

The Forgotten Early Chinese-Language Newspaper in Latin America: History and Role of *Hoy Men Kong Po* in Cuba

El Periódico Olvidado en Idioma Chino de la América Latina Temprana: Historia y Rol del "Hoy Men Kong Po" en Cuba

拉美早期华文报纸钩沉：古巴《開明公報》的历史与作用

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Abstract: Early Chinese-language newspapers in Latin America were a vital carrier of social memory for the Chinese community and a key window for academics to understand the social situation of the Chinese diaspora in the mentioned region. As the longest-running Chinese-language newspaper in Cuba, the centre of Chinese-language media in Latin America in the last century, *Hoy Men Kong Po* (開明公報) was highly representative and significant. In this study, we conducted an in-depth excavation of this newspaper stored in the National Library of China. We sorted out and reviewed the historical context and different stages of its establishment. Subsequently, based on a structural weekly sampling study of more than a thousand copies of this newspaper from 1955 to 1959, we identified six major classifications of its contents and analysed their corresponding characteristics and impacts on the Chinese community in Cuba.

Key Words: *Hoy Men Kong Po*; Chinese-language newspaper; overseas Chinese in Latin America; Chee Kung Tang; Min Chih Tang.

Resumen: Los primeros periódicos chinos en América Latina constituyeron un crucial repositorio de memoria social para las comunidades chinas de ultramar, además de fungir como ventana analítica para el estudio de sus condiciones societales. El *Hoy Men Kong Po* (開明公報), como el periódico chino de mayor longevidad en Cuba -epicentro mediático sinológico latinoamericano del siglo XX- posee particular relevancia académica. Esta investigación examina los archivos del periódico conservados en la Biblioteca Nacional de China, reconstruyendo sistemáticamente su contexto histórico y fases evolutivas. Mediante un muestreo semanal estructurado aplicado a más de mil ejemplares publicados entre 1955 y 1959, se identificaron seis categorías temáticas predominantes. El análisis subsiguiente revela sus características editoriales distintivas y su profundo impacto en la configuración identitaria de la comunidad china cubana.

Palabras clave: *Hoy Men Kong Po*; periódico en chino; chinos en América Latina; Chee Kung Tang; Min Chih Tang.

摘要: 拉美早期中文报刊既是华侨社群社会记忆的重要载体，也是学界考察该地区华侨社会境况的关键窗口。作为上世纪拉美中文媒体重镇古巴存续时间最长的中文报纸，《開明公報》（*Hoy Men Kong Po*）具有特殊代表性与研究价值。本文基于中国国家图书馆馆藏对该报进行深度挖掘，系统梳理其历史脉络与发展阶段，通过对1955-1959年间千余份报纸展开构造周抽样研究，提炼出六大内容类别，进而解析其内容特性及对古巴华侨社会产生的深层影响。

[关键词] 開明公報；华文报刊；拉美人；致公堂；民治党

1. Introduction

As a carrier of overseas Chinese social memory, Chinese-language newspapers are of key significance for restoring the development history of the overseas Chinese and understanding the structure of their social organizations. Despite that the study of the Chinese in Latin America and Latin American media (Zhi & Haowen, 2023) has received more attention as the relationship between China and Latin America has grown closer

since the new century, it still has been limited the relevant exploration of early Chinese-language newspapers in Latin America at the beginning of the 20th century. As early as the beginning of this century, Li Anshan (2004) pointed out that the neglect of Chinese-language newspapers in Latin America was a major flaw in the study of overseas Chinese in Latin America. Nevertheless, due to the scarcity of early Chinese-language newspapers in Latin America that have survived to this day, for a long time, whether in China or other countries, the research content related to them has mostly stayed at introductory and collective macro-narratives, there are few in-depth thematic discussions beyond this area.

After entering the 21st century, with the continuous development of China's domestic archival data collection process, we have noticed that some early Latin American Chinese newspapers preserved in China have reappeared. A few scholars have studied and analyzed these newspapers in their works. Among them, representative ones include "Integration and Alienation: Overseas Chinese in Cuba" by Yuan Yan (2014), "A Foreign Country, Hometown: A Study of the Centennial Evolution of Chinese Society in Latin America (1847-1970)" by Liu Yehua (2011), and "Rise, Decline and Revival: The Evolution of the Chinese Community in Cuba, 1920-2005" by Xue Qixin (2022) and so on. In these studies, Latin American Chinese newspapers played a key role in "restoring" the appearance and development of early Latin American Chinese society. However, these works did not take newspapers themselves as the research object. In this sense, the academic community still lacks understanding of the running process and characteristics of early Chinese newspapers in Latin America and their role for the overseas Chinese at that time. As scholars believe, to a large extent, Chinese-language newspapers in Latin America are still "virgin lands" that need to be discovered, utilized and studied (Du, 2017).

It is difficult to explore early Chinese-language media in Latin America without paying attention to Cuba. As a gathering place for overseas Chinese in Latin America and the center of Chinese-language media in the early 20th century (Xu, 2022), its Chinese-language newspapers are typical and representative. The "*Hoy Men Kong Po*" was founded by the Chee Kung Tong (CKT) (致公堂) in Cuba in 1920. It was the longest-running Chinese-language newspaper in Cuba during the public distribution period of the 20th century¹. The newspaper was not only well-known among the Cuban

¹ The three major Chinese-language newspapers in Cuba are Wah Man Sion Po (Chinese Business Daily, 《华文商报》), Hoy Men Kong Po and Man Sen Yat Po (People's Voice Daily, 《民声日报》). The

overseas Chinese community at that time, but also had readers in Jamaica, Mexico, the United States, and even the United Kingdom. It was one of the three major Chinese-language newspapers in Cuba in the 20th century. In this article, we will explore based on the excavation of the original newspaper of *Hoy Men Kong Po*. While sorting out its newspaper running history, we will also analyse its content characteristics and the role it played on the Chinese community in Cuba at that time, hoping to provide information and references to further understand the early Latin American Chinese media for the academic community.

2. Methodology

As we mentioned, the scarcity of Chinese-language newspapers in Latin America in the 20th century has been a major obstacle to in-depth research on them. The *Hoy Men Kong Po* is no exception. Although it circulated in Cuba for nearly sixty years, the number of original copies that still exist is extremely rare, limited by the newspaper's circulation and material as well as factors such as environmental protection and preservation conditions. Currently, only a few fragmentary copies are known to exist at the headquarters of the Cuban Min Chih Tang (民治党, Democratic Party). The Stanford University Library in the United States has collections published from September 1966 to January and March 1967², while the National Library of China has stored collections of individual months from 1939 to 1942 and from 1952 to 1963. For this study, we mainly chose the *Hoy Men Kong Po* collected by the National Library of China, which is not only based on the consideration of "accessibility", but also because the newspapers it preserves can provide a more suitable range of publication period for the research. We conducted a nine-month data excavation and organization at the National Library of China from March to December 2022.

Overall, historical materials related to the *Hoy Men Kong Po* are extremely scarce and can only be found in individual Cuban Chinese historical writings, documents from the Republic of China period, and memoirs of veteran overseas Chinese (Jerez & Santana, 2003). Although they have obvious fragmentation characteristics, relevant Chinese and Spanish documents are still an important second-hand material for us to

Wah Man Sion Po was held from 1914 to 1961, Man Sen Yat Po was held from 1921 to 1960, and Hoy Men Kong Po was held from 1922 to 1976.

² See: Stanford Library. <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/5319763>

restore the newspaper running process of *Hoy Men Kong Po* via document analysis method. Through reading the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, we found that since the 1950s, the newspaper would issue a “Commemorative Issue” every year, and the contents contained in it were mostly the editors and readers recalling the past of running the newspaper. Reading and analyzing them actually constituted a kind of “interview” that spanned time and space, which also became an important first-hand source for this article to reproduce the development history and characteristics of the newspaper. We will further show the related content in the third part.

In the analysis of the content setting and function of the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, we focused on the situation of the newspaper from 1955 to 1959. This period was the end of the prosperity and stability of the Chinese community in Cuba³, and also corresponded to the relatively stable and mature development stage of this newspaper itself. Considering the diverse content published in the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, classifying it was a necessary step if we wanted to analyze its characteristics and functions. In order to improve the research efficiency while ensuring the rationality and stability of the classification, this study used the “constructed week sampling” to sample the collections during this period. This method not only took into account the time factor, but also solved the problem of the cyclical bias that existed in simple random sampling (Riffe, Aust & Lacy, 1993; Meng, Gao & Li, 2017). This article selected one constructed week every six months, from 1955 to 1959, which led to a total of 60 samples from 10 constructed weeks that were selected in a completely random manner for a total of 5 years for observation and research. We sorted out the 7,200 pieces of content involved, and conducted researches and discussions on their characteristics. After multiple rounds of comparisons, the research team reached an agreement to divide the relevant content, according to its nature and characteristics, into six categories, and carried out classification and statistics on these. The relevant results are shown in Table 1:

³ Since 1960, various reform measures after the Cuban Revolution have begun to have a comprehensive impact on the Chinese community.

Table 1: Classification of the contents and the corresponding percentage (1955-1959)

Category	Content Included	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
News	Reports and news on various recent events	25.1 %	27.6 %	25.5 %	26.5 %	25.8 %
Advertising	Promotional texts and advertisements for shops, enterprises and different products.	57.1 %	51.8 %	53.2 %	54.5 %	55.4 %
Commentary and analysis	Analysis and interpretation of current events, situations and hot topics.	0.7%	0.6%	0.8%	1.2%	1.5%
Notices and announcements	Various types of information disclosure, publication and announcement for the overseas Chinese community. Usually titled with “启, <i>qi</i> ” and “通告, <i>tonggao</i> ”	12.5 %	14.6 %	15.2 %	13.1 %	12.9 %
Invitation and mails	Short messages published on behalf of Chinese associations or individuals. Usually titled with “代柬, <i>daijian</i> ” and “代邮, <i>daiyou</i> ”	1.1%	2.7%	1.5%	1.7%	1.2%
Literary work	Novels, poetry, popular science articles, anecdotes of celebrities, etc.	3.4%	2.7%	3.8%	3.0%	3.2%

(Source: Drawn by the author)

Furthermore, based on this classification, the research team conducted studies on different categories of content through in-depth reading, and analyzed the characteristics and functions of each category of content based on different specific cases, and this will be what we mainly show in Chapter 4.

3. Establishment Process of *Hoy Men Kong Po*

3.1 Difficult start, bumpy road (1920-1944)

In 1920, Cuban CKT began to organize the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, but due to financial constraints and lack of talent, publication was suspended for a while. To raise more funds and improve the conditions for running the newspaper, Cuban CKT established the “Cuban-Jamaican Newspaper Company” in 1922 and sent commissioners to Jamaica to conduct a stock offering (Chen, 1955). With the sponsorship of the CKT in Jamaica and the hard work of the early editors of the *Hoy Men Kong Po* (Huang, 1958), the newspaper obtained the second-class letter franchise from the Havana Postal Administration. It reissued and published the first issue on May 3, 1922. However, at this time, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* was still barely surviving. Its office located in the headquarters building of CKT (Calle Salud, 14) (Chang, 2022) in Cuba was quite short of materials and the conditions were difficult. There was only one lithograph printing press for printing work.

Photo 1: First issue of Hoy Men Kong Po (3 May, 1922)



(Source: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Library, Cuban Overseas Chinese Archives.)

During this period, to distinguish itself from the other two major newspapers in the Cuban overseas community, *Man Sen Yat Po* (People's Voice Daily) and *Wah Man Sion Po* (Chinese Business Daily), *Hoy Men Kong Po* designated itself as an evening newspaper, focusing on reporting night and daytime news. In terms of the publication cycle, *Hoy Men Kong Po* was published six times a week, each time publishing two large sheets of paper for a total of eight pages. It was usually closed for one day on Sundays, Cuban public holidays and traditional Chinese festivals.

The sugar boom and the increase in the number of Chinese immigrants in Cuba may have improved the conditions for running the *Hoy Men Kong Po* to a certain extent in the late 1920s (Jerez & Santana, 2017: 187). However, the good times did not last long. The Depression and the political turmoil in Cuba in the 1930s made it difficult for the *Hoy Men Kong Po* to keep running. Especially after the newspaper moved to Campanario No.568, even electricity became a problem (Lin, 1953). Financial constraints and debt defaults even caused the newspaper to be closed. In 1939, Zhu Jiazhao (Federico Chi Casio), a well-known Chinese businessman and overseas Chinese leader in Cuba, served as the news director and presided over relevant work. By mobilizing resources from all parties and reporting party dues subsidies from the Cuban CKT at that time, the *Hoy Men Kong Po*

was gradually stabilized in the difficult situation. After the outbreak of the World War II, affected by the international situation, the mail charges, prices of paper, ink, and worker supplies for the *Hoy Men Kong Po* increased again (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 29 September, 1939). In the end, the newspaper relied on collecting debts accumulated in the early stage (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 16 February, 1939) and raising funds by organizing events to survive the crisis (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 3 June, 1942).

In the 1930s, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* sold more than 700 copies a day (Huang, 10 September, 1958). Despite financial constraints, the subscription fee for the newspaper remained at one peso and a cent per month. Especially during the War of China's Resistance Against Japan, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* also set up an additional "Hong Kong Special Line" to inform the overseas Chinese of the current situation in the country on a daily basis. At this time, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* had a relatively left-leaning stance. The newspaper once denounced Wang Jingwei's traitorous trip to Japan (Huang, 1958b), and its fierce rhetoric even made the Nanjing National Government decide to ban it (Zhou, 1999: 64). To a certain extent, this stance also had an important influence on the Cuban overseas community at that time. The famous progressive overseas Chinese José Wong (黄淘白), who was a member of the Revolutionary Alliance of the Overseas Chinese in America For Supporting the Workers and Peasants, was once an employee of the *Hoy Men Kong Po*.

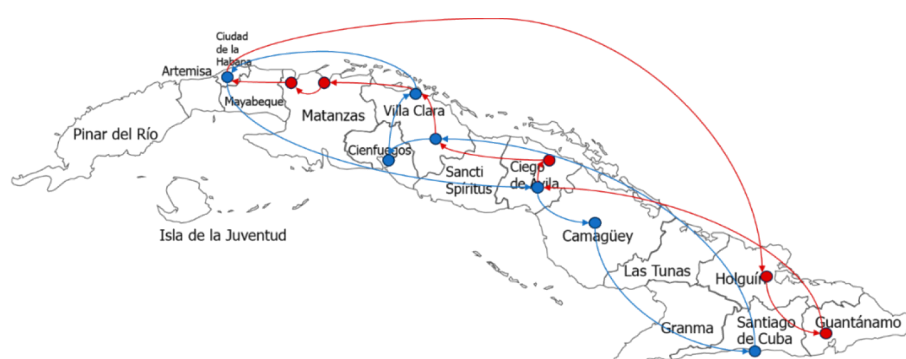
3.2 Rapid development, entering a good state (1945-1959)

After the World War II, the international and Cuban domestic situation ushered in a period of relative stability. The once-interrupted Chinese migration to Cuba was restarted, and the Chinese community in Cuba also gained new vitality. The CKT and the *Hoy Men Kong Po* of this period also saw rapid development. In January 1945, under the chairmanship of then president Zhu Jiazhao (Triana & Herrera, 2009: 75-80), Cuban CKT purchased two three-story houses at Manrique Street (Calle Manrique) 511 and 513 as the Havana headquarters. It was of great significance and also an important symbol of the party's prosperity. *Hoy Men Kong Po*, as the party's organ newspaper, naturally moved into it later. Different from the previous two sites, both its appearance and facilities had been greatly improved (Yu, 1958). As Li Pusheng (1958: 277) described, a member of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission of the National Government at the time, "The CKT's Cuban office has the best atmosphere and decoration in America." In 1946, China's Hongmen Min Chih Tang was established, and Cuban CKT was

renamed Cuban Min Chih Tang (MCT). *Hoy Men Kong Po* also became the official newspaper of the party.

As a feedback to the prosperity of the Chinese community in the 1940s and the development of the MCT, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* entered a more mature and stable new period in the 1950s, which was not only reflected in the the large number of MCT members with substantial assets (Yuan, 2014: 123) and establishment of the “Chinese Democratic Party Publishing Company (Compañía Editora del Partido Demócrata Chino S.A.)”⁴, but also in the increase in the circulation of *Hoy Men Kong Po* in a more intuitive way: during this period, the newspaper’s daily circulation reached 2,000 copies per day (Ayer Press, 1946: 1096), and even reached 3,500 to 3,600 copies at its peak (López, 2013: 186). Due to the large number of readers spread across the island, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* needed to send commissioners to various provinces twice a year to collect fees (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The locations of fee payments and routes of the fee collectors for Hoy Men Kong Po (1957)



(Source⁵: Drawn by the author)

Although *Hoy Men Kong Po* equipped with a large printing press at this time, in order to innovate the newspaper industry and improve the quality of the newspaper, Zhu Jiazhao still mobilized to raise more than 7,000

⁴ Véase: Hun JG (2014). El periodico Hoi Men Kong Po. Available at: <http://chinosdecuba.blogspot.com/2014/05/el-periodico-hoy-men-kong-po.html>

⁵ Red line: First half of the year route; Blue line: Second half of the year route. *Hoy Men Kong Po*, March 18, April 13-30, May 6-22, 1957; September 25-28, October 3-26, November 4-11, 1957.

pesos to purchase different sizes printing models from Hong Kong in 1953. This comprehensively refreshed the appearance of *Hoy Men Kong Po*, which to some extent marked that the newspaper had entered its “heyday”. As its editor Chen Yiming (1954) said at the time: “the situation of its initial period cannot be compared with what it is now.” In addition, we can also see this “prosperity” from the anniversary ceremony held by the *Hoy Men Kong Po* every seventh month of the lunar calendar: celebrities from all circles and the Hongmen branch of the Americas came to celebrate, the Golden Eagle Theatre (金鷹劇院), a significant place for social connections and interpersonal activities among the overseas Chinese community in Cuba, also arranged for film screenings, and the Lion Dance Group also performed to add to the fun (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 23 September, 1954).

Photo 2: The Hoy Men Kong Po after changing to new printing models (9 Jan, 1954)



Source: Library National of China

3.3 Gradual decline, being the history (1960-1980)

The impact of various reforms implemented after the Cuban revolution on the Cuban Chinese began to appear in the 1960s. Most Chinese businesses were nationalized, and the Chinese community began to gradually decline amid the turmoil. The impact on Chinese-language newspapers in Cuba occurred in the 1960s, especially after the establishment of diplomatic relations

between the People's Republic of China and Cuba. The Cuban revolutionary authorities carried out many rectifications on the media and communication industry, including the Chinese-language newspapers. In October 1960, the Cuban Kuomintang newspaper *Man Sen Yat Po* ceased operations and was taken over by personnel from the *Kwong Wah Po* supported by the Cuban Communist Party. Due to its pro-Kuomintang stance, *Wah Man Sion Po* also ceased publication in 1961 (Xue, 2022: 323-324). At this time, only the *Hoy Men Kong Po* of the three major Chinese newspapers in Cuba was still publishing (Jerez & Santana, 2003: 196). This might have an important relationship with its stance of promoting and supporting the socialist New China. In response to the sudden changes in the social environment, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* became more cautious and low-key in running the newspaper. Not only did it no longer publish editorial comments, it also no longer held celebrations. As the United States implemented an economic blockade against Cuba in 1962, various supplies began to be in short supply, and due to this reason, in the same year, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* reduced its layout to two small sheets, and its content was reduced by half compared to before. This was the biggest change since its inception and the most intuitive manifestation of its decline. At the same time, the decline of *Hoy Men Kong Po* also came from within the Chinese community: the continuous decrease of Chinese readers in Cuba was gradually eroding the foundation of *Hoy Men Kong Po*. (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 10 September, 1958).

Photo 3: The *Hoy Men Kong Po* after reducing the page size (15 January, 1962)



Source: Library National of China

Despite such internal and external troubles, *Hoy Men Kong Po* continued to publish for more than ten years, until 1976. In this year, *Hoy Men Kong Po* and *Kwong Wah Po* merged to form *Kwong Wah Po and Hoy Men Kong Po Joint Issue* (光華報・開明報聯合刊). On one hand, this was naturally a required adjustment to the shortage of materials and the reduction of readers (Min Chih Tang, 1976:116-119), and on the other hand, it was a necessary measure to give a continuation to the *Hoy Men Kong Po* and the Chinese-language media industry in Cuba. After the merger, the joint issue made several adjustments due to financial difficulties and stumbling blocks from relevant parties. It first changed from a daily newspaper to a Wednesday issue, then to a Tuesday publication, and the paper size and length of the articles continued to shrink. In 1981, it was “temporarily suspended” for several months. On February 2, 1982, the newspaper announced that since the paper source was cut off, it had not been resolved despite numerous applications from all parties, so it was changed to a tabloid format. However, after 1987, due to extreme lack of printed materials, it was forced to cease publication (Zhou, 1999: 178), and the *Hoy Men Kong Po* also came to the end of its history.

4. Content Features and Functions

As the pivotal information hub for Cuba’s overseas Chinese community, *Hoy Men Kong Po* developed a multidimensional content architecture that systematically evolved from information dissemination to cultural preservation. Through its dual-track international-local news coverage, the newspaper dismantled information barriers within the diaspora. Commercial advertisements bridged Chinese enterprises with local business integration, while editorial commentaries shaped community discourse. Public notices reinforced emotional bonds through communal alerts, and its pioneering proxy mailing system revolutionized diasporic communication. Serialized literary works further constructed transnational cultural corridors. This integrated content ecosystem not only transcended the linguistic and geographical constraints confronting mid-20th century Cuban Chinese, but also established a distinctive overseas information network through sustained content delivery, commercial networking, opinion convergence, and emotional engagement. Crucially, it functioned as an indispensable social mechanism - consolidating intra-community cohesion while mediating dialogues between the diaspora and mainstream Cuban society.

4.1 News: introduction and transmission of information

By the mid-20th century, the Cuban news media industry had developed considerably, however, the language and demand differences still largely isolated the Cuban Chinese from the “information island”. In this sense, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* acted as an “information intermediary” or “broker” that filtered and arranged external information and eventually “bring in” it to the overseas Chinese community. As we can see, as an important part of the overseas news published by the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, the “International News” column provided the Cuban overseas Chinese with a broad international perspective, not only 90% of its content was compiled from internationally renowned news agencies (e.g.: International Agency, United Agency and United Press), but also its sources covered more than 60 countries in the world. In terms of content, in addition to international events, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* also provided more international content related to overseas Chinese and China, especially reporting more on the hometowns of the Cuban Chinese - Guangdong Xinhui (新会) and Taishan (台山). These “International News” not only maintained the connection between the Cuban overseas Chinese and the world, but also paid attention to and alleviated the homesickness of the Chinese, and to a large extent maintained the information synchronization between the Cuban overseas Chinese and the world, the motherland and the hometown. The “Cuban News” as another part of the overseas information also reflected similar characteristics. The *Hoy Men Kong Po* not only reported on major public events in Cuban society, but also paid special attention to the local government dynamics, including but not limited to government officials’ movements, large-scale actions, decrees and organizational composition. The content on the local security situation was also often published. These news provided key information support for the overseas Chinese to grasp the surrounding dynamics and respond and adjust in time.

Besides bringing in external information to the overseas Chinese community, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* also played a key role in making the internal news of the overseas Chinese community “flow”. Although most of the Cuban Chinese were concentrated in Havana in the first half of the 20th century, there were also Chinese immigrants in other provinces, and the whole Cuban Chinese population was very scattered (Yuan: 2014: 214). Therefore, it was not easy for the news of the Chinese communities in different places to circulate among each other. The internal news published by the *Hoy Men Kong Po* involved various parts of Cuba, which broke the geographical boundaries to a large extent and promoted the dissemination of overseas Chinese news throughout the island of Cuba. Especially in terms

of content, these news covered both big and small matters, ranging from important events such as the celebration of the president's inauguration by the whole overseas Chinese community (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 25 February, 1955), to trivial news such as the treatment of stomach diseases by overseas Chinese (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 25 January, 1955). All the information related to the overseas Chinese community, regardless of size, was reported. These seemingly "chaotic" contents actually enriched the appearance and details of the Cuban Chinese society that the overseas Chinese read and shared. It was also thanks to the reporting and circulation of these internal news by the *Hoy Men Kong Po* that the Cuban overseas Chinese community became more clear, close and vital.

4.2 Advertising: commercial display and bridging

"Advertising" was the largest content category in the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, which was distributed from the second to the seventh page. This situation was not surprising. According to the registration of the Chinese Consulate in 1942, there were 8,611 merchants among the 185,000 Chinese and overseas Chinese in Cuba at that time, accounting for 46.6% (Corbitt, 1971: 106-107). Although they were numerous, they had a high degree of homogeneity. On one hand, their businesses were mostly concentrated in the *banzhuang* (办庄)⁶, grocery wholesale, retail shops, restaurants, laundries and fruit shops (Liu, 1949). On the other hand, although the geographical distribution of Chinese business activities was very wide, most of the shops were concentrated in Chinatown in Havana, and even the names were very similar⁷. This brought about the "involution" of the Cuban Chinese merchants to some extent. How to promote and display their products naturally became a topic of concern for the Cuban Chinese merchants. As we have found, most of the contents in the category of "advertising" in the *Hoy Men Kong Po* were published by the shops in Havana Chinatown, which were significantly concentrated in the *banzhuang* and retail industries. Despite the limited space of each advertisement, they all described in detail as much as possible, showing the names, addresses, phone numbers, product lists and features of the shops. These contents made the *Hoy Men Kong Po* a "showcase" of the Cuban Chinese shops and their products, and

⁶ It mainly refers to industries and stores that import and export Chinese products.

⁷ Such as Wing On Lung (永安隆), Kuong On Long (广安隆), Wong Yi Cia (广生隆) and so on are the names of *banzhuang*.

at the same time, an important field for the Chinese merchants to compete for influence and customers.

Figure 2: Chinese merchant advertisements and local merchant advertisements in *Hoy Men Kong Po*



(Source: *Hoy Men Kong Po*, 1 December, 1957)

Interestingly, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* not only attracted local Chinese merchants to advertise, but also drew the attention of local enterprises. It is not difficult to find that many local products also favored to promote on the newspaper. Compared with the Chinese merchant advertisements, their layouts were larger and mainly based on pictures, highlighting the product packaging, brand or history, with Spanish introductions and Chinese translations to emphasize the product features. These products were significantly different from those operated by the Cuban Chinese, including but not limited to canned food, beverages, daily chemicals, electrical appliances and other industrial products. Although we are not clear whether these products were well-known to the overseas Chinese at that time, the appearance of local products on the Chinese newspaper meant that the *Hoy Men Kong Po* played a “bridging” role in bringing them into the Cuban Chinese community. We believe that this largely benefited from the *Hoy Men Kong Po*’s niche coverage of the Cuban Chinese and its membership of the Cuban Advertising Association (Asociación de Anunciantes de Cuba). The former made it a potentially effective channel for local enterprises or products to enter the Chinese market, while the latter provided the *Hoy Men Kong Po* with a professional identity and endorsement when facing local enterprises.

4.3 Commentary and Analysis: Output and Guidance of Opinions

“Commentary and Analysis” is the smallest in terms of the number of articles, but it is one of the few opinion-oriented contents in the whole newspaper. We find that its related content is mostly about the insights and analysis of the current situation of China and that of Cuba, especially when encountering events related to overseas Chinese, more ink is spent to explain and analyze them. This provides information “processing” to reduce the cognitive load of the local overseas Chinese, and also guides the opinions of the overseas Chinese community, achieving the propaganda of their own opinions, or the opinions of the Cuban MCT.

However, the core of the American Democratic Party (American MCT) is still the “Hongmen” Society based on the Chinese diaspora (Hebei Literature and History Materials Editorial Department, 1993: 152-179), which has no more modern party claims besides representing the interests of the overseas Chinese. This also makes the *Hoy Men Kong Po* very different from the pro-Kuomintang *Wah Man Sion Po* and the Kuomintang mouthpiece *Man Sen Yat Po*. As we can see, the content it advocates is based on the “overseas Chinese” as the core rather than a certain determined ideology, which also gives its discourse a considerable degree of independence and autonomy. Especially in the period of 1955-1960 that we studied, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* showed a great deal of doubt and vigilance about the “communism” shown by mainland China, and on the other hand also criticized Chiang Ching-kuo’s words and deeds (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 1 November, 1955). After the anti-Chinese wave in Indonesia, seeing the Chinese Communist Party’s maintenance of the overseas Chinese, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* also published a comment that “only the socialist motherland cares about the overseas Chinese and protects their legitimate rights and interests” (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 23 December, 1959). As the *Hoy Men Kong Po* positioned itself as the “social mentor” and “people’s voice” of the overseas Chinese community, speaking for the overseas Chinese and promoting the social progress of the overseas Chinese community is its mission and responsibility (Yu, 1953), and this is also the core of its opinion departure.

Sometimes, the opinions of “Commentary and Analysis” are not limited to statements, and even play a role of unified planning and guidance for the behaviour of the overseas Chinese community to a certain extent. For example, in January 1959, Huang Xiansun, the editor-in-chief of the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, wrote a long article “My Opinion on the Fundraising Relief for the Cuban War Zone Refugees by the Overseas Chinese”. After analysing the progress of the Cuban Revolutionary Army and Castro’s actions, he called on everyone to donate relief to the Cuban war zone from the perspective

of the collective social interests of the overseas Chinese community, and proposed a specific action plan:

“We might as well raise funds on the one hand and inquire about the news on the other, and set the deadline for fundraising, preferably later by ten or twenty days, so that we can inquire from all sides during this period (...) The wealthy associations and the rich merchants who are good at trading will inevitably compete to donate more, and the total achievement of the donation will be expected to be impressive, exceeding 10,000 yuanes, otherwise if there are millions of refugees in the war zone, a mere 5,000 yuanes (...) It is not enough to move the listener and feel good.”

From the performance of the Cuban overseas Chinese community afterwards, this propaganda and guidance did have some effect. The Cuban Chinese established the Cuban Overseas Chinese Welfare Association, which was responsible for fundraising for disaster relief. At the same time, the Casino Chung Wah (中华总会馆) immediately borrowed 10,000 pesos from the Bank of China and donated it to the war zone refugees (Yuan, 2014: 182), which indeed played a role of “feeling good” with the Cuban people to a certain extent.

4.4 Notices and Announcements: Information Sharing and Disclosure

“Notices and Announcements” account for a large proportion of the articles in the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, and both are essentially a disclosure of some information or matters. Among them, “启, *qi*, notice” are mostly texts published by individuals to explain facts or request assistance to the public. According to the different purposes and objectives, they can be further divided into thank-you *qi* (谢启), condolence *qi* (哀启), donation *qi* (酬捐启), missing person *qi* (寻人启), etc. Since most of their contents are brief, they are scattered among the other contents of the *Hoy Men Kong Po*. Although the basic function of these notices is naturally a kind of information disclosure to the overseas Chinese community, at the same time it is also a sharing of experiences. Taking the thank-you *qi*, which are the most published by the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, as an example, it is not difficult to feel this feature (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 1 November, 1955):

I have been suffering from heart disease for years and has a swollen and painful abdomen. (...) Now I have been discharged from

the hospital safely, but during my hospitalization, I was repeatedly visited by the Pei Guotang brothers, the Min Chih Tang comrades and various relatives and friends, who gave me fruits and nourishing items. I was very grateful and had nothing to repay. I wrote a few words to express his gratitude.

Cheerful greetings to all
November 1
Zhu Qiuwei's Thank-You qi

We believe that the relevant notices published by the *Hoy Men Kong Po* can bring similar emotional experiences to both the parties involved and the ordinary readers. The disclosure of these information is not only a human exchange between the Cuban Chinese individuals, but also a spiritual promotion and emotional empathy of the Cuban overseas Chinese community. These notices also play an important role in enhancing trust, understanding and care among the overseas Chinese and establishing a broad emotional “community”.

“Announcements (*tonggao*), ” are mostly from the overseas Chinese associations, and their content mainly involves various aspects of the Cuban Chinese association life, including but not limited to the convening of meetings, resolutions, account income and expenditure, and staff appointment and removal, etc. The relevant content can be said to be detailed and detailed, and the associations involved are more than twenty. In some way, for the overseas Chinese community, this is an important manifestation of the “organizational managers” transparent and open information to the overseas Chinese and inviting them to participate in supervision. It is also thanks to the publication of these information by the *Hoy Men Kong Po* that in many cases, the urgent information can be quickly realized transmission and diffusion among local overseas Chinese. The following announcement is one of the representative examples (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 18 June, 1958):

Chinese General Chamber of Commerce Announcement No. 47-6

(1) The city government has ordered the chief of the inspection department to stop sending staff to check the scales. If anyone encounter such inspectors, please inform the Chamber .

(2) We overseas Chinese merchants are known for our honesty. We should always check the scales and weights themselves and need to be legal.

(3) If the scales and weights are legal, but the inspectors still make trouble, seem to be extorting us, we should refuse their demands, let them sue, and wait for the court to decide.

(4) This is to inform all overseas Chinese merchants.

June 14, Chinese General Chamber of Commerce

4.5 Invitation and Mail: Message Delivery and Communication

“Invitation and mail” are almost indispensable contents in every issue of the *Hoy Men Kong Po*. They are both texts sent by the newspaper on behalf of one or some objects. As an important composition in this category, “代柬, *daijian*” literally means sending invitations or letters on behalf of others. Their content is mostly very short, mostly in the form of one sentence, indicating the time, place, reason and invitees. Generally speaking, major events such as weddings, banquets, and commemorations of the overseas Chinese community constitute the main reasons for the notices of the *Hoy Men Kong Po*. The expected contact objects are often many and wide (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 7 July, 1958):

Daijian: On November 11th at 4 pm, the Zhu Peiguo Tong (朱沛国堂)⁸ will hold an engagement ceremony for the second son Yue Xiu and the eldest daughter Mei Zhen. (...). We invite relatives and friends, brothers, sisters and family members to come and instruct us, which will be a great honor.

Fang Renchu, Zhu Fuxiao respectfully invite

The publication of “*daijian*” highlights the communication tool attribute of the *Hoy Men Kong Po* for the overseas Chinese community. Although the organizers can naturally send invitations to the objects one by one through the traditional postal method, on the one hand, it undoubtedly means more expenses and work, and on the other hand, it also means that the participants need to be pre-excluded or limited. This is obviously inconvenient for large-scale or important overseas Chinese activities. The notices of the *Hoy Men Kong Po* can expand the contact range to all overseas Chinese readers while saving costs.

This communication function is even more evident in another important part of this category “代邮” (*daiyou*), means “sending mail on

⁸ An association of the Chinese immigrants in Cuba who considered themselves as descendants of the same ancestor with surname Zhu.

behalf of others”. Compared with “*daijian*”, it is more “specific” in terms of contact objects, that is, its purpose is to convey information or respond to a specific individual in a targeted manner. Since the communication reasons are mostly mutually understood or familiar between the contactor and the contacted person, the content is more concise. The following is one of the representative examples (*Hoy Men Kong Po*, 31 March, 1956):

Mr. Liang Dihuan, please note that the second red paper from Yundan (雲丹, Guantanamo Port) has been received. Don’t worry and wish you a safe journey.

April 19 Havana On Teng Tong (安定堂)

In most of the “*daiyou*”, these “contacted persons” often change their addresses or do not know the detailed addresses. Mr. Liang Dihuan mentioned in the above example belongs to this category. As a commissioner sent by the association, he often needs to travel around. After finishing the work in one place, he needs to leave for the next immediately, so his whereabouts are variable. In the meantime, if someone wanted information delivered to him, he needs to rely on the mail function of the *Hoy Men Kong Po*. No matter where the contacted person is, he only needs to buy or borrow a newspaper and read it. It can be said that at that time, the “Invitation and mail” of *Hoy Men Kong Po* provided an effective and irreplaceable communication tool for the overseas Chinese community.

4.6 Literary work: entertainment and diversion in life

Although previous scholars believed that Cantonese opera and homeland movies were the important or even the only entertainment for the Cuban Chinese at that time (Yuan, 2014: 138), through the exploration of the *Hoy Men Kong Po*, we think that the contents of “Literary work” published in it were also important entertainment and leisure ways for the Cuban Chinese community at that time.

Novels are the main component of this type of content, with about 2-3 different novels being serialized daily in the newspaper. These novels are often directly imported from Hong Kong, where the “New School” *Wuxia* Novels⁹ were popular during the 1950s, which is the period covered by this study. Due to their content style, which is in line with the concept of

⁹ The “New School” wuxia novels were characterized by their realistic portrayal of martial arts, their emphasis on individualism, and their exploration of contemporary social issues. (Teo, 2009).

“chivalry and eliminating evil” of the Hongmen, they have been favoured by the *Hoy Men Kong Po*. There were sixteen related serialized novels between 1955 and 1959 during this study period. These novels involved different dynasties, places, and characters, but they all contained rich Chinese traditional culture, such as calligraphy and painting, customs and habits, and poetry and *fu*, etc. To a certain extent, these contents had a subtle influence on inspiring or maintaining the interest of the overseas Chinese and their descendants in Chinese culture.

In addition to novels, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* also published many anecdotes, humorous jokes, popular science articles and other rich contents, each with its own characteristics: anecdotes and jokes were short in length, witty in language, and relaxing and pleasant. Popular science articles involved various aspects of knowledge, such as astronomy and geography, and were easy to understand. The most “elegant” content might be the “诗界” (*shijie*, poetry world) section of the newspaper, which published many poems by the Cuban overseas Chinese literati. These poems were mostly about the themes of homesickness and wandering in foreign lands, and were brilliant in style and full of emotion. These poems and songs were not only the expression of the literati’s emotions towards life, but also resonated with the overseas Chinese community because of their commonality in the themes.

In general, the “Literary work” content of the *Hoy Men Kong Po* was rich and diverse, bringing important fun and inspiration to the hard life of the Cuban overseas Chinese, as its readers commented on the newspaper’s supplement: “Holding a copy of *Hoy Men Kong Po*, it’s like walking on a beautiful scenic road. Its content is rich and interesting, making it hard to put down” (Liang, 1957). It can be seen that the *Hoy Men Kong Po* undoubtedly played an important role in adjusting the life of the Cuban Chinese.

5. Conclusion

In this article, we have restored the historical development of the *Hoy Men Kong Po* based on our exploration, and preliminary analyzed its content categories, basic characteristics and functions. It must be admitted that the establishment process of the *Hoy Men Kong Po* was full of difficulties and challenges, which was naturally related to the external situation and the rise and fall of the Cuban Chinese community. But the reason why it was able to operate for a long time was largely due to the perseverance of the newspaper staff and the Cuban MCT, as well as their sentiment of serving

the overseas Chinese. As we have seen, although the *Hoy Men Kong Po* had limited space, the six categories of content it published were all based on the needs and interests of the overseas Chinese community, and each played the role of news communication, business integration, opinion promotion, information disclosure, communication and contact, and entertainment. They built a kind of “community” based on information sharing, which was close, autonomous and easy to perceive for the Cuban overseas Chinese at different levels, which played an important role in maintaining the integration and development of the Cuban overseas Chinese community at that time.

It is thanks to the exploration of the *Hoy Men Kong Po* that even after a hundred years, as time changes, we can still read, understand and even feel the prosperity of the Cuban Chinese society at that time, and achieve a “transcendence of time and space” contact with the Cuban Chinese a hundred years ago. In our view, the *Hoy Men Kong Po* and other early Latin American Chinese newspapers are a continuous record of the memory of the Chinese society in various places in Latin America at that time, and this is also the value of our research on it. But we also realized deeply in this research that how to preserve these newspapers in the present may be more critical than how to use them, as their paper, ink and damage caused by browsing are constantly threatening the “life” of the memory they carry. In fact, before we went to the National Library of China to conduct research, some of the newspapers in its collection had to stop lending due to excessive paper damage. The rescue excavation and research of the early Chinese newspapers in Cuba and Latin America should attract the attention of all relevant scholars.

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