

**HOW JOURNALISTS SUSTAIN THEIR AUTONOMY UNDER OWNERSHIP**

**CHANGE:**

**A CASE STUDY IN TAIWAN**

A Thesis

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research is to explore how changes in the structure of the print media in Taiwan affect journalists' autonomy, a key element of free speech in a democracy. The case of China Times faces the change of managerial practice and the formalization of control after the changes in ownership. This research attempts to examine how these changes influence journalists' autonomy, and further clarify how journalists react to the change of their autonomy. To examine the problem, I interviewed seven journalists who work or have worked in China Times. In addition, I conducted the archival analysis based on interviewees' blogs and the on-line publications of union at China Times.

The results show that with change of managerial practice, which decreased journalists' autonomy, there is a formalization of control. There were three different owners at China Times, each representing three work regimes: paternalist hegemony, market hegemony and subsidiary hegemonic despotism. The changes in ownership resulted in the formalization of control resulting in the break between managers and employees. This division resulted in journalists feeling less autonomous than before. Faced with less autonomy, journalists had to choose whether to stay or to exit.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### Research question

On September 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, an estimated nine thousand students and concerned citizens joined a protest march called “September 1st Anti-Media Monopoly March” in Taipei. It is the largest contemporary social movement that focused specifically on media in Taiwan. The activists who joined this movement protested against the take-over of a cable system by a media conglomerate, Want-Want Holding. Before this big protest march, there were many controversial incidents affiliated with China Times, one of the largest newspapers in Taiwan. China Times was established in 1950, and was sold to Want-Want Holdings, the largest food production company in both Taiwan and China in 2008. To cater to the new owner, China Times and the other two TV stations under Want-Want Holding fabricated news that an activist paid students to join the anti-media monopoly protest. A young journalist blogged about how her article was rewritten by her manager, and in return, many senior journalists resigned from their positions to support the young journalist. This sequence of incidents triggered the anti-media monopoly movement and exposed China Times of delivering newspapers as a pro-China publicity instrument to the public in 2012.

As one of largest newspapers in Taiwan, China Times has been known for its liberal orientation and the trusted relationship between the owner and journalists. However, many people describe that its orientation changed a lot after the change of

ownership; additionally, few journalists have criticized the new owner for managing journalists as if they were food production workers. Many resigned or fired journalists wrote articles to criticize these changes at China Times after the buyout, and these internal criticisms toward new ownership became the strong evidence supporting anti-media monopoly movement. My research question was born from these critiques, focusing on how the new ownership at China Times controls its workforce.

The purpose of this research is to explore how changes in the structure of the newspaper media in Taiwan affect journalists' autonomy, a key element of free speech in a democracy. Autonomy is a core attribute of professions, because professionals are distinctive based on their special attitude of commitment and concern towards their work (Freidson, 1984). The concept of autonomy refers to a employee's degree of self-determination, which increases when there is less control and more trust (Kalleberg, 2011). Furthermore, autonomy for professionals means the perceived control over routine work activities, and the perceived freedom to be innovative in the workplace (Prechel & Gupman, 1995). According to democratic principles (Reese, 2001), journalists require more autonomy than other occupations because they ideally provide a system of checks and balances by informing the electorate on issues that pertain to government and business. In this study, I examine China Times, one of the largest newspapers in Taiwan, to understand what factors influenced the autonomy of journalists in Taiwan since 2008.

This case has characteristics that make it uniquely suited to examine how change in ownership affects journalists' autonomy, specifically since China Times was purchased

by a key newsprint/media conglomerate that has significantly changed the way the broader profession operates. In 2008, a food production conglomerate, Want-Want Holding took over China Times. This switch of leadership changed the political orientation of China Times from pro-Taiwan to pro-China (Cheng, 2012; Society, 2012). The union at China Times, which had existed since 1988 and represented 1300 workers, was dissolved. China Times also fired almost four hundred and fifty workers, almost forty percent of all workers. These changes affected not only the structure of China Times but also its managerial practice, and through it, influenced journalists' autonomy.

As a result, I argue that change in ownership resulted in the change of managerial practices, which affected the autonomy of journalists at China Times. According to China Times' history, we can find there are two transformations of ownership. The first one is from the founder to his son, while the second one is from his son to Want-Want Holdings. Different periods of ownership showed different work regimes based on different political and economic contexts, resulting in different autonomy for journalists. Different regimes practiced different managerial controls, which were shifted from informal to formal. The control over journalists can be observed by two main indexes in the newsroom: censorship and the focus of the censorship, also termed the "sacred cow" (Cain, 2012). More formal controls mean additional regulations and limits. As a result, I argue that more formal controls will also decrease journalists' autonomy.



## Method

To investigate my research question, I used two sources for collecting data, journalists' blogs and interviews. To measure the degree of journalistic autonomy before the change in management, I did two things. First, I analyzed all the publications of the China Times union along with three blogs written by three of my interviewees in order to understand how the union and workplace issues changed over time. In total, there are 1000 articles in those blogs, but I focused on the details which addressed working experiences at China Times. As a result, I reviewed almost 200 articles from journalists' blogs. Most blogs were consistent with what my interviewees said, so I quoted more from interviews rather than from the blogs. Only when blogs presented more detailed descriptions did I quote from them. In addition, I also reviewed some business magazine articles regarding China Times to examine the change of organizational structure at China Times. The China Times union's publication, the resigned journalists' blogs and those business magazine articles are all publicly available on their website, so no special permission is required to access them.

Second, I interviewed seven journalists who work or have worked at China Times before and after the take-over by Want-Want Holding. My interviewees were asked how they were assigned stories to cover and how much editorial guidance and censorship they experienced in their work in the past and in the present. Recruiting interviewees was the biggest challenge. There were some difficulties in contacting journalists through the company, since I planned to interview both current workers and past workers. Thus, I recruited my participants via my social network. I used semi-structured interviews and

audio-recorded the interview with the person's permission. After being transcribed, I destroyed the audio recordings. I did not ask any personal identifying information, assuring confidentiality and anonymity. Names are not used to protect interviewees in my research.

### Literature review

To examine if changes in ownership structure influenced journalists' autonomy at China Times, I focused on what changed after the transfer of ownership. First, I will review the characteristics of journalists' professional identity, which influenced how journalists perceived themselves and thought about changes in the workplace. Second, I will review the research on expansion and managerial control.

First, I need to clarify the concept of professional identity. Reese (2001) argues that journalists must have a high degree of professional freedom and autonomy to carry out their function; however, the freedom of journalists to follow their profession sometimes is hindered by organizational pressure. Van Maanen (1982) developed the concept of occupational community. An occupational community is a group of people who consider themselves to be engaged in the same sort of work, sharing a set of values, norms and perspectives. Van Maanen argued that an occupational community was defined by the members themselves, and it shaped how people in the same occupation behaved. Freidson (1988) defined a profession as a type of occupation whose members control recruitment, training, and the work they do. Additionally, professional work is a type of work that requires discretionary judgment. He emphasized the importance of

professional practice, which could be defined as an interpersonal relationship between an individual professional and an individual client. Taken together, these scholars argue for a high correlation between professional identity and autonomy. For professionals, autonomy means the perceived control over routine work activities, and the perceived freedom to be innovative in the workplace (Prechel & Gupman, 1995). If autonomy is an important part of that identity, as it is for journalists, their ability to exercise autonomy will be important in the legitimacy they confer to management.

Although professionals need more autonomy compared to other occupations, the professional autonomy declines as organizations expand through time. As Weber (1946) argues, bureaucracy is the outcome of rationalization in modern society. It is considered the basis of organizational efficiency; however, it is also considered the iron cage that deprives people of substantive rationality, which refers to how to achieve the desired outcome. It is compared to formal rationality, which focuses on the right procedures rather than outcome. Weber argued that bureaucratization is one of the ways formal rationality gradually replaces substantive rationality. Edwards (1979) argues there are three dimensions of control as organizations grow and become more complex: simple control, technical control, and bureaucratic control. The complexity of an organization forces it to transfer its control from simple control based on personal relations to more formal and regulated bureaucratic control. Simple control is applied to small-business corporations. Since its managerial, controls mostly depend on the family or founder. Technological control means using machinery and planning the flow of work to

maximize efficiency. As corporations expand, bureaucratic control emerged to replace the control of personal relationship by formal regulation.

Bureaucracy is an inevitable trend as organizations expand. Freidson (1984) examines two theories describing how professional autonomy declines when stratification in the professions has become more formal than in the past: the deprofessionalization thesis and the proletarianization thesis. The deprofessionalization thesis refers to a profession that loses its position of prestige and trust when political pressure exercises more control over professions; the proletarianization thesis emphasizes how professional autonomy declines when bureaucratization grows. According to the proletarianization thesis, increased bureaucratization leads to a greater of layers of hierarchy, furthering the loss of professionals' right of self-direction. Although there is a divergence of views toward bureaucracy, the main critique argues that extreme bureaucratic organization causes irrationality. Abernethy and Stoelwinder (1995) examine if the bureaucracy and formal controls crush professionals' culture. They argue that the popularity of formal administrative control threaten the professionals' autonomy ultimately generating conflict. Their research shows that providing an environment which reduces role conflict will increase individual's job satisfaction and autonomy.

The expansion of organizations causes changes in control as well. The most significant change in control through time is the transformation from informal control to formal control. The more complex an organization is, the more bureaucracy and formal rules emerge. The managerial practice can be seen as a form of control. Bendix (1956)

argued that the managerial ideology shift from scientific management to human relations represents a growing managerial ideology in the psychological absorption of workers. Barley and Kunda (1992) examined the transformation of managerial ideologies in United States from 1870 to the present. They argue there are two kinds of managerial ideology that have alternated: rational and normative ideologies. Under rational control, productivity stems from carefully articulated methods and systems, such as scientific management. On the other hand, normative control means that managers can more effectively regulate workers by attending not only to their behavior but also to their thoughts and emotions. Therefore, when employees share core values with managers, those employees tend to be more deeply connected to the organization. Barley and Kunda argue that the dominant ideology in the U.S. since the 1980s is one that combines both normative and rational goals. Commitment, unity, and loyalty become important to the organization when the quality of production is increased. Strong and positive organizational cultures enhances autonomy as well, since it appears as if the organization trusts that employees can act to pursue the organization's best interest. As a professional occupation, journalists need autonomy in order to appear legitimate. Therefore, management through normative control, which involves journalists internalizing the ideology of organization, is crucial. Normative control influences how journalists perceive control, which is highly related to professional autonomy. After internalizing the ideology of the organization, they will do the self-censor rather than requiring direct control and external censorship (Napoli, 1997; Reese, 2001).

Crowley and Hodson (2014) examine how organizations function under the current neo-liberal economic system. They argue that it is “neoliberal practices” that influence relationships and day-to-day behavior which underwrite organizational functioning and success. They argue that neoliberal managerial practices try to increase efficiency by restructuring organizations, however they also find that the neoliberal managerial practices can only increase short-term profits and undercut the long-term investments and sustained effort. Neoliberal practices undercut normative control and shift to rational control and may cause some negative results, including increases in turnover and reduction in informal peer training.

There are different views of formal control and how it related to workers’ autonomy. Generally speaking, the formalization of control will decrease employees’ autonomy. Based on these arguments, I argue that the formalization of control at China Times will decrease the journalists’ autonomy.

**Table 1: The three periods of China Times**

Independent variable	Autonomy changed through periods: decline		
	Yu Chi-Chung (1950—2001)	Albert Yu (2001—2008)	Tsai Eng-Meng (2008—present)
Factory Regime	Paternalist Hegemony	Market Hegemony	Subsidiary Hegemonic Despotism
Historical context	Limited political freedom: political intervention, Ban on newspapers	Neoliberalism: Competitive media market	Chinese intervention Anti-media monopoly movement
Ownership structure	Independently owned company	Independently owned company	Subsidiary company
Type of control	Informal control	Formal control Neoliberal control	Formal control Cultural control
	Censorship: Direct, informal → bureaucratic	Censorship: Formal, bureaucratic	Censorship: formal, bureaucratic and more coercive
	Focus of censorship: political KMT	Focus of censorship: Business financial friends	Focus of censorship: China cross-straight trade, financial friends and self-promotion
Professional autonomy	Perception of autonomy	Deprofessionalization	Proletarianization

## **CHAPTER II**

### **CONTEXT**

The development of China Times is deeply intertwined with the history of the newspaper industry in Taiwan. In order to understand how those external factors influenced journalists' autonomy in China Times, it is necessary to examine the history of media development in Taiwan. The development of Taiwanese newspaper industry can be divided into three phases: the political intervention phase from 1949 to 1988, the economic phase from 1988 to 2008, and the Chinese intervention phase from 2008 until now. This division is based on important factors present in each stage, including politics, economics and Chinese factor.

#### The political intervention phase during 1949 to 1988

During the political intervention phase from 1949 to 1988, political factors were the most important issues shaping the newspaper market. After the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the government of the Republic of China, the Kuomintang (KMT), was expelled to Taiwan by the Communist Party of China (CPC). At that time, the KMT government promulgated martial law that regulated every division of society. The regulations prevented unlawful assembly, associations, processions, petitions, and strikes under martial law and punished rebellions. Moreover, measures were put in place to regulate newspapers, magazines and book publications. The ban on newspapers restricted the number of pages a newspaper could print (no more than six pages), the publication of



newspapers, and the license of the newspaper industry. During this period, most newspapers were published by the government, the KMT, or the military.

Until 1988, only a few newspaper companies had licenses to publish newspapers. Most studies attributes the success of the two largest newspapers, China Times and United Daily News, to the ban on competition from other newspapers (Lee, 2000; Zhu, 2003). The predecessor of China Times, Credit News, was founded by Yu Chi-Chung in 1950. At first, Credit News was a small newspaper which only focused on the business price index. At the same time, the predecessor of United Daily News was formed from the fusion of three small newspapers by Wang Tih-Wu in 1951. The circulation of United Daily News' predecessor first exceeded all the other state-owned newspapers, and it became the largest newspaper in 1959. To compete with United Daily News, Credit News transformed itself from a business price index newspaper to a newspaper with comprehensive news coverage. In 1968, the name of Credit News changed to China Times. In addition to the name change, color printing was introduced as well, making China Times the first newspaper in Taiwan to make the move to color. Under the ban on newspapers, regulations provided a niche to early newspaper firms who have connections with the KMT, such as United Daily News and China Times. No other newspapers could compete with them due to the regulation of licenses. Therefore, United Daily News and China Times became the two largest newspapers in Taiwan by 1988.

The economic phase during 1988 to 2008

Following the political intervention phase arose the economic phase from 1988 to 2008 where economic deregulation caused a market boom. At this point, market competition was the central organizing logic. In 1987, the KMT government abolished martial law. In 1988, KMT government further lifted the ban on newspaper. This meant that there was no more regulation of the number of pages, the publication and the licenses to newspaper industry. As a result, the publication of newspapers began to follow the rules of free market. Nevertheless, the deregulation of government did not change monopoly structure which already existed. The two largest newspaper companies had accumulated enough capital and readers to expand their market. The deregulation provided them a big opportunity to publish more pages and increase their circulation. By 1991, China Times and United Daily News controlled 70% of market share.

The free market logic was akin to a double-edged sword, which had the possibility of strengthening China Times but also throwing it into a critical competition for market share. After lifting the ban on newspaper, some newspapers with different political inclinations joined the newspaper market as well. In 1988, another big newspaper, called Liberty Times, was established. Liberty Times is the only newspaper with a different ideology from other two newspapers. Unlike the United Daily News' and China Times' strong connection with KMT, Liberty Times showed its strong political inclination toward the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). DPP was founded in 1986, and soon became a dominant political party, emphasizing a progressive and liberal ideology. It was the first meaningful opposition party in Taiwan as well.

In 2000, Taiwan experienced the first party alternation at the presidential election. The ruling party was changed from KMT to DPP. In 2003, the Hong Kong-based Next Media published a newspaper, Apple Daily (Taiwan). Apple Daily brought the Hong Kong paparazzi culture to Taiwan, and which soon increased in popularity among readers. The paper was also famous for its neutral political attitude. Hsiao (2006) analyzed the readers of the four largest newspapers, finding that Apple Daily increased the amount of newspaper readers. More and more people who were not newspaper readers began reading newspapers. The popularity of Apple Daily definitely threatened the three older and larger newspapers, China Times, United Daily News, and Liberty Times. In addition to the competition of new newspapers, other forms of media joined the market, threatening the entire newspaper market. In 1993, the Cable Radio and Television Act was enforced. Cable TV was not legitimate until this act was enforced, which resulted in the boom of cable TV. The development of cable and radio hugely changed the structure of media, making the newspaper market become much more competitive than past.

Zhu (2003) mentions the influences assisting in the shrinkage of the newspaper market and the change of presidency made to China Times after 1990s. After 1990s, the development of cable and Internet resulted in the decrease and minimization of the newspaper market. After the founders of China Times and United Daily News passed away, the presidency was changed to their children. Business inheritance from first generation to second generation is a common practice within Taiwanese corporations. Zhu argues that the management has changed a lot from the founders to their heirs. It is

no longer a space for intellectuals to debate about public issues but of rather cost concerns became the focus of management. Responding to the shrinking market, these heirs seemed to care more about cost management than the role of newspapers in a democracy. We can observe this in the China Times case. In 2001, Yu Chi-Chung left the presidency of China Times to his son, Albert Yu. In order to compete with different media, Albert Yu bought a cable TV channel, CiTV, to make China Times a media conglomerate in 2006.

The Chinese intervention period during 2008 until present

The last phase in the development of China Times' history is the Chinese intervention phase from 2008 until now. A pro-China conglomerate, Want-Want Holding, bought China Times in 2008. In 2008, Taiwan experienced the second party alternation; the ruling party changed from DPP to KMT again. The second party alternation made the relations between Taiwan and China much closer in 2008. Compared with DPP, KMT seemed to support pro-Chinese corporatism, which also supported the idea that Taiwan should be part of China. As a result of this campaign, KMT tried to make the relation between China and Taiwan much closer. To attract more votes from those who cared about economic development, KMT emphasized the opening of markets to China.

The new president, Ma Ying-Jeou, attempted to loosen many regulations in cross-strait trade, including direct weekend charter flights between PRC and Taiwan, opening Taiwan to mainland Chinese tourist, easing restrictions on Taiwanese

investment in mainland China, and approving measures that will allow mainland Chinese investors to buy Taiwanese stocks. The most famous change under Ma Yin-Jeou's presidency is the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), which aims to reduce tariffs and commercial barriers between China and Taiwan. After signing ECFA in 2010, the connection between China and Taiwan deepened. Ultimately, trade policy became much more pro-China after the second party alternation.

### Three work regimes of China Times

The development of the newspaper industry and the history of China Times are closely related with the macro political and economic conditions in Taiwan. Burawoy (1985) argues that the process of production contains not only the labor process but also the political apparatuses which reproduces the relations of labor process through regulations. He mentions a concept called factory regime, which refers to overall political form of production, including the labor process and the political apparatuses of production. He categorizes factories based on four main factors: the labor process, market competition among firms, the reproduction of labor power, and state invention. Burawoy (1983) distinguishes despotic regime from hegemonic regime, arguing that hegemonic regime gradually replaced despotic regime under capitalism. Under the despotic regime capital extracts labor from workers without state intervention, which leads to worker resistance. As a result a hegemonic regime emerges, where the state provides labor protections and political stability that coordinate capital and labor's interests. However, as economic competition increases, such as under globalization, a

new regime of hegemonic despotism arises where state intervention is limited and capital gains more control over labor. Considering the shifting political and economic context in Taiwan, I will divide the factory regimes of China Times into three periods: paternalist hegemony, market hegemony and subsidiary hegemonic despotism.

Table 1 shows the transformation throughout the three different periods. During the first period from 1950 to 2001 under Yu Chi-Chung, I name it “paternalist hegemony” due to its hegemonic and paternalistic control. The political context at this period like the ban on newspapers provided a niche for China Times. China Times became one of the largest newspapers in Taiwan after lifting the ban on newspaper in 1988. After that, Yu Chi-Chung recruited many talented and critical journalists to shape the liberal and innovative pro-Kuomintang (KMT, the governing party at that time) ideology of China Times. He was known for treating journalists very well so that many journalists are dubbed as “Yu Chi-Chung’s vessels.” Yu Chi-Chung was good at using his personal charisma to enact the paternalist control. After the founder of China Times, Yu Chi-Chung, passed away, the presidency was changed to his son, Albert Yu. Business inheritance from first generation to second generation is a common practice in Taiwanese corporation.

The second period from 2001 to 2008 of Albert Yu is “market hegemony.” During the second period from 2001 to 2008 of Albert Yu, the newspaper market was much more competitive than in the past due to a shrinking media market. China Times faced the challenge not only from other newspapers but also from different kinds of media like TV and internet.

Although Albert Yu tried to transform China Times into a media conglomerate by buying two TV stations and establishing an e-paper, he was still unable to survive in such a competitive atmosphere. Finally, he sold China Times to Want-Want Holding.

The third period from 2008 until present is “subsidiary hegemonic despotism.” During this period, China Times was bought out by Tsai Eng-Ming, the CEO of Want-Want Holding. It transferred from an independently owned company into a subsidiary company. In addition, its new managerial practice was criticized by some journalists, since it is more like a management toward food company workers. In 2008, Taiwan experienced the second party alteration. The second party alternation made the relation between Taiwan and China much closer. The new president, Ma Ying-Jeou, tried to loosen many regulations that governed cross-strait trade, including direct weekend charter flights between PRC and Taiwan, opening Taiwan to mainland Chinese tourist, easing restrictions on Taiwan investment in mainland China and approving measures that will allow mainland Chinese investors to buy Taiwanese stocks. Chinese intervention became much more influential since 2008, and it is evident within China Times as well. Want-Want Holding is a large food corporation conglomerate which disperses both in China and Taiwan, and it bought out China Times in 2008. It operates over one hundred manufacturing plants in Mainland China, and only two plants in Taiwan. Due to Want-Want holding’s major business interests in China, many people worried if China Times became a political intervention from Chinese government. As those people’s concern, China Times published more and more self-promotion news

after changing ownership. The pro-China and self-promotion content of China Times triggered a sequence of anti-media monopoly movement in 2012.

Based on the development of China Times, we can see how the orientation of China Times changed through time. To know how the change happened, I will examine changes in journalists' autonomy under each of the three ownership structures.



## CHAPTER III

### THE AGE OF PATERNALIST HEGEMONY

#### Introduction

China Times was founded by Yu Chi-Chung in 1950. At that time, the Kuomintang (KMT) government not only enforced martial law, but also imposed a ban on newspapers. As a result, only approved newspaper companies could publish newspapers with the limitation of only printing six pages. Yu Chi-Chung, the founder of China Times, was a KMT member who graduated from the London School of Economics and Political Science. The British studying experiences increased the likelihood that Yu Chi-Chung would have been immersed in the Western democratic thoughts. As a result, China Times was known for its liberal pro-KMT orientation. Yu Chi-Chung recruited many talented and critical journalists in 1970s, which made its style more liberal and innovative. The slogan of China Times was “liberal and innovative,” which alludes to the idea that they are more critical compared to other newspapers. Yu Chi-Chung and journalists were proud of the orientation of China Times. China Times became one of the largest newspapers in Taiwan after the abolishment of the ban on newspapers in 1988. Yu Chi-Chung governed China Times for fifty years during 1950 to 2001, and then passed his presidency to his son, Albert Yu.

Although the political context was constrained during this initial period under KMT ban on a free press, many journalists still missed that period most for the “autonomous work culture” within the organization. “Autonomous work culture” was a term which

was often mentioned by the journalists themselves in the interviews. It seemed like a nostalgic term from journalists' description, but what does it mean? Work culture can be defined as norms that promote self-control and collective autonomy for the membership (J. E. Van Maanen & Schein, 1977). The "autonomous work culture" defined by journalists can be considered as a trusted relationship between the owner and journalists, influencing how journalists perceive autonomy. Ironically, the most restrained political context shaped the most perceived "autonomous work culture." In this chapter, I will explain why that period was the time that provided journalists the most liberty in China Times and how it related to journalists' autonomy.

### The paternalist hegemony

To clarify why the work culture was liberal within China Times during this period, it is necessary to understand how the owner, Yu Chi-Chung, exerted control over China Times. The name "paternalist hegemony" derives from the managerial style of Yu Chi-Chung. The newspaper corporations under the martial law were called "vassal newspapers", since the owners usually acted like the feudal vassal of the KMT government by paying homage to the ruling party in return for political and economic protection. Although the newspaper industries' owners tried to please ruling party by their newspapers, they were still the pilots of democratization in Taiwan (Jungshin Ho, 2008) during the paternalist hegemony period. Under the tutelage from government, the relationship between journalists and owners was very co-dependent. Just like China Times was considered the vassal of the KMT, its journalists were considered the vassals

of Yu Chi-Chung. While Yu Chi-Chung cherished talented journalists and he was willing to invest financial resources and time on cultivating those young journalists who were critical and talented, he also controlled what they could write. Many journalists mention the direct censorship, along with the mentoring they received from Yu Chi-Chung. One journalist who began working at China Times since 1988 stated,

It was one of Yu Chi-Chung's legends. There was a desk in the editorial meeting room, and we all knew it was Yu Chi-Chung's position. Sometimes there happened a big news incident or something really important to him, like the death of former president Chiang Ching-Ku. He read every article by himself on the desk. Sometimes he would ask some journalists to discuss the articles with him. It was his style. However, he seldom went to the office when I worked there (Journalist Y).

According to this quote, we can tell how the owner directly read all the journalists' articles and then discussed what has to be changed, especially to political controversial issues. It is like Edward's simple control: informal and unstructured control based on personal authority. Because the firm was small enough for the owner to intervene at all levels of production, employees were controlled by their personal relations with the owner. Employees were heavily influenced by the owner's personal charisma. Due to the personal relationship with the owner, loyalty and trust are two important factors in simple control. One journalist describes how the factors trust and loyalty are essential in the organization

I heard Yu Chi-Chung's stories from many senior journalists. Facing political intervention, Yu Chi-Chung would tell journalists that he had no choice but to remove or to edit their articles. He told journalists how much pressure he was under, seeking journalists' forgiveness. Sometimes he told journalists that he would support them to write what they wanted even though there were some political pressures; he would be on the same side of the fence with journalists. It was his way to win journalists' support (Journalist B).

“Trust” is the most important factor with which Yu Chi-Chung wins journalists' loyalty. Journalists believed the owner was protecting them from political intervention; as a result, they consented to the censorship rather than feeling coerced.

#### Perceived “autonomous work culture”

This paternalist hegemony shaped the journalists' experience within China Times. The informal structure and positive relationship with the owner seem to provide journalists' with the perception that they had an “autonomous work culture” in China Times although there was direct and overt censorship. As Prechel and Gupman (1995) defined, the concept of autonomy refers the perceived control over routine work activities, and the perceived freedom to be innovative in the workplace. When journalists consented to the owner, they perceived freedom instead of controlled. Therefore, they felt autonomous even though they were directly censored. Most interviewees were proud to be a part of China Times due to China Times' liberal style and “autonomous work

culture.” No matter what period they started working at China Times, they all mentioned how autonomous the work culture was before the change of ownership. Compared with other largest newspaper, United Daily News, China Times’ targeted audience was liberal KMT members. Just like its slogan “liberal and reform”, China Times was known for its liberal political leanings. Journalists, who tended to be left-leaning, felt the atmosphere within the organization was consistent with China Times’ political bent, which helped foster a feeling of belonging and loyalty. Nevertheless, some interviewees criticized Yu Chi-Chung for his attitude toward the union.

In 1988 three journalists were laid off by Yu Chi-Chung when they established a “real” union for all the employees at China Times. The “real” union refers to a union which is founded by employees rather than owner. Previously, Yu Chi-Chung had tried to establish a “capon union” instead a real union. The “capon union” was what Taiwanese labor movement activists call the union which was formed by capitalists (H.-C. Chang, 1987). Those journalists who couldn’t stand Yu Chi-Chung’s behavior decided to establish a real union, after which they were all fired. In addition, Yu Chi-Chung asked many journalists to leave the union, using his paternalist power to distinguish white-collar journalists from blue-collar workers. Due to journalists’ loyalty toward Yu Chi-Chung, most union members at China Times were blue-collar workers. Many interviewees mentioned that the reason why journalists didn’t join the union is their consent to Yu Chi-Chung. Yu Chi-Chung’s attitude toward the union was in contrast with China Times’ liberal style, so some interviewees criticized that the liberal style was just a business strategy. As journalist D stated,

It's easy to understand what Yu Chi-Chung thought; he could be liberal and rational to issues like democracy, politics and human rights. However, he wanted to be the only authority within the organization. Within China Times, the establishment of a union will jeopardize his authority, and due to this reasoning he needs to lay off the three founders of union (Journalist D's blog).

#### The shift toward bureaucratic control

Although the simple control of Yu Chi-Chung shaped the loyal and “autonomous work culture” to journalists within China Times, this kind of control was hard to sustain when the organization expanded. China Times gradually increased its published pages during 1950 to 1988. In 1994, China Times further established three local editing rooms, including Northern Taiwan, Middle Taiwan and Southern Taiwan editing rooms (Lee, 2000). Although the Middle Taiwan and Southern Taiwan editing rooms were both laid off in 2000, we can see the expansion of China Times during paternalist hegemony period. Only those famous journalists with seniority and high status experienced the paternalist hegemony, while most journalists in the latter phase which began with the expansion at late-1980s faced the bureaucratic control instead of simple control. They heard the stories of Yu Chi-Chung from other senior journalists, but they didn't experience it. Beginning in late-1980s, all newspaper stories had to pass through a pre-established system of editors who censored for political content. Lower-level

journalists only followed the bureaucratic rules the organization provided. A journalist who began working at China Times since 1988 mentioned,

The censorship may go through three layers. The first layer is the leader of our group, and then the editing room. Editors will edit some inappropriate words, and finally the chief editor will make a general censorship. If there is something controversial, it will go through more layers between leader of group and chief editor..... The chief editor is the one who made the political censorship (Journalist Y).

This quote demonstrates that the political censorship of lower-level journalists was done by the chief editor instead of the owner. It is evidence of the development of bureaucratic control. The formalization of hierarchy is bureaucratic control.

As the size of China Times became larger and larger, it required more and more layers of bureaucracy to regulate the routine work. As a result, the paternalistic hegemony gradually declined, but it wouldn't disappear under Yu Chi-Chung's tutelage. The paternalistic hegemony was applied to control over those senior employees with higher status, like famous senior journalists or chief editors, while the lower-level journalists followed bureaucratic rules under Yu Chi-Chung's ownership in late-1980s. People who were not top journalists who started in the newspaper in the earlier periods, only heard about the paternalistic hegemony, but they couldn't see or feel it. What they faced is the bureaucracy.

In this chapter, I explained how the constrained political context made the liberal and trusted relationship between the owner and journalists (what journalists considered as “autonomous work culture”) within China Times. At this period, the heavy hand of the KMT government intervened in the newspaper market. Under the tutelage from the KMT government, Yu Chi-Chung shaped China Times as a progressive and liberal newspaper within the KMT’s framework. His targeted audience was those liberal KMT members. To shape China Times’ progressive orientation, he established the “autonomous work culture” as a strategy to attract those talented progressive journalists. The informal control, paternalist hegemony, made journalists trust Yu Chi-Chung, even though they still faced Yu Chi-Chung’s direct censorship. In the previously stated definition of autonomy, the more perceived freedom and less perceived controlled means more autonomy. Journalists felt autonomous due to their trust toward Yu Chi-Chung, even though the owner still control over them by direct-censorship. In addition, work culture can be considered as norms that promote self-control and collective autonomy to employees. As a result, the “autonomous work culture” provided the employees a norm that they can be self-determined. Based on journalists’ professional identity, self-determination made journalists perceive more freedom and less control. That is why all the interviewees felt more autonomous and proud of the autonomous work culture at China Times during paternalist hegemony period. With the expansion of the organization, the paternalist hegemony cannot be applied to all dimensions of journalists so that bureaucratic control emerged. The owner still had control over editors and senior journalists by paternalist hegemony, while managers and editors used bureaucracy to



control lower-level journalists. No matter what control they were under, journalists still perceive an autonomous environment due to the work culture Yu Chi-Chung shaped.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE AGE OF MARKET HEGEMONY**

#### Introduction

The second period was called “market hegemony” under Albert Yu’s ownership during 2001 to 2008. This period began from Yu Chi-Chung transferred his ownership to his son, Albert Yu, and ended in the change of ownership to Want-Want Holding. During this period, the abolishment of the news ban, the boom of different forms of media and the popularity of a new newspaper made the newspaper market really competitive. The social context in which newsprint firms functioned was now governed by market and business interests, rather than political ones. Market concerns also became primordial within China Times, which is why I call this period “market hegemony.” During this period, Albert Yu expanded China Times to a media conglomerate by buying out two TV stations. As a result, the most important changes in China Times during this market hegemonic period pertain to its organizational expansion. The organizational expansion further caused the formalization of bureaucratic control and the shift to neoliberal managerial practice. This chapter will examine how organizational change influenced managerial practices, which affected journalists’ experience of autonomy. Specifically, I will discuss the attempts to formalize bureaucratic control, the shift to neoliberal managerial practice, and how these affected journalists’ autonomy.

## Market hegemony

Yu Chi-Chung governed China Times for fifty years from 1950 to 2001 and then transferred his ownership to his son, Albert Yu. By that time, China Times had become one of the largest newspapers in Taiwan, based in part on the abolishment of the newspaper ban. Although the ending of this ban made China Times a large and famous newspaper, it also caused a very competitive newspaper market. Not only did the newsprint market boom, but other media did as well. The newspaper industry was especially threatened by the development of television and internet industry. The expansion of different forms of media made the newspaper market shrink, as newspapers were no longer the only source of news. In addition, the Hong Kong-funded Next media began publishing Apple Daily (Taiwan Edition) in Taiwan.

The paparazzi culture Apple Daily brought to Taiwan became very popular and soon Apple Daily became one of the four largest newspapers in Taiwan. The popularity of Apple Daily soon threatened the other three largest newspapers, including China Times, United Daily News, and Liberty Times. As a result, every newspaper industry tried to imitate Apple Daily. Facing the shrinking newspaper market, news marketization became very rampant. News marketization refers to the selling of government or corporation advertisement as news, what some consider as propaganda. It can be dated back to 2003, since the newspaper market became really competitive. Newspapers began selling news as commercials, publishing promotion news without informing consumers. Not only entrepreneurs but also the government bought “news stories”, rather than commercials, to promote their product or policy. In 2011, one senior journalist in China

Times resigned to protest the encroaching news marketization culture within the newspaper industry. Given this turn towards the marketization of news, I argue that market logic replaced the previous period of political intervention. That is why I call this period “market hegemony.”

#### How organizational expansion caused organizational restructuring

Albert Yu undertook several significant changes after inheriting China Times, including expansion and organizational restructuring. Albert Yu had big ambitions to establish a media conglomerate which included not only newspapers but different forms of media. In 2002, Albert Yu took over a KMT-based TV station, CiTV. In 2006, he took over another KMT-based media firm, including CTV and Broadcasting Corporation of China. Now he owned two newspapers, one magazine, one broadcasting corporation and two TV stations. In 2007, Albert Yu formally established the China Times Media Group, which was the largest media conglomerate in Taiwan then.

Although Albert Yu attained his goal of establishing a large media conglomerate, he was unable to stop the financial crisis of China Times. By 2005 China Times had already lost 500 million NTD (Ma, 2008). On June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008, the bureau chief of China Times announced that they would transform China Times to a newspaper which focused on a more educated and higher class audience. This new orientation needed less employees due to its decreased coverage of local news. On June 18<sup>th</sup>, China Times laid off half of its employees, almost 450 people. Two hundred and sixty people were laid off from editing department which originally contained 520 people; moreover, nineteen

local news centers were closed (T.-H. Chang, 2008). As the result of the downsizing, China Times reduced its printed pages to 10 pages. A new group called “survey investigation room” was established. The survey investigation room was formed by five senior and famous journalists, and it focused on in-depth reports on issues such as the stories of individual small business men who resisted to neoliberal order. Many interviewees argue that the survey investigation room was established to make up for the dissolution of the local news department. At the same time, the union at China Times attempted to strike but it failed, and therefore it voted to dissolve itself. By the end of 2008, Albert Yu’s media conglomerate was in financial crisis. Tsai Eng-Ming, the CEO of Want-Want Holding, a large food products conglomerate, bought out China Times media group.

#### The attempt to formalize bureaucratic control

At the end of Yu Chi-Chung’s period, bureaucratic control had developed at China Times. Under Albert Yu’s ownership, the expansion of China Times Media Group made the bureaucratic control more necessary and accentuated since financial decisions for the entire media group impacted operational decisions for the China Times newspaper. Compared to Apple Daily, Chou (2006) considered the problem of China Times as the huge personnel cost. China Times had higher personnel cost than Apple Daily, but it lacked the formal personnel regulations like Apple Daily. Albert Yu tried to make some significant changes to break the hierarchy within China Times, such as

making personnel changes of those top managers in advertising, publishing and accounting departments. However, transforming the informal and often unstructured control based on personal authority that his father had cultivated, to a more formal bureaucratic control based on cost management was difficult. As a journalist outside China Times who wrote an article in a financial magazine argues,

An employee indicated that too many people used to go [during Yu Chi-Chung's time] beyond the bureaucracy and then report to the owner directly within China Times. During Albert Yu's period, those people still did the same thing so that professional managers couldn't work (Liao, 2005).

Another financial magazine journalist noted how journalists at China Times did not go along with the changes as well. He quotes a journalist saying, "there are different cliques that resisted innovation within China Times" (Ma, 2008).

The two quotes show the difficulties in transforming from informal control to formal control. The main obstacles for formal control are those old "vassals" from Yu Chi-Chung's period, the high status and senior journalists whose talent he had cultivated. These journalists were still used to the direct personal relationship with the owner, while the new owner tried to break this personal relationship to build a formal bureaucracy.

The shift to neoliberal managerial practice

Unlike the paternalist hegemony of Yu Chi-Chung's time, as the head of China Times, Albert Yu cared more about costs and the budget. Albert Yu's concerns with

costs are consistent with what Crowley and Hodson (2014) call neoliberal managerial practices. Crowley and Hodson (2014) argue that organizational decision-makers increasingly promote neoliberal work practices, such as downsizing and cost management under competitive market environments. In addition, cost management at China Times included firing of senior (and more expensive) workers, hiring less experienced (and cheaper) journalists, shifting from full-time to part-time employees, and hiring contract workers.

The downsizing can be observed during the market hegemony period with the laying off of 450 employees out of 1200 at China Times on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2008. Although the bureau chief of China Times stated that China Times, layoff of half of the employees was to transform China Times into a more focused newspapers, almost all the interviewees thought the true reason was cost management.

He [Albert Yu] only cares about the personnel cost and financial conditions, like how to lower cost. In short, this layoff or this organizational restructuring was not to strengthen China Times. It is like what I said, the true reason is that Albert Yu faced financial problem so that he needed to lower the personnel cost. If I only have half of the employees, how do I allocate these employees? Under this condition, top managers discussed how to restructure organization in the editorial meeting. Therefore, the establishment of the survey investigation room was under the editing room's leadership. Albert Yu didn't care much about these details. What

Albert Yu cared about is how to downsize and how to solve China Times' financial problem (Journalist C).

The quote shows the employees' distrust of the owner. Another junior local journalist who began working at China Times in 2007 mentioned the impact of the big layoff to his group in 2008.

My group used to include eight journalists, but there were only two journalists remaining in my group after the layoff. All the senior journalists were laid off. I couldn't believe that those journalists who performed well were fired. At that time, I doubted about this job (Journalist L).

Even though the owner stated that the layoff was due to a change in newspaper style, employees did not buy it. They all considered the layoff as a strategy to decrease personnel cost. The quote strongly supports the argument that the firing was just a cost management. The above two quotes can be seen as evidence of neoliberal downsizing, which doesn't care about employees' experience but only about the budget. As journalists L stated, those senior (more expensive) journalists were laid off no matter how they performed in the workplace. There was another instance of cost management stated from a journalist who had been a consultant at China Times' union:

From editing room to proofreader, all are managed by a cost management way; editing room hired young employees with low salary. Sometimes they even hired some part-time workers to be editors (Journalist Y).



Crowley and Hodson (2014) find that neoliberal managerial practices have some negative results, including increases in turnover and reductions in informal peer training. Although it can lower cost in a short term, it may jeopardize work culture in the long run. In China Times, the neoliberal managerial practice led to feelings of distrust between the journalists and the owner.

#### The influence on journalists' autonomy

Although Albert Yu considered formal control and neoliberal management as the solutions to China Time's decline, many journalists attributed the decline to Albert Yu's management. They criticized Albert Yu for his inability to cultivate talented journalists, and they also criticized that he neglected the liberal and innovative orientation of China Times. Perrow (1996) describes this criticism as a discrepancy between the expertise of the subordinate and that of the superior. In other word, the managers who know less about things than the workers may cause the discrepancy. In this case, journalists respected Yu Chi-Chung, since they considered him as an intellectual just like them. However, they didn't respect the "businessman," Albert Yu, as much as Yu Chi-Chung.

There was a big change from the paternalist hegemony under the owner's father, to the market hegemony of the son. Many journalists interviewed considered Yu Chi-Chung an intellectual with whom they could have discussions, but considered Albert Yu a businessman. The relationship between journalists and the owner had changed greatly. One journalist who had been at the newspaper for sixteen years, noted:

During Yu Chi-Chung's period, he censored political news and the editorial page much more strongly, while Albert Yu cared less about these things. He cared about financial news, especially financial news that was related to his friends. Almost all the journalists at China Times knew that Albert Yu had many entrepreneur friends, so he [Yu] would make comments to journalists when the news pertaining to his friends was printed (Journalist B).

Another journalist who had worked at China Times for twelve years concurred that the contact between journalists and the owner had changed significantly:

Based on the same political inclination, there is not much difference between Yu Chi-Chung and Albert Yu to journalists who covered politics desk at China Times. The only difference is that Yu Chi-Chung cherished talented journalists and that he carefully censored articles. As a result, he spent lots of time discussing [articles] with journalists, but Albert Yu seldom did that (Journalist J).

Ironically, journalists showed greater trust toward Yu Chi-Chung's paternalist hegemony even though there was direct censorship. Journalists felt they had a relationship with the owner and thus could "discuss" the censorship, which was experienced as informal control. Under the market hegemonic regime, there was no more direct censorship made by the owner, although news marketization meant that news items or favorable economic reviews were posted for financial benefit. For journalists, Albert Yu was not an intellectual nor did he play a paternalistic role. He was

a businessman who only cared about cost management. During this period, the self-censorship was transferred from political news to financial news. Although journalists present less trust and less respect to Albert Yu than Yu Chi-Chung, they didn't feel more coercion due to the similar political inclination. Albert Yu didn't change the targeted audience and the orientation of China Times much, so the ideology journalists internalized didn't change during this period. In that sense journalist still perceived the presence of an "autonomous work culture," which was shaped by the trusted relationship with Yu Chi-Chung. Not only those liberal journalists but also conservative journalists felt proud of the "autonomous work culture." No matter what political orientation the journalists had, they could debate issues coming from different points of view. As journalist D stated in his blog, "At China Times, journalists could express what they thought, even though there was a conflict between them. All the different views and arguments were approved to be presented in the same page or different pages."

While the political orientation did not change, however, the content of "news" did as news marketization became more important than journalistic reporting in key departments. That is, some journalists' professional identity was threatened since they felt less like serious writers and more like advertisers. They experienced a continued deprofessionalization, using Freidson (1984) term, at China Times.

In conclusion, the competitive newspaper market ultimately influenced China Times to restructure its organization and its managerial practice. Albert Yu's expansion into a media conglomerate caused the more formal bureaucratic control to replace the

personal relationship between Yu Chi-Chung and senior journalists. In addition, Albert Yu used neoliberal managerial practices to lower costs. Although the break in personal relationship caused the journalists' distrust toward the owner, they only felt less autonomous due to the same political orientation and targeted audience of China Times. However, the news marketization caused journalists to feel deprofessionalized since they were asked to write propaganda rather than news.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **THE AGE OF SUBSIDIARY HEGEMONIC DESPOTISM**

#### Introduction

On November 4<sup>th</sup> 2008, China Times was bought out by Tsai Eng-Meng, the CEO of Want-Want Holding. The change of ownership brought several dramatic changes in management, work culture, and political orientation at China Times. Since Want-Want Holding had its main business interest in China, many people worried that China Times would become a form of Chinese intervention. Indeed, the new orientation of China Times was conservative, extremely pro-China, and an instrument of self-promotion for the owner (Society, 2012). This drastic change of political orientation triggered a series of anti-media monopoly protests in 2012, including the boycott of China Times, a fake news incident, a series of resignations, and an anti-media monopoly rally. This change of ownership structure resulted in a more coercive bureaucracy, which restricted journalists' autonomy. That is why I called the control regime in this period "subsidiary hegemonic despotism."

In this chapter, I will examine how Tsai Eng-Meng's leadership affected the work culture and journalists' autonomy at China Times. What were the changes in managerial practice? How did journalists react to these changes? To answer these questions, I will clarify what and when the changes emerged in China Times. After that, I will examine how the change of ownership structure and the change of control influenced journalists'

autonomy at China Times. Finally, I will describe some strategies journalists used to react to the change in their autonomy.

What happened to China Times after the change of ownership?

Change did not occur immediately but rather unfolded in a series of incidents beginning with the change of ownership in 2008 and escalating three years later in 2011 (See Table 2). In 2010, a senior journalist resigned to protest the increase in news marketization. The senior journalist argued that he resigned to protest against the government, because even the government bought newspaper space for commercialized news. That is, the news marketization allowed for blatant political manipulation of news, making clear the changed political orientation of the newspaper. Given that an important element of journalists' professional identity was related to belonging to a liberal newspaper, this expression of a changed political orientation of the newspaper was not well received.

A key event signaling drastic change at China Times was the 2012 incendiary public comment made by Tsai Eng-Meng, where he told the Washington Post that the 1989 massacre in Tiananmen Square did not occur. About sixty scholars, disturbed by the comment, presented a petition to the public and journalists calling them to protest the statement about Tiananmen Square by not contributing articles to China Times. In addition, those scholars strongly criticized the current political orientation of China Times, which had changed from pro-Taiwan to pro-China (Cheng, 2012; Society, 2012).

Although the boycott toward China Times was not an action against media monopoly, it was a sign of the change within China Times. After the boycott of China Times, another series of incidents happened. On April 11<sup>th</sup> 2012, a senior editor was laid off. This editor argued that the reason for his firing was that he posted news about a personnel change at the newspaper on his personal Facebook page. On April 17<sup>th</sup>, the chief editor wrote an open letter to all employees at China Times. The open letter stated that the liberal style of China Times had ended, asking all employees to be united in loyalty to the new owner. Later, Tsai Eng-Meng made known his intention to buy out a cable TV system called China Network System (CNS). On July 25<sup>th</sup>, many people concerned about media monopoly mobilized a movement to protest the buyout of CNS by Want-Want Holding.

Another major incident was the placing of fake news in media outlets. On July 29<sup>th</sup>, China Times and the other two TV stations under Want-Want Holding reported fake news that an anti-media monopoly activist had paid students to join the anti-monopoly protest. On August 9<sup>th</sup>, many senior journalists resigned to protest against this fake news incident. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, a young journalist credited with writing the article with untrue information noted in a blog how her article was rewritten by her manager before publication. On September 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, a large protest march called “September 1st Anti-Media Monopoly March” was held in Taipei. Based on this series of incidents at China Times, we can tell that there were several changes in China Times. These changes included the decline of autonomous work culture, more coercive management, and the change in orientation of China Times.

**Table 2: The chronicle of events at China Times since the change of ownership**

Date	Event
11/03/2008	Change of ownership at Want-Want holding.
12/13/2010	A senior journalist resigned to protest against “news marketization.”
01/21/2012	The CEO of Want-Want holding told the Washington Post that the 1989 massacre in Tiananmen Square did not occur.
02/07/2012	Scholars signed a petition that they won’t contribute any articles to China Times anymore.
02/08/2012	An anonymous writer who worked at China Times contributed an article which criticized the owner, Tsai Eng-Meng, to another newspaper.
04/11/2012	A senior editor in the editorial page was fired. He argued that the reason was that he posted a comment about personnel changes on his personal Facebook page.
04/17/2012	The chief editor wrote an open letter, noting the change in the liberal orientation within organization to all employees in China Times.
07/25/2012	The activists of anti-media monopoly movement asked NCC to stop the buyout of China Network System by Want-Want Holding.
07/29/2012	Fake news was published to criticize a scholar who opposes Want-Want holding.
08/09/2012	Many senior editors and journalists quit protesting against Want-Want.
08/31/2012	A junior journalist posted her 10-day diary on her blog to show how China Times rewrote her article.
09/01/2012	An estimated nine thousand students and concerned citizens joined a protest march called “September 1st Anti-Media Monopoly March” in Taipei.



When did the change in workplace autonomy happen at China Times?

After listing the series of incidents and protest at China Times, I was puzzled why so little seemed to change immediately after the transfer of ownership. According to the interviews, most journalists at China Times used to be proud of their “autonomous work culture.” They noted how it did not change much at the very beginning of Tsai Eng-Meng’s leadership because he did not know much about the newspaper business. One journalist who worked at China Times for 18 years noted that,

Because he just took over for a short time... You know he [Tsai Eng-Meng] is a rude guy, so he had no idea about [how to run a] media [company]. There was no change during November to the end of 2008. As a result, the last two months of 2008 were the happiest time for us. You could write and criticize what you wanted; nobody would judge you (Journalist D).

Based on this quote, we can tell that the new owner did not know how to run the newspaper so there was no censorship at the beginning. The two months after the takeover were the most autonomous time for journalists at China Times since Tsai Eng-Meng was unfamiliar with the newspaper industry. However, by 2012, the work culture at China Times was completely different. Journalist J described the change in the following way:

It started three years [end of 2008-2012] after the takeover.... Mr. Tsai had taken over China Times for three years when the fake news incident happened. I thought

he couldn't change the lasting-10-year liberal and autonomous work culture within China Times during the first two years of his leadership. However, his thought [ideology] was practiced starting the third year... The autonomous and liberal culture within organization shrunk a lot (Journalist J).

Comparing the second quote with the first quote, we find that Tsai Eng-Meng gradually gained control over China Times. At first, Tsai Eng-Meng was still learning how to manage a newspaper company due to his unfamiliarity of the media industry. However, he began intervening in China Times as he became familiar with the newspaper company. Most interviewees agreed that the owner's ideas about how to run a media company were completely in place by 2012, a whole three years after the takeover. Scholars argue that such changes in orientation in news media occur through new recruitment practices where journalists with similar political inclinations are hired to control the ideological position of the newspaper (Chomsky, 1999; Napoli, 1997). At China Times, a drastic change in orientation was attained through increased coercive bureaucratic control and a change in recruitment practices. That is, a change in routine work activities and practices, taking away much of journalists' ability to self-direct and thus leading to a proletarianization of professionals.

#### Attempt to regain control over journalists

To know how the new subsidiary ownership structure influenced the management at China Times, we have to know the bureaucracy first. As the former two chapters

stated, a formal bureaucracy within China Times had been slowly established during the first two periods. As a result, the bureaucracy had its own rules and operating logic. Due to the established bureaucracy within China Times, the new owner needed to convey his commands through pre-established management layers. However, this was problematic since he had to overcome the previous operating logic and create a new one. At first, Tsai Eng-Meng lacked the experience to manage a newspaper so he relied on the editors and managers that had been at China Times under the previous owner. To enact a new operating logic, he imposed his rule through personnel change. One journalist who was a leader of a group put it in the following way:

The takeover of Mr. Tsai influenced China Times step by step. The employees within China Times have established their own operating logic. No matter what the owner commands, employees will follow their own operating logic. Because Mr. Tsai used to manage a food corporation, he didn't have a group of managers who were familiar with media firms. As a result, he had to use those senior employees within China Times. Yet his ideology or idea was digested [mediated] by those senior employees; he cannot enact his own ideas..... The only way he could do this was through personnel change. The personnel change is how the owner gradually managed the editing room (Journalist N).

## Change in control

To gain control over China Times it was necessary for Tsai Eng-Meng to add to the original bureaucratic controls which had been established during the first two periods. Based on the interviews, there were five methods he used to gain control over China Times. The five methods included personnel change, editorial meetings, coercive censorship, more cost management, and cultural control. The first three methods can be considered as a form of bureaucratic control, and the third is similar to Albert Yu's neoliberal management. The fourth control was a kind of normative control as demonstrated by Barley and Kunda (1992). I will separately describe the five methods in the following pages.

### Personnel change

Once Mr. Tsai became familiar with the operation of the newspaper industry, he began using personnel change to enact his will. An incident occurred in 2012 that makes this clear. A senior editor was laid off due to a post he made on his personal Facebook page about the personnel changes going on at China Times. According to this fired journalists' blog, the layoff was Tsai Eng-Ming's strategy to expel those detractors (Tsai, 2012). The fired journalist also mentioned many managers were demoted since they didn't meet Tsai Eng-Meng's requirements. He described the China Times as a gangster environment under Tsai Eng-Meng's ownership, because it expelled those who were not loyal to the leader. Besides that, one journalist who was a leader of a group also

mentioned how Tsai Eng-Meng used personnel change to gain control over his group after he retired.

Journalist N: No, almost no [intervention from owner]. The reason may be that I had been in this position for ten years. Maybe the former owner told him [Tsai Eng-Meng] that I was fine with the position, so he scarcely intervened in my job. To be honest, he didn't know how to intervene since I never make any trouble. I was very senior, so he didn't know how to intervene.....

I: So he intervened in your group after you left?

Journalist N: Sure! Of course! There was no obstacle after I left. ...He began intervening in my group for sure!

Based on N's interview, Tsai Eng-Meng changed all the members in his group after he and other members left. Another interviewee, D, mentioned that more and more self-promotion articles were published after the personnel change of N's group. Both N and D considered the personnel change as Tsai Eng-Meng's complete control over N's group. N's statement indicated how Tsai Eng-Meng intervened in the original operating logic within China Times through personnel change. As the bureaucracy became more complex within China Times, Tsai needed to control all the journalists by controlling those journalists at the higher levels of the hierarchy. As a result, the series of resignation seemed to have the unintended consequence of allowing Tsai Eng-Meng to take comprehensive control of the newspaper.

### Editorial meetings

In addition to personnel change, Tsai Eng-Meng gradually conveyed his operating logic to the chief editors and other managers through the routine editorial meeting. As a result, lower level employees did not experience the direct control from the owner, as in previous time, but rather from the different levels of bureaucracy re-established at the firm. As a senior journalist with higher status within China Times stated:

Who conveys the owner's commands and practices is the chief editor, so the usual lower-level journalists cannot know the owner's commands or the owner's thoughts. However, I've attended the editorial meetings, so I knew that the chief editor would convey the owner's thoughts and what the owner wanted to do. You will know what the owner wanted you to do and how to operate no matter if the commands are in public or in private (Journalist J).

Only those journalists with higher status could join the editorial meeting, like the chief editor, the associate chief editor, editor-in-chief, and other important chief writers. In summary, Tsai Eng-Meng could gain control over those people with higher positions in the editorial meeting so that his commands could be conveyed through the bureaucracy.

### Coercive censorship

After conveying the owner's commands through the bureaucracy, all the employees in the bureaucracy followed commands. Censorship is an important form of control

within media, but the self-censorship may be even more important. Self-censorship as normative control means that journalists internalize the ideology of the organization, so they will pursue the organization's interests as their own interests (Napoli, 1997; Reese, 2001). It may also be that employees' fear for their jobs and thus self-censor to write articles according to the dictates of their supervisors and the owner. This would be coercive control. In the case of China Times, the new owner established a new system of self-censorship to replace the old one. Tsai Eng-Meng used bureaucratic coercive control to convey his priorities. Journalist D described this,

When you touch some taboos, the command emerges. The command is very subtle, since it was not conveyed by the managers but by the leader of our group. One day the leader of our group told me that we cannot publish any news about the Dalai Lama (Journalist D).

Based on journalist D's quote, we can see the coercive bureaucratic control emerge. The commands and the censorship were both practiced by the leader of the group. The censorship at this period is much more coercive than the former two periods; the journalists were clearly informed what they cannot be published. In addition, the quote also showed the pro-China political orientation after the change of ownership. That is, during this third period the sacred cow or untouchable topic was China.

The fake news incident in 2012 is another piece of evidence of the coercive censorship. As mentioned earlier, a young journalist named You resigned to protest the coercive censorship at China Times when her article was rewritten for her by the editors

to criticize the movement and cater to the owner's pro-China ideology. You (2012) posted her ten-day diary on her blog to show how the censorship process unfolded. She mentioned that managers asked her to write something to benefited Want-Want Holding. After she handed in an article, she found her article was rewritten when published. The re-written news article, with her name as the by-line, stated that the anti-media monopoly activists were hired by a specific scholar, which made that scholar a target for angry activists. In the end, You decided to resign to protest the coercive censorship. Her resignation triggered a series of senior journalists' resignations as well. The resignations can be regarded as a sign of decreasing autonomy at China Times. Besides her case, many interviewees mentioned that they were asked by their employer to be united in the fight against the owner's enemies. China Times gradually became the owner's tool for self-promotion and to fight his enemies. As a junior journalist stated,

They would say it clearly: "we are in a battle [with specific organization or specific person] now. If you write these things [which are good for the enemies], managers will have opinions about it. Maybe you should hide these controversial parts into the article, but not put it in the introduction. As a result, I edited my article, but I don't know if the controversial parts would be removed when published (Journalist L).

Looking back at the effects of the protest resignations, long-time journalist J said the resignations had no effect on managerial control.



Until now, you can see the battle between China Times and its enemy. In the self-promotion news, there were many things added to the articles. He didn't change the coercive rewriting after the resignation. No, they still do the rewriting even after three years (Journalist J).

After the coercive censorship, journalists gradually internalize the owner's pro-China ideology. They started to self-censor when they wrote articles. They learned what was considered taboo, so they did not touch those topics. Once the new self-censorship was established, journalists would cater to owner's ideology without external control. Ironically, the series of resignations by senior journalists to protest Tsai Eng-Meng's imposition of a pro-China political orientation, increased political news marketization, and more coercive forms of censorship, allowed for more rapid personnel change and control over the remaining journalists, and thus an intensification of the changes being protested.

#### More cost management

Under Tsai Eng-Meng's ownership, management continued to be focused on cutting costs. Want-Want Holdings was praised for saving China Times from a financial crisis after the change of ownership. Many journalists mentioned that Want-Want Holding was an expert in cost management. Although journalists had experienced relative steady salaries and annual bonuses, they noticed more and more limitations in their ability to successfully perform their work based on the cost of reporting.

He [Tsai] tended to lower the cost and conduct efficiency evaluations. These are necessary for an enterprise, so the evaluation of the traveling fund was more and more strict. The funds for the news decreased, since he evaluates if it is worthy. I have to argue that it was a problem for the whole [news] media market; less and less media was willing to invest a lot in good news. The opportunity to interview abroad was less and less, since he evaluated the budgets of every group. As a result, you have to finish your interview within this [funding] quota. (Journalist C).

Tsai Eng-Meng also changed some established work roles in order to lower costs. For example, journalists were asked to be part-time editors to decrease the number of editors. Just as journalist B said, “Logically, journalists shouldn’t do the editing job. Tsai Eng-Meng hoped to decrease the [company] debt and to create more profits, so he didn’t hire new editors to do those jobs” (Journalist B).

Although China Times began its neoliberal managerial practice under Albert Yu’s ownership, Tsai Eng-Meng pushed the neoliberal managerial practice much further. The strict evaluation of budget limits and increased flexibilization of work represent further neoliberal management. Prechel (1994) argues that budget control causes behavior that contradicts organizational goals. Because the budget control encourages managers to care more about their own units within specific budgets, it will undermine the personal cooperation to attain the larger corporate goals. The formal rationality may decrease the substantial rationality. In China Times’ case, the stricter budget controls established caused complaints from journalists who felt they could not do their job adequately under such strict budgets and thus decreased news quality.

### Cultural control

In addition to the formal control, Want-Want Holding applied their cultural control used in food corporations to China Times as well. It was called “cultural practice” in China Times. All the new employees of Want-Want Holding had to join a boot camp that included teaching the history, slogans, and songs of Want-Want Holding, asking all recruits to sing the same song and shout the same slogans. This cultural practice can also be seen in some Japanese lean production corporations, like Toyota (Mehri, 2005) or large retailers like Wal-Mart (Chan, 2011).

Almost all senior journalists considered the cultural practice very stupid; they abhorred it. A common critique was that Want-Want shouldn't treat journalists like food company workers. Although senior journalists were not forced to join in these cultural practices, they faced it in the year-end feast party. The year-end feast is a traditional Taiwanese corporate gathering. In the year-end festivities, the boss throws a party for all employees to thank them for their efforts throughout the whole year. In this party, the boss also provides some prizes and bonuses. An interviewee mentioned that Tsai Eng-Meng asked employees to sing the songs and to shout the slogans when they got a prize. If the employee could not remember the slogan or songs, their prize would be cut in half. The interviewees criticized this policy, because they thought the policy disrespected journalists. The criticism underlines the fact the journalists saw themselves as professionals, not lowly manual workers. Forcing journalists to recite the slogans contradicted this belief.

## The influence on journalists' autonomy

Compared to the first two periods, the control under subsidiary hegemonic despotism regime was more formal, neoliberal, and coercive. The more formal and coercive bureaucratic control broke from the work culture previously established at China Times, making journalists feel less autonomous than before. Another consequence of the coercive subsidiary regime is the break in the personal relationship between employees and managers. The transformation to a subsidiary company made the relationship more distant and estranged. One journalist described it this way,

In the past, although the senior officer was unfamiliar to us, we could be like buddies after drinking some wine. However, I can tell the relationship is not equal anymore after the Want-Want takeover. It's not the way to treat intellectuals... The senior officer is senior officer... When Tsai Eng-Meng's son, Tsai Shao-Chung, came to our meeting, he was sitting there in a formal suit. We were asked to wear a suit with a tie. Have you ever seen journalists in a suit with a tie? I can say never. I was used to wearing jeans, hanging out with the senior officers, but now I have to sit there and listen to his speech. If you didn't make any comment, he would point to you to make comments. The relationship is just like one of the authority to a subordinate (Journalist L).

The quote described the condition where journalists faced the CEO of China Times group, Tsai Shao-Chung, the son of Tsai Eng-Meng. Tsai Eng-Meng is the owner of Want-Want Holding, while Tsai Shao-Chung is the CEO of China Times group. The quote also shows the journalists' anger . The formalization of control after the takeover

ruined the personal relationship between the owner and employees. The owner or managers become the authority, and journalists feel less trusted and more restricted. Their professional identity made journalists proud of being intellectuals. As intellectuals, they emphasized their autonomy. However, the increased controls through bureaucracy and authority as a subsidiary made them more like nameless employees and decreased journalists' perception of autonomy. Faced with these changes, journalists had to decide whether to stay or leave.

#### How journalists reacted to changes in autonomy

Hirschman (1970) argues there are three ways employees can react to the deterioration of work conditions in a firm: exit, voice, or loyalty. The journalists at China Times needed to face the growing contradictions. The resignations can be seen as the exit reaction, while the anti-media monopoly movement can be regarded as the voice. Although the anti-media monopoly movement was an external movement, some interviewees considered the movement as a backlash against the removal of journalists' autonomy. As I mentioned earlier, the "autonomous work culture" was established by Yu Chi-Chung to sustain the liberal orientation of China Times. Under Yu Chi-Chung's paternalist hegemony, journalists felt free to write what they wanted to write within the KMT framework. As a result, China Times used to attract not only the progressive readers but also the progressive journalists. Just as journalist N stated,

Those people who criticized the government could find a position in China Times [under Yu Chi-Chung]. Only China Times would accept those critical and

rebellious journalists. However, those journalists have their own will. Once their will was deprived [under Tsai Eng-Meng], the backlash was very dramatic (Journalist N).

Like Journalist N argued, the changes made it hard for journalists to accept the news marketization that was the norm in this latter period. Journalist B's blog noted that under Tsai Eng-Meng "China Times was the newspaper with most [journalist] resistance toward news consumptions." Although these statements might be nostalgia and myth-making, it still presented the difference journalists perceived between before and after ownership change.

Those who stayed at China Times devised their own strategies to sustain some level of autonomy while remaining loyal to the firm. Journalists followed three strategies: seeing work as a game, passing important stories to other newspapers, and hiding stories in unimportant sections of the newspaper. Burawoy (1979) argued that manufacturing workers used "making out," a game or competition between workers that made work interesting, as a way of escaping managerial control but which ultimately produced more profit for the company. In the act of gaining a sense of relative autonomy in the manufacturing process, workers consented to managerial dictates. Journalist N mentioned similar strategies at China Times,

Journalists still have their own little autonomy. At least they are the only ones on site, so they can choose to neglect something they don't want to write. Even though the part he neglected may be the part the owner wants, they can choose to play it

down or not to write it. Sometimes the censors may add this part to their article again. It is just like a daily game, a game that happened day after day. It is not gonna be easy! (Journalist N)

As the writers, journalists had the ability to choose what they wrote although the editor might change it afterwards. The conflict between journalists and editors was a game for journalists every day.

Journalists also sought ways to thwart censorship and enact autonomy. The second strategy was to provide news to other newspaper corporations. Through this process, journalists could publish what they thought they should have written. As journalist B argued,

If some important news was banned by the newspaper company, journalists sometimes took another strategy. I may tell my friends who work for other newspapers in private, asking him to write and publish it. Sometimes journalists are driven by a sense of justice. If the managers banned some controversial news, I will provide the news to other newspapers in private (Journalist B).

Lastly, the third strategy they called the “stowaway” technique. Journalists sustained their sense of autonomy by placing their pieces in the section the owner did not care about.

The owners of media only care about what they care, such as political news and financial news. Except these two sections, they don't care about other sections of

the newspaper. As a result, you can stowaway your own ideology or put it in those sections the owner neglected (Journalist J).

The three quotes represent three different strategies journalists used to sustain their sense of autonomy within China Times, to stay within the company regulations, that is to maintain loyalty. However, in the process, they still mostly wrote what the company told them to write and self-censored in order to follow the Pro-China ideology set by the new owner.

In this chapter, I discussed the changes in the organization and management after the buyout by Want-Want Holding. The most important changes included the transformation to a subsidiary company, which deepened both formal and cultural control. I noted how Tsai Eng-Meng did not completely take over the running of the newspaper until three years after purchasing the company. He first needed to learn how media companies worked and soon after he used personnel change and augmented budgetary restraints, censorship, and cultural practices to establish greater bureaucratic coercive control over the journalists.

Increased control ate away at journalists' self-perception as professionals who had high degrees of autonomy. As professionals, journalists were used to using their discretionary judgment to write news articles. Increasingly, however, they were told what to write and what to not write, which was experienced as direct censorship. Although censorship had existed under Yu Chi-Chung, journalists believed they had participated in an informal conversation among intellectuals about what was politically expedient to print at the moment. Given the shared political orientation with the owner,



requests to not write certain things were not interpreted as censorship. Other changes in established work routines—such as more supervision by editors, increased control through operating budgets, copy-editing one’s own pieces, and pressure to shout slogans—convinced journalists that their professional status and concomitant autonomy were being stripped away by Tsai Eng-Meng’s vision of China Times. In effect, journalists were turned into food workers; they faced proletarianization as professionals.

The decrease in autonomy forced journalists to choose exit, voice or loyalty. Many journalists resigned to protest the coercion and censorship, while the anti-media monopoly movement spurred by those who resigned can be regarded as voice. For those who chose to stay at China Times, they devised strategies to sustain some autonomy.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

This study seeks to explore how the change in ownership influenced journalists' autonomy at one newspaper company, China Times. There were three work regimes at China Times based on the context and managerial control: paternalist hegemony, market hegemony, and subsidiary hegemonic despotism. Based on the change of work regime, we find that the change of managerial practice and shifted from informal control to formal control at China Times. The autonomy journalists perceived decreased. The results support my argument that the formalization of control decreases journalists' autonomy. However, there were some other factors that also affected journalists' autonomy. The other factors which affected journalists' autonomy included the political orientation of China Times, professional identity, and the work culture within organization.

The "autonomous work culture" was established by Yu Chi-Chung to shape China Times' orientation as liberal and innovative under the paternalist hegemonic period, based on the trusted relationship between the owner and journalists. This political orientation was a key component of journalists' professional identity. The work culture, or norms and expectations, established under paternalist hegemony were one of consultation between the owner and senior journalists. Such consultation, although a form of censorship, was upheld by a sense of shared political belief and resulted in journalists describing themselves as autonomous professionals. As Breed

(1954) states, journalists' conformity toward an owner's policy can be based on elements more subtle than coercion, such as socialization and mobility aspiration. Perceived autonomy and self-censorship are always important for social control within a newsroom. However, the expansion of China Times under Yu Chi-Chung necessitated neoliberal bureaucratic control and thus began a process of deprofessionalization for the lower level journalists.

Even though control became formal during the second period under the founder's son Albert Yu, journalists still perceived relatively high levels of autonomy. Importantly, journalists ascribed the decreasing but still important levels of autonomy to the continued shared political orientation of the newspaper. However, the work culture was changing as cost cutting were the ruling concerns for management. Neoliberal managerial practices decreased journalists' self-direction, leading to further deprofessionalization of journalists at China Times.

Under the leadership of Tsai Eng-Meng and subsidiary hegemonic despotism, the increased formalization of bureaucratic control and the drastic shift of the newspaper's political orientation from pro-Taiwan to pro-China resulted in more coercive control over journalists. After an initial period of little change, Tsai Eng-Meng instituted increased censorship, made important changes in personnel, changed the work duties of journalists, and imposed cultural practices previously only reserved for manual food workers. As a result, journalists felt much less autonomy than before. Many felt they had been proletarianized. As journalist's autonomy decreased, the trust and legitimacy they conferred to the owner decreased. For some this meant resisting in the newsroom and out

in the streets, which played a pivotal role in the anti-monopoly media movement still thriving today.

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