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Carol P. Lai, *Media in Hong Kong: Press Freedom and Political Change, 1967–2005*. (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), 269 pp.

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Lai's book analyzes the changing relationships between the news media and political power in Hong Kong from the colonial to the post-colonial era. Applying a historical and political economic analysis, Lai emphasizes how the complicated interactions among political forces, market forces, journalistic professionalism, and local public opinions shaped the development of press freedom in the city.

The study illustrates several key themes which are important to both the Hong Kong media and the general theoretical understanding of media–power relationship. These include, to name a few: (1) how political and economic forces sometimes worked together to exert control on public discourses, and yet sometimes worked against each other to leave room for freedom of expression, (2) how journalistic professionalism and public opinion served as counteracting forces preventing the media from completely succumbing to political pressure, and (3) how self-censorship was implemented and resisted within the context of news organizations.

These major themes and arguments, however, are not groundbreaking in the context of Hong Kong journalism research. In fact, the book could probably be improved if the author had built more and stronger linkages with the existing media studies in Hong Kong. For just one example, it is a bit surprising how little the book draws on Joseph M. Chan and Chin-chuan Lee's *Mass Media and Political Transition* (1991), which has provided much insight on the historical evolution of the Hong Kong press during the colonial era as well as a nuanced analysis of the changes in “journalistic paradigms” during the transition period. The discussions of the existing literature in Hong Kong media studies in chapter 1 may be just enough for this book. But a deeper, more comprehensive and more synthetic review would not only do better justice to past research, but also provide a more solid basis for the author's own analysis.

Meanwhile, some of the more specific arguments are also debatable. For example, I disagree with the argument in chapter 4 that “popular nationalistic sentiments” in Hong Kong rivaled with “official nationalism” during the Taiwan presidential election in 2000. In fact, opinion polls in March 2000 showed that more than 70 percent of the Hong Kong people were against Taiwan independence—hardly sentiments rivaling with Chinese official nationalism. For another example, I would also beg to differ with the statement in chapter 6 that, in the post-colonial era, apparently only one mass newspaper, one specialist paper, and one commercial broadcaster “maintained a critical stance towards the HKSAR and expressed concerns about the Chinese meddling in Hong Kong affairs” (p. 174). On the contrary, as far as local issues are concerned, because of economic problems and the perceived incompetence of the Tung administration, many news media have been highly critical toward the SAR government.

Nevertheless, despite the above limitations, it should be fair to say that the major arguments of the book remain valid and quite well articulated. On this basis I would recommend it to anyone interested in understanding more about the case of Hong Kong, which indeed has general theoretical relevance.

Reference

Chan, Joseph M., and Chin-chuan Lee. 1991. *Mass Media and Political Transition*. New York: Guilford.