed the cultural aspects that were distinctly representative of a civilization that incorporated both Chinese and the foreign elements that paved way to the creation of a new cultural hub – Hong Kong (Wang & Zhang, 2007).

Hu Shi's appeal during his speech at the Overseas Chinese Education Association in Hong Kong in 1938 underscored this transformation. The educators of Hong Kong will embrace the new culture, subvert the old-fashioned forces through non-violence, and then re-establish the south as a new cultural belt (Kuang, 2001). Likewise, another article "Building a New Cultural Center" by the editor-in-chief of the Shanghai Libao Sa Kong pointed out that "In the future, the Chinese cultural center will be in Hong Kong for at least some time; the culture should be even shinier than it is in Shanghai. However, it will contain the culture of old Shanghai and new South China; the combination of the two is sure to create strange waves as usual" (Clavan, 2019). The rhetoric of founding and development of cultural center in Hong Kong is inextricably linked with historical immigration of writers and scholars into the city. This phenomenon occurred primarily during two significant periods: the Second Sino-Japanese War and the KMT-CCP Civil War, resulting in the failure of the KMT war strategy (Fu, 2008). It was a vital location throughout the Anti-Japanese War because numerous writers and scholars had to move south to Hong Kong. While these Southern literati products were simply fleeting passers-by in a locality, their existence was crucial in the project of building local culture (Leung, 2021). There are profound social and historical reasons for their migration, which sets them apart from their counterparts in the main land, many of whose movement was more administratively driven (Yang, 2014).

These literati found that Hong Kong provided them with an opportunity for autonomous decision making in a political climate that was not as free as it is today as the British Empire was in decline. While the internal migrations within the mainland were procured compelled, by economic, political, and state machinery, the literati who moved to Hong Kong found a breathing space in the colonial context (Ku, 2004). This enabled them to give voice, take specific responsibilities and be involved in other cultural issues. The emergence of an open immigration policy in Hong Kong and the management of the systematic reduction of British influence contributed to the circumstances that allowed the cultural practice of the Southern literati. I must mention that the origins of the establishment of Hong Kong Culture Center cannot disregard the support of the southern literati who actively participated in the city and were instrumental in the development of the Hong Kong's culture. The general environment of urban space and the model of collective writing provided a strong base for creating the commons of literature and local imagery. It also assumed the relevant knowledge base for further deliberations on the matter at hand.

## **2.2 From Hong Kong's "Li Bao" to the Construction of Hong Kong's Literary Public Sphere by Southern Literati**

Making newspapers and magazines has been imperative to the writers and literati to express their thoughts, build the literary sphere and form the literary imagination. This was the same for the Southern literati who considered travelling to Hong Kong as a form of escape. According to Ma and Chan (2008), Standing before the unfavorable cultural environment in Hong Kong, the re-envisioned new Southern literati decided to cultivate the Mainland cultural resources instead of recreating them. Newspapers and periodical titles like Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art and Li Bao, which were shifted from the Mainland to Hong Kong had rather deeper implications; they were the transplanted forms

of the guest residence in the public sphere of literature (Feng, 2017). When Shanghai Libao started to be re-published in Hong Kong, its major characters remained there, Sa Gong as general manager and editor in chief, and Cheng Shewo also played a great role. These publications retained their format and content, however, which stress the necessity of establishing mature structures of publishing and transferring cultural practices into a new cultural region while moving the headquarters. No significant changes were made to the identity of Libao, including the retention of the tabloid format and focus on fun and cutting-edge content, which aligned with Cheng Shewo's vision for a "third newspaper" with a tabloid format but the scope and prowess of a big newspaper (Cheng, 1956).

However, the adjustments to the local context of Hong Kong created new problems. As the study highlights, the interplay of nativeness and locality assumed significance in the unfolding of World War II in particular Hong Kong. Some newspapers that were struggling for their localization include the Hong Kong Libao where there are significant cultural and political differences between the Shanghai and the Hong Kong populations. The academic community has not highly appraised the accomplishments of Hong Kong Libao media, frequently attributing its decline to political postures and splits within the initial elites (Li, 2012). It is evident, therefore, that the construction of Hong Kong's literary public sphere needed the participation of the Mainlanders as well as the Hong Kong residents (Henry, 2007). Illustrating the need for a cultural center in Hong Kong, Sa Kong focused on manpower from the south and the people in the vicinity to form a new base of culture through cooperation (Cheng, 2021). But as with many other social systems, this balanced cooperation was not always easy to maintain in this respect. In this way, the theme of the Anti-Japanese War became a mobilizing focus for Southern literati, construction the literary public sphere and space of Hong Kong. For instance, *Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art* which was edited by Xiao Gan mostly contained literary pieces on the Anti-Japanese War and largely concentrated on the political, economic and social aspects of the Japanese military (Fan, 2019). Nevertheless, there were issues with finding the connection to the local characteristics of Hong Kong and becoming popular in supplement sales. The conflict between the Southerners' guest house and deeper cultivation in Hong Kong and local cultural environment emerged. Albeit experiencing the same challenges, Libao in Hong Kong made more emphatic attempts at local advertising. For example, the supplement "Small Teahouse" served as an instrument to deal with local concerns and uphold the principles of free speech. The subjects and topics included direct quotes of what people were saying on the streets and world affairs to create a public sphere for readers and editors (Lee et al., 2017). While HKLB may not have been able to produce a large amount of localized content due to lack of staff and resources, the effort demonstrated an attempt to cater to the new culture.

### **2.3 Imagine Elsewhere in Hong Kong's Free Space: The Role of Hong Kong's Literary Public Sphere in Xiao Hong**

The war and the Anti-Japanese War, in particular, gave Hong Kong the freedom to engage in literary activities that were not available to other cities in mainland China. The British Hong Kong authorities played a passive role and gave a non-aligned and neutral response to the conflict between China and Japan, thus providing the most freedom for both sides. This made Southern immigrants occupy a relatively free zone where it could run newspapers, publish and do literary productions with less political constraints. It is due to this free space that Xiao Hong (1911-1942), a middle writer with independent consciousness, could also derive benefits. Xiao Hong came to Hong Kong in early 1940 and during the last years of her life she wrote articles such as "Biography of Hulan River" and "Ma Bole." Hong Kong as free space gave Xiao Hong the political freedom for her creative freedom to mean beyond political meaning (Zhou, 2020).

There are two major reasons for Xiao Hong to move to Hong Kong: first, escaping from the increasingly severe bombing situation in Chongqing city and second, aspiring for being a writer. This action disclosed by some left-wing comrades was made in the light of having a conducive environment within which to write (Duanmu, 2011). One might note that due to the literary public sphere of Hong Kong, Xiao Hong was able to get her work published and participate in literary activities which contributed to the creation of her works. In Hong Kong, she continued to work and write, composing over 300,000 words and penning some masterpieces. Her articles in local Hong Kong newspapers and periodicals like 'Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art' and 'Sing Tao Daily' indicated a burgeoning literary public sphere that nurtured her work. In Hong Kong, Xiao Hong's literary activities had characteristics of personal freedom and independence, and different from the political themes before (Merlin, 2011).

Xiao Hong's attendance of public literary events such as the symposium "Female Students and March 8 Festival" and the celebration of the Hundred Anniversary of Lu Xun's birth made her nex to the Hong Kong literary public sphere (Yang, 2011). These activities gave her an opportunity to share her view on literature and interact with the Manitoba literature society. However, works by Xiao Hong, including 'Hulan River,' and 'Ma Bole,' contained the more personal and sentimentalistic theme, which highlighted home and personal lives rather than overall war against Japanese. Xiao Hong drops the consistent plot and major characters and adopts a casual narrative approach and poetic narrative mode to portray life in Hulan River County in "Biography of Hulan River". Thus, this novel, like others such as "Back Garden" and "March in a Small Town," demonstrate a distinct longing and individual orientation, which stands out from the main historiosophical paradigm of that period (Wen-yu, 2001). Xiao Hong's last novel, "Ma Bole," though set against the backdrop of the Anti-Japanese War, challenges the traditional creative mode of anti-Japanese war literature. The novel's satirical tone and focus on the daily lives of ordinary people during wartime reflect Xiao Hong's unique literary imagination and independent spirit (Chen, 1999). In short, free space in Hong Kong created a much deeper impression on the literary practices by Xiao Hong than a wholesome milieu for individual and independent voices. The interaction between her and the literary public sphere of Hong Kong not only furthered her output, but it also started to inject diverse, individualizing literary expressions into the indigenous local literary landscape.

## 2.4 Research Gap

Although one can certainly point out general investigations into literati from the south as contributors to Hong Kong's cultural and literary landscape in times of war, little can be said about the specific mechanisms through which individual interactions have come together to develop local literary public spheres. Current scholarship tends to be broadly focused on the migration patterns and general cultural contributions of these literati; it does not delve into nuanced processes and individuated experiences that allow for the integration and evolution of literary practices in Hong Kong. Investigation into the role played by lesser figures and publications, beyond major names and newspapers, has not been done much. Such gaps, if bridged, might have provided a greater understanding of how Hong Kong's free space actually works in fostering innovations in literature and public engagement, yielding further valuable lessons for contemporary cultural studies.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

This research employs the use of a qualitative research design, founded on historical analysis and

literary criticism, in an attempt to investigate the interplay between the Southern scholars and the literary public sphere of Hong Kong during the wartime period. The study hypothesizes that though interpretable through a number of lenses, the real impacts of the contributing school of Southern literati to the mediation of culture in war-era Hong Kong can be understood only by identifying the literary culture from which they emerged (Zhang, 2004). This research will consider the influences that the experiences of these authors bore on their compositions in real-time, in particular with regard to warfare in a city-state and life as a refugee.

### 3.2 Data Collection

#### 3.2.1. *Primary Sources*

Primary data for this research were collected from various historical newspapers and periodicals of importance in Hong Kong during the wartime period. Important ones include:

1. Shanghai Libao: This journal throws light on the doings and editorial principles of Southern literati who shifted to Hong Kong. Two hotspots where a public sphere is established are the “Yan Lin” and “Small Teahouse.”
2. Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art: Edited by Xiao Gan, this supplement focused on Anti-Japanese War literature and became a lens through which it is possible to gain a sense of the themes and priorities of Southern literati in Hong Kong.
3. Hong Kong Libao: The republished version of Shanghai Libao in Hong Kong presents a case study for understanding localization efforts and challenges in the new cultural environment.

#### 3.2.2. *Literary Works*

Theoretically, the role of free space in Hong Kong on the creative output was explained, taking for illustration the literary works of Xiao Hong, among them “Biography of Hulan River” and “Ma Bole (Charrieras, Darchen, & Sigler, 2018).” These materials were published at different times in various Hong Kong newspapers and periodicals during her staying there and became the main primary source of this research.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved several steps:

#### 3.3.1. *Thematic Analysis*

It applies thematic analysis to primary and secondary sources, aiming at identifying recurrent themes and patterns pertaining to the interaction between the Southern literati and Hong Kong’s literary public sphere (Breakwell, Barnett, & Wright, 2020). Some major themes are “nativeness” and “freedom,” the role of newspapers and periodicals in constructing the literary public sphere, and the impact of Hong Kong’s political and social environment on the performance of literature.

#### Historical Contextualization

In this case, the primary sources have been placed within a wider historical framework of wartime Hong Kong. This comprises analysis of the political, social, and cultural context that gave rise to the immigration of southern literati to Hong Kong and how these literati contributed to the local literary scene. Historical references, such as the speech by Hu Shi and declarations by Sa Kong, framed the context.

#### 3.3.2. *Comparative Analysis*

A comparative analysis brings out the differences and similarities between the literary activities and contributions of Southern literati in Hong Kong and those on the mainland. It involves comparing the editorial practices, thematic focuses, and audience engagement strategies employed in publications like Shanghai Libao and Hong Kong Libao.

### 3.4 Validation of Findings

To safeguard against the possibility of bias in the findings, triangulation was ensured by cross-checking data from at least three different sources. This meant the content and themes of the literary works being compared against their stated editorial policies and articles in contemporary newspapers and periodicals. Checking against the findings was also done with historical documents like personal correspondences of key figures—notably, Xiao Hong's letters.

### 3.5 Limitations

The study acknowledges certain limitations. Reliance solely on historical documents and literature is always biased, as archive records are but a selective account of reality, and personal writings may include very subjective individual experiences. Moreover, such focus on major figures and publications may miss out on the contribution of lesser figures and smaller periodicals. These limitations can be remedied in future research through broadening the scope of sources and voices.

## 4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

### 4.1 Cultural Center and Southern Scholars

The development of the cultural centre of Hong Kong during the period of war due to the arrival of the Southern literati. These intellectuals, who sought refuge in Hong Kong due to the political instabilities in the mainland, came with a rich cultural and literary heritage that defined the city's literary formations. The cultural leaders, including Lu Xun, Hu Shi, and Xu Dishan, extended the linkage between the cultural field in Hong Kong and the May Fourth Movement that promoted new literature and diverse cultural discourses. In his farewell speech to the Overseas Chinese Education Association in Hong Kong, Hu Shi unveiled a strategy for the city to be a cultural mecca of the south; he called for the acceptance of new cultures and the nonviolent transformation of traditionalism (Hu, 2014). In the "Building a New Cultural Center," Sa Kong also highlighted the position of the Hong Kong as a cultural platform albeit temporarily. He hoped that literature in the Hong Kong area would be developed from both the old culture of Shanghai and the local culture of South China, which would make it a very prosperous literary area (Clavan, 2019). This vision was to be achieved through the literary activism of Southern literati whose cultural activities were enacted from Hong Kong. These literati were given the opportunity to select their own life-course and participate in culture because of the steroids political climate of Hong Kong with the British Empire struggling. While the people in the mainland experienced unnatural migration, the Southerners who came to Hong Kong felt that they were at least able to breathe in the colonial environment. This enabled them to assert their voices, take full responsibilities of concrete tasks and other cultural activities. The policy of an open door to immigrants in Hong Kong and the measured and conscious British surrenders paved the way for the freedom of the cultural practices among the Southern literati. Generally, the roles and efforts of the Southern literati in constructing the cultural hub of Hong Kong were diverse. They wrote and edited books, published materials and organized cultural events to enhance the endowment of the local cultures. These intellectuals also made a positive contribution in terms of the continuity and development of culture by sustaining and modernizing the practices of literary arts.

### 4.2 From Hong Kong's "Li Bao" to the Construction of Hong Kong's Literary Public Sphere by Southern Literati

It is most apparent in the South's use of newspapers and periodicals to influence the Hong Kong literary sphere of the literati. Newspapers like *Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art* and *Li Bao* offered

formidable arenas for passionate and cultural exhibitions. These newspapers offered opportunities for the Southern literati to speak out, build literary discourse communities, and foster literary imagination among their readers. In the public domain of literature, the practice of transplanting mainland newspapers to Hong Kong for example *Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art* and *Li Bao* signified the guest residence. When the *Shanghai Libao* was re-published in Hong Kong, some of these key players remained in situ – *Sa Kong* held the position of general manager and editor-in-chief, while Cheng Shewo also played a major part. Nevertheless, the difficulties associated with the transplanting process in a completely different cultural area did not allow such publications to change their structure and content; they also stressed the need for transplanting strong and healthy publishing systems and cultural traditions (Cheng, 1956).

In this way, the basic attributes are preserved: tabloid appearance and content entertainment and wits. Focus on style, consistent with Cheng Shewo's vision of creating a "third newspaper", incorporating the tabloid format and the grand newspaper image. Nonetheless, the change of context from around Hong Kong presented certain concerns. The notions of the nativeness and location were rebalanced and proved significant in the context of wartime Hong Kong. Some Chinese newspapers such as the *Hong Kong Libao* struggled to remain locally connected since the culture and politics of Shanghai are quite different from that of Hong Kong. More than this, the establishment of the literary public sphere in Hong Kong entailed the engagement of both Mainlanders and locals. *Sa Kong* discussed a vision to develop a cultural landmark in Hong Kong that involves manpower from the south and the local population in the construction of a new cultural center (Ho & Law, 2023). But, of course, this kind of smooth collaboration between the two entities was not always easy to accomplish in the real world. The warring state of Anti-Japanese War was adopted as the key theme by Southern literati and influenced the literary culture in Hong Kong.

*Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art*, which was edited by Xiao Gan, mainly aimed at publishing literary works on the topic of the Anti-Japanese War and it published academic works on the Japanese military politics, economy, and society (Fan, 2019). Although attempts were made to offer localized content, the supplement was unable to successfully associate with the local culture of Hong Kong and thus, was disappointing in terms of sales. It was apparent that there was a clash between the guest residence and deep cultivation of the Southerners literati of Hong Kong and the local culture. While Hong Kong is not very different from *Libao* in terms of challenges, more attempts were made in local promotion. For example, the supplement "Small Teahouse" actively participated in addressing problems and enshrinement of free speech and discussions. It spanned from ordinary people's banter on streets to current affairs from around the globe in a bid to build readers and editors' public sphere (Ho & Law, 2023). Thus, in its attempts to localize its content, albeit with limited resources and human staff, *Hong Kong Libao* demonstrated readiness to tailor its content to the new cultural climate.

#### **4.3 Imagine Elsewhere in Hong Kong's Free Space: The Role of Hong Kong's Literary Public Sphere in Xiao Hong**

The free space of Hong Kong also affected the life of Xiao Hong during her stay there; indeed, her story is an example of the impact of this free space on the southern literati. Xiao Hong came to Hong Kong at the beginning of 1940 and lived here until her death, writing some of her most important pieces including 'Hulan River' and 'Ma Bole'. For Xiao Hong, Hong Kong's free space opens up an individualistic freedom, going beyond the political meaning, to allow her to write as she wanted, beyond the political space and gain individuality. Xiao Hong went to Hong Kong for personal reasons, majorly for refuge from the increasingly severe bombing in Chongqing and in search of creative opportunities. The move, greatly criticized by some left-wing fellows as a weakness in her stand, was informed by a



passion and longing for peace and a good working environment to bring out the best in her (Duanmu, 2011). It is through the Hong Kong literary public sphere that Xiao Hong got an avenue for publication of her works and other related literary activities that greatly influenced her creativity.

During her stay in Hong Kong, Xiao Hong managed to write over 300,000 words and create a number of immortal works. Her publications in Hong Kong newspapers and periodicals, like *Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art* and *Sing Tao Daily*, reflect a flowering literary public sphere that had sustained her creativity. The central characteristic of Xiao Hong's literary activities in Hong Kong was a focus on personal and independent expression, breaking away from the mainstream political themes abundant at this time (Merlin, 2011). Participation in many public literary activities, such as the symposium on "Female Students and March 8 Festival" and activities organized to commemorate Lu Xun's birth, further connected Xiao Hong with the literary public sphere of Hong Kong. This supplied her with an avenue to put across views on literature and make her a part of the local literature circle (Yang, 2011). Contrasted with Xiao Hong, the works she wrote tended to be personalized and nostalgic in tone, relating more to her hometown and personal experiences rather than fitting into the larger anti-Japanese war narrative found in "Biography of Hulan River" and "Ma Bole."

In the novel "Biography of Hulan River," Xiao Hong has given up both the complete story and central characters, and instead used a loose structure with lyrical prose to express her thoughts about Hulan River City. This novel, together with some other works like "Back Garden" and "March in a Small Town," manifests a strong sense of nostalgia and personal expression highly unrelated to the grand narrative of mainstream discourse at that time (Wen-yu, 2001). Among the final novels of Xiao Hong, "Ma Bole" uses the Anti-Japanese War as its background to break through the traditional creativity of anti-Japanese war literature. The satirical tone and focus on the daily lives of people in belligerent situations are the unique features of Xiao Hong's literary imagination and independent spirit (Chen, 1999).

#### 4.4 Impact on Hong Kong's Literary Public Sphere

Its impact on Hong Kong's literary public sphere was more than the sum of southern literati's individual contributions. Their presence and activities created an atmosphere of dynamism in culture, where the traditional and modern in literary practices existed together and interacted. In this period, a distinct literary field emerged in Hong Kong, as multiple cultural influences converged, with the formation of a provisional cultural center. The interchange between the Southern literati and the local literary circle gave rise to the creation of new forms and genres in literature. In this free space of Hong Kong, experimentation and innovation ran wild, and the diverse use of literary expressions was opened. This kind of cultural exchange has enriched the local scenes of literature and contributed to the development of the general literary public sphere of Hong Kong. This interaction has left a legacy in the continued impact that Southern literati have on Hong Kong's cultural and literary scenes. Their contribution set the base for further literary practices and a certain precedence for the integration of diverse cultural uses. The free space of Hong Kong provided a special environment for literary activities, fostering a sense of cultural continuity and innovation that persisted over time.

#### 4.5. Summary of Findings

This research would, therefore, show that Southern literati had played a very crucial role in developing Hong Kong's cultural and literary scene during its wartime period. This contribution of theirs to create a center for culture, to raise a public sphere for literature, and construct new forms and genres of literature itself turned Hong Kong into a vibrant site for culture. The unique political and social environment of Hong Kong provided an apt space for these intellectuals to indulge in

cultural activities and strive toward creative freedom. In this period, the Southern literati interacted with the local literary circle, shaping a dynamic and diversified cultural atmosphere that showed the convergence of traditional and modern literary practices. This is how, within this cultural exchange and innovation, future literary undertakings in Hong Kong were founded, and it contributed to the developmental formation of the literary public sphere in this city.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 The Duality of Nativeness and Freedom in Hong Kong's Literary Landscape

The findings bring to the fore the complex relationship that existed between nativeness and freedom in Hong Kong's wartime literary landscape. Big contingencies of the southern literati who swept into Hong Kong created a unique cultural space combined with local traditions and newfound freedoms. This duality finds an echo in the literary activities and contributions of these intellectuals, gesturing between a quest for the maintenance of cultural heritage and innovation in expression. The question of nativeness, discussed by Wang (2007), alludes to the deep roots of the Southern literati in their cultural and literary traditions. These are traditions that they brought over from the mainland, forming a platform on which they were to base their literacy practices in Hong Kong. This temporary freedom, made possible by Hong Kong's unique political environment, would enable the literati of the area to work with new forms and ideas, setting the ground for a dynamic literary public sphere. Such is Hu (2014) vision of a new cultural center in the south, a Hong Kong, as propounded by Hu Shi himself in 2014 on page 616. His appeal for the acceptance of new culture and the peaceful transition of old-fashioned forces encapsulates the balance between the preservation of cultural heritage and embracing modernity. This finds further elaboration in Sa Kong's declaration that Hong Kong would be a confluence of the old culture of Shanghai and the local culture of South China. Alternatively, this vibrant and innovating environment is elaborated by Fung (2001) as he declares that Hong Kong shall be the inflowing point for Shanghai's old culture and South China's local culture. The findings also highlight the challenges for Southern literati to achieve this balance. From the mainland to Hong Kong's local context meant a cultural shift in which these intellectuals had to adapt their literary practices. Publications like Hong Kong Libao reveal how these problems of nativeness and locality, as part of localization efforts, still ensue, which are, in their manifestation of cultural integration, highly complex (Li, 2012).

### 5.2 The Role of Newspapers and Periodicals in Constructing the Literary Public Sphere

It is believed that the participation of the Southern literati in newspapers and periodicals helped drive the construction of Hong Kong's literary public sphere. Publications, like Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art and Li Bao, are considered essential platforms for literary expression and cultural exchange. The newspapers opened up a space for the Southern literati to express themselves, develop a literary imagination, and communicate with the community. The transplantation of the mainland newspapers in Hong Kong symbolized the guest residence in the public domain of literature. The re-publication in Hong Kong saw Shanghai Libao still retain its core figures, although Sa Kong and Cheng Shewo played important roles. Although characterized by challenges of relocation in a new cultural region, these publications still maintained their structure and content, thus putting much emphasis on the transplanting of mature publishing mechanisms and cultural practice (Cheng, 1956). However, the adaptation of Hong Kong's local context proved pretty difficult. The interplay between nativeness and locality became central to the wartime Hong Kong experience. Newspapers like Hong Kong Libao were hard-pressed in maintaining their local relevance against the backdrop of

cultural and political differences between Shanghai and Hong Kong. The great accomplishments of Hong Kong Libao have not been highly regarded by academic circles, and many relate its decline to political stances and separations among the original talents (Li, 2012).

The construction of Hong Kong's reading public sphere could not do without the cooperation from both the mainlanders and local residents either. What Sa Kong called for in Hong Kong was a combination of manpower from the south and local residents in the establishment of a cultural center, with hopes to build up a new cultural center through collective efforts (Fung, 2001). However, this harmonious collusion was often difficult to achieve in practice. The anti-Japanese War theme became a main slogan of the southern literati's efforts at shaping the literary public sphere in Hong Kong. Edited by Xiao Gan, *Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art* primarily published literary works about Anti-Japanese War and paid much attention to the analysis of Japanese military politics, economy, and society (Fan, 2019). Despite all the efforts with localization, it often failed to touch the local characteristics of Hong Kong, making its sales unsatisfactory. Thus, a very clear contradiction became apparent between the residence of the Southern literati and their deep cultivation in Hong Kong and the local cultural atmosphere. However, Libao of Hong Kong did more in terms of local promotion despite the challenges it had to face. For example, the supplement "Small Teahouse" was an important channel through which local issues were engaged and served as a platform for free speech and discussion. The topics ranged from people's street talk to international current affairs in an effort to construct a public space for readers and editors (Fung, 2001). In its endeavor to localise its content within the limitations of staff and resources, Hong Kong Libao showed that it was committed to and serious about adapting itself to a new cultural environment.

### 5.3 Xiao Hong and the Free Space of Hong Kong

Among the many Southern writers and intellectuals of modern China, Xiao Hong's sojourn in Hong Kong is most representative of the changing power of the city's free space. It was in early 1940 that Xiao Hong arrived in Hong Kong to spend the last years of her life by writing some very important works, including "Biography of Hulan River" and "Ma Bole." In the case of Xiao Hong, Hong Kong provided free space that activated personal meaning beyond politics in a quest for creative freedom and personal expression. The development that influenced Xiao Hong's arrival in Hong Kong was purely based on personal motive—fleeing the ever-increasing bombing of Chongqing and finding enough reason to look out for other creative opportunities. It was a move that was criticized by some of her left-wing colleagues and based on her desire for a peaceful and conducive environment for writing (Duanmu, 2011). It is through the Hong Kong literary public sphere that Xiao Hong was able to find an outlet for her publications and other literary activities that contributed to her creative output. During her sojourn in Hong Kong, Xiao Hong completed over 300,000 words, bringing out many of her works, which are timeless. Publications in Hong Kong newspapers and periodicals, such as *Ta Kung Pao Literature and Art* and *Sing Tao Daily*, were facilities that testify to the efflorescent state of a literary public sphere, which kept her creativity going. In all the literary activities Xiao Hong engaged in during her time in Hong Kong, individual and independent expression is given significance and often departs from mainstream political themes (Merlin, 2011). Such participation in public literary activities as her attendance at the symposium on "Female Students and March 8 Festival" and the commemoration of Lu Xun's birth further connected Xiao Hong with Hong Kong's literary public sphere (Yang, 2011). These activities gave her an opportunity to express her literary views and combine her thoughts with the local literary circle. However, Xiao Hong's works, such as "Biography of Hulan River" and "Ma Bole," have a high tendency to be engulfed in personal nostalgia and represent only the countryside and her own individual struggle against Japanese aggression.

In the novel “Biography of Hulan River,” Xiao Hong renounces both a complete story and a central character, showing a preference for a loose structure and lyrical prose that explores the life of the Hulan River City. This, as well as many other works, such as “Back Garden” and “March in a Small Town,” is covered with great nostalgia and self-expression, far from the grand narrative mainstream at the time (Wen-yu, 2001). Her last novel, “Ma Bole,” although set against the background of the Anti-Japanese War, breaks through the traditional creative mode of anti-Japanese war literature. Its satirical tone and concern for the everyday lives of ordinary people in wartime reflect the unique literary imagination and independent spirit that are hallmarks of Xiao Hong (Chen, 1999).

#### **5.4 The Influence of Southern Literati on Hong Kong’s Cultural and Literary Landscape**

The influence exerted by the Southern literati did not end here, at the level of individual contribution. More importantly, their existence and activity contributed to stimulating a dynamic cultural atmosphere where traditional and modern literary practices flowed freely. It led to the constitution of an independent literary field in Hong Kong, in which there is a confluence of different cultural influences and the founding of a temporary cultural center. The interchange between the Southern literati and the local circle of letters thus engendered new forms and genres in this free space. The atmosphere was fertile with experimentation and innovation, which manifested in an enormous variety of literary expressions. This exchange has greatly enriched the local literature and helped develop the overall literary public sphere of Hong Kong. This legacy reverberates in the continued influence that the Southern literati had over Hong Kong’s cultural and literary arena. The work provided a foundation on which future literature would be built and set a precedent for the space of diversified cultural practice within the integration of cultural and literary discourses. Free space in Hong Kong has provided a unique setting for literary activities that gave a feeling of cultural continuity and novelty, as it survived across time.

#### **5.5 Implications for Contemporary Cultural Studies**

The findings of this research have far-reaching implications for contemporary cultural studies. In this sense, twin ideas of nativeness and freedom define the literary scene in Hong Kong during wartime, illuminating the dynamic balances of cultural integration and innovation. Southern literati experiences in Hong Kong underscore a certain proper balance of cultural heritage against the needs for creative freedom and experiment. The role played by newspapers and periodicals toward the creation of the literary public sphere thus reflects the actual potency of the media platform in facilitating cultural exchange and public engagement. The lessons learned from the challenges that Southern literati face in terms of maintaining local relevance and adapting to a new cultural environment are invaluable for contemporary cultural practitioners and policymakers. The case of Xiao Hong in Hong Kong has served to typify the way in which free space could be reinvented as that outlet for individual creativity and expression. Her writings, marked with characteristic independent and very personal themes, illustrate the importance bestowed upon supportive settings for artistic innovation. The realization of the lasting legacy that the Southern literati brought to Hong Kong’s cultural and literary terrain continues to resonate with the lasting value of their contributions to retain a richness of insights from experience that continue to inform contemporary cultural studies.

#### **5.6 Future Research Directions**

There are especially some areas which such research has opened up. The role of lesser figures and smaller publications in shaping Hong Kong’s literary public sphere remains relatively unexplored. In the future, research could be broadened to include more sources and voices, thus offering a broad overview of the period in question with its cultural dynamics. Other factors that could be further developed and researched are the impacts of Southern literati on other Hong Kong cultural forms,

including visual arts, theater, music, and so on. Cultural interaction in these multiple forms might be able to reveal new aspects of the very complex situation of cultural exchange and innovation. Comparative studies to Hong Kong with respect to other cities playing a cultural center role during the war and migration periods would give new insights into the bigger picture pertaining to resilience and cultural integration. Knowing the experiences of varied centers of cultures would bring forth light in the contemporary efforts aimed at engendering expansive and lively cultural environments.

## 6. CONCLUSION

It has been found that the Southern literati deeply influenced Hong Kong's cultural and literary circles during the wartime period. That influx of intellectuals fleeing turmoil on the mainland made Hong Kong a lively cultural center, marked by the interplay between nativeness and freedom. Their presence instigated the constitution of a specific literary field that aimed to link traditional Chinese literature with modern, innovative forms. It is such findings that would support this duality of life in heritage and freedom in creativity as would many leaders including Hu Shi and Sa Kong. This is a vision that these leaders made for Hong Kong as a new cultural center, with the essence of the tense balance that had to be kept between issues of heritage and innovation. This duality was furthered with the challenges pursued from publications such as the Hong Kong Libao, which had to stay relevant in local contexts, furthering an ideal means of staying culturally relevant.

Xiao Hong's literary journey in Hong Kong is an example of what new life the free space in the city can take up. The great outburst of prolific work on personal and nostalgic themes only speaks to the importance of supportive environments to the practice of an art. Her works, such as "Biography of Hulan River" and "Ma Bole," have been examples of individual richness of creativity that has been remaining undefeated by the mainstream political narrative. The role of newspapers and periodicals in the construction of Hong Kong's literary public sphere was very crucial. These platforms made cultural exchange and public engagement possible with a view to underlining the role of media in the development of literature. The co-operative efforts which existed between the mainlander and the local residents, despite having some inherent problems, helped in forming a dynamic cultural environment with diversity. The research opens up many other topics for possible future investigation, like contributions by smaller figures or publications, and the southern literati's influence on other cultural forms. Comparative studies between Hong Kong and another cultural center under wartime situations would place in sharper relief the cultural dynamics of integration and resilience.

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