

Dr MA Ka Fai



Karina Africa  
BOLASCO



Gary LEUNG  
Kwan Ho



Mark TAN



AN Boshun



LIN Hsin Chin



# OPPORTUNITIES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL PUBLICATION

UNDERSTANDING OTHERS, LEARNING OTHERS, PRESERVING  
SELF-CHARACTERISTICS

DATE: NOVEMBER 12, 2005

VENUE: DRAMA THEATRE, HONG KONG ACADEMY FOR PERFORMING ARTS

MODERATOR: Dr MA Ka Fai  
Assistant Director of the Chinese Civilisation Centre, City University of  
Hong Kong

SPEAKERS: Karina Africa BOLASCO  
Founder and Assistant General Manager Anvil Publishing, Inc.

Gary LEUNG Kwan Ho  
Chief Executive Officer, Red Publishing

Mark TAN  
Chief Executive Officer, Page One Group; Head, Page One Publishing

AN Boshun  
Chief Editor, Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House Beijing Book  
Center

LIN Hsin Chin  
Editor-in-chief, China Times Publishing Company

Co-organiser: Mingpao Century Page



# Publishing as a Cultural and Creative Industry

A book publisher must fundamentally have the highest respect for both the creative acts of reading and writing books. He or she should be highly sensitive to how and why a writer writes and must own the resolve to gather every possible resource to thoughtfully put together this writer's book and put it out where readers can savour it.

Karina Africa BOLASCO

Founder and Assistant General Manager Anvil Publishing, Inc.

DR MA KA FAI:

Good morning and welcome to the Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum 2005. It is a great honour for me to be the moderator of this session. I feel extremely privileged to be sitting among the creative people of the publishing industry today. The topic for this session is opportunities for cross-cultural publications. The basic idea of cross-cultural experiences is the ability to understand the thinking of others and the ability to speak the language of others, without losing your own identity.

The first speaker I would like to introduce is Ms Karina Bolasco. Ms Bolasco is a well-known publisher and also a well-known writer. She is the founder and publishing manager of Anvil Publishing Incorporation. She was cited six times in "Publisher of the Year" by the Manila Critics Circle. Under her leadership 103 Anvil titles have won national book awards. In 1995 she was given the Outstanding Woman in the Nation's Service award for Literacy and Book Publishing. She was the former Chair of the National Committee on Cultural Education of the National Commission on Culture and the Arts from 1995 to 2001. She is currently the Vice-president for External Affairs of the Book Development Association of the Philippines. Ms Bolasco will share with us her thoughts and visions on publishing as cultural and creative industry.

MS KARINA AFRICA BOLASCO:

Good morning everyone. I am so glad we still have a crowd today.

In the last five years, the Philippine book industry has been producing 5,000 titles a year, already a significant growth from years ago, yet measly against the UK or

US annual output of 60,000 to 70,000 titles. Beset by high costs of paper and printing and distribution and a progressively dwindling readership, publishers have abandoned trade books altogether and have remained with textbooks which always have captive markets. Except for cookbooks and dictionaries, which are all trade book reliables, my own company has had to publish as many titles for as many small publics or audiences.

### Cater to different markets

In this strategy, it is very important to know by heart what the niche market wants to read, then the book, from writing to design, pricing to promotion, distribution to discounting, we must be catered to each of those different markets.

We came up with many preparations or titles. We managed to match the niche market size and have more turnovers. For example "*Coming to Terms*", a book for mid-life women, which collects essays by 15 famous women writing on how to deal with it emotionally, will have a 3,000 print run that should sell in eight to ten months.

Let me just run down a few of these titles I chose, just show you how we run this company.

The Baiyanihan is our famous dance. Actually, it is the official dance group of the Philippines and we had to – at first, we were trying to decide whether we were going to publish their story because the minute you did that then it felt like you were obligated to do the stories as well, or publish the stories of all the other dance groups or theatre groups. Because it is considered the national dance group of the country, it was easier for us to decide and publish their story. The other book – *Most of our El Comedor* is a cookbook that collects the recipes of a famous Spanish restaurant in Manila, a hundred-year-old routine and that is one of our bestsellers.

"*Forbidden fruit*" is a collection of essays or erotica written by women because normally it is the men who write the erotica and not the women. So it was considered a landmark anthology, although the men did say, "This is erotica?" "*The Killing Time in a Warm Place*" is one of our more successful contemporary novels. This is serious literature but because it was prescribed or acquired in schools, it did not become a bestseller but became a steady seller. Every year we would print copies.

No one in fact can write  
without having read first,  
just as no human can learn  
to speak without having  
heard first.

This is a book for widows and widowers. We thought about putting together a collection of essays of men and women who have lost their spouses. I hear this is now, apart from the mass card, one of the things people bring to a wake.

### The fount of the power

Virginia Woolf was quoted to have said often that God in heaven had nothing more to give those who love reading. They need no further reward. I am sorry I cannot quote an Asian writer, not even a Filipino writer – not because they do not have any but because they are very inaccessible – to illustrate the value of reading. Virginia Woolf is a writer and clearly has a vested interest in making people read. But maybe precisely because she is a writer, she must have first been a reader, as all writers were and continued to be avid readers. No one in fact can write without having read first, just as no human can learn to speak without having heard first. Reading is a simple act but involves perception, imagination and memory.

As an cultural historian, Adrian Johns, said, reading can never be separated from the circulation of the blood and the movement of the body. Books come from the long traditions of religion and scholarship and therefore have authority and fixity. In his work, *"The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making"*, Johns explains how knowledge is necessarily mediated through the psychological mechanisms of perception and the passions, and this is how knowledge is created. Everything is first read and only after are they put to use or do they exert or produce a historical effect. Unlike television or newspapers, books are identical copies, repeatable over the years, and can stay alive in library or on archival shelves for hundreds of years. Here is the fount of their power.

People come to books for guidance, for clarification, for argument or for support. A book publisher therefore, among many other obligations, must fundamentally have the highest respect for both the creative acts of reading and writing books. He or she should be highly sensitive to how and why a writer writes and must own the resolve to gather every possible resource to thoughtfully put together this writer's book and put it out where readers can savour it.

### The awkwardness to balance the commerce

Books are complex products because in them must co-exist, no matter how awkwardly, considerations of profits and posterity. Publishing them is always a tough balancing act between culture and commerce. A book might sell millions but what does it give to humankind? How does it benefit Filipinos, in our case? On the other

hand, for a book to make an impact on the public consciousness, it must sell widely and be read widely. So success, either way, for profit or posterity, will always be a matter of number of copies sold and whether it is a good book to read.

What is a good book? The one that carries in it the passion and pleasure of both the writer and the reader. A writer, after writing his last page, surely will heave deeply a sigh of relief and satisfaction. That book will deserve readers who, after finishing the last page, most certainly heave deeply the same sigh of relief and satisfaction from the pleasure of having experienced a great story or from new knowledge or from the passion of a conviction.

A book publisher simply makes that happen: connect the writer to his/her readers and no matter how skillful a publisher might be in running a business, he or she will still be known by the books he or she publishes. The history of publishing is the history of houses that published great books, and publishing is worthwhile only when the books are worthwhile and only when the books are read.

I hope I have established clearly that book publishing is not like any other manufacturer of a consumer product. While making many copies of a book, which is the printing part, makes a book a mass market product, assembling that book together does not mean putting together many same parts, as what happens with cars or condominium units. Every book or title is different, even from another on exactly the same subject or topic, and even when you take two readers to read the very same copy of a book, they can read them very differently, unlike cars which are driven more or less the same way, or air conditioners propped up and used in rooms more or less the same way.

Assembling a book involves several creative professionals, most of whom are freelancers instead of in-house staff, at least that is the case in my company. There are the readers, usually university graduates, then editors – substantive, style, copy or proof, then designers who set the look of every book, supported by illustrators or cartoonists or painters or photographers. Then there are the paper manufacturers and the printers, reviewers or critics, and dealers or distribution agents.

Easily, about 50 million pesos of our yearly budget go to these creative workers. Yearly, Anvil puts out 100 to 120 new titles and reprints 90 to 120 titles. It pays 25 to 35 million pesos in royalties every year.

Books are complex products because in them must co-exist, no matter how awkwardly, considerations of profits and posterity. Publishing them or publishing books is always a tough balancing act between culture and commerce.



### Improve the format of textbooks

What is lamentable is that if do not have a real book trade in Asia, we are not reading each other. We are depriving ourselves of the participating in the two most creative acts, on both the intellectual and spiritual levels, taking place in one another's country.

Export sales of books from the United States of America to the Philippines in the last five years has steadily increased by 20 to 25% annually. I have to explain this. In my country, English is taught from preschool and it is considered the official language. In school, you learn science and math using English, not our national language. So the Philippines has always been considered the extension of American territory so that publishers feel they have to sell copies to the Philippines instead of translation rights.

So this figure I gave, 20 to 25% increase annually, was based on the estimates of the National Bookstore's purchases of books from the US, UK and Australia. National Bookstore, which is also my mother company, with its more than 75 outlets all over the country is the Philippines' largest book retailer and importer today. They average 90 to 100 million import quarterly, which speaks to 100 to 150 million during book fair season. That is a rough estimate.

So this purchase speaks during book fair season. Negligible is the importation from Asia like India, Malaysia and Singapore from where books are bought are actually just cheap editions of American books whether they are classics like Disneyland titles or the generic alphabet, counting, colouring and shapes books or textbooks. Most of the American publishers' regional offices and subsidiaries are in India or in Singapore.

Some attribute this lack of the book trade in our part of the region, they attribute this to the language issue. But our countries are not even actively trading translation rights the way they do in Europe – perhaps only among the east Asian countries and that is small compared to the amount of publishing rights China, Japan and Korea buy from the United States and UK.

Our histories of colonisation have assimilated us into the colonial cultures, repressing our very own bodies of knowledge, literature, thinking patterns and forms of critical enquiry and separated us from our neighbouring countries: the British had India, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong; the Dutch had Indonesia; the French had

Vietnam; and the Americans had the Philippines. Our common maritime history that dated back to the 15th century has been forgotten and glossed over because colonial education still insists on making us believe we were nothing until the westerners came to civilise us.

So in the first-ever creative industry forum that was organised by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts and the Cultural Centre of the Philippines, three months ago, the book industry sector, 90% of which are textbook publishers, was urged to radically improve both the form and content of textbooks especially in history, in basic education, through national prizes and awards for the best.

In an economically challenged nation like ours, the textbook is still the cheapest and most fundamental shaper of consciousness, not only of students, sometimes even of teachers in the public school system.

The task force formed two years ago, to set in motion the crafting of a Philippine culture index that will prioritise what needs to be woven into a basic educational curriculum for cultural education, had completed a model for data gathering in one region and will soon be replicated in the other regions of the country.

### Move to areas for co-publishing opportunities

I will now move to areas for co-publishing opportunities. While there were enthusiastic attempts in the past to form an association of Southeast Asian publishers, thrice it failed. In the early 1980s, the Secretariat was in Manila under Manuel Valdehuesa but it lasted for three years. It was not at all active. To be kind, it met once a year in the Singapore book fair. Then two more tries at reviving the association were spearheaded by, first, Malaysia in the early 1990s and then by Singapore late in the same decade. We finally gave up, saying it did not take off because there really is no need for it. The last thing we wanted was an artificial organisation, not market-driven or not driven at all.

The aims were noble as far as I can remember. I would like to update them for you for this forum:

1. To encourage and support co-publication ventures between and among publishers in different countries on popular subjects to grow an awareness of Asia among Asians. For example, an encyclopedia of culture and the arts of Asia

All these are market-driven and need to be supported or supplemented by a deeper understanding or appreciation of one another's culture through books and education.



where data-gathering institutions can partner with publishers in different countries to list down all the artistic and cultural forums we have in every country. Because, as I always say, we have to begin – if we are going to do Brand Asia or Asia Nation we have to start with an inventory. We have to know what we have. And by composing this encyclopaedia, listing all our artistic and cultural forms in every country, then we have some sort of source book or guide book that we can always refer to. Another is to start a series on religions, courtship, birth and death rituals, festivals, food, architecture, crafts and many others.

2. To set in motion a translation programme of literatures of the different countries. I really find it very tragic that we cannot read each other's literature. I have made friends all over Asia and many of them are writers and until now, I have not been able to read their works because they are not translated into English and I have not learnt any of their languages.

3. To initiate a similar translation programme for university textbooks, taking into consideration the strengths of the different countries; for example, electrical engineering or electronics or car mechanics textbooks of universities in Tokyo and Seoul should be more reliable and applicable to us than those from the United States.

4. To agree on the distribution centres for Asian books, perhaps here in Hong Kong or in Singapore, to start by consolidating all quality titles in English from different countries in the region.

5. To encourage more active participation in each other's country's book fair. To go to Frankfurt is really very expensive and it is such a huge fair, I do not understand how people can call attention, especially from this part of the world. But if we actively, I think, start participating in each other's fairs, this should be cheaper and should bring about more joint projects or co-publication ventures.

### Arrange the mutual agreements

The idea of working out special arrangements did not sit well with some of us publishers who thought all this, including me, had to be market-driven. If bookstores like Kikokuniya or Page One are not carrying an Asian publishers' titles, then there must be no demand for said books. If joint ventures are not happening, then there must be no urgency that they do. If translation of one another's literature is not taking place, there must be no interest, and so on and so forth.

Their proof –Toyota Foundation funded for ten years a literary translation series. The books were badly packaged and not found in stores at all. ASEAN was able to put together collections of stories, poetry, plays, folktales, through its COCI programme and many of these were good collections. But at 1,000 copies per title, no single copy can be found in any library, no even in store. It is much more sold in stores, or even in many of the important libraries. Instead, they remain well hidden on shelves of bureaucrats. Because these projects were funded with money that did not have to be recouped. No serious marketing effort was put into it.

Americanisation has always been market-driven, that is why it works. Maybe Brand Asia in books can be given a pat on the back, a slight push and a guiding hand; nothing grand or fantastic, but some kind of infrastructure in terms of special mutual government agreements or arrangements.

I would like to cite –I am not very familiar with the day-to-day operations of Periplus in Singapore but I see the impact of what they have been exerting. Periplus is a publishing house that specialises in Asia. I think they have done – it is an ordinary private company that is market-driven and I think they have done so much in popularising Asian food, travel, architecture and interiors, lifestyles as in spas, rejuvenating herbs, yoga and others. I think what Periplus is doing is like the model of Pan Asia because they come to the Philippines to get writers when the subject is about the Philippines. Last I heard was that they were in trouble for having expanded so fast. I hope not.

Films, television dramas, anime and food, always food first, have come and crossed borders. Bookstores have become transnational too. Outsourcing is happening all over, whether we document it or not. People are sourcing talent everywhere on their own, without government support, without funding from any grant. All these are market-driven and need to be supported or supplemented by a deeper understanding or appreciation of one another's culture through books and education. Otherwise, new misimpressions can emerge or validate old misconceptions. This can certainly happen when we are merely overtaken by the markets without an appropriate understanding and education of Asia as we embark on Brand Asia.

We have to retrieve our own stories, our own forms of thinking and critical enquiry, elements of our culture long repressed, and resurrect them into new exciting forms and ideas for our new generation of Asians to read. Thank you.



# Save the Small Publishing House

How can a small publishing company find its own position in the market? And how can it make sure that its policies are suitable to the market? How to work in Hong Kong and other areas?

Gary LEUNG Kwan Ho  
Chief Executive Officer, Red Publish

DR MA KA FAI:

Our next speaker is Mr Gary Leung, Mr Gary Leung Kwan Ho is a very young speaker. Mr Leung graduated from HKU. His major is Actuarial Science, and he devoted his first years of work to the actuarial industry. He has also worked in the education and medical service field. Two years ago he joined the publishing industry.

At that time, the death of his idol made him think that it is the right time that he should be engaged in some meaningful cultural business and that is why Red Corporation Limited was founded. In the beginning the company was engaged in self-publishing services and later, it also published very popular books and best-sellers and now it is in the active expansion phase. It is now selling magazines. It also offers internet courses and travelling services. So how can a small publishing company find its own position in the market? And how can it make sure that its policies are suitable to the market? These are important issues. It is now an era of attaching a lot of importance to local art and to markets. May we invite Mr Leung.

MR GARY LEUNG KWAN HO:

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen and members of the audience. I am going to talk about how small and medium sizes publishers can survive in Hong Kong and in other parts of the world. The subject of my speech is on how creativity and co-operation can save the small publishers like my own company.

The difficulties we are facing are extraordinary. What do I mean by extraordinary? For instance, we do not have the best talents, we do not have a grand marketing budget. Many publishers are spending millions on PR, on marketing. We do not have sufficient staff, we might have quality writers, quality writers may not choose to co-operate with us.

We have met some challenges. Distribution is in fact very difficult for small and medium-sized publishers like us because compared with what it was 10, 5 or 3 years ago, things are very different. We have importation of Chinese books in simplified and also traditional characters. So it has been quite difficult for small publishers like us. Bookstores may think that our books will not sell as much as other books, so it would be quite difficult if they do not buy too many copies of our titles. The books may be returned after they have been on the shelf for a couple of weeks and they do not take up premium positions on shelves.

I have also added a few more to this list.

#### Four difficulties

The first challenge we face is editorial experience. We are always recruiting editors but the candidates are all novices. They do not have much experience or maybe those experienced ones are happy and stable in their present posts. Small publishers cannot really recruit editors of a high calibre. Editors determine our direction. We have to choose hot topics in our titles. We may not do best in publishing very serious books, but in Hong Kong, we have publishers with only a few members in the company and their books may be able to sell more than 100,000 copies; they might be jokes and comics, and so on and so forth. We may not be the best editorial staff and this constraint has forced us to work on alternative topics.

Second, the packaging of books is getting better and better. Some older publishers may not follow this trend but for publishers like Joint Publishing and Commercial Press, their packaging of books is now modernised. Small publishers used to sell by packaging their books in an interesting manner but even larger publishers are doing the same. They are now aware of the importance of packaging; they use different cover designs. Large publishers did not used to have pictures on the cover, they relied mainly on prints. But now they have changed and we no longer have this competitive edge.

Actually we are put in a disadvantaged position. Large publishers may be able to spend more than \$10,000 on the cover design, but for us, it would be a big deal. Because our distribution net is basically in Hong Kong, we cannot afford too much on the cover design and packaging.

In the future, this will make it more difficult for small publishers to produce new titles and these new titles may not sell well, because the largest chain stores like

Largest chain stores are producing titles of a great variety and they are also packaged in a very attractive way. It is extremely difficult for small publishing houses to occupy premium positions.

Commercial Press and Joint Publishing are producing titles of a great variety and they are also packaged in a very attractive way. It is extremely difficult for our titles to occupy premium positions in their shops, because their own books are getting more popular.

Third, the distribution channel is now more diversified. A small company like us does not have the resources to widen our distribution net. In the past, publishers just left their books at bookstores and these bookstores can be sold. Now we have to visit 1st floor bookstores and we have to sell our books to school libraries. Traditional publishers will ask Cosmos or Crown – did not have to visit schools. Now we have small marketing teams promoting our books to schools and we have not set up bookstores or book shelves in universities.

Local book fairs have increased drastically. In the past we took part in one or two book fairs, and now we have one or two book fairs almost every month which are organised by different organisations. These have brought us opportunities to meet readers but for small companies it is difficult because we do not have sufficient resources like large publishers. Cosmos and Crown can rent a store to sell their products but we cannot afford the resources required for attending book fairs.

Fourth, small publishers will also face the difficulty of high publishing costs or printing costs. Because of the number of copies printed, the unit cost is high. Books are very expensive in our neighbouring countries, but books in Hong Kong are relatively cheap. To quote what was said by a publisher in a developed place like Hong Kong, we are only paying the price of a third-world country to purchase knowledge. So we are only paying \$10 or \$20 for a book. Again, this is difficult for us. Our titles may not be able to sell 7,000 or 10,000 copies and sometimes we cannot even recover our printing costs.

### Multiple ways in adding sources of income

I have told you the bad side of small publishers. If I am to find a solution for these problems, I have only one solution to offer: we cannot simply rely on book sales. If we have only one source of income, we will not be able to overcome these difficulties. Since the outbreak of SARS three years ago, I figured out that if the income only came from one way, it would be a problem. So I think the topic is a very valid one. We are still in business although we face fierce competition. I am sure we are surviving well.

But what are our advantages? Although we face fierce competition from larger publishers, we are still able to survive. In addition to adding sources of income with our own advantages, we have made many, many attempts, many of which will be unknown to readers. It is not because we have not publicised, but rather we have done so by brand diversification. We have different types of books making different attempts. The most famous is Red Publish. Actually, we also have brands such as Ten Publish, Eleven Publish and PEMI. We use diversified titles to make different attempts. I think this is very important because for large publishers, they face pressure from their own brand names. A company 30 years old may think that this is politically sensitive and these books, cannot publish and fit in here.

Some publishers, not mine, are interested in publishing books that are politically sensitive titles, that are taboo – or well, they will package their books by saying that this title is banned on the mainland, and so on and so forth. So without this burden, we are able to make different attempts, like we have smaller books on games and also books on arithmetic or we have books on horses racing. Actually our bestsellers are those on horse racing. I often think whether these books have markets outside Hong Kong. Horse racing is not unique to Hong Kong although the rules may differ in different parts of the world. We can rely on these books as our source of income. And you know, there is also a break in horses. In horse racing, our highest sales on these sales usually happen in September and October, because these books can sell at over \$100 a copy. These are secrets. You may not have noticed our books on horse racing because I guess those who are here are not interested in the races.

For large companies, they are willing to co-operate with us on so-called problematic books. Many of them really want to try these out. It is just that they do not want to attach their brand name to it because they are worried about their prospects on the mainland and the printery may be closed on the mainland but we are willing to try out everything. It is not that we are particularly daring, it is just that we have to increase our sources of income in order to survive.

### Three kinds of creativity

Let me go back to the theme today –creativity. Many people may think that creativity involves introducing surprises in themes and new angles that may lead to surprise, but these are difficult to inexperienced publishers like us because as I said just now, we do not have a big enough team. But creativity can be applied in other areas apart from contents. In the field of publishing we can add three creativity items.

First is creativity in distribution channels. Distribution channel is very important. If you pay attention to book vendors, say for example, the APM which has been newly opened has books vending machines. This is very creative. I have asked what the rent is of one machine but then the rent cannot be recovered by selling even 100,000 books. So it would be difficult to just operate one or two such machines, but if you can have 100 or 200 ones, that is a different story. Google and Yahoo scan a lot of books onto the web but perhaps there are still a lot of controversies and arguments.

To you, this is good news, China Times Publishing has sold 700,000 copies of "*The Da Vinci Code*" or "*Wolf Totem*" selling out one million copies. But for us, we are just selling a few hundred copies and a few thousand copies. If we can sell books in pages then that may increase our total revenue. So if there is a public referendum, I will cast a vote in favour of Google and Yahoo. This may be the mainstream trend. There are still a lot of arguments and controversies in the US, but in Hong Kong, are these distribution channels feasible, can books be sold on a per page business, will Hong Kong people pay on a per page basis? Well, even if you photocopy a page it will just cost you a few 10 cents. But then I am optimistic about this. In the long run it should be feasible.

Second is the creativity in the mode of expression or expression formats. Say, for example, a CD can be inserted into a book and then VCD can also be produced. If VCD is not enough, if you want to go further you can attach a DVD, two or three DVD to a book; so these are also expression methods. In Hong Kong, there are very few audio books and sometimes, contents of books can be turned into video programmes or footage. In fact, we have produced audio books, how can we sell them? The answer is they are given out for free, we do not know how we can sell them. When books are turned into audio books, whether there is a suitable environment for that, we think the idea will be workable.

Third is the creativity in publicity channels. There are multi-various channels for publicity. In the mainland, there is a book, "*The Rats Love Rice*", and of course there is a song with the same title. So do you think the income from the book or the song is higher? Of course the song. But then these are very good publicity channels so the readership will go up quite rapidly on the mainland, there are many network singers and in a month, 400,000 people are willing to pay RMB5 to download a song onto their mobile phone. Actually, I have considered turning to the music industry and maybe I can become a network singer or web singer then I

can earn a lot of money. Well, the amount can be very big, so in relation to distribution channels or publicity channels, one channel is the mobile phone. Hong Kong people do not have big demand for SMS but on the mainland, we can see it is a big market. At this moment, we do not know how we can do it in relation to book contents but in the mainland we are selling SMS and it really works. How can we convert 500,000-word book "*Wolf Totem*" into 500,000 SMS? That will take a lot of techniques.

### Some tries during this period:

What have we actually done? We have tried many things. Today I am not going to tell you things that we have failed in. How can we increase pluralistic revenue? Now we promote course through books. It will be better in terms of revenue to organise courses than to sell books. We tried to step up communication with our readers. One year ago we opened a website which is operated as a discussion forum and it is a travel idea discussion board. We have 4,000-odd members and we are now able to generate a lot of articles, magazines and books on travelling. So this is what we have done. Of course, we also charge advertising fees for our forum and it is like a dotcom business so it is a bit different from the traditional publishing industry but I think Hong Kong people's strength is to merge things and to make things happen.

Apart from travelling and organising courses over the last few years we produced a lot of CDs. Today we are discussing the publishing industry but it is not just paper work. Actually, publishing CDs and publishing films also belongs to the publishing industry. In Hong Kong, the demand for CDs is getting smaller and smaller but the demand is still high on the mainland. So apart from printing things on papers, we will also produce songs on CDs.

Many Feng Shui books will be sold as DVDs. Usually feng shui books have covers in red and black and the cost of these feng shui DVDs will be very similar to that of books but then DVDs will be very colourful. And of course, these products have not been made available to the market yet but this will happen soon. On the mainland, there is already this trend coming up so it seems we are behind the trend in Hong Kong.

### Co-operation between nations and regions:

How can we collaborate with big companies? Now we are willing to take breakthrough, we do not care about our brand name to a certain extent, so actually we

In a developed place like Hong Kong, we are only paying the price of third-world country to purchase knowledge.





called book trade. So maybe 500 books can be transported to Taiwan for sale but usually it is the other way around. Books from Taiwan are coming in in 500 copies. So over the years, many small publishers are engaged in book trade, say, they may identify a good book in Taiwan and then they will bring it to Hong Kong for sale. But this business is getting more and more difficult. Now this process actually does not work.

There is another issue and that is trade of copyright. In the last couple of years, this is a very popular idea, say, for example, the book "*Wolf Totem*", as stated in the programme today, has been sold to so many countries and according to the newspapers, it has broken the records of copyright sale. So many mainland publishers are interested in good books in Asia, so they have just bought the copyright of these books.

Another way is to borrow other people's brand names. The large publishers do not need to give us money in advance but we can also borrow or tap on the historical background of the brand name to sell books. So this is a more innovative and creative way of brand name collaboration. In the process, we hope that there can be more events like this today; leaders of the publishing industries of different countries can sit together and discuss. The book fair in Hong Kong should have played this function but the book fair in Hong Kong is more like a venue for selling books at low prices. A publisher sold three books at \$100 the first day and four books at \$100 the second day and 5 books at \$100 the next day. I bought books worth \$200 on the last day but this the way the Hong Kong book fair is. There are also opportunities about copyright. It should not be difficult. It depends on how fellow players can work together. That is all I would like to say today. Thank you.

There had been book vending machines recently in Hong Kong. It would be difficult to just operate one or two such machines, but if you can have 100 or 200 ones, that is a different story.



# No Starbucks in Bookstore

The history and diversities of Asian culture are worth displaying themselves. It is Page One's dream and mission to have such Asian themed bookstore in every major city in Asia and to make our cultural contents available to the cities like Paris, London, Rome, Madrid, New York.

Mr Mark TAN

Chief Executive Officer, Page One Group; Head, Page One Publishing

DR MA KA FAI:

I have decided to take it easy although this is an official occasion. I want to speak my mind. I had three wishes when I was a kid: First, to get married, to find myself a wife. That I have already done. My second dream was to start my own publishing company. I did it, but then it closed after the publication of one book. That was in Taiwan many years ago. The third wish was to operate a bookstore of my own style, one with taste and everyone who loved books would visit my bookstore and would be aware of its assistance. That I have not tried out yet and I think it is getting more and more impossible for me to do this.

It is with great pleasure that I am going to introduce the next speaker to you, Mr Mark Tan. As we all know, Page One has been acclaimed as the best Asian bookstore by Times Magazine. In many places, including Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong, we have Page One bookstores. So Mr Tan is very experienced in bookstore operation and it is also a great publishing firm. So how come Mr Tan has been so successful? I am very glad that Mark Tan, CEO of Page One Group is going to share with us his experience.

## Educate the next generation with history

MR MARK TAN:

My speech today will focus on marketing Asia through publishing. The diversity of our Asian culture and our rich history, not only differentiates Asia from the rest of the world but are also Asia's strongest form of introduction that we can proudly use to engage the people from outside Asia. Not only does Asia need to engage the world with Asian intellectual development, to strengthen our present and future co-operation, more importantly, we need to educate our children so that they can appreciate their cultural background. Intellectual development in Asia would thus be the intellectual property we can give to our children. Asia's fast-developing

pace also endangers us in losing our unique identity. With the advance of the internet age, Asian children today are overwhelmed by information and choices. Unless we are innovative in stimulating a new excitement of our historical intellectual development, to enhance the lifestyle of Asian children today and to sustain their interests in the future, we risk losing our Asian identity and our rich cultural history.

For us, in order to reach out to ourselves in Asia and ultimately to the world audience, we need to be creative in our marketing strategy when introducing Asia diverse culture. This leads to a sustained interest from our audience. One good example is from our South Korean counterparts who have achieved a renewed interest in the South Korean culture through their TV series "*Jewel in the Palace*", also known as "*Dae Jang Keum*" in Chinese. This television series has taken Asia by storm. Through the portrait of the Korean Imperial Palace kitchen and the imperial maids, "*Jewel in the Palace*" has indirectly drawn the sudden wide interest of the Asian region. They are interested in everything about South Korea.

At the recent Frankfurt book fair held last month, a publisher asked me if our next season publishing programme had any title with Korean contents which are now in great demand. My wife and our children are currently having their holiday in South Korea, visiting the sites where they shot the TV series, and they must be enjoying the food too. I am sure during their trips to South Korea my kids will learn more about their culture, which is not taught in the school they attend in Singapore. South Korean economic development has benefited from the country's intellectual development. In October 2005, South Korea overseas sales rose by 13.4 % to US\$25.7 billion from a year earlier, and business confidence was at the highest level since February 2004.

### Soft approach route to reach out to the world audience

According to a recent Bloomberg news report, "*Jewel in the Palace*" showcases a country's intellectual development transforming into its intellectual property. This intellectual property has in certain ways contributed to South Korean economic development and tourism industry, thus becoming a valuable intangible asset of South Korea.

"*Jewel in the Palace*" has successfully introduced Korean history in a soft approach, pairing the imperial kitchen team with a perfect storyline on the lives of young imperial maids, supported by excellent directors good-looking actors and actresses. Most importantly, the dialogue was translated into other Asian lan-

We need to educate our children so that they can appreciate their cultural background. Asia intellectual development would thus be the intellectual property we can give to our children.



guages successfully reaching out to the rest of Asia. By having children as young as six play the role of young imperial maids, *"Jewel in the Palace"* has captured a wide audience of young Asians. By focussing on the details of cooking that takes place in the imperial kitchen, it has managed to capture a wide audience of Asian food lovers, and housewives, both young and old.

Asian publications must take the same soft approach route to reach out to the world audience. Page One Publishing division publishes 130 titles on art and design annually along with a bi-monthly magazine. Out of the 130 titles published annually, we specifically set aside at least 25 to 35 titles to focus on Asian art and design culture. Endorsing Asian designers, our bi-monthly magazine extensively reports on the style and lifestyle scene in Asia. Besides publishing in English, which is our first language in Singapore, our publications are also translated into simplified Chinese, Japanese, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Norwegian, Italian, Spanish and the Swedish language, thus reaching out to many readers in different parts of the world.

Two years ago, we published *"Remembering China"*, a resplendent pictorial book showcasing the fearless aspect of China's magnificent lifestyle and history, which many business visitors do not normally encounter on their visits to China cosmopolitan city. The book was a cultural revelation of China's life and times, depicting the common people, their works, their family, their home, their food, their simple leisure and their beautiful landscape.

When the first draft was presented to Harper Collins, an American publisher, they immediately bought the copyrights. We did not have to do much selling to convince the decision maker at Harper Collins, simply because the American publisher was astonished by the image she saw. She did not have any clue about the intensity of China's splendour despite her many visits to many cities in China. As a publisher, our message for *"Remembering China's"* audiences is that while China is known today to the international market as the factory of the world, there are also China's historical traditions and captivation, cultural diversity that all visitors should explore beyond major cities like Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou.

Our forthcoming book, entitled *"Making Thai"*, focuses on the craft of Thailand. As publishers, our objective is to reach out to three groups of targeted audiences; Asian designers, foreign visitors to Thailand and the western market. For the Asian designers, we need to remind them of the many unique and overlooked forms of Asian artefacts, from ancient pieces to those still in use daily.

Our designers must not just take an interest in the latest design put into the market from designers in the West. Asian designers must take the challenge themselves to transform the many unique artefacts that can be found right in their homes, be it a fishing trap that Thai fisherman use, the basket Thai farmers use or the traditional headwear that Thai dancers adorn. Such distinctive forms from our intellectual development can be reinterpreted into an Asian architectural form for tomorrow's skyscraper in any city in the world.

Beyond Asia, *"Making Thai"* is also targeted at foreign visitors to Thailand, allowing them to bring home a collection of exciting visuals from Thai culture which they can share with their families and friends back home. Making Thai also targeted the western market, where such exclusive collection of Thai forms are almost impossible to find. This will help to whet the appetite for more information on Thailand which will subsequently cultivate into a sustained interest in the Asian culture.

At a recent Frankfurt book fair, *"Making Thai"* caught the attention of a German publisher and we are now work towards translating the book into the German language, bringing a slice of the Thai way of living right into the homes of Germans. In line with our company mission of promoting Asian culture to the world, and to strengthen our current publishing programme that focuses only on design-related contents, our publishing division will take on a new publishing programme, focusing on guide books for tourists visiting Asian cities and more importantly, Asia lesser-known regions. The objective of this new publishing programme will be targeted at the world traveller, creating a new awareness and interest in Asia's lesser-known regions, which hold strong Asian cultural trades. By doing so, we hope to bring in more tourists to our region and at the same time, cultivate foreign interest in our history and culture.

### Enforce the connection with publishing plan

Books have always been our greatest source for knowledge, and will continue to stay that way for many more years to come. Asia's future development success is dependent on how well read Asians will be and how well we make available our contents to the rest of the world. Books are a form of media that reaches out to a wide audience. A book is not limited by its print run, instead, its circulation is enhanced by the number of times the book is read by the number of different readers. Like the *Bible* or the *Koran*, a book's enduring power is enormous when compared with other forms of media.

Asian designers must take the challenge themselves to transform the many unique artefacts that can be found right in their homes.

The Asian government and companies, publishers and bookshops must work together with co-ordinate our effort in making Asian contents available among ourselves and to the rest of the world. At this point of my speech, I would like to put forward a proposal for all our Asian ministers and ministry delegates present to initiate a programme among the Asian region, to have Asian publications translated into other Asian languages, including English, so as to widen Asia and the rest of the world's understanding of our cultural development.

The investment of this programme will bring great rewards. If we take into consideration the impact Asian intellectual development can exert on Asian economical development, the programme will also strengthen the region's understanding of each other's cultural development, thus strengthening ties among the Asian region. I also hope to see Asian conglomerates extending their financial help to the programme, as a social contribution back to the society that they benefited from. Asian SMEs can also participate by making available such publications as their corporate gifts for their western counterparts, thus spreading awareness of our intellectual development. Asian publishers should make efforts to plan their publication programme, to target at not only their local audiences but also the world interest in Asia cultural development.

Take ourselves, for example, how many Asians will be interested in reading a book about the history of England's castles? Such a book will only do well in England's home market. However, what if the next Harry Potter book is written with a variety of English castles as its backdrops? I am sure it will not only do well in the Asia market like all the previous Harry Potter titles, it will also create new awareness and interest of the England's history of castles in Asia.

Such a creative marketing approach in creating the interest of a mass audience has been proven a success. Take the example of the book *"Jurassic Park"*, authored by Michael Crichton in 1990, which was made into a movie by Stephen Spielberg in 1993. *"Jurassic Park"* single-handedly created a wide interest in all things dinosaur. Before that, there was never such a keen interest from the market on dinosaurs until Michael Crichton's artful penmanship. As a result of that faithful book, there was a demand from the readers' market that saw bookshops around the world carrying a wide range of detailed books on dinosaurs, even to this very day.

Asian cultural development is as old as the dinosaur's existence. Asian publishers

have to repackage and reinterpret our dinosaur age culture with a soft but exciting approach before putting the finished hip and cool books into the market to meet the savvy 21st century market demand of the readers. Asian bookstores alike must do more than just sell books in their stores. Besides stocking the widest range of books to meet consumer demand, Asian bookstores must also take pride in introducing contents on Asian cultural works to their countrymen, foreign visitors and expatriates alike. Bookstores must take the initiative to go beyond the traditional autograph session or storytelling session to promote Asian intellectual development. Bookstores must grab consumers' attention with strong in-store graphic visual elements and attractive display to attract consumer interests in ASEAN cultural contents.

### Have Asian themed bookstore with dream and mission

Page One regularly holds promotional activities on Asian cultural contents. One of our more recent promotions involved the work of Hong Kong Polytechnic graduate Tim Yip. The acclaimed designer has garnered international recognition and won several accolades including an Academy Award for Best Art Director in 2001 For his outstanding design work on the major motion picture "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*".

For the past 18 years, Tim has done costume and art design for many movies and theatrical performances co-operating with other award-winning Asian directors and doing his role in putting Asian culture on the world map.

Another such promotion was on renowned Shanghainese author Zhang Ailing. This talented romance author was already deemed a literature genius during her early age and during the next couple of years, she produced her best works, including "*Qing Cheng Zhi Lian*" and "*Jin Suo Ji*". She depicted life in Asia through her writing and was able to reach out to many Asian readers with her touching romance novel. Zhang Ailing ultimately relocated to Los Angeles in 1973 where she completed the English translation of the biography of *Hai Shang Hua* a celebrated Chinese classic written in the Wu dialect. She did a preparation to celebrate words of this famed author and here some images of the Zhang Ailing in-store promotion.

Another promotion held at Page One brought to life the vivid and sensual philosophical world of: "*Dream of the Red Chamber*" by Cloud Gate which was inspired by the novel of the same title by Cao Xueqin in 1760. Cloud Gate is said to be the

Asia's future development success depends on how well Asians read will be and how well we make available our contents to the other parts of the world.






name of the oldest known dance in China, dating back some 5,000 years.

In 1973 the choreographer Lin Huai-min adopted the name for the first contemporary dance company in the Chinese community –the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. Since then Cloud Gate has gone on extensive overseas tours throughout the western market raising awareness for fascinating Asian history.

Even our cafe within the bookstore was not spared, for our effort in promoting all things Asian. The café name is "Tian Kai Tu Yi Fan" which means "to open the door to the heaven of arts". It has two words extracted from the Japanese Zen and calligraphy studio of master Saizu. The teaware we use in our cafe are works of master craftsmen from the Asian region, alongside furnishings by Thai craftsmen, with a 4-metre overhead traditional textile from Vietnam and Myanmar, complementing the Chinese calligraphy and painting display below to induce Asian culture on to our customers.

To top off, the cafe menu includes aromatic Vietnamese cafe and Japan's highest grade of sencha tea, complemented by a selection of snacks and delicacies from Southeast Asia. So no Starbucks, only Asian culture.

It is Page One's dream and mission to have such Asian themed bookstore in every major city in Asia and expand our Asian bookstore concept in developed cities like Paris, London, Rome, Madrid, New York, Los Angeles and Vancouver. To make available to the West our cultural contents and at the same time, fill the needs of Asian readers living in this foreign land.



To end my speech, I would like to thank the Home Affairs Bureau of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region for initiating the Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum since 2003. I would also like to thank all Asian ministries for their effort in fostering Asia cultural co-operation. Thank you.



# The Wolfish Shock of "*Wolf Totem*"

Three weeks after its publication, "*Wolf Totem*" went on the bestseller list and has remained there for almost two years. We will sign copyright contracts with over 10 countries on the way. Major publications or newspapers have given the book wide coverage and I think this is quite rare for a book in Chinese.

Mr AN Boshun

Chief Editor, Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House Beijing Book Center

DR MA KA FAI:

Next we are going to have Mr An Boshun who is an author and a playwright, and has worked in the media. Mr An is now in the publishing industry and he is the Chief Editor of Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House and he has published many books. He also founded the Cloth Tiger book series which is a very popular series in the mainland. He then joined the Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House subsequently. He was also the Chief Editor of the Beijing Book Centre and the topic of his speech is "*Wolf Totem*". Mr An told me very interesting stories about the book. It seems the book has to be reprinted every week, and in the trading and copyright of the books, Chinese books, Mr An thinks that it is a very meaningful task. Mr An will tell us how publishers should operate and tell us how "*Wolf Totem*" has become such a popular title. I give the floor to Mr An.

MR AN BOSHUN:

In the spring of 2004, I met a friend who told me that he had written a book on wolves in grassland. He never published any literary works previously and I was only aware of his sharp views and insight into national economics and also reform trends, so with some suspicion, I read his thick draft.

I was deeply shocked by the draft and the book made me tremble. Being an editor and reader I was greatly stirred by the story. The theme was about harmony between men and nature and I was deeply impressed. The relationship between wolves and the grassland and also the Nomadic history and also Mongolian's worship of wolves brought me new insight between man and nature and brought me over to nature. It also stirred up anxiety about the role of man and also the environ-

ment. I believe my psychological, physical and mental reactions were very strong, were very real. They were not really led by conventional ideologies. I had a feeling it was going to be a very rare book that would cause a great sensation in the world and that book was "*Wolf Totem*".

### Not optimistic at first but causing sensation over the world

When the book was first published, people were not optimistic. Critics were of the view that it was really nonsense and cliché and the publishing sector felt there was no ingredient to make it a bestseller; there was no sex, no love. However, I believe that immense DNA –we have retained some of the primitive censors of prehistoric men. We have that pursuit of freedom and also human dignity and also that very strong affinity with nature and I think these are eternal motifs for literary works and have also caused arts to survive throughout the years. I believe it is just a matter of time that the book will receive great applause.

Three weeks after its publication, the book went on the bestseller list and has remained there for almost two years. We have more than 10 million copies sold as at October. We have signed copyright contracts for the book to be published in English, German, French and Korean and contracts with publishers in Spain, Italy, Holland, Norway, Turkey and Vietnam are on the way. We expect that the book will appear in more than a dozen languages and we have covered almost all developed countries with the exception of Japan.

Major publications or newspapers, such as New York Times, Time Magazine, Times, Daily Telegraph, AP and other media have given the book wide coverage and I think this is quite rare for a book in Chinese. So why is that so?

### Wolfishness in human nature

First, it is because of the sense of crisis. As we all know, in 2003, the US CIA presented a report on terrorism. It did not put human hatred and confrontation as the most important thing to fear, rather it stressed natural disasters. As we all know, tidal waves, hurricanes and also rainstorms have claimed more lives than terrorist bombings, kidnappings and also assassination. I think these are of man's own making.

We are depleting our natural resources and are causing irreversible damage and pollution to our environment, ecology –this has already threatened our existence. After decades of rapid development, pollution is very serious on the mainland. No

Ecological terrorism is more horrifying than traditional terrorism and has brought challenges to the whole mankind. Actually, because the western world has a higher environmental awareness and therefore, the acceptance to "*Wolf Totem*" is expected.



one can guarantee the water we drink, the air we breathe in, the food we eat, the vegetables, the meat and eggs that we eat are free from pollutants. Major infrastructure in the mainland are projects we all take pride in but these projects or these successes have come with pain and helplessness. So in the next five-year plan, the Chinese Government is going to build a harmonious, sustainable society. This is a wise decision and it also highlighted the urgency and gravity of the matter. Harmony between man and the nature is not just the pursuit of scientists and philosophers. It is about life and death of the whole of mankind. No wonder "*Wolf Totem*", the book "*Wolf Totem*" has received wide acceptance by readers.

The writer, Mr Jiang Rong used his own personal experience to tell us a story between a man and wolves, wolves and herbivores and man and grassland, and how human greed and desire and foolishness have caused grasslands to become deserts and have caused rainstorms to cast darkness over Beijing City. The book is about a very important ring of the food chain. Wolves are not just man's enemies, they are also man's friends. Wolves have helped to tame horses, helped to clear dead bodies of war. They have helped to maintain balance in grasslands. Wolves were very important in protecting or managing balance and prosperity in the grasslands. However, when farming activities started, man's greed and foolishness have caused wolves to go into extinction and this is the start of tragedy. Everyone who has been to Beijing City, you just have to look at the sky and you understand what it is all about. This tragedy is not just about the Mongolian grassland, it is happening in almost every part of the world and the story has given us a warning. Ecological terrorism is more horrifying than traditional terrorism and has brought challenges to the whole mankind. Actually, because the Western world has a higher environmental awareness and therefore, the acceptance to "*Wolf Totem*" is expected.

Second, the wolfishness exists in the globalization and the market economy. Undoubtedly, we humankind have all possessed wolfishness. Our wolfishness was shown in our prehistoric ancestors when they faced challenges from nature, when we were hunters, when we fought for national freedom and we defended ourselves against foreign invaders. We are not talking about the negative attributes frequently associated with wolves. The key words here are freedom, which must be the core, bravery and dignity.

In the story, we can see that there was clear division of labour when wolves went hunting; they displayed courage and wisdom. When they were hunting around in

snowstorms, there was no howls or wails; we only saw green eyes and fierce fangs and how they fought for victory at one's expense and how they beat off their wounded leg for the sake of survival, how they would rather run until they drop dead, rather than beg for mercy, how a cub reared by humans would rather die than to be domesticated. These qualities have stirred a chord in readers because we all have a desire for freedom and we also feel ashamed of our own agreed and desire as we read the story. Of course the story has depicted the brutal side of wolves, but then I think a similar brutality has been displayed by humankind in our history.

### Positive values for enterprises

Most readers are able to see the positive meaning of "wolf", and in fact, enterprises have the biggest reaction. Mainland enterprises have recommended their staff to read *"Wolf Totem"*.

Over the few thousand years, we have been adopting the Confucius thinking, but this has been put under challenge and we have gotten away from plant economy and we are in the phase of strong cultures from other countries. We are in a weak position, so how can enterprises get united together? It is not enough to rely on scientific management and business management skills. We do have to adopt a thinking that we have to make progress, otherwise we will move backward. So if we have to dance with wolves then we first have to become wolves ourselves, so actually the characteristics of wolves as depicted in *"Wolf Totem"* will have certain positive effects or values to current enterprises. After the publication of *"Wolf Totem"*, many enterprises have adopted management style and philosophical style with the characteristics of wolf as the core values.

As regards individuals in current society, we are in the face of fierce competition and we have to strive for independence, progress and autonomy as wolves. Many people are still not used to enjoying freedom. They do not know they have to be independent and they have to take up responsibilities, and for children, and also for those workers who have just gotten away from the farming industry, to them,



freedom is not sunshine, it is in fact fear. This is related to our Confucian teaching we have received over the years. We hope in the coming years, this will improve. At the present moment, readers think that *"Wolf Totem"* is a very constructive book and they have left a lot of messages on discussion forums. Some readers wrote that they were committed to learning how the wolf behaves.

Jiang Rong has introduced a concept to reflect the Chinese culture. He concludes that in order for a nation to rise in power, it must have the characteristics of wolves. As Mr Deng Xiao Peng said, you have to suffer or tolerate the beating of other people if you lag behind.

### Farming culture as sheep, nomadic culture as wolf

Third, the conflict between the farming culture and nomadic culture is the driving force of civilisation. Now, in *"Wolf Totem"*, the author has introduced a concept to reflect the Chinese culture. He thinks that the cultural characteristics will affect the destiny of a certain nation. The Chinese ancient civilisation has continued, unlike the other ancient civilisations, and that is because of the element of threats introduced by the nomadic culture. The farming industry or the farming culture has been considered weak as sheep all along and the conclusion of the author is that in order for a nation to rise in power, it must have the characteristics of wolves. As Mr Deng Xiao Peng said, you have to suffer or tolerate the beating of other people if you lag behind. So actually there is some correlation between the characteristics of wolves and the government's objective of a rising nation. Now I, as the publisher, am not going to give comments on the ideology of the author of *"Wolf Totem"*.

I would like to say that the conflict between the farming culture and nomadic culture is the driving force of civilisation and development of different countries. Herbert George Wells in the *"Outline of a Plain History of Life and Mankind"*, described in great detail the integration between the farming culture and nomadic culture with the current industrial culture. This is not something new to western readers.

But when one culture conflicts with another culture, will there be integration or will there be replacement? Will there be dialogue on an equal basis or will there be dominance by either side? This is an important issue faced by many leaders in the world. In the book *"Wolf Totem"*, there is no mention of the conflicts between world culture and the issue of integration. Many people said that the Nomadic culture is related to the Ghenghis Khan thinking and culture. The Milan publisher in Italy said that wolves are also in their totem. And in other totems, they have wolves as well. For example, on the wall of the fortress in Rome, the logo or the symbol is two wolves. In the modern history of the UK, the very prominent characteristic is industrialisation and culture arising thereof. And in fact, there were two serious conflicts in our history and one is during the Han dynasty. We defeated Xiongnu and forced them to retreat to the Europe. And then they chased the nomadic people on the Eurasian prairie such as Ruzhi, Magyar, Hungarian, Alani away to the south or east. This not only had great impact on the decline of Sasanian Dynasty and also on the collapse of the slavery in Roman Empire. Another incident is Genghis Khan defeated many European and Asian nations and as a result, Mongolian blood can now be found among Europeans.

At first, I am worried that western readers are not able to understand the concepts and theories of *"Wolf Totem"*. But in fact, many westerners are now very interested in the culture and history of China and so they are also interested in *"Wolf Totem"*.

### Not enough to rely on our own efforts

So from the above analysis, we can see that there are three major factors for *"Wolf Totem"* to enter the world market. If you analyse from the perspective of writing skills or the skill of writing novels, usually we think that the behavioural language in romantic love and also body language of animals should not have any national boundary. Let me cite two examples. There is an author who is famous for writing romantic novels and he has written a book, *"911 Wedding"*, and it has been sold to an investor in Hollywood to be produced into a film. It is not enough to rely on our own efforts to promote books like *"Wolf Totem"* to different parts of the world. My suggestions are:

1. There must be co-operation among the official agencies and publishers of different countries. They should also try to identify common themes of humanised novels. Nations that belong to the world – there have to be humanised values, otherwise people will not be able to understand and appreciate the works. The method is to organise free seminars and organise free writer-training workshops. We believe in this way, writers will become more and more active in the global market.

2. We have to take reference from the Latin American experience of penetrating the US market. Official agencies and community organisations should have plans to subsidise researchers into their own culture and also the culture of other countries. We have a lot of examples, successful examples related to this, but to be honest, if we only rely on our own ability, there will be a lot of difficulties. Of course, we will not give up so easily. Because of the sale of copyright of *"Wolf Totem"*, usually we will offer copyright to some organisations and as a result, the copyrights cannot be sold out. They just take the works and that is it. If we want to promote our culture to them in a good way, then these intermediary companies are partners that we have to work with. To us –I am doing promotion publicity in different parts of the world. We are translating articles into English, and we are trying to introduce *"Wolf Totem"* to different parts of the word. I have been engaged in such work for half a year but not everybody can do such things; not everybody is competent to do this. We may not be able to discuss this with everybody because some people will not listen to us. So my suggestion is that official organisations






have to take reference from how Latin American publishers could penetrate the US market. They received community donations and subsidies to write articles, and after a year's research work, the US market realised that there were important writers like Marx and gradually the market could be opened up.

3. China is a country with ceremonies. We have to build up a concept that culture is the staple of a country. We must not be a giant economically but a dwarf culturally. A country without culture can not be respected in the world. Concerning collectibles such as valuable securities, coins, vessels and spaceships, we can put logos and symbols of reputable writers and celebrities on these spaceships, vehicles, and so on. For example, we have the spaceship in China and if the name of this spaceship is named after a famous person then I am sure everybody will pay more attention to it. Why is it that Confucius's picture is not found on the spaceship? Why can Confucius's picture not be embossed on our coins? Why is it only our political leader's figures are shown on coins? And why not artists and why not writers' figures? For example, vessels can also be named after important writers, but very often, the name of a vessel is not understandable. If they can be called Ba Qin or Liu Shun then it will be very good in terms of promotion effect. So our Minister of Culture, our administration and our academics should promote this. We have to promote our own Asian culture. If we rely on other people to do it, it is not possible. That is all I would like to say, thank you very much.





# The Miracle of "*The Da Vinci Code*"

Dan Brown's "*The Da Vinci Code*" hit almost every part of the world within two years. Not only the novel became a big hit but also the movie. It caused the controversies, related publishing and the crowds in resorts. The popularity is incredible.

Ms LIN Hsin Chin  
Editor-in-chief, China Times Publishing Company

DR MA KA FAI:

Next speaker I want to introduce is from Taiwan, Ms Lin Hsin Chin. Ms Lin is an experienced journalist. She has worked in China Times for a long time and then she has also been the co-editor and director of The China Post. She is an experienced worker and she has written a lot on arts and culture. I have not just found from literature research. When I was a student in Taiwan, I came to learn about Ms Lin. She joined China Times very early on. She has helped in the publication of fine and popular artworks in Taiwan. Today, she is going to speak on the miracle "*The Da Vinci Code*" in Taiwan and the mainland, in Hong Kong and even in other parts of the world. The book has sold very well. She is going to use "*The Da Vinci Code*" as an example to illustrate points to know and also the strategy in marketing western works, and also the cultural meaning of such an exchange. I give the floor to Ms Lin.

MS LIN HSIN CHIN:

"*The Da Vinci Code*" can be regarded as one of the most highly valued books in recent years. I think many people have read it already and I would call it a miracle.

This is the cover we have for the book. We used Mona Lisa's smile as the cover design and then we used kraft paper for the cover because as some confidential manuscript was mentioned in the story and then because the story was about a murder, you saw some bloodstains. We asked two very famous authors to write the recommendation. One is the novelist Zhang Dachun and the other is Zhan Hongzhi who is a specialist in detective genre. Their recommendation has a boost in marketing. Besides, it is said that it was the first time an American book had persuaded the French.

### The miracle of Dan Brown

The publishing industry has also gone through globalisation. Amazon's online bookstore has made American publishing a world culture industry and everyone wants to know what are the bestsellers on the New York Times. People also like to know what books other parts of the world are reading.

The Frankfurt trade fair is also a trading centre for copyrights. It accounts for almost one-third of the trading. 200,000 publishers took part in the Frankfurt fair this year, so you can have a feel of the scale of the fair. I have to attend different trade fairs, whether they are held in Frankfurt, London, Beijing or Tokyo to see what new titles are out in that year. I cannot afford to wait to buy copyrights of books after they are published because good books will see their copyrights being sold quite soon.

Bestsellers are very often made into movies and they become another kind of commodity. So in addition to dissemination of knowledge, it also has an entertaining mission.

Dan Brown's "*The Da Vinci Code*" is regarded as a miracle because within two years, it has hit almost every part of the world. People are asking one another, "Have you read the book?" Even people who do not read often are talking about the book. A doctor friend asked me or told me that our "*The Da Vinci Code*" was excellent. I asked him, "How do you know?" He said, "Well, it has become a buzzword and everyone is reading that book." I have also seen people reading "*The Da Vinci Code*" on buses or subways. So housewives, university professors, students, ordinary people are reading the book and more than 700,000 copies have been sold in Taiwan. The book was published in August last year in Taiwan. In less than three months, more than 300,000 copies were sold. A record. Before that, it was excellent – we did not know back then that the book would continue to be sold. Now we have already hit the 700,000 mark and I have been asking how the book's sales is in Hong Kong. I was told almost 100,000 copies have been sold in Hong Kong. I know you do not read simplified characters in Hong Kong and we have actually exported the book to Hong Kong.



Bestsellers are very often made into movies and they become another kind of commodity. So in addition to dissemination of knowledge, it also has an entertaining mission.

### The business in every field

The book went on to the New York bestseller list last year. Actually The "*Da Vinci Code*" was not Dan Brown's first book. The first one was "*Digital Fortress*" and then there was "*Angels and Demons*" and "*Deception Point*". The first one was actually "*Digital Fortress*". Now Dan Brown's books are on the bestseller list of the New York Times. "*Angels and Demons*" – Dan Brown thought that it was great but it did not become popular and he was quite upset about that. The new book, "*The Da Vinci Code*" has helped to market his older books and now, people are reporting his previous works such as "*Angels and Demons*" and "*Digital Fortress*" which we will also published, so this is indeed a miracle.

Another miracle I would like to refer to that – it has also stirred up the interest for this kind of genre. We are telling people that any story involving Medieval castles and secrets and cryptology would be very interesting. This has become a very common subject for thrillers. People think if they use the same formula they will be successful and readers are also interested in such themes. Some people also like to make a windfall out of this phenomenon.

People also are very interested now in deciphering encryption in Taiwan. Books on deciphering encryption have become popular. So now books like to call themselves such and such code, they like to use the word "code" in the title of their books.

So the book has aroused interest in deciphering encryption. We also have a book on solving the mystery of "*The Da Vinci Code*". The book helps to resolve the secret or encryption behind the literary works referred to in Dan Brown's book.

As I said, books on encryption and related issues are becoming popular. So the playing with figures is very interesting and in Taiwan, we have lots of such games, with numbers and encryption; they talk about developing your left brain and your right brain and these are all related to the book.

### Protests from the religious group

The book has also sparked a lot of controversies, because the book mentioned many controversial topics such as religious topics. It said that Jesus got married like an ordinary man and he had offspring, and this has sparked objection from the religious sector. I think it is trying to change people's impression of religion. Then there were people who would like to sue him for plagiarism and even the Vatican

has been involved. So a lot of controversies have been aroused and this is led or caused more interest and attention for the book. So all these have helped to fuel the success of the book. This is indeed very interesting.

People now like to visit Paris and also Italy. The Louvre in Paris has long lines outside its entrance and people are also interested in finding the Holy Grail. People may ask: why are people going to the Louvre? And people are saying that they want to bring their children to see the Louvre, to see that famous painting and the fortresses referred to, for instance, the fortress that the professor lived in in the book has now been developed into a tourist attraction. From New York, a four-day trip there will cost you a few thousand US dollars. Even so, you do not easily get a place. Then because the Last Supper took place in Rome near the Vatican, people are also flooding to the Vatican.

### The war for the copyright

Now I would like to talk about how China Times Publishing has been able to sell 700,000 copies of *"The Da Vinci Code"* in a year. Let me explain our strategies. Actually, what is most important is to strive to get the copyright. Without this copyright, we cannot publish the book. In fact, nobody has said to me that we are so lucky to have been able to buy the copyrights of this book. In fact I am not lucky. In 2003, the US already published *"The Da Vinci Code"*, but this book was not available in other places. In New York, we do have some colleagues responsible for identifying new books for us and they told us that this is quite a good book and they sent me some information. I studied History of Art and I was surprised to see this title, *"The Da Vinci Code"*. My colleagues told me that there were codes in the book which were very interesting. Those who have learned art history will be familiar with "Mona Lisa" and the "Last Supper". So what does Mona Lisa's smile represent? Many people have guessed that the smile comes from a pregnant woman or the smile represents real pain. Some people try to think who this Mona Lisa was. Was she a relative in Madison family? Lover of a silk merchant? Or a homosexual? There are many rumors about it.

But this book did not narrow its topic on "Mona Lisa". The author made use of the four paintings of Da Vinci in a very clever way. At that time, I read one of the chapters and I smiled. I said that at the beginning there was an expert in religion and also in symbology, he is a Harvard professor and he made a business trip over and then in the middle of the night he was disturbed by a telephone call saying that the curator was murdered and he was an expert in symbology. And before that cura-

It seems that book was a page turner right from the beginning. People could not put down the book once they started reading it and this is why this book is so successful.

tor died, he lay down in front of the painting of Mona Lisa's smile and he used his body to form the shape as painted in the painting. So I felt surprised at that time. It seems that book was a page turner right from the beginning. People could not put down the book once they started reading it and this is why this book is so successful. Each chapter is short, but each chapter talks about an incident and this incident gives rise to the incident in the next chapter. So we do not know where the book is leading us to. So this is the unique feature of the book. At that time, I have not identified so many interesting features, I just saw Mona Lisa's smile and then the portrait of Holy Mary in the Last Supper and in these four paintings, there were some clues. So it seems that it is interesting.

How will it be related to art history? I talked to my editor in-chief and I said, "This is quite a good book, we should buy it." There is a murder case and also there is beauty in the story, so if we translate the book, it should not be a boring one. So that is why we have bought it with just a small amount of royalty. People would not believe it. We did not know that it would turn out to be a bestseller at that time so we were all very lucky. So that is how we have got the copyright. It's good luck.

### Excellent translation

I have found also a very good translator to translate the book. The translator You Chuanli has translated a lot of books of the same type. She is also familiar with history of art. She gathered information on all the paintings mentioned in the book. We have then asked that translator to do the work for us. When the book was published, we were very anxious because our edition was already the last edition because there was already the simplified Chinese character version, the Japanese version and all other versions. We also have the simplified character version in Taiwan as well. So we were worried that our book would not have a market, but the fact is that the situation is not like that. Taiwanese likes to read Taiwanese style Chinese. So the mainland translation is not natural to Taiwanese. So that is why our translator has done a very good job.

### Booking on the internet

Right from the beginning, we did publicity on the website and we also uploaded some deciphering games onto our website; and also concepts of architecture and astronomy and so on and so forth are included on our website so readers have to answer some questions first before they can get into the website. This is an arithmetic game. We try to invite readers to participate. So we have aroused people's curiosity and we have published 1,000 books with magnetic bookmarks and in

less than one day, all these copies were sold. At that time, we just thought that we could give it a try, but in one day, all these copies were sold. As a result, the craze for *"The Da Vinci Code"* was even bigger.

This is a very interesting book. I have not spent a lot of time and effort to promote this book, but if you read the newspapers, Apple Daily and China Times and so on, this book is always featured. So I just traced the news. The Vatican Church also issued some press releases; they sued Dan Brown. These are all in the news.

### A big hand of TV stars

In television programmes, as you all know, Taiwanese have a lot of favourite programmes and two of the famous TV stars, "Big S" and "Small S", said that *"The Da Vinci Code"* is really enjoyable and on the same day, 2,000 copies were sold. We did not ask these celebrities to promote the book for us but they really liked the book. We also uploaded this news to our website. You will be able to see news in relation to code and so on. In the discussion forum on the web, there were enthusiastic responses.

Also a movie was produced on *"The Da Vinci Code"* and we tried to select which version is the best one. In the Frankfurt book fair, you can see the poster of the movie *"The Da Vinci Code"*. This is Tom Hanks, he is playing the role of Robert Langdon and a famous French movie star—Audrey Tautou— is also taking part in the film. The Director is Ron Howard.

### Family industry

Dan Brown is also an attractive person. As I said just now, in June this year, he was interviewed and we had a discussion with him. He met with bookstores and publishers. He was interviewed by the National Geographic magazine. He said that there was basis behind his writing. He is handsome. In fact he is an English teacher. His wife has also done a lot of research work for him. His father is a mathematician. His mother is a religious musician and during the cocktail reception, his parents and his wife were also present together with him, so they were very proud of Dan Brown. It is their family industry.

This was the situation in July when we published the book. We did a promotion with National Geographic. We invited National Geographic to do a thematic article on the book.

Two of the famous TV stars, "Big S" and "Small S", said that *"The Da Vinci Code"* is really enjoyable and on the same day, 2,000 copies were sold.





He said that Mary Magdalen was a whore but this was not mentioned in the Bible so Dan Brown tried to defend Mary Magdalen and said the person sitting to Jesus's right was his wife and that woman was Mary Magdalen. In Taiwan, we have the Chinese version of National Geographic and so all these tie in with the promotion of the movie. I have also written an article on Dan Brown and Ming Pao has also published the interview report with Dan Brown.

We hope that next year we will publish *"Angels and Demons"*. We also published *"The Real History Behind the Da Vinci Code"*. The author, Sharan Newman, is an expert in Medieval history and she has written a book on deciphering code and it is also another bestseller. So that is all.





# Toward the International with Knowledge Share

As an integral part of the world, I think we have to learn from everyone. We not only learn technology, science and marketing in the West but also work harder to explore the long history. The publishing house should take account of the world and share the knowledge.

Moderator:Dr MA Ka Fai

DR MA KA FAI:

It is time for the Q&A session. You could just raise your hands or write the questions on the paper and pass it onto the stage. Feel free to raise your hands if you want to ask a question.

ASK: Do publishers have any moral considerations?

Actually The "*The Da Vinci Code*" is an excellent book and Dan Brown claimed that "*The Da Vinci Code*" contained fact. If from an academic point of view, he said that his novel was based on facts. If the book has sparked controversies and the book has become a bestseller all because of the controversies it has aroused, Dan Brown used this strategy to boost sales. Would you say that is rather immoral and unethical? You are building your success on something which is not true and you call it truth. Would that be problematic? Do publishers have any moral considerations? The novel should not be allowed to claim that it contains facts. If we publish things as if they were true without any support, would that be acceptable?

## People have rights to express themselves

MS LIN HSIN CHIN:

I understand that Dan Brown had conducted research for two or three years before he wrote the book and I think many of the issues have been discussed in art history. He spent some time researching into the background information. He got basic information, he turned such information into a novel. I think it is also about the creation of a historical novel. I do not think we have things like ethics involved because it is an expression of his creativity.

I think it is part of the fun. The religious bit may upset Catholics, but then it says the real history behind "*The Da Vinci Code*". This book has followed all the details

in Dan Brown's book and he has written on the things mentioned in Da Vinci's code and such is really historical information. I think Dan Brown has been very smart to add such things to the novel.

MR AN BOSHUN:

Concerning this issue, I think publishers sometimes have to struggle in their conscience. For instance, books like "*The Da Vinci Code*" and other novels are actually exploiting our people's pursuit for entertainment and a thrilling story. So publishers have to consider the profits and as for social responsibility. I do not think that what that gentleman said was wrong. We have to strike a balance. Of course, the bottom line is not to do any harm. Then above that, there can be a diversity of views. We also have to consider the need for pluralism. Perhaps the view is only one out of a hundred people, but then he still has the right to express himself.

MR GARY LEUNG KWAN HO:

Regarding Red Publish, I can only tell you my own experiences. We take part in self-financed publishing. New writers may come with manuscripts that other publishers are not willing to publish. Perhaps they are doubtful about the source and they think there is not sufficient research back-up. I think each publisher would use different yardsticks. Our objective is to help new authors publish their books. It is our mission to help such writers to realise their dreams. As for social responsibility, how come books have a longer life than newspapers and magazines? Books will remain on shelves for a longer period of time so they do have their share of social responsibility. I am a typical fan of "*The Da Vinci Code*". I regard it as a novel of fiction, I do not regard it as a history book. At the end of the day, it is not a history textbook, it is fiction. History textbooks should be left to Oxford University Press. Here we are just reading a novel and will not be too interested in finding out whether what Dan Brown wrote is true or not. No one can confirm whether what he said in the book is right or wrong so I do not think there is any moral or ethical consideration here.

We have the freedom of expression in Hong Kong as long as people have something to say and there are publishers willing to publish the book for him then I think he has a right.

We have the freedom of expression in Hong Kong as long as people have something to say and there are publishers willing to publish the book for him then I think he has a right.

## Publishers should take more responsibilities

MS KARINA AFRICA BOLASCO:

I am not sure, for me, a publisher should be able to give the public access to information, free access – I mean access to information on all positions. I have had to be in so many instances where it was difficult deciding whether to put out a book or not. Maybe the hardest was when I was approached to publish the story of a survivor from the killing fields of the Communist Party of the Philippines in the early 1980s, so this was – I had several people coming to me to saying not to publish this because this was going to work against the movement and this was going to discredit a lot of people who used to be the leading activists during the Marcos period, and that was a tough decision to make. But we heard the stories of the survivors and it was well written, well documented and so we went ahead and published the book.

So I think a publisher also faces this time of situation. Anything can be published. I think that is what makes books different from magazines and newspapers. Magazines, newspapers can probably be a bit more reckless in the sense that after today, that newspaper is gone, after this week, the magazine is gone but books have a longer shelf life and if they are even kept in libraries, they stay even longer. So I think there is a bit more responsibility that has to be exercised when you put out books.

MR MARK TAN:

My view is almost similar. I think a publisher also has to take some responsibility. For visual books which I am good at times, designers, photographers, artists want me to feature their work, and at times, I really do not want to do it. The main reason is basically the work is not good enough. If I publish it, I would not be helping these designers, but instead damaging their reputation. So it is very important that whatever we publish, we have to take care of the audience's impact on the author.

ASK: How to keep cultural characters without imbalance?

From the Filipino and Singapore Page One and the mainland experience it seems to me that you emphasise the uniqueness of the Asian culture and the heritage and the identity amidst the economic growth which is kind of shattering the heritage. You seek the cultural goods and make it universal and popular. That is very good. I want to ask the speakers from Hong Kong and Taiwan: how do you see yourself on this footing, from the national or unique cultural identity? Are you just going to do "choy ma"(horse racing), representing Hong Kong or what? And the

other way round, how would the Filipino and the Singaporean and the mainland China publishers receive globalisation? How do you import, like Da Vinci and the other Western properties into cross-publishing? How do you balance the global co-operation without imbalance without losing your own identity?

### Plans for nurturing local writers

MR GARY LEUNG KWAN HO:

I believe the question is: how can we publish books with the unique characteristics of Hong Kong apart from those books on horse racing. All along, we have plans to do this thing. As I said just now in my speech, the difficulty we have encountered is that we do not have enough experienced editors, we do not have people with good knowledge of history. We may not be as successful as Page One, we may not be able to market books with different Asian countries' characteristics.

For example, we have published the book on wedding games. Usually there are a lot of very interesting games. So we are trying to take up things that we can handle. Those very grand, great cultural themes should be taken up by Ming Pao and other large publishers, but for some local community cultural themes, these are things that we can handle.

MS LIN HSIN CHIN:

What you said just now is about identity. Now our company has introduced best-sellers of other countries to our country. We also pay a lot of attention to the nurturing of local writers so we have published a lot of works by Taiwanese writers. Actually local writers are most important. They have their own unique characteristics. We should think of how to introduce them to people outside Taiwan. There are only a few books written by local writers that have been translated into other languages. We have co-operated with Columbia University in the US and we have translated some Taiwanese writers' books into English hoping they can penetrate other countries, but those are more academic in nature. We are still working hard in this regard. We have the Japanese version and Taiwan version for a certain writer, Wang Wen Wah.

MR AN BOSHUN:

This gentleman talked about globalisation. I think this is quite a controversial issue. Whenever I come across bestsellers like *"The Da Vinci Code"*, I feel very painful in relation to our mainland market. All the money or profits are taken by other people. I will doubt how other people can be so successful, while we cannot be. In 1993,

we started to introduce our brand name, adopting the western style. We grouped together writers and we told them this is the way they should write and the book became very successful. We had made some profits over the years.

When we introduced the books in international book fairs, when other countries sold their books to us, they were always cheerful but when we tried to promote our books to them, they did not have such a welcoming expression. This is something we have to do but when we do it, other publishers may not want to see us. I think we are aiming at the situation that they will come to approach us. We are talking about a group of academics and knowledgeable people. As wolves in the past, we were insulted by you so I will not approach you, I will wait for you to approach and contact me. I believe this process will be a long one and it will be painful.

### Work harder to export it

MS KARINA AFRICABOLASCO:

Before this, can I also answer that question. If you come to a Manila bookstore you will think you are in the United States because three-quarters of the titles are all titles from the United States. The reason this is so is because the book is a luxury item. Considering the purchasing power of Filipinos, they have to stay with the basics, and most of the market that has the spare money to buy books is American or colonially educated in the Philippines. So because of the education, they are westernised and they like reading "*The Da Vinci Code*", Michael Crichton, all the bestsellers.

We feel that we cannot – this is exactly what we have to do is to catch up with this and to retrieve all our stories, edify our own culture, our own literature, because right now, even if the bookstore gave its space to the local publishers, we would not be able to fill up the bookstore, maybe just one-quarter of the bookstore because many of the publishers in the Philippines are textbook publishers and they are not put on the store shelves, they are sold directly to schools, they are brought to schools.

The market overseas for our titles is Filipinos, I regret to say that, but this is how we think of our books when they export. We are looking at the Filipino Americans in the States, in Canada, for the professional titles, for the titles on history and culture. The new generation of Fil-Americans are very hungry for such materials. They grow up in the United States and they want to know what their history, culture and heritage really is. So we have a way of selling all these books in the United States.

So this is how do we look at globalisation? We are not looking at something that we can play up in Frankfurt or – what we are doing is just, right now, maybe it is parochial, we are catering to the Filipino market right now and the Filipinos overseas which is still the Filipino market. But I believe you cannot sit at the global table without knowing who you are. When globalisation happens, you take stock of your own, you have your own and you defend your own.

The other question is we have continued to have historical and social interactions. For example, the Philippines has a sizeable number of Chinese immigrants, and Filipino entertainers and workers are a staple in China. We have done anthologies of Filipino – writings by Chinese. It is called "Inchik". It is literary so these are different literary forms written by Filipino Chinese. It is been a group – a big Chinese newspaper in Manila has asked to translate it into Mandarin but we have not exported it of course to China.

MR MARK TAN:

I feel that as part of the world, I think we have to learn from everyone. I think in the current situation, the west is very strong in their technology and their science and their medicine. I think we should learn from them and welcome them to bring in more books from the West on this subject, including their marketing tactic which is very strong.

On the other hand, we have a longer history of culture and I think we have to work harder to export this. So far we have not been successful. Basically I think most of us are publishing for ourselves when we start to plan a book, publishers do not always think about the world. China has 1.3 billion people, yes, it is big, but the world is bigger.

So in this case, I think we have to share our knowledge both ways and what we are proud of is our history because we have a long history, although Singapore does not have a long history, but Asia itself has a long history.

ASK: How will the publishing industry go in the future?

DR MA KA FAI:

I think there is one question which many people will be interested in and that is apart from the book "*Wolf Totem*", what bestsellers in China have become the main trend?

I think we are aiming at the situation that the Western publishers will come to approach us. I believe this process will be a long one and it will be painful.



MR AN BOSHUN:

Well, for a free Chinese person "*Wolf Totem*" is a brand new concept. A freedom to farmers is also a new concept. So people like to write about prayers, freedom and freedom of expression. Usually these books would contain very feudalistic and Confucius ideas. For instance, going to a long deserted place and going to a farming civilisation – if Chinese writers and Chinese culture can go into the world then we do not need a language platform. If we can understand each other's language, then there is no need for translation.

For Korean TV dramas, they are very popular on the mainland. Why are we not as creative? Because our artists and authors do not have any conviction, this is very horrifying. In the past ten years, people have been very realistic. That was not the case when we believed in Communism. Now people have no beliefs, no convictions.

Religions are now rising on the mainland. Many intellectuals and the leadership are now trying to instil morals and also beliefs and convictions into Chinese people but we do not have many mainstream books in China.

DR MA KA FAI:

The last question is for Ms Lin Hsin Chin, now you have talked about people who try to identify good books, so what characteristics should these people possess?

MS LIN HSIN CHIN:

In the US, they have scouts to find bestsellers. In the US there are some companies like that.



China Times, back in 1992, we had a major copyright infringement problem in Taiwan, there was not any concept on copyright and in 1992, we started to attach significance to intellectual property rights. China Times was one of the first companies to introduce copyright arrangements in Taiwan.

In Taiwan, we have companies that specialise in this area. We cannot rely

on them alone. We went to New York and looked for real scouts there. They are New York-based because New York is the centre of publishing. Many large publishing houses are based in New York. They have hundreds of new titles every year. It is impossible for us to read them one by one. These scouts would give us a publication list. For instance, in the coming year, there would be these popular books available in Frankfurt. I think it is quite desirable to work through scouts so that we can get hold of more information.

Sometimes, these books are written for the American audience so they may not know what Taiwanese readers want. We cannot rely on their recommendations alone. A book that sells well in the US may not sell well in Taiwan. "*The Da Vinci Code*" is a different phenomenon. There are many American bestsellers that may not necessarily be welcome in Asia, so we have to be wary.

A book scout can only work for one publishing company, like if we have a contract with a scout, they can only serve China Times, it cannot provide information to other publishing houses. That is the rule of the game in the publishing industry. They also have their own customers in Paris or in Finland, but each scouting company can only be contracted with one publishing company.

DR MA KA FAI:

It is about time we have to close. I will give each speaker 30 seconds to round up, to supplement what you have said. Thirty seconds for each speaker please. We will start with Mr An.

MR AN BOSHUN:

Whether it be Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland or Singapore, wherever there are Chinese, our culture will certainly have a market, but we must have the globalisation concept in mind.

MS LIN HSIN CHIN:

Yes, we have been talking about globalisation. I want to introduce good books from outside Taiwan because this is important. It would be Taiwan's loss if we do not introduce such books to Taiwan because these books help to enhance our cultural standard.

MR MARK TAN:

This forum is very important. I hope that this forum will develop into a more con-

If Chinese writers and Chinese culture can go into the world then we do not need a language platform. If we can understand each other's language, then there is no need for translation.



crete action. Minister and ministry delegate – I prepared my speech but they were not here, so I hope to see this forum develop into a very concrete action for Asia cultural co-operation.

MR GARY LEUNG KWAN HO:

Being such a very small publishing firm, I would appeal to everyone in Hong Kong to think of different topics and ideas. Publishers need new concepts and ideas from authors and if you have new ideas, please contact us.

MS KARINA AFRICABOLASCO:

I think Brand Asia is a very good idea and the time has come, especially in books, in the book trade. Like Mr Tan, I hope something concrete will come out of it – there are so many attempts to achieve this.

I just want to end with saying that I think it is important for us to be able to read one another and not to read translations that are referred by American publishing houses, in other words, we do not just read Murakami or Yoshimoto because the Americans decide they are fit for international release. We should also choose and read other writers on our own level, on our own terms.

] The session ended. The moderator showed thanks to all the speakers who share their experiences and opinions with audience. ^

