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Negotiating a Community Space in the State Media: the Development of Cable Television in China -- A Case Study of a Community Cable TV Station in Tianjin

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Negotiating a Community Space in the State Media: the Development of Cable Television in China -- A Case Study of a Community Cable TV Station in Tianjin

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ABSTRACT

The spread of cable television in the 1990s has seriously challenged the historically rooted place of Chinese mass media as an organ of the state propaganda machine. One of the more acute features in the cable development was the establishment of cable stations run largely by communal work units known as "*danwei*" in Chinese.

This thesis probes the "micro locale" of a Chinese *danwei* community and investigates how the communist propaganda is distilled at the grass-roots level and, furthermore, how the indigenous resistance and defiance against the central domination are negotiated and translated into community-based cable television. It seeks to illuminate the nature of the media development in reform-era China from the perspective of community media -- or *danwei* media, as the most appropriate term and, consequently, map out the changing patterns of control, contestation and conciliation between the twin actors of community media and state propaganda.

Chinese *danwei* communities have constituted a basic unit of the social organization of communist China and occupied a prima position in the communist establishment of mass media. It is in the ultimate interests of the state to control media undertakings at the grass-roots in order to dominate the local space of communication and entertainment with the official language and ideology. However, this objective of absolute control on the part of the central government becomes definitely impossible, particularly in the age of economic reform of the 1990s, when the once omnipotent power of the Party-state has withered away remarkably in terms of permeating the daily life of the *danwei* communities.

My research findings illustrate the tension and symmetry between community-cable television and the overarching Chinese media system. On the one hand, community cable embodies the grass-roots resistance to the state domination of television -- it is the intelligent use of cable technology on the part of *danwei* communities to take advantage of the communist tradition of locally organized media operation in gaining control over the local television space.

Simultaneously, though, community cable has emerged as the newest medium for the state propagandists to penetrate the basic units of society. It provides local resources to not only assist the delivery of state propaganda to work units, but also the re-packaging of the state propaganda vocabulary into more locally palatable television programming.

Community cable represents a unique experience of the Chinese people in asserting their desire to recapture the local media and to negotiate their space within the state structure of mass media.

To my parents and the *danwei* community where I grew up.

The Master said, "It is the human being who is capable of broadening the Way. It is not the Way that is capable of broadening the human being."

Confucius. *The Analects* Book XV. 29

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Eight and a half years ago, I left China and took on a second life in Canada. I had been frequently asked by people almost the same question: "What do you miss most about China?" There was no easy answer. The memory of many things that were so distinctively Chinese lingered -- the food, the people, the landscape, the crowds and even the noises. However, as time goes on, I have become keenly aware of the single most distinguishing feature of life there and here; it is this essence of living in complex, multi-dimensional and perpetuating webs of social relations.

This thesis is a scholarly endeavour to explain this nature of Chinese life in relation to mass communication. It reflects an academic journey of struggling to construct meanings and connections between my past experience and the current one, and between China and Canada. I have benefited greatly from my eight-year study in the Department of Communication Studies at Concordia University, an unusually diversified, accommodating and intellectually stimulating environment, without which this study would have not been made possible.

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Table of Contents

Figures . . . . . .

Appendices 263

Maps 273

Pictures 277

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The traditional place of Chinese mass media as an organ of the state propaganda machine has undergone a profound transformation in the 1990s with the rise of cable television -- the fastest developing medium in the People's Republic. The proliferation of cable has helped make television the central conduit in terms of audience reach in present-day China. As an intrinsically local-based medium, it has given communities an unprecedented opportunity to carve out a space in the media system that is at once grass-roots-oriented and wedded to state propaganda. Consequently, it has undercut the tension that exists between media centralization, used to indoctrinate the masses with an official ideology, and a Chinese audience hungry for more entertaining and lively programming.

Cable television has posed a serious challenge to the existing centralized system of Chinese media. In the past six years alone, cable television, particularly community-cable television, has flourished so well that it has loosened the centralization in television management. How did community-cable television emerge in China? What is its modus operandi? What is the relationship between community television and the state media? How will the development of these community stations affect the status of the centralized state media as the primary disseminator of information and knowledge? These questions form the thrust of my examination in this paper.

Research Questions

This thesis is primarily preoccupied with an aspect of Chinese mass media that has

not been addressed adequately in the literature of media studies, namely, community television in China. It focuses on the "micro locale" of a work organization and probes how the communist propaganda is organized at the grass-roots level and, conversely, how the indigenous resistance and defiance against central control has translated into a form of community-based cable television. The term "community cable television" refers to a distinctive type of locally based cable-television station which appeared in China during this current decade. It is significantly different from the "community television" with which we are familiar in the West -- community access television in the form of community-produced programmes delivered via commercial cable systems.

This study analyses the strategic importance of community cable television in relation to the state monopoly of mass communication at the most organic level of society. Research on various types of development of cable television in the West indicates that cable television, specifically, community cable, represents an alternative to mainstream media by providing vehicles for the expression of minority dissent and for grass-roots inter-communication. To what extent can these theories be applied in the Chinese context? To what degree is Chinese community-cable television able to cultivate a local domain vis-à-vis the state system of propaganda?

The central theme is explored in regard to the following sub-issues:

a) The definition of the Chinese community[1] in the context of the political,

[1] For the purpose of this thesis, the modern Chinese "community" is used to refer to a peculiar type of social entity that has established and assumed an important place in China since the early 1950s after the communists came to power. It is only part of the larger category of Chinese organizations, namely, *danwei* (unit) as it is commonly known

cultural and historical milieu of the Chinese state;

b) The importance of the Chinese community in organizing the Communist state-media system;

c) The development and operation of community television with a particular focus on a case study in Tianjin City, China;

d) The significance of community television in the complex relations between the community, the state and the centralized organization of mass media.

Development of Community Cable Television

The development of nation-wide cable television was a mass media phenomenon of the 1990s in China, which constitutes the second phase of a rapid development of television initiated in the 1980s. By the early 1990s, television replaced print media to become the locus of the mass media system in terms of audience penetration.[2]

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in Chinese. In other words, there are perhaps millions of *danweis* in China, but not every *danwei* can be categorized as a "community." The *danwei* community only refers to those units which have a residential territory to provide a way of living for their members. For such a *danwei* community, the more accurate term should be "organizational community" or "communal organization." Detailed explanation of these terms and definitions is provided in Chapter II.

[2] The media system of communist China was marked by two distinctive periods: Mao's era (1949-1976) and Deng's era (1978-1996). Generally speaking, Mao's media were characterized by increasing centralization featuring print media (newspapers) as the core of the system supplemented by radio and wired broadcasting; whereas media in Deng's period became gradually decentralized and diversified featuring television as the leading medium. A 1992 audience study of scientific information revealed that 61 percent of Chinese claimed that TV was their number one source for information, whereas 55.8 percent said that the print medium was their major source. The study also showed that the level education is the most important factor in using media. About 93.6 percent of the respondents with university or higher education said that they relied more

China had 980 television stations in mid-1995 (People's Daily 1995) compared with only 38 television stations in 1980 (Zhou 1994, 23). The number was 202 in 1985 (Zhou 1994, 23). The growth of television in the 1980s can also be traced in the surge of total program hours. On average, only 2,018 hours of programs were broadcast weekly in 1980. The figure increased to 7,698 in 1985, to 22,298 in 1990 (Lee 1994, 27) and to 34,407 in 1993 (Zhou 1994, 23). The most remarkable increase occurred in the rapid multiplication of television sets in Chinese households. In 1980, there was less than one television set per 100 persons. By 1990, the figure rose to 16.2 per 100 persons (Zhou 1994, 23). In mid-1995, the total number of television sets was estimated to be 250 million (Zhang 1996, 11). Television penetration among the Chinese populace was 88.3%, according to estimated figures (People's Daily 1995).

The importance of television was particularly reinforced by the development of cable television, which initially started by way of a system of common neighbourhood antennae or relay stations in order an attempt to improve TV reception quality in the 1970s (Zhou et al 1993, 39). These cable systems grew increasingly popular in the 1980s as a way to heighten TV reception and provide more programme choices. Later, more advanced technology of satellite reception were adopted. According to the statistics of China's Broadcasting Ministry which supervised television media, there were 1,200 cable stations

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on print medium for information (Ge et al 1995, 4). Although it was mainly concerned with scientific information, the study should be considered as an indicator of the general pattern. It was in contrast to another study conducted 10 years earlier -- The 1982 Beijing audience study -- which indicated that the most important source for information in 1982 was the print medium (Beijing Journalists' Association Research Group 1986).

officially registered with the Ministry in May 1995 (Zhang 1996, 11). An unofficial estimate, however, puts the figure at over 2,000 since more than 1,000 cable stations operated without the final approval from the Ministry (Liu 1994, 70). About 30 million households had access to cable television in mid-1995 (Zhang 1996, 11), comprising about 11% of total television households (Zhou 1994, 25) -- a sharp increase from a mere 70,000 households in 1983 (Liu 1994, 70). Each year, an average of five million more households signed up as new subscribers of cable services (People's Daily 1995). The total number of families with access to cable will peak at 100 million in the year 2000 (People's Daily 1995).

One of the more prominent features in the establishment of cable television was the bulk of cable stations were run by communal work units known as "*danwei*" in Chinese (Liu 1994, 70). Large territorial state corporations and institutions were the first and most active players when it came to inaugurating their own cable television facilities. In 1975, the Beijing Yansha Oil & Chemical Corporation installed the first cable-receiving and transmitting system in the country (Zhu et al 1993, 39). This spawned a precedent, allowing communal workplaces to run their own cable television stations. Community-owned cable stations flourished in major universities and state corporations and later expanded to rural communities -- townships and villages. In order to maintain a steady grip on the extraordinary growth of cable stations at the local level, the state government in 1990 first issued regulations on the management of cable television which, in fact, ratified the legal status of work unit-run cable stations and licensed the co-existence of two cable systems: one, cable television covering governmental administrative territories -- "District cable" (*xing zheng qu yu* cable stations); and, two, cable television run by Chinese-style

communities -- "*Danwei* cable."

A typical community-cable television station is equipped with satellite-receiving dishes, a relay and broadcasting system, a cable network linking the community territory, several VCRs, a studio and other equipment for program production. Owned and managed entirely by communities, these workplace cable stations mirror local tastes and are rich in local flavours. Apart from relaying programming from the centralized television, they offer a variety of local programmes, ranging from community news and children's educational programmes to documentaries, videos and commercial song orderings.[3]

It was this kind of community cable television that attracted my attention during my visit to China in 1995. I was amazed not only by the rapid augmentation of cable television -- it was expanding from urban settings to rural areas -- but also by the local orientation of the cable development and content. Compared with the commercial hold over cable television to which I had been exposed to in Canada for five years, Chinese cable television entailed a decidedly different way of organizing community resources into the mass-media system.

My interest in community cable was also prompted by the nonchalant attitude of community-cable workers and media scholars in China. None of them found it remotely unusual that a workplace community runs its own cable television. They regarded the community cable as a logical step in the development of a nation-wide television network.

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[3] The song ordering is a special and popular service offered by cable television. Viewers can order a song to be shown on television with greetings to their families or friends on special occasions like birthdays, wedding days or graduation days. The price for ordering one song is about ¥50.00 (about US$6.25).

By examining the situation further, I realized that Chinese communal workplaces have always performed the function of mobilizing internal resources to relay state propaganda to their employees through mass-media technology. Indeed, cable television is only the latest technology and development in this regard. Exactly how will locally cable television coalesce with the state domination of mass media? To what extent does this community cable function as a mass media organ of the state? And to what extent is it able to negotiate a local space in the centralized media? How does the communist tradition of incorporating local work units into one national propaganda network play a role in the current development of community cable television? And what varied consequences does cable television as an audio-visual medium bring about to the dominating media system? These are just a few of the questions I plan to examine throughout this thesis.

Strategic Site of "*Danwei* Media"

This thesis seeks to describe the nature of the media development in reform-era China from the perspective of community media - or *danwei* media, as is the most appropriate term. In so doing, it investigates the dynamics of the Chinese media beyond the spectra of existing theoretical models of the "powerful" or "powerless" paradigms. The examination centres on the issue of how the state media are organized and contested at the grass-roots level and how, in turn, these patterns of control and reconciliation have effectively transformed in the last 15 years.

The concept of "*danwei* media" refers to the locally coordinated use of media technology, be it cable television, wired broadcasting or print medium by a basic

organizational unit. On the one hand, the "*danwei* media" are an extension of the state media system at the grass-roots level in that they are invested with the function of relaying the central propaganda to the internal audience of the work unit. On the other hand, though, they are also the axis where local resources and interests interface with those of the state. Their dual functions of an extended arm of the state propaganda apparatus and representative of the local voices render them a vital place of control, contestation and negotiation in the Chinese media. Their position has become increasingly critical to the state media since Chinese society is increasingly decentralizing and starting to taste the fruits of capitalism.

Though a unique refashioning of the Maoist strategy of mass persuasion, the work unit-based media operations have virtually been ignored by scholars of Chinese mass media in the West except for the initial presumptions of local group communication in the 1970s (Whyte 1974; Chu 1977). Research on mass media in the People's Republic of China (PRC) has largely focused on the subject of large media operations, such as the People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency, CCTV, and so forth. Accordingly, previous academic efforts have zeroed in the analysis of the source and content of messages from the Chinese system of mass media, but have paid alarmingly little attention to the issue of how the communist propaganda is delivered and distributed at society's basic level.

This bias of the dominant media and their content is problematic in the Western conceptualization of Chinese mass media in that it is apparently contradictory in regard to the indoctrinating power of the communist propaganda system. Western literature of the Chinese media presents two completely divergent views as far as the effectiveness of the state instrument of mass communication is concerned. One is the "powerful state media" in

the lengthy studies conducted between the 1960s and the early 80s (Houn 1961; Yu 1964; Liu 1971; Chu 1977, 1978; Hsu et al 1979; Chu et al 1983; Chao 1985), which evaluate the Chinese media as one of the most prevalent and best organized systems of propaganda (Chu 1979). The other is the "powerless model," popular in the field since the late 1980s, particularly after the 1989 mass demonstration and confrontation in Beijing (Lee 1990; Tan 1990; Hong 1991; Porter 1992; Jernow 1993; Yu 1994; Lee 1994). The latter model conceptualizes the Chinese system as a wholly repressive one which has no hegemonic power over the population and has to resort to a rigid and highly unpopular ideological control.

Each of these two perspectives presents only a part of the picture as far as the nature of the communist propaganda is concerned. As Hamid Mowlana and Laurie J. Wilson point out, the mass media in any country is a complex social system that reflects the social conditions of the whole society in which it operates.

> The operation of no one part of the mass media system and process can be fully understood without reference to the way in which the whole itself operates; or to put it more succinctly, no part of the mass media system stands alone, but each part is related to both the formation (production) and distribution processes of its messages. (Mowlana et al 1990, 91)

This thesis represents an initial effort to conduct an elaborate description of the Chinese mass media by directing attention beyond the conventional subject area of the dominant media and their content. By focusing on the media operations in the micro-level workplace which hitherto have been neglected as an important component of the Chinese media system, this work strives to construct a historical link between the classic works of Godwin Chu and other media scholars in the 1970s which described the Chinese media in Mao's era and the

later research of the reform-era media in the mid-1980s and the early 1990s. The re-construction of Chu's concept on locally organized communication into the "*danwei* media" serves as an appropriate starting point to re-evaluate the populistic orientation of the communist media system, and its functions and connections to the ultimate goal of the Party state in transmitting knowledge, information and entertainment to society at the ground level. By so doing, this thesis will not only trace the roots and nature of the locally organized mass persuasion of the state media, but also map out the changing path of the system in the past decade or so. The future of Chinese media, therefore, is not entirely difficult to predict.

Chinese Community Cable: Generalization beyond China

Scholars of Chinese studies in the West face a double challenge: how to detect the dynamics of China from inside and how to generalize this Chinese experience beyond China's borders (Womack 1991, 2-3). As a native of China who grew up in Mao's China and worked as a journalist in Beijing during the vibrant reform years of the 1980s until the tragic crackdown of mass demonstration in the spring of 1989, I find it relatively easy to understand the internal logic and dynamics of the mass media system in the country. The most painstaking, and sometimes frustrating, endeavour I have undertaken is to generalize the Chinese experience beyond China, to explore the applicability of concepts developed elsewhere, particularly in the West, into China studies, and to interpret my findings within a framework and academic language that speaks to a non-Chinese audience. I have to admit that although a task of generalizing Chinese-style community cable is possible, it is also unavoidable that a multidimensional, thick reality of workplace media would be "skewed,

fixed and flattened" (Womack, 3) by whatever theoretical lens one assumes.

My research findings illustrate the internal tension between community-cable television and the Chinese system of mass media. On the one hand, the establishment of community cable television, embodies the local resistance to state domination of television, representing an alliance forged between community leaders and ordinary citizens to gain partial control of the local domain of television entertainment from the state. In addition, it signifies the intelligent use of cable technology on the part of *danwei* communities which have taken advantage of the communist tradition of locally organized media operation. Accordingly, they have reaped certain advantages for its own benefit, e.g. the creation of jobs and revenue for the community, a new vehicle of internal communication, a public-relations tool for the community leadership, and a coherent cultural venue for community building. On the other hand, community cable has arisen as the newest medium for state propagandists to feed into. It provides local resources to assist not only in the delivery of state propaganda to work units, but also in the re-packaging of the general language of state propaganda into more locally oriented television programming. Ideologically, it is invested with the function by the state to reinforce mass persuasion in the workplace.

The significance of the above-stated findings to a broader framework of concepts and standpoints can be understood within the context of the following five conceptual themes most pertinent to my study: a) the *danwei* community in the "state-society" relationship; b) Chinese community cable vis-à-vis participatory communication; c) community cable in regard to organizational communication; d) the nature of negotiation between the state and community cable.

Danwei in "state-society" relationship

One of the most influential and commonly accepted views on China's transformation in the past two decades is framed within the liberalistic paradigm of "state-society" relationships, which assumes that there exists an antithetic relationship between the state and society. The communist system is seen as a "totalitarian" state intruding on every sphere of society. There is no independent institution or organization in society that has the legitimate right to speak freely and authentically (Tsou 1991, 271). Thus, calls for change or dissident movements that defy the state authority are commonly interpreted as an "emergence" or "re-emergence" of "society" or "civil society," meaning that individuals are gaining some sort of identity as citizens that is independent of the relationships defined by the state and which is organized into various types of associational life, e.g. business, cultural, political or social. (Fewsmith 1991; Rosenbaum 1992; Whyte 1992; Solinger 1992; Wang 1995). Such emergence of "civil society" could eventually lead to the complete separation of society from the state and the establishment of a "formal democracy" characterized by electoral democracy, multi-party politics, market economy, freedom of public opinion, individual rights and so forth.[4]

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[4] Bob Jessop is one of the most prominent critics of this liberalistic paradigm of "state-society" theory. He sees the capitalist state as " the core of the state apparatus comprises a distinct ensemble of institutions and organizations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on the members of a society in the name of their common interest or general will" (Jessop 1990, 341). Wang Hsiao-guang, by exploring the origins and implications of "civil society" in reference to a diverse spectrum of theorists from Hopes, Rousseau, Hegel, to Marx, Tocqueville, Gramsci and Habermas, also questions the validity of the "state-society" parameters (Wang 1991, 102-114). It is obvious that the "state-society" framework is subject to debate, however, such efforts are far beyond the academic specialty of this author.

Except for a few scholars such as Martin K. Whyte who believe that some sort of "civil society" emerged at the time of the Tiananmen demonstration in 1989 (Whyte 1992), many studies concluded that economic reform in China, although brought about societal changes vis-à-vis the communist state, did not lead, at least in the early 1990s, to the emergence of "civil society" in the Western sense of the term (Fewsmith 1991; Tsou 1991; Solinger 1992, Dittmer 1994). My research findings point to a similar direction. The defiance and resistance against the state domination are carried out more within the tolerant limits of the state system rather than outside of that system. While organized societal resistance independent of the state system may clearly exist in current China, however, credit must be paid to those positive changes that occurred within the state system and beyond the knowledge framework of Western experience. To a certain extent, the vibrant and dynamic transformation of Chinese society in the past 17 years is indeed more a result of intra-system reform initiatives rather than it is of dissident movements completely estranged from the established system.

Therefore, instead of looking for a locus of societal resistance independent of the state, I place the *danwei* community as a pertinent and significant perch from which to analyse the control and contestation with regard to the relation between state and society. One of my key departures from previous views of the *danwei,* which viewed it as a complete vehicle of control for the state, or a third force of independent interest groups,[5] is that I construct the *danwei* as a communal space where various interests of the state, *danwei* and

[5] See Chapter II for detailed analysis of *danwei.*

individual persons mesh. I position the *danwei* as an *intermediate institution* between the state and individual citizens in Chinese cities. The urban individuals are not directly exposed to the centralized authorities of the state, they are first organized into the state system by consolidation into the *danwei*, which is both localistic and the embodiment of state power. While the work unit is a centrally structured entity of political, economic and social activities at the basic level, subordinate to the command and the principle of the centralized authority, it also presents a self-sufficient community with relatively autonomous room for interaction among work unit members and leaders to pursue their respective interests.

It is premature at the moment to predict whether this local and intra-system defiance against the state described in my thesis will eventually lead to the emergence of autonomous institutions in society, or "civil society" in the Western sense. Furthermore, will they emerge outside the current state system as China is undergoing more dramatic changes? More quantitative and qualitative research in a variety of disciplines in the social sciences are required before a realistic attempt at answering these fundamental questions can be made.

Danwei cable as a model of community media

This thesis endeavours to appraise the societal changes, specifically in the field of mass communication, from the perspective of community and community media. The philosophy of community media is based on the Western democratic principle of access and participation, which visualizes that every individual citizen has a right to access information and knowledge as well as to participate in the public debate of subjects concerning his/her own interests (Berrigan et al 1977; Berrigan 1979; Tichenor et al 1980; White et al 1994).

Community media are seen as one of the most important nexus points for individuals and local communities -- particularly those who have traditionally been left out of the centralized communication system -- to express themselves and to take part in a public forum of sorts. The central concept of community media is basically the participatory communication derived from the principle of individual right of expression.

The Chinese community cable service outlined in my study is, for all intents and purposes, different from the ideal model of participatory communication in the West. First, it is not an "open space" where individual members of the community have an equal right to participate in the operation and to gain access to information. Instead, it is a relatively self-interested sub-unit within the community. Grass-roots participation is not politically and structurally encouraged. In addition, it does not offer a "public forum" for critical debates and discussions of important issues concerning community life. Rather it is used as a vehicle to promote an *imagined reality* of harmonious community. Finally, to the dismay of many, it is also invested with the function of relaying and localizing the state propaganda to an internal audience.

The central issue is how we, as social scientists, might evaluate the experience of Chinese *danwei* cable as a valuable model of locally based media operation vis-à-vis the domination of centralized television. Instead of discrediting it because it does not fit into the definitions of the established model which ostensibly stems from the Western experience, I think it is perhaps more constructive to regard the Chinese workplace cable as one of the alternative models of community media.

Besides the fact that *danwei* cable plays an important role in challenging the state

monopoly of mass media in China, as I have outlined previously and examined closely throughout the thesis, the significance of Chinese local cable to our broad understanding of grass-roots media operation, I believe, lies in at least three aspects. First, it offers a unique model of ownership in community media. Its status of non-commercial and non-state subsidised operation makes it a truly collective property. From the ownership point of view, it is a cable service of the community.

Second, it is a community cable service that controls the distribution system -- the cable network within its own territory. By maintaining the cable lines that connect its constituency, community cable has a legitimate right to claim cable fees to sustain its locally oriented service. This model could perhaps help efforts to restore a local community space in the commercial domination of cable television in the West. One of the optional strategies for community-based television to secure a financial resources for their programming could be to claim a part of the subscription revenue the monopolizing commercial cable companies collect in their constituencies.

Finally, and perhaps most debatably, is the principle of "harmonious community" that underlies the operation of Chinese grass-roots cable. On the surface, the ethics of media seems so remote from the commonly accepted Western ideal that trumpets individual participation, expression of dissent and criticism of authorities. However, as I explore the issue further in connection within the context of the traditional *danwei* approach -- consensus politics, strong social relations and so forth, I realize that this "harmonious media" fits the whole *danwei* environment perfectly well. The community cable is seen as the *public face* of the community, not a public forum. Any critical coverage or dissenting expression would

be viewed not only as "negative images" of the community, but also a signal of "open confrontation" which is deemed deviant behaviour in the community culture and should be avoided at all cost.

What I find interesting is that the practice of cultivating a harmonious image of community is not all together alien in community programming seen on Western television. For instance, ethnic channels often exhibit cheerful groups singing and dancing in festive costumes and only very rarely expose deep internal rifts within minority communities. What are the implications of these "harmonious" images with reference to the community identity and community building? What do they mean to the contestation of minority groups against the domination of mainstream media? How can such practices be compatible with the fundamental principle of individual rights to communicate and participatory communication in our society? All these issues are clearly vital to a growing cognizance of community and community media and deserve to be studied thoroughly and comparatively. The Chinese *danwei* cable, it should be noted, stands as one such example of a referent.

Danwei cable and organizational communication

While preoccupied with media communications as an organizational entity, this study does not intend to be a deliberate on organizational communication. It is concerned primarily with the issue of control, contestation and conciliation forged on the locality of the *danwei* to the domination of the state media system. Rather than an analysis of communicative culture exclusively within an organization, it places an emphasis on investigating the *relationship* between the media operation in a micro-level work unit and the state system of

mass media.

Having said this, I realize the connections that Chinese workplace cable may have with the conceptual framework of organizational communication. The Chinese work unit, indubitably, is a modern organization, as I examine closely in the next chapter. Hence, whatever communicative actions carried out within it ought to be considered the pertinent subject of organizational communication. My research findings indicate that the workplace cable service is associated with several functions similar to that of organizational communication, for example, internal communication of information, public relations, maintaining control over communication, etc. While assessing the *danwei* cable, I became aware that it could be worthy of another substantial research project that exclusively explores the communication within the *danwei*. But, for my current work, I will rather concentrate on the theme of *danwei* media in relation to the state propaganda and leave the subject of *danwei* communication to other researchers to explore down the road.

Although I have tried to avoid directing my research attention to organizational communication, one of the more overriding issues I have had to face is to analyse the *danwei* cable service in relation to its environment. As Gareth Morgan points out, the way we conceptualize and explicate organizational life is based on certain metaphors which define our understanding of organizations in a "distinctive yet partial" manner (Morgan 1986, 12). Hence, the question that consistently arose in my scrutiny of the workplace cable television was: "What are the metaphors that underlie my explanation of the *danwei* life?" Several metaphorical images are implicitly involved, such as the machine metaphor in my use of the term "unit" or "sub-unit" which imply that the *danwei* is organized like a machine consisting

of mechanistic parts and bureaucratic supervision. The examination of interests and control implies the metaphor that the *danwei* is a political system. Of course there is also the metaphor of *danwei* life as culture which is explicit in my central definition of the *danwei* as a community and lengthy examination of the community history, social relations, communication and so forth.

In characterizing the *danwei* life, however, the most suggestive metaphor that comes to mind, after the scrutiny of workplace cable, is the term "family," or more exactly, the "patriarchal family" in the Confucian sense. Two thousand years ago Confucius put forth the principle of modelling the Chinese political system after the patriarchal family. In such a system, the ruler was like a father figure, benign but authoritative. He ruled the territory with a firm hand, but at the same time he also had a deep concern for the welfare of his people. The ruled were like children who, on the one hand, submitted themselves to the authority of the ruler the way sons obeyed their father. On the other hand, they also expected to be taken care of by the ruler like the sons being cared for by the father. The bonding relationships among members were governed not by a universally undifferentiated law such as citizenship rights, but rather by moral obligations defined and required by particular sets of relationship such as father and son, husband and wife, ruler and subject. Maintaining harmonious relations was the supreme goal of such a system.

It is interesting to see that such a metaphor still underlies the Chinese explanation of *danwei*. They often refer to it as a "big family" (*da jia ting*), and its sub-units as "fraternal groups" (*xiong di danwei*). The roles undertaken by the *danwei* are described as "paternal" functions which discipline and sanction, and "maternal" functions which provide care and

daily necessities (Lü et al 1997, 8). What is more illuminating is that none of the studies, either in China or abroad, has so far dealt with the connection of the Confucian metaphor and the ways Chinese organize their lives in the *danwei*. Obviously, there are numerous subjects involving the *danwei* and *danwei* communication that need further study in relation to organization and organizational communication. But these concerns lie beyond the scope of my current study.

Nature of negotiation

This thesis concerns the interweaving interactions of control, contestation and conciliation carried out at the locale of workplace cable television between the central state, the regional government and the work unit. The central term of "negotiation," instead of its conventional meaning of "face-to-face" discussions that aspires to arrive at a settlement of some matter, is used in this context to signify a complex and multi-level process of challenging, regulating, conceding and reconciling.

My research findings reveal that this interactive negotiation is first a process conducted within a structured system. Each distinctive group -- the state propagandists, central television, regional governments, regional cable companies, *danwei* and *danwei* cable stations -- are structured in a particular place within the state system of mass media. Featuring a hierarchical structure of command, supervision and territorial control, this system ensures a structural domination of the state television and authorities of superior bureaus over subordinate organizations. However, the establishment of the monopoly and exertion of control are curbed by a number of constraints as well, e.g. financial and human constraints

of the state, interests and autonomy of regional governments, territorial control of work-unit communities and demands of grass-roots audience for non-state-controlled information and entertainment. The negotiating process basically evolves through the defining and redefining of the boundary of workplace television within the established structure.

Moreover, the negotiation entails collective actions. None of the parties involved in the negotiations has an appointed negotiator. Individual actors are anonymous in the process. Their acts and roles become meaningful only when they represent the governments or media organizations ascribed to them in the structure of mass communication. This factor was repeatedly cited in the interviews I conducted in 1995 and 1997 with the directors of competing cable stations -- the campus television, district and city cable companies. They had a habit of using the first person plural pronoun "we" to indicate what was really meant to be "I." When they gave opinions, they often used the phrase "we think" rather than "I think." As such, contesting opinions and manoeuvres taken by individuals were translated into actions in the name of and for the interests of collectives.

Lastly, negotiation is a distant process rather than a "face-to-face" bargaining and compromise. It never involves key players sitting in a closed-door conference room explaining their differences and negotiating terms and conditions. Instead, the negotiating process is signified by give-and-take, back-and-forth manoeuvres initiated by various involved parties at a distance. The initial contestation was launched by local communities which jumped at the opportunity to establish a satellite-transmission-distribution network of cable television in their own territory. The central government responded by imposing increasingly tougher regulations on grass-roots cable operations and on compulsory relay of

central TV programming. At the same time, cable companies owned by regional governments introduced regional regulations, attempting to re-claim the cable territory occupied by local cable companies. The local cable stations responded to these measures by a variety of acts and techniques in order to maintain control over the grass-roots media space. It is a continuing and tough negotiation -- a negotiation without "face-to-face" communication.

Methodology

The thesis is one of the first endeavours to do qualitative research on Chinese community cable. Political, cultural, linguistic barriers in the past have made such a project, if initiated in the West, almost impossible. The colossal changes that have taken place in China in the last few years, however, provide a more fortuitous opportunity for such a research project. My field research in 1995 and 1997 demonstrated that people working with community cable television were eager to share their experience with outsiders. Ethnographically documenting the development of community cable television in China, as this study attempts to do, contributes to the formation of a more comprehensive knowledge of the Chinese media system -- its past, present and future.

The central part of the project is conducted as a case study in the field. I focus exclusively on a particular cable television station operated by one of these Chinese organizations characterised as a *danwei* community, namely the Cable Television Station of Tianjin University in Tianjin City, China. The methodology involves largely qualitative approaches including naturalistic observation, field interviews, contextualization and

descriptive writing. It also involves, to some extent, content study and audience questionaries. Based on the qualitative examination of this particular *danwei* cable station, I construct a general understanding of the *danwei* media in the Chinese system of mass communication.

Qualitative approach

There is a limited number of studies of Chinese media in the West that are conducted through the method of qualitative or ethnographical analysis. The field is apparently dominated by studies that rely heavily on models or theories developed in the West. The Chinese media are used generally as a field test for these Western models. Many factors contribute to the lack of alternative methods:

a) A bias toward quantitative research in the study of communication as an academic discipline. Depending on the "objective," quantifiable character of date, such approaches assume that social and cultural phenomena can be explained in essentially statistical and empirical terms (Christians et al 1991, 354);

b) A general assumption that concepts of social sciences, once justified through quantitative examination in Western society, would entail a universal nature. Cultural varieties are seen as one of the "objective" variables of the analytical frame rather than the frame itself;

c) The political and cultural situation in communist China for many years made it impossible for students of the West to conduct field research in China. Although the situation has been relaxed to a certain degree in recent years and many foreign scholars have been able

to do some field research in China, the Chinese government is still very surveillant of foreigners doing research in the country, particularly in highly sensitive fields such as mass communication.

The quantitative research alone, conducted mainly in the West through the use of Western theories and second- or third-hand information, is never able to provide a thorough and in-depth description of the Chinese media. It has led to simplistic views about either the "powerful" or "powerless" media, which are theoretically inadequate to grasp the dynamic or changing nature of the Chinese system. Qualitative research offers an alternative. Emphasizing the mass media as a creative continuum of historical, cultural and communicative experience of a certain society, this research attempts at rendering a "thick description," an interpretation of communication experience "through the agency of culture" (Christians et al 1991, 359).

Scholars from the West have tried hard to penetrate the Chinese borders to obtain more concrete research materials. Such efforts included a research project to document the Chinese village life in Mao's China by interviewing Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong in the 1970s (Whyte 1984), Judy Polumbaum's study on Chinese journalists in the mid-1980s (Polumbaum 1990), Godwin Chu's "Great Wall in Ruin" (Chu 1993) and James Lull's "China Turned On" in the late 1980s (Lull 1991).[6] This project, which follows the ethnographic tradition, is designed to zero in on the media practice at the micro and grass-

[6] Since the mid-1980s, more and more studies on Chinese media published in the West were conducted by Chinese researchers studying abroad. These studies, although mostly incorporating some first-hand information and personal experience of the mass media in the People's Republic, were basically quantitative research in nature.

roots level and on a limited scale.

The Site

The selection of the Cable Television Station of Tianjin University (TUTV) in Northern China's Tianjin City, is based on several considerations. First, the organization that owns and runs the cable television station represents a prototypical example of community-like *danweis*. Tianjin University (TU) entails all the characteristics of the *danwei*-community I describe in the following chapters.

Second, TUTV is a relatively well developed system of cable television. Established in 1993, the station currently reaches about 4,000 households in the community and offers 27 channels with 24-hour service. Besides relaying television programming from central and provincial stations, it also offers self-produced, community-oriented programming on community news, education and entertainment. It represents a full-range cable station in miniature.

Third, the development of cable television in the City of Tianjin where TU is located has taken on a very decentralized format. The city now is carved up into several cable zones which are either controlled by the municipal cable stations, city district (township) cable stations or *danwei* community cable stations. This multi-faceted cable situation represents an ideal environment for the study of the contestation and conciliation of local cable television within the state media system.

The choice is, of course, also a choice of convenience. Having grown up in the TU neighbourhood, I consider the place my hometown. There are no language or cultural

barriers. And above all, I don't need to apply for a government permit to do field research because no one would ask me for it. I am not a stranger in the sociological sense.

Field trips

The research findings are the result of my two field trips to Tianjin University in 1995 and 1997. During each trip, I stayed for about three months from March to June. During the first trip, I conducted a preliminary study in order to familiarize myself with the evolution of community cable television. I then returned to Canada, designed and formulated the theoretical structure in reference to a wide range of literature on, for instance, Chinese mass media, Chinese society, community media in general, etc. After my thesis proposal was approved, I went back to the field again in 1997 and conducted a substantial part of the research project including observations, interviews, questionaries and textual analysis. I did some preliminary writing in China, but the major part of the writing was done in Canada between September 1997 and March 1998.

Methods

Several methodological approaches were involved in my investigation. They included:

- Observation:

  During each trip, I spent 20 days visiting TUTV (its interior and exterior facilities, building, offices, studios, central control room and etc.). I chose to visit the station at various times: in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening. In addition, I

accompanied a TUTV cameraman to cover community events on five occasions (mostly in the evenings). During these visits, I paid close attention to how TUTV is operated, managed and controlled; how the programming is produced, how directors and workers relate to each other, how decisions or consensus are made within the cable station, how school commands are delivered from the leadership to the cable station and how people react to them, and how people related to other people (leaders, friends and strangers) in the community. Also under my observation was the process of how cable workers acted and reacted to the commands of city and central government;

- I reviewed historical and government documents published in China in relation to *danwei* media and, in particular, to cable television; and a variety of history and current books on university communities
- Interviews:

  I conducted extensive interviews with over 50 people including leaders of the TU, TUTV, Tianjin City Cable, Nankai District Cable, employees of the campus cable, propaganda officials, ex-employees of the school newspaper and wired radio station and ordinary viewers in the community. Interviews with some key persons such as leaders of TU, TUTV and city cable company were conducted several times.
- Textual analysis:

  I monitored the TUTV programming over a period of one month and taped its full programme during one week. The textual analysis was based on these materials.
- Questionnaires: I randomly distributed 40 questionnaires to collect some feedback

on TUTV.

The investigation focuses on four aspects as they pertain to the complex interplay involving the community, the community media, the state and the state media. These aspects are the following:

1. The geographic, economic, social and organizational environment of TU as a community in the communist state;
2. TUTV as a community media -- the development, operation, programming, technology and audience of TUTV; the historical relation it has with other types of *danwei* media in the communist history;
3. The role of TUTV in the development of TU as a community;
4. The status and place of TUTV in the centralized state television.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into 11 chapters. Chapter II, III and IV elaborate the theoretical framework of the research. They deal respectively with the definitions of the Chinese community as a transfigured community, general theories of community media and their relevance to the investigation of community cable in China with a specific focus on cable television and the conceptual models concerning the importance of the Chinese community media in the system of state propaganda.

Chapter V, concentrating on the development of locally based media undertakings in communist China, seeks to provide some background information so as to place my

central theme of community cable TV in a proper perspective. Chapter VI focuses on a general description of TU as a typical Chinese *danwei* community. In Chapter VII, VIII and IX, a detailed analysis is provided on TUTV, its status and attributes within the political, social and cultural environment of the community and its negotiated place in relation to the centralized system of propaganda. Chapter X summarizes how the community cable acts, reacts and readjusts to the control and regulation over its operation imposed by the state and regional authorities. The last chapter offers some concluding remarks and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

CHINESE *DANWEI* AS THE TRANSFIGURED COMMUNITY: DEFINITIONS

The Chinese social entity that will be the primary focus of this study is a peculiar type of social organization in communist China. It is distinguished from other types of collectivity of social interaction by the following distinctive attributes:

a) It has a clear geographical boundary;

b) It is incorporated into the state organizational hierarchy;

c) It engages in diverse activities beyond the main area of specialization. It has both specific output goals as well as non-specific social and political objectives. Its members, in theory, share the usage of all production means of materials;

d) It is a social organization in which its members are able to meet a wide range of their needs in their lives including work, leisure, socialization, family planning, children's education, social welfare, etc.;

e) It has a high degree of stability and continuity of its members. Therefore, there is a sustained sense of a shared identity and belonging among its members.

In short, the Chinese community is a basic unit of the state organization and a combination of the characteristics which would be defined into distinctly different categories of social aggregate in the West: the "community" and the "organization." It is not a community in its traditional sense, but rather a community "transfigured by its subordination to a complex and modernizing public order" (Womack 1991, 314).

The above definition of the Chinese community is based on a variety of conceptual

frameworks, primarily, the sociological theories on the community and the organization. In this section, I will first give a brief outline of the Chinese organizational structure in which such a community-like entity is located. Following this, a description of some basic agreements in relation to definitions of the community is introduced. In the third part, I look at some references to organization theories, which will be followed by my own constructs of the idiosyncratic nature of the Chinese community. The last section posits the work unit community in relation to the larger panorama of the state and society.

Danwei and the State Organizational Structure

This community-like social collectivity I defined above is part of the predominant type of modern Chinese social organization which is usually referred to as "*danwei*" in Chinese.[7] The term "*danwei*" is so widely used in China that it makes an over-all definition almost impossible.[8] In the broadest sense, every Chinese social entity can be called a "unit" (a *danwei*). But in a more restricted, commonly accepted and sociologically meaningful term, it usually refers to all the collective entities covered by the state administrative structure

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[7] The literary translation in English would be "unit." However, I prefer to use the Chinese *pinyin* "*danwei*" instead of the translated name throughout the text in order to retain its original meaning.

[8] Scholars in the West have taken a painstaking effort to define the "*danwei*," however none of the existing definitions is completely satisfactory. Misunderstood views include the view that *danweis* are only state-owned organizations or have a party committee (Francis 1993, 23-14). Xiaobo Lü and Elizabeth Perry suggest that a *danwei* is a work unit which possesses five attributes including: a) personnel-related mandate; b) independent accounts; c) communal facilities; d) urban or nonagricultural purview; and e) in the public sector (Lü et al 1997, 5-6).

regardless of specified activities those organizations may assume.[9] Any organization, whether it is a government department, university, hospital, research centre, factory, retail store, trading house and so on, is considered a "*danwei*" as long as it is listed as being owned by either the government or collectivities. Generally speaking, all Chinese in today's China fall into five major categories of social organizations: the village, the *danwei* (which means the government or collectively owned entities), private enterprises, foreign companies and the self-employed. However, for a long period from the 1950s till the mid-1980s, the Chinese population was organized into virtually two types of organizations: the village and the *danwei*.[10]

All *danweis* are constructed into an extensive state structure of organization. (See Appendix I). This structure can be characterized as an inverted tree with the trunk

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[9] Private and foreign companies could be referred to as "private *danwei*" or "foreign *danwei*." However, when the "*danwei*" is used without specification, it always means state-or collectively run organizations. For the purpose of this thesis, the term *danwei* refers only to those Chinese organizations that are directly linked to the state structure of organizations. In other words, the *danwei* is used to refer to only those that are either state owned or collectively owned. Other types of organization -- private companies, foreign sole proprietaries, Sino-foreign partnership which have emerged in recent years -- are not considered as Chinese *danwei* in this study.

[10] The most thorough examination of the *danwei* is the book Danwei edited by Xiaobo Lü and Elizabeth J. Perry (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997). Other works include Marc Blecher and Gordon White, Micropolitics in Contemporary China: A Technical Unit During and After the Cultural Revolution (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E.Sharpe, 1979); Martin King Whyte and William L. Parish, Urban Life in Contemporary China (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984); Gail Henderson and Myron Cohen, A Socialist Work Unit (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Mayfair Yang, "Between State and Society: The Construction of Corporateness in a Chinese Socialist Factory," Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs, no. 22 (1989); and Corinna-Barbara Francis, Paradoxes of Power and Dependence in the Chinese Workplace (Ph.D dissertation. Columbia University, 1993).

symbolizing the vertical rule of governments from the central top to the local level. Major branches stretching out of the trunk represent the horizontal control of governments at various levels. Small branches sprouting from the major branches indicate various types of directive relations. Leaves are the organizations - the *danwei.*[11]

The Chinese *danwei* has been a predominant form of social relationship in Chinese society since the communists took power in 1949. To what extent Chinese urban society is dominated by the *danwei* is difficult to assess due to the ambiguous status of Chinese work units in various categories [12] and the lack of overall statistical records. Some figures given by Lü and Perry in *Danwei* suggest that the number of workers employed by enterprise units, nonprofit units and government units totals around 147.7 million at the end of 1994 (Lü et al, 7).[13]

The community-like *danwei*, which will be the centre of my thesis, is one type of

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[11] This is a very much simplified characterization of the Chinese state structure, and is also an ideal form. It is intended to serve only as a simple aid for readers to have a quick understanding of the complicated structure of Chinese bureaucracy.

[12] Chinese *danwei* can be classified by activities into three categories: enterprise *danwei*, nonprofit *danwei* and government *danwei*. Or it can be categorized vertically as central units, local units and grass-roots units (Lü et al 1997, 6-8).

[13] This figure does not take into consideration that many *danwei*-like township enterprises have emerged in the traditionally non-*danwei* rural communities in the 1980s-1990s. It is worth noting that more people have been drawn to non-*danwei* organizations since the early 1990s, namely, those organizations in the private and foreign business sectors. However, it would be naive to predict that the demise of Chinese *danwei* is drawing near. Further market-oriented approaches, e.g. downsizing, layoffs, bankruptcies, cut in medicare and social safety networks etc. in Chinese industries have met with mounting resistance and even public demonstrations from the workers of state and collective enterprises.

danwei which has its own residential compound to provide a sort of communal life style for its employees. In such an environment, fellow workers are also neighbours and playmates. Generally speaking, the community-like *danwei* is usually ranked high in the state organizational structure. That is one of the reasons that it has resources and land to build a common living space (a residential area). Beyond this fact, *danwei* communities can be very diverse in specified activities, the number of population and the size of the territory. A big *danwei* community can cover an area as large as a medium-sized city. For example, the community of the Baotou Steel and Iron Corporation covers almost a major part of Baotou City in Inner Mongolia and has a population of 270,000 (Fei 1993, 437). In contrast, a small community can have just a small number of people and a few houses which are generally divided into offices and living quarters.

Concepts of Community

Many Western scholars have pointed to the communal nature of the Chinese *danwei*. Corinna-Barbara Francis terms it as a "mini-urban village" (Francis 1993, 23).[14] Brantly

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[14] It is worth noting that Chinese scholars also recognize the peculiar nature of the *danwei*. However they see it more as a deviant form of modern organization. A major part of research, based on modern organization and management theories, deals with the inefficiency of the Chinese *danwei* as a modern business firm (Fei 1993; Yang 1994; Wang 1995). Most scholars have noticed that a Chinese-style enterprise assumes too many types of activities, which leads to its being less specialised in its main job and thus less efficient. They unanimously assume that the situation is the result of the adoption of the Soviet system of planned economy and state monopoly. However, few studies attempt to examine the cultural roots that contribute to the creation of the Chinese *danwei*. Even fewer try to look at the functional attributes of the community-like activities assumed by the Chinese *danwei* in maintaining a distance between the state power and individuals' daily life. It takes an American scholar, Corinna-Barbara Francis

Womack, in particular, makes the connection of the Chinese *danwei* to Ferdinand Tönnies' well-known concept of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* and refers to it as "transfigured community" (Womack 1991). However, it is necessary to review some basic community concepts in order to arrive at a better understanding of the communal character of the *danwei.*

The term "community" carries a wide range of concepts and implications in modern sociology and anthropology. A common understanding of the "community" is that it is "a place in which people live and work" (Kaufman and Bailey 1965, 1). However, a community does not necessarily mean a locality-based social organization. Broader uses of the term, such as the "artists' community," or "science community," or "ethnic community" imply rather the social relations in which people are bonded by a shared interest, an intellectual similarity or just simply an ethnic origin. In an extreme sense, the community is deprived of both territorial and social bases and is seen as a pure product of cultural imagination (Anderson 1991). In such a perspective, the community exists only in the mind of the people who create it. Pertinent to this study, the following discussion of the community concentrates on the theories which recognize the community as a social entity with a territorial basis and social action orientations.

Hillery's categories of definitions

In a 1955 study, George Hillery identified altogether 94 notions in regard to

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to point out the strategic position of the *danwei* in the state-society relations (Francis 1993). I believe that the Chinese *danwei* is an outcome of both the communist operation and the Chinese traditional ways of social organizations. It is the Chinese compromise to the strictly monopolized state organization in modern times. This last point is beyond the scope of this paper and hence, will not be discussed here.

definitions of the community in sociological researches. Those 94 ideas involved at least 16 different conceptual elements (Hillery 1955, 111-123). Hillery found that the community definitions dealt with two types of communities: a) Generic community, a community in a general sense; and b) rural community, a particular type of its kind. The following table summarizes his findings.

Figure I

A Classification of Definitions of Community

Distinguishing ideas or elements in the definition*	Number of Definitions
I. Generic Community	
A. Social interaction	
1. Geographic area	
a. Self-sufficiency	8
b. Common life	9
(1) Kinship	2
c. Consciousness of kind	7
d. Possession of common ends, norms, means	20
e. Collection of institutions	2
f. Locality group	5
g. Individuality	2
2. Presence of some common characteristic, Other than area	
a. Self-sufficiency	1
b. Common life	3
c. Consciousness of kind	5
d. Possession of common ends, norms, means	5
3. Social system	1
4. Individuality	3
5. Totality of attitudes	1
6. Process	2
B. Ecological Relationships	3
II. Rural Community	
A. Social interaction	
1. Geographic area	
a. Self-sufficiency	1
b. Common life	3
c. Consciousness of kind	3
d. Possession of common ends, norms, means	3
e. Locality group	5
Total definition	94

* Description of the definitions' content are to be read by combining all categories specific under each roman numeral. Thus, MacIver and Page's definition contains the following ideas: generic community, social interaction, geographic area, and common life. Cooley's definition contains the ideas of generic community, social interaction, and the presence of some common characteristic other than area - namely, consciousness of kind.

Source: George A. Hillery, Jr., "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement," Rural Sociology, 20, 1955: 111-123.

Even though the table demonstrates a wide range of ideas which rest upon no consensus except "the fact that community involves people" (Hillery 1955, 111), Hillery noted that three elements became more prominent than others, namely, social interaction, common ties and geographic locality. Thus he assumed that there was at least a basically agreed definition that "community consists of people in social interaction within a geographic area with one or more additional common ties" (Hillery 1955, 111-123).

Perspectives and definitions

The multiplicity of community notions is a result of diverse approaches sociologists adapt to the study of the community. As Satadal Dasgupta puts it: "The way each group of sociologists views the community is reflected in the way they define it"(Dasgupta 1996, 7). There are some fundamentally different perspectives in the sociological study of the community, each has its own particular focus and thus contributes to a specific set of community definitions. Dasgupta categorizes them as the ecological approach, the ethnographic approach, the social system[15] and the typological perspective. Each one is

[15] Besides the four perspectives listed above, there is also a conflict approach in Dasgupta's classification. However, I exclude it from the list due to the fact that the conflict theory holds a similar view as the social system approach in terms of community definition. Both perspectives agree on the basic concept of the community as a social

derived from a particular set of concepts defining the community.

The ecological perspective, according to Dasgupta, focuses on the spatial or territorial consequences of the community as a social and spatial entity. Conceptualizing the community as a human aggregate in a spatial unit, it is primarily concerned with the relations between the territorial dimension of the community and its structural and institutional aspects (Dasgupta 1996, 8).

The ethnographic perspective involves a "thick description" of a local society which is viewed as "a way of life" (Sanders 1966, 16) or "shared institutions and values" (Warren 1963, 32). One of the major goals is to identify the interrelationships of social and cultural aspects of the community (Dasgupta 1996, 26). Such approach is based on the notion that the community constitutes "a total pattern of living, involving the comprehensive organization of behaviour on the locality basis" (Warren 1963, 32).

The social system approach sees the community as a social structure which is composed of a variety of subsystems and social groups. The system is maintained through the socialization of individual actors who occupy the social positions and play appropriate roles ascribed to them by the system (Dasgupta 1996, 37-39).

The community as such is made up of five factors: territory, population, culture,

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system. They only differ in visualizing how this system functions to maintain a balanced state. Social system analysis emphasizes the equilibrium aspect of the community as a social system. It argues that the system can maintain internal balance or equilibrium by optimal functioning of interactive units and subsystems. In contrast, the conflict theory maintains that the social system is characterized by conflicts which often originate from within the system and play an important role in transforming the system into a more effective social structure (Dasgupta 1996, 52).

personality and time, according to Irwin Sanders (1966, 25-53). The geographical territory in which a community is set in has a settlement arrangement for common facilities and services. The population covers all stages of the life cycle. Thus, the community is rich in culture -- which means norms, beliefs and the value system etc. -- due to the contribution of its members who also contribute personality variables to the rich life of community socialization. Finally, the whole process of community life is set in a time frame. Time which determines the past, influences the present and signifies the future, sets a sequence of actions taking place within a community (Dasgupta 1996, 39).

The most classical and fundamental concept on the community is the typological approach. This perspective defines the social organization in relation to each other and in a progressive time frame. The community is conceived as a type of social entity which organizes human relations in a way different from the rational modern organization. Resting upon the long tradition of using "ideal types" to evaluate social entities antithetically, this approach offers more conceptual models in distinguishing fundamental differences of social organizations rather than generalizations based on empirical studies (Dasgupta 1996, 68). The antithetical attributes of each society are only "ideal" in the sense that they are the theoretical constructs of society in a purely conceptualized condition.

Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

Ferdinand Tönnies' antithesis of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft is the first typological attempt to identify essential qualities of societies. In his 1887 masterpiece Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, he constructs two types of social entities: Gemeinschaft

(community as the accepted translation) and Gesellschaft (translated as "society" or "association."). The former stands for a social organization operated on "natural will," an organic group bonded by the kinship and friendship and common locality. And the latter is the one based on "rational will," a mechanical structure kept together by contractual relations (Tönnies 1957).

In the Gemeinschaft type of society, social relations are based on understanding, unity and emotional attachment. There are clear codes and norms guiding people's behaviour. Members identify strongly with the group. The culture thus is homogeneous in the sense that codes and values become internalized and all-encompassing. Social control is informal and carried on more often through daily practice of customs, rituals and group socializations (Dasgupta 1996, 69).

Gesellschaft, on the contrary, is characterized by the dominance of the rational will, which focuses on deliberate calculation of means and ends. Social interaction is performed based on rationality, formality and goal-specificity. Individual members do not need to have a personal attachment to each other beyond the formal contracts that bond them together for the purpose of pursuing individual self-interests (Dasgupta 1996, 69-70).

Tönnies' pair of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft has inspired many sociologists to develop their own typological constructs in describing different societies. Emile Durkheim uses the types of "mechanical and organic solidarity" to conceptualize the differences between societies in pre-industrial and modern times. Along the same line, there is also Charles Cooley's theory of "primary and secondary groups," Howard Becker's "sacred and secular societies" and Fei Hsiao-tung's "differential modes of association." All attempt to

map out the fundamental disparities between the non-industrial society and the industrial one. These types provide some theoretical framework for constructing the concept of the community, however, as Dasgupta points out:

> The conceptual types are assumed to serve as theoretical yardsticks to classify real communities or societies as resembling one type or the other. But empirical entities show a wide range of variation in their degree of conformity to one conceptual type or the other. No two communities or societies in real life show as sharp and abrupt discontinuity to be classified as Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft and sacred or secular. (Dasgupta 1996, 74)

In my study of the Chinese social entity - *danwei*, I have found that none of the above mentioned definitions and perspectives adequately explain the nature of this Chinese type of social organization. The Chinese "*danweis*," particularly those with spatial territory to house their employees, although having both locality and societal attributes of the community, are above all modern organizations. They assume a wide range of activities including industrial, agricultural, academic, professional or administrative ventures. Therefore, the usual classifications in relation to community theories of "rural" or "urban,""non-industrial" or "industrial,""sacred" or "secular" do not really apply to the Chinese case. In addition, the Chinese *danwei* is never an isolated system of social interactions as a community is supposed to be. It is closely attached to the state structure of organizations.

To adequately address the concept of Chinese *danwei*, community theories alone are not adequate in and of themselves. In this regard, another conceptual framework relevant to social organizations, namely the organization theory, needs to be examined.

Concepts of the Organization

In organization theories, the term "organization" usually refers to a type of collectivity which has become a prevalent form of social organization in modern industrial societies (Parsons 1970, 75). Familiar examples include government departments, the business corporation, the political party, the labour union, the hospital and the school. It is a system which is oriented towards the primacy of attaining a specific goal and turning out "an identifiable something which can be utilized in some way by another system" (Parsons 1970, 75).

The organization also means a type of social entity to which the term "bureaucracy" is often applied. It is thus understandable that modern studies of organization usually credit Max Weber as its founding father. Organization theories are basically derived from Weber's concept of "bureaucracy."

Weber argued that the capitalist market economy placed an increasing demand on the efficiency of administration. As an organization expanded and its responsibilities grew more complicated, a bureaucracy became a necessity. Bureaucratization offered the means to effectively carry out our organizational tasks (Weber 1958, 228). A bureaucracy is the administrative apparatus in an organization. It enjoys a high degree of specialization in its tasks and personnel skills. Its positions are organized in an hierarchical structure with clear lines of authority. Impersonal detachment is the behaviour code in the performance of duties (Blau 1970, 183).

Viewing the organization as a system, organizational analysts are primarily concerned with: 1) the individual in his/her specific role in the organization; 2) the social relations

among members of the organization; and 3) interrelated factors that structure the organization as a complete system (Blau 1970, 177).

It is worth noting that a typical organization does not apply to the type of social entity that is normally characterized as the community. Although being a collective of social relations, a kinship group or a locality-based community, it is not considered as an organization in the present sense of the organization framework (Parsons 1970, 75).

The distinction between the community and the organization, according to Hillery, is that the organization has one or more specific goals it seeks to attain (Hillery 1968, 147).[16] The community, on the other hand, is not formed out of the orientation to achieve specific goals. It is simply

> a system of institutions formed by people who live together. ... The reasons for living together are often no more than that of being born in the locality. (Hillery 186)

The disparities, I believe, between the generally accepted definitions of the community and the organization as organized entities of social interaction are far more extensive than the single reason of goal attainment.

First, the community is generally understood as a holistic society while activities in the organization are very specialized. The specialization of activities is never a necessary requirement for being the community, although some communities may concentrate on

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[16] The term "specific goal" was first articulated by Talcott Parsons in his article "Social System". A specific goal should have at least the following three characteristics: 1) the product of the goal is identifiable, such as automobiles, academic degrees, etc.; 2) the product can be used by another system - that is, the output of one system is an input for another system; and 3) the output is amenable to a contract, it can be bought and sold. (Parsons 1970, 75-76)

certain trades. On the contrary, the organization is always formed on the concept of specialization and division of labour.

Secondly, the social relationships in the community are characterized primarily as personal attachment - blood ties, friendship or brotherhood, whereas the organization requires the impersonal detachment from its members to perform duties. The social interaction in the organization is more of a rational choice of interdependence on one another to achieve individual goals rather than a genuine emotional attachment out of love, respect and friendship.

Thirdly, the community provides "a way of life" for its members. In contrast, the organization offers a career. A community member can possibly satisfy all his/her needs by living within the community. However, the organization can satisfy part of the needs of its members whose other needs have to be met outside of the organization.

The community, finally, is believed to be one of the basic groups of human relations which came into being at the dawn of human civilization as early human beings got together struggling for survival. As such, it can be characterized as a permanent form of social interaction. In contrast, the organization does not enjoy such a long history. It came into being only after humankind entered the so-called modern age of industrialization. Thus, it is an outcome of the advance of market economy and the industrial revolution. The existence of the organization depends largely on the social and economic circumstances of society as a whole. As a result, it is a temporary form of human interaction.

Idiosyncratic Nature of the Chinese *Danwei*

Applying the above-mentioned theoretical constructs to the study of the Chinese *danwei*, I consider that the *danwei* is a peculiar type of social organization. It does not fit into the single category of either the community or the organization. In fact, it is more of a hybrid of the two. Its most accurate term should be the "communal organization" or "organizational community." Simply put, the Chinese *danwei* is a modern Chinese organization with many community characteristics. It is a "community transfigured by its subordination to a complex and modernizing public order" (Womack 1991, 314).

The *danwei* is an organization in the sense that its creation is based on the concept of bureaucracy. Group activities are defined by an ordered system of super-subordination. Each Chinese *danwei*, be it a government department, business firm, university, or hospital, is considered as a unit in the huge state bureaucracy. Each has its specific place within the state organizational structure, which defines not only its rank in the state hierarchy, but also its direct superior organizations and subordinate organizations.

In addition, the organizational characteristic of the *danwei* resulted from the fact that the Chinese *danwei* is constructed according to the modern knowledge of specification of tasks, division of labour and modern disciplines of the sciences. Each of them has specific goals to attain. For example, a shoe factory *danwei* is specialized in making shoes. A government tax bureau is responsible for collecting taxes. A university is engaged in similar activities assumed by universities in the West. It is important to note that although the Chinese *danwei* assumes specialized tasks, its scope of activities is much more diverse than a typical Western organization would normally encompass. I will elaborate on this further

on in this paper.

Beyond the above-mentioned two points, the Chinese *danwei* has little in common with the type of collectivity understood as the "organization" in Western organization theories. It has a number of attributes which distinguish it from the standard Western organization.

1. The Chinese *danwei* is not specialized in a single task. It is a multi-task social collectivity. It is difficult to classify a Chinese *danwei* into the categories of activities commonly known in the West. For example, a Chinese shoe factory is not only a business firm, or an economic organization. In addition to its major job of manufacturing shoes, it also assumes many other tasks, such as politics, justice, media, labour union, health care, social welfare and even entertainment. It has a party branch to promote the Communist Party's initiatives and to ensure the political correctness of workers in the factory. It also takes on some judiciary responsibilities in mediating civil disputes involving its workers. The factory's media task involves a factory press and wired broadcasting outlet. It also runs a factory clinic, a cafeteria, a daycare centre and a library to provide all those non-economic services to its employees. Occasionally, it organizes movie shows or travel trips for the workers. Besides shoe making, it may engage in other commercial businesses - running a store or a restaurant open to the public. In Western society, all these tasks would be assumed by a variety of organizations, e.g. the political party, the church, the court, the police, the hospital, the catering company, the travel agency and so on. However in China, part of those responsibilities would be delegated to a *danwei*.

2. Unlike the Western organization whose primacy is to attain a "specific goal" and

produce "identifiable" things, the Chinese *danwei* does not have a single "specific goal." The most prominent example is that Chinese business *danwei*, the enterprise in Western terminology, is not oriented to achieving ultimate "profits." The goals that concern the Chinese *danwei* are more than just producing some "identifiable output." Besides achieving some material goal, a *danwei* has to take into consideration whether it maintains a good image in the eyes of the superior organizations. To achieve that, a *danwei* has to calculate the means that would ensure it follows the correct policy line. Consequently, objectives of the *danwei* would continue to increase far beyond the economic dimension.

3. The relationship between employees and the employer in the Chinese *danwei* cannot be considered as a typical contractual relation which involves the exchange of commodities from their respective owners who have agreed upon the exchanged values. Following the communist tradition of public ownership, the Chinese government has abolished private ownership in all its *danweis*. The Chinese *danwei* is not owned by its leaders; it is either state-owned or collectively owned. In theory, all the members in the *danwei* are ascribed an equal status in relation to the ownership of the *danwei*, although in practice, *danwei* leaders are most likely to have a greater access to *danwei*'s resources. In such a structure, *danwei* leaders do not have as much absolute authority over the subordinates as an owner of a Western private firm would have over his/her employees.

4. The Chinese *danwei* has a larger room for social interaction based on personal relationships than the Western-style organization would permit. "Organized particularism" or "patron-client network" is the basic behavioural norm in the Chinese *danwei* despite painstaking government efforts to introduce an impartial work ethic (Walder 1986). *Danwei*

members actively seek a high degree of personal interaction because they are motivated to network a friendship relation in the *danwei* in order to attain personal benefits. The Chinese enthusiasm for networking is deeply rooted in the Chinese cultural tradition of social organization.[17]

5. The Chinese *danwei* enjoys a greater continuity in its members along the generation line than the ordinary Western organization does. Although in theory the membership of a *danwei* is uninheritable, younger generations usually enjoy the privilege of being recruited by the same *danwei* in which their parents or grand-parents work (Francis 1993).

The above-stated elements all contribute to the idiosyncratic nature of the Chinese *danwei*. It is something that combines part of the organization and part of the community in terms of their commonly understood definitions. Precisely speaking, it is a "communal organization" or "organizational community." The Chinese *danwei* community, a work unit with a residential compound for its employees, in comparison, has a stronger communal nature in the sense that the *danwei* members share a common living space beyond the common working space. Members are virtually working and living together.

Danwei: A strategic Locus in State-Society Parameters

Chinese *danwei*, first and foremost, is the work unit of the state. Originally

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[17] For an introduction to the Chinese culture of social relations, see Fei Hsiao-tung, From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). For a detailed account of Chinese networking practices, see Andrew Kipnis, Producing Guanxi. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997)

designated by the state to serve the interests of political and economical needs of the larger structure, the Chinese workplace constitutes blocks in the political edifice of the state through which the centralized authorities control and monitor the masses (Lü 1997, 21). However, in due course, the work unit has played an increasingly pivotal role in providing societal functions to its members, and consequently turned into a unique social organization best comparable to the traditional Chinese patriarchal family. As Xiaobo Lü and Elizabeth J. Perry put it:

> As in a traditional family, the *danwei* acts as a patriarch who disciplines and sanctions his children, while at the same time serving as a maternal provider of care and daily necessities. (Lü et al 1997, 8)[18]

The relation of the Chinese workplace community -- as basic level of organization of political, economic, social and cultural activities -- to the larger paradigms of the state and society has been the focus of a series of studies in the West. These studies involved a complex of contradictory notions, arguments and theories whose validities were constantly challenged by emerging new facets of the Chinese workplace presented by later studies. Yet, the scholarship throughout the years has presented increasingly sophisticated interpretations of the communal work unit.

One of the influential concepts on the Chinese industrial units in the early 1980s was Andrew Walder's theory of neocommunist traditionalism. He presented the workplace as the cellular unit thoroughly penetrated and dominated by the authority of the Party-state. Workers at the lowest level were totally dependent on their *danwei* for a variety of needs,

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[18] Also see Lowell Dittmer and Xiaobo Lü, "Personal Politics in the Chinese Danwei Under Reform," Asian Survey (March 1996).

including remunerative benefits, political promotions, social services, housing, and other resources. This dependent position was further reinforced by the *danwei* leadership's exercises of power through its control of communal goods in building a network of cliental relations. The dominance of the vertical "particularism" made it almost impossible for workers to organize collective solidarity against management. The *danwei* organization perpetuated an institutionalized dependence of individuals on the state (Walder 1986).

The analysis by Mayfair Yang in 1989 on printing shops in Beijing reinforced Walder's notion of workers' dependency on the enterprise unit. However she argued that this dependency during the Dengist reform era encouraged the moves at the basic level to gain more benefits for the work unit rather than serving the interests of the state. The interests of the state and that of the corporate group did not always coincide. There were intensified internal tensions between the state and the enterprise.

Corinna-Barbara Francis' thesis on roles of workplace leaders in 1993 further contested the dependency theory by introducing the workplace leaders as the third party in the traditional state-society dichotomy. She presented a picture of the *danwei* as a strategic position with workplace leadership being a key force mediating state-society relations. The *danwei* leaders were portrayed as an independent set of actors who occupied a distinct sphere of authority and interests in interacting with the state and societal forces.

My study of the *danwei* media departs from the above views of the *danwei* either as a complete vehicle of control for the state, or a third force of independent interest groups. Rather it sees the *danwei* as a communal space where various interests of the state, *danwei* and individual persons meet. Following Womack's concept of the "transfigured community,"

I position the *danwei* as an intermediate institution between the state and individual citizens in Chinese cities. The urban individuals are not directly exposed to the centralized authorities of the state; they are organized into the state system by first being integrated into the *danwei*, which is both localistic and the representation of the state power. On one hand, the work unit is a centrally structured entity of political, economic and social activities at the basic level, which is subordinate to the command and the principle of the centralized authorities. On the other hand, it also presents a self-sufficient community with relatively autonomous room for maneuvering and interactions among work unit members and leaders to pursue their own interests and agendas.

Womack believed that there was a tension between the centralized structure in which the *danwei* was designed as a "cellular " unit to serve the central purposes, and the content of the work unit in which behaviour norms were dominated not by state rules, but by particularist relationships among almost lifetime, immobile members. "The work unit as an abstract set of rules cannot be separated from the work unit as a concrete set of people, and the question of what can or cannot be done cannot be separated in reality from the facts of who is doing it to whom" (Womack 1991, 325). The workplace community demonstrated three distinguishing features: principled particularism, consensus politics and strong relationships.

In the past two decades, the power of the centralized state has gradually been reduced due to the Dengist reform. There has been a considerable reconfiguration of local spaces in Chinese society as a whole. While a great deal of enterprise *danweis* were transformed into profit-driven firms and left to the mercy of market forces, many other *danweis*, specifically

those large *danweis* -- which usually enjoyed a privileged position in access to the political, economic and human resources -- thrived under the reform policies. In urban centres, people nowadays talk about the so-called "one family two system" model,[19] which referred to the desired job arrangement in a two-worker urban family. The most preferable option in a family is to have one person working in a capitalist firm and the other working for a socialist *danwei* so that the family could take advantage of two systems -- making more money offered by a free economy while being able to enjoy the security and welfare benefits provided by the *danwei*. It is ironic that the *danweis* have become increasingly treasured by urban Chinese while the central state is trying to replace them with capitalist corporations.

What interests me most in this thesis is the *danwei* as a strategic place in facilitating the propaganda function of the centralized system and in negotiating a space in the state-centric structure of mass communication. I am essentially concerned with the function of the *danwei* in the production and transmission of meanings, symbols, information and entertainment in regard to the larger system of the centralized propaganda. The following chapters will explore this issue in a more detailed fashion.

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[19] The phrase echoes the government slogan of "one country two system" referring to the new Hong Kong status after the 1997 turnover.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTS OF COMMUNITY MEDIA

Community media in an ideal form are defined as communication media used by the community and for the community (Berrigan 1979). In the North American context, community media are usually understood as community access media -- media programming especially designed for particular segments of people who are classified as communities by either geographical locality, ethnic origins, cultural backgrounds or sexual orientations.

Community media include various types of media technology: press, audio cassettes, videos, local radio stations, local television, films and photography (Berrigan 1979; Nigg et al 1980). In a broad sense, any medium can be considered as a community medium as long as it is used for community purposes, such as community access cable television in North America. However, more radical views are established on the belief that community control and management of media themselves hold the key to the real meaning of community media (Berrigan 1979). They are not only the media to which community members have access to information, education and entertainment, but also the media in which community members participate as planners, producers and performers. "They are the means of expression of the community, rather than for the community" (Berrigan 1979, 8).

The philosophy of community media is based on the democratic principle of access and participation. This ideal visualizes that every individual citizen has a right to access information and knowledge and to participate in the decision-making process concerning his/her own interests (Berrigan et al 1977; Berrigan 1979; Tichenor et al 1980; White et al

1994). Under this principle, community media are seen as one of the important venues for individuals and local communities to express themselves and to take part in the communication processes in general. As such, everyone's voice, particularly of those who have traditionally been left out by the centralized communication system, can be aired, heard from and attract the attention of a larger audience. By participating in the communication process, everyone contributes to the public discussion and public decision-making.

Community media started surfacing in Western and international discussions of mass communication in the 1970s. The pioneer case of the use of mass media for community purposes was credited to the Challenge for Change project sponsored by the National Film Board of Canada. Set up in 1967 as part of the government fight against poverty, the project aimed at providing the disenfranchised and marginal communities of Canada a public space by giving them access to the media, e.g. film, later super 8, video and cable television (Berrigan 1977; Mitchell 1974; Marchessault 1995). One of its most documented programmes is the Fogo Island experiment in 1970.[20] Critics believe that the Challenge for Change gave rise to the interest in the use of media, particularly cable programming, for community purposes (Berrigan 1977, 88).

Community uses of media are advocated as a solution to some fundamental problems rooted in the political and mass media institutions of the West, namely, the centralization of political power and the centralization of mass communication. First, critics note that present

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[20] It is worth noting that the Challenge for Change was not a community initiated project. In fact, it was a centrally-coordinated project sponsored by the Canadian federal government. From a critical point of view, this project seemed to be another example of centralized initiatives to promote some government agenda.

day democracies operate remotely from the community (Berrigan 1979, 8). Unlike the ancient Athenian model of "open debate" democracy, government today is carried out by representatives. This system of representative democracy prevents the community and individuals from taking part in the daily practice of the government decision-making process. It is the centralized government, delegated by the elected parliaments, which makes virtually all the decisions.

In addition, with the advent of television, the process of operating and disseminating information and knowledge has become highly centralized. A small number of TV networks plus a few print media giants have become dominant in mass communication. Access to these media, specifically to their production, dissemination process and their editorial management becomes virtually impossible for ordinary people and local communities.

Furthermore, the mass media bureaucracy operates on the ethics of professionalism. Media workers are career professionals. They are responsible for producing and delivering messages professionally to mass audiences. In such a process, the division of the sender and the receiver becomes permanent. The audience is in a passive position to receive the message and has little or no control of how the message is produced. Communication as such becomes "vertical"(or from "top down") and a "one-way flow."

Community media are taken as a formula to remedy these institutional deficiencies by introducing community participation into the communication process. They offer the community access not only to media equipment, communication training, but also to editorial management of community projects. They provide open resources whereby media productions are generated by project workers responding to community needs (Nigg et al

1980, 264). Sequentially, a new way of exchanging views and information is described. It is not merely a transmission from one centralized source to a mass audience, but a participatory model of "horizontal" communication whereby every member of the community takes part in one way or another and mutually shares information and knowledge (Berrigan 1979, 13-15).

In addition to issues primarily concerning Western democratic society, community media are also advocated as a new vision in development and communication in developing countries. Studies are mainly concerned with how to make remote rural communities have more access to information and development knowledge. Community uses of media are viewed as ways to decentralize the national development programming, to have communities at the periphery participate more in these programmes, and consequently to effect development changes in these communities (Berrigan 1979).

Discussions on the roles of community media focus on the following aspects:

Politics: Community media are first and foremost a political weapon for political manoeuvres of the community in society as a whole and inside of community power politics.

a) Vehicle to express dissent: community media provide venues for disenfranchised and marginal communities (or groups within a community) which have usually been ignored by mainstream media to express their discontent and criticism;

b) Mobilizing agent: community media can bring to attention community issues, community perspectives and community awareness. Thus, they can mobilize political activities by advocating particular causes (Nigg 1980);

c) Mediator or agitator in community conflicts: the function of community media in

community conflicts can be twofold - it can lead either to reducing the tension or increasing the intensity of confrontation within the community (Tichenor et al 1980).

Information: Community media offer local channels of information circulation. They provide the community with access to information on the community and concerning the community.

Cultural: By concentrating on community-based programming, community media stimulate group or community awareness and thus contribute to the building-up of minority group or community identity (Nigg 1980).

Education: Community media are a tool to conduct education in the community.

Economic: Community media also have an economic function. Popular community programming can help attract viewers, thus bring in more revenue for those who control the media (Nigg 1980).

Communication: Community media decentralize the communication process, reestablish the communicative relationship between programme producers and viewers and introduce some amateurish flavour to the otherwise professional media productions.

Community Cable Television

Community cable television (also referred to as community television) is a specific type of community media which distinguishes itself from other community media by offering audio-visual technology for community purposes. It is a direct outcome of the development of cable television.

The United States introduced its earliest cable television systems in 1950 as a way

to improve television reception in isolated communities in the mountains of Pennsylvania which had suffered from poor distribution of signals (Roman 1983, 2). As of May 1982, it was estimated that US cable television penetration reached 33.4% with a total of over 27 million households. (Roman 1983, 10).

Cable television developed more rapidly in Canada due to its geographical size and sparsely scattered rural communities. Cable was considered the technology that could provide optimum quality signals at reasonable cost (Roman 1983, 152). In addition, the Canadian demand for cable was also prompted by the interest in having "more American channels" (Communication and Information Services Division 1974, 8). As of 1981, 56 percent of Canadian television households are connected to cable (Roman 1983, 152).

The former communist countries in Central Europe witnessed another style of cable development. Multichannel cable television networks carrying a variety of domestic and foreign programming grew almost overnight in countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Fenton 1994, 1). This explosive growth was due largely to the master television antenna systems that communist authorities mandated for apartment buildings in communist regimes (Fenton 1994, 1). These antenna systems were readily adaptable to satellite and local programming feeds once government controls were relaxed (Fenton 1994, 1). Communist cable operators quickly became commercial operators by delivering uncensored Western satellite programmes to their subscribers who had long been restricted from seeing them (Fenton 1994, 1-9).

It is evident that the development of cable television in every case entailed its own distinctiveness. It was an outcome of specific needs, specific media structures and specific

technology available in each individual country. Generally speaking, cable television in the United States was a solution for the improvement of the quality of television signals. In Canada, the demand for variety in the form of US television had formed the basis for the rapid growth of cable television in the country. (Communication and Information Services Division 1974, 8). In Central European countries, cable television was more a popular rebellion against the programming monopoly of former communist authorities.

Community-cable television in North America, strictly speaking, means community channels whose programming is produced by non-profit community groups and delivered via cable to the local audience by commercial cable companies (Goldberg 1990, 11). In order to obtain an operating license, a commercial cable company is required to devote one or two channels to programmes made by local groups in its constituency. There are nearly 300 community access cable TV stations in Canada which collectively air thousands of hours of Canadian programming each week (Goldberg 1990, 3). This community-cable system represents a particular junction of the Western media structure which has been a contestation site of the commercial domination, the ideological tradition of democratic liberalism and the continuing intervention of the state in balancing the reality and the ideals. It is not surprising that there are no counterparts of the Chinese style community-cable stations in North America.

Theories concerning cable television in North America, particularly community cable television, encompass the following arguments:

1. Cable television vs. television: cable television is seen as an alternative medium to the highly controlled, commercially financed and entertainment-oriented television

broadcasting (Gillespie 1975; Hollins 1984; Oringel 1987). Cable permits more channels and grants viewers a greater degree of control over reception (Hollins 1984, 10). It is a more responsive and two-way interactive medium (Hollins 1984, 11; Pool 1973, 5-6). It is narrowcasting vs. TV's broadcasting.

2. Community cable vs. the domination of existing mass communication system. The existing mass media system is seen as unsatisfactory. "It is impersonal, overly uniform ..., and unrewarding to individuality" (Pool 1973, 5-6). This system also restricts the access and limits the space for alternative discourses. It cannot adequately serve the needs of communication among the broad spectrum of individuals and special-interest groups in society (Wurtzel 1975, 15). Community cable is viewed as an important vehicle to regain the power at the community level (Tate 1973, 54).

The significant prospects of community cable in this regard include the decentralization of the sources of information production, the possible democratising effects of more access to the media and the creation of new means of community discourse (Gillespie 1975, v-1). Community access to the media through cable television would specifically "restore to the television screen some qualities that have nearly been refined out of it: spontaneity, originality; controversy; realism; even attractive amateurishness" (Carpenter-Huffman 1974, 3).

The belief in community cable, furthermore, springs from an idealistic view of community spirit and activism. Advocates see the locally accessed cable as a vehicle of communication for a truly participatory social entity bonded by common identity, mutual respect and community unity. Community cable could spark a revival of this local activism

and community spirit by becoming a neighbourhood venue of communication, and thus broaden opportunities for building political participation in the grass-roots (Doty 1975, 33).

However, many critics, even from the very beginning, questioned the real utilization of community-access cable TV to society at large. The content of programming was seen as amateurish, unattractive (Doty 1975), and even "indecent" in some cases (Wurtzel 1975). The audience was estimated to be very small and with a casual attitude (Bretz 1975). There might be more staff and voluntary journalists working for public-access cable than the actual viewing audience (Bretz 1975).

Even community cable advocates began to recognize the over-optimistic tone in regard to community cable more than a decade later. An interesting study by Kim Goldberg indicates that unlike other alternative media such as community press and campus radio which play a role in liberating the public from indoctrination and in contributing to social change, community cable, to a large extent, has not fulfilled the role of alternative media (Goldberg 1990, 107). Goldberg claims that the control over the community access channel has gradually slipped out of the hands of the community and into the hands of the cable industry. At the same time, she monitors a parallel trend of the increasingly conventional look and function of the community channel. (Goldberg 1990, 96).

Goldberg sees the obstacle between the dream of the community access channel and its realization as a result of government policy that leaves sponsorship of the community cable channel in the hands of the private television industry (Goldberg 1990, 10). She may point to an interesting direction. However, her criticism lacks both quantitative and qualitative analysis to be considered reliable academic work.

The relevance of these theoretical models of community media and community cable to my thesis of Chinese community cable is limited in the sense that these models are developed from the Western experience. First, all models are constructed in light of the Western ideal of participatory democracy which has little influence in the establishment of mass communication in communist China, and even less so in the development of community cable. Second, the community itself as expressed in these models is different from the one to be examined in my study. The Chinese community in my thesis represents a particular type of social organization which exists only in communist China. Third, few models consider community media, specifically community television, as a media organization itself, since most community media in the West are programme-based rather than organization-based. They involve the collective use of media rather than media collectivities themselves. By contrast, community television in China is a solid organization structured within the state organizational establishment. In sum, the Chinese media system has evolved in a political and cultural milieu that is completely different from that of the West. As such, it requires a separate frame of analysis which should encompass particular characteristics in regard to the Chinese development of community cable television.

Even though Western models in general are limited as a reference point to my analysis, their concept of roles of community media may serve as a starting point to the understanding of community television in Chinese society. In addition, the following notions of relations of community media to community and mainstream media are also important in structuring the place of community television in regard to the state media system in China.

- Community media constitute a supplementary part to mass communication in society.

They offer alternatives to the mainstream media;

- Community media are based on community resources and used for community purposes;
- Community media provide channels for non-professionals to participate in the production and distribution of information and knowledge.

CHAPTER IV

DANWEI MEDIA AND THE STATE MASS COMMUNICATION

Chinese local communities occupy a strategic position in the communist establishment and organization of mass media and mass persuasion. The knowledge of the place of the community media and the role they play in the Chinese media system holds the keys to the understanding of the media persuasion in communist China and the changing structure of the Chinese media in the past 17 years. However, few studies in the West evaluate the Chinese development of mass media from the perspective of community media, or more exactly, *danwei* media. This obvious lack of interest in the role of *danwei* media in the Chinese system may lie in the Western unfamiliarity with the Chinese social/cultural structure of organization. The Chinese *danwei* to be studied in this thesis has no equivalent in the West. As a result, there are limited theories available in regard to this subject. However, some scholars in the West have recognized the importance of local groups and small groups in the Chinese mass media. Their interpretations serve as a starting point in my research. To construct my theory on the Chinese *danwei* media, I first define the *danwei* media as a specific terrain in the state media system. Second, I look at the existing theoretical framework of the Chinese media in general as reference to my thesis. Third, the argument and discussion of the "local groups/small groups" are closely examined. My own construction of the "*danwei* media" and their significance to the studies of the Chinese media comes in the final section.

The *"Danwei* Media"

None of the studies of the Chinese communist media in the West have provided solid theories on the "*danwei* media" besides the early hypothetical discussion of "local groups," "small groups" and "wired broadcasting networks" in the 1970s. One of the most innovative communication inventions of Chinese communists in their war against the Nationalists in the 1920s-1940s, the tradition of grass-roots communication and persuasion has been carried out in the form of "*danwei* media"in the People's Republic ever since the communists came to power. The "*danwei* media," although being a pervasive and persistent phenomenon in the Chinese state media and a constant subject for the Chinese propagandists and media scholars, have not been thoroughly studied in the West.

The "*danwei* media" refer to communication outlets of cable television, wired broadcasting and print media that are managed and operated by an organization at local or grass-roots level, "*danwei*" as it is usually known in Chinese. Responsible for relaying government messages to the internal audience of the organization, on the one hand, the "*danwei* media"are local or grass-roots extensions of the state media system. On the other hand, they are also the site where local resources and interests are interfaced with those of the state. Their dual functions of the state propaganda transmitter/persuader and the representatives of the local voices make them a vital place of control, contestation and negotiation in the Chinese media. Their position has become increasingly crucial to the state domination of media since Chinese society is gradually being decentralized and capitalized. The "*danwei* media" have successfully sustained the command of the state propaganda. They may also spell a cataclysmic disaster for the state monopoly. To a certain extent, they hold

the key to the projection of the potential directions the Chinese media may head for as a system in the years to come.

Because of their importance, they constitute an important subject for academic studies of the Chinese media.

Western Concepts of Chinese Media

The tradition of the Western understanding of Chinese media was built around the dominant "instrument" theory advanced by Wilbur Schramm which was based on the Soviet model. The theory considered that mass media in communist countries functioned as an instrument of the state authority, which was in contrast to the Western libertarian style of media being an independent agency of the state power. The communist media were used as a "mouthpiece" of the state propaganda and agitation (Schramm 1956, 121). Adapted from the Soviet system, the Chinese media were seen as being used exclusively by the state for the purpose of national integration and ideological monopoly (Markham 1967; Liu 1971).

Although few theorists argued against the viewpoint the Chinese media could be seen as an "instrument," they were widely divided in regard to the effectiveness of this "instrument." Simply speaking, the Western explanation of the Chinese media can be ranged along a spectrum, with the "powerful" model at one end and the "powerless" model at the other.

1. The "powerful media" model

The "powerful"tradition, which had been popular until the mid-1980s, placed an

enormous emphasis on the effective uses of mass media by communist China in promoting national integration and mobilizing the masses. The media were necessarily instrumental as a state apparatus in converting the traditionally apathetic masses into devoted revolutionaries and in dismantling the old fabric of society for the building of the communist state (Houn 1961; Yu 1964; Liu 1971; Chu 1977, 1978; Hsu et al 1979; Chu et al 1983; Chao 1985). Labelled as one of the world's most extensive and best organized communication systems, the Chinese media were said to be functional in four aspects: information, mass mobilization, power struggle and ideological monopoly (Chu et al 1979, 27-58). They brought Chinese masses into close contact with the central government to an extent that almost everyone was covered by the system. Characterized as pervasive and penetrating, this system was able to integrate all communication resources, such as oral, informal, casual, and traditional types of communication, into a centralized state apparatus of mass propaganda and indoctrination (Chu 1979, 40). Such a theory painted a picture of the Chinese media as an effective state machine which successfully monopolized information and indoctrinated the mind of the masses with communist ideology.

Although the "powerful" model provided some virtuous thoughts on the Chinese media system in Mao's era, its overestimation was obvious. It romanticized the rigid and repressive nature of Mao's media and failed to explain the mass resistance to the official media in the late Mao and post-Mao periods. Most of the theories in this range were highly hypothetical due to the fact that China was closed to the West and all scholars had to construct their knowledge based on second- or third-hand information and official documents of the Chinese government of the time. As such, the validity of these theories was

questionable. In the least, they needed to be tested in the field to justify the pertinence of these concepts in China.

2. The "powerless media" model

Since the late 1980s, studies on Chinese communication began exploring broader issues as more factual information about the Chinese media came out and contacts between Chinese and Western scholars increased. Dramatic changes that took place in the post-Mao-era Chinese media and society as a whole prompted many research papers and books. Some studies started questioning the old monolithic model by suggesting that the Chinese media were a site of elite struggle (Wu 1993; Lee 1994b), that censorship in the system was not codified, but institutionalized (Lee 1994b) or issue-specific (Zhang 1993), that there was an increased perspective divergence of regional media from the national media (Chang et al 1993) and that efforts for professionalism had introduced a considerable Western influence of journalism into Chinese media organizations and journalism educations (Polumbaum 1990, 1994). The overall discursive framework was set within what I would call the "powerless media" perspective (Lee 1990; Tan 1990; Hong 1991; Porter 1992; Jernow 1993; Yu 1994; Lee 1994). Setting the Western-style media as a normative model, this theoretical framework is critical of the state-controlled nature of media practice. The model constructs the mass media in China as a repressive state monopoly in contrast to a popular revolt from the mass audience. The pro-freedom rhetoric by Tiananmen demonstrators in 1989 provides the best example for the repertoire of the "powerless" arguments.

The "powerless" framework views the Chinese media as an authoritarian system (Lee

1994a, 13), which represses dissident opinions, exercises rigid control over information and represents only the interests of the state. By doing so, the system is morally and ideologically corrupt and commands no legitimacy over the population. Such a system has alienated itself from mass audiences. It has no supportive base among Chinese people. Audience resistance is pervasive and people are capable of reading the communist propaganda "between the lines" (Friedman 1994). As an ideological propaganda machine, it is bankrupt in its credits for ideological indoctrination. The survival of the system depends completely on the coercive state authority which supports and controls it. Under such a system, people including ordinary readers, journalists, media organizations and even reformist officials are struggling all the time with the state media.

There are two great shifts from the early "powerful" model to the current "powerless" perspective. First, the latter rejects completely the "effective" attribute of the Chinese media suggested by the "powerful model" theorists. Due to the closed nature of communist China between the 1950s and 1970s, first-hand information on the Chinese situation was largely unavailable to Western scholars who had to rely heavily on official media sources from China, such as newspaper articles and government documents. The "effectiveness" of the system was, to a large extent, an image cultivated and maintained by the Chinese official media. It is understandable that many theorists of the time were unconsciously misled by such communist information. It was not until the early 1980s when China started taking on the course of economic reform and open-policy that scholars from outside the country began to see a more complete and concrete picture of China and Chinese media.

The Chinese system was no more "powerful" than any of the centrally controlled

media. Many examples demonstrated by the "powerless media" studies indicate that people's resistance to the media monopoly and official ideology always existed in China and even within the ruling party. It became widespread in the late years of Mao's era and after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989. The power of a media monopoly over information and knowledge could never last long if such a monopoly advocates something that goes contradictory to people's experience of their environment.

Second, the "powerless" model does not recognize any participatory elements in the Chinese media system. Unlike the "powerful media" theory which elaborates substantially on the massive nature of the Chinese media, the "powerless" approach pays no attention to the populistic base of Chinese media, particularly Chinese television. Those theorists who usually have a strong belief in the Western-style media just don't see the point that a media system infamous for expressing a unified viewpoint like the Chinese one would entail any elements of mass participation.[21]

The problem with the "powerless" model lies in its theoretical discontinuity from the previous model. It abandons almost completely the "powerful" model without thoroughly

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[21] It is worth noting that the aforementioned two dominant models about the Chinese media reflect more the rise and fall of American enthusiasm towards Red China than China itself. These studies have "more to do with what is happening in the United States than it does with what is happening in China" (Farmer 1990, 250). The idealistic view of the Chinese media as an "effective" instrument became known in the mid 1970s and early 1980s when Americans were indulged in a romantic view of communist China after Nixon normalized the relation with Beijing in 1971. The critical views became dominant in the Chinese media studies in the early 1990s following the collapse of the American confidence in reformed China due to the Tiananmen massacre in the spring of 1989.

reviewing their claims and proving why they are not worth being credited. There is an obvious lack of perspective pointing to the connections between the media system in two consecutive periods of Mao's era and the reform period. How is it that a media system with proven evidence of encompassing power in Mao's time failed to indoctrinate the masses in the reform period? What happens to the old "powerful" instrument which has become much less useful in ideological indoctrination in the reform era? In other words, what are the connections between the rigid and absolute media in Mao's China which is portrayed primarily by the "powerful media" theory and the more complex media in modern times? What has changed and remained unchanged in the Chinese media system in relation to media functions and influence in the last 17 years?

I do not think the "powerless" approach provides an adequate conceptual framework to analyse the complex nature of the Chinese media development in the reform period. First, it permits no recognition of the relevance of the Chinese experience in media development. It considers the Western-style media as a normative model, and the state media monopoly as deviant or unacceptable. Therefore it is valid and logical to replace the "state instrument" with an independent and autonomous media institution. This perspective rejects the historical validity of the Chinese media development and fails to see that the media system in any country is essentially a historically defined situation.

Second, the "powerless" theory holds a simplistic view of the state propaganda system. It sees the state mass media as a mere message transmitting channel where the state and the party dominate. It does not realize that the mass media are also a participatory system. The bottom line for any propaganda medium is that it has to be able to attract some

audience. As such, no mass media system can afford the absolute propaganda that appeals to nobody. Consequently, the state media cannot be simply formulated as an antithetic model of the state propaganda against the popular revolt of the masses.

Third, the "powerless" approach fails to visualize that there may occur some positive changes within the Chinese media system which may not necessarily be the Western model. Based on the theoretical tradition of "four theories of press," these theorists see "a qualitative difference" between the Western liberalist media which attempt at an ideological function by manufacturing consent and the Chinese communist media which impose totalistic ideological control over society (Lee 1994a, 5-6). Thus, they tend to construct changes that have taken place in the Chinese media in the reform era within the liberal vocabulary of media independence, autonomy, objectivity and press freedom. By defining the changes in the China media merely as shifting practice from the totalitarian model towards a more liberal and Western-style media, the "powerless" approach sets a limit to the understanding of the changing nature of the Chinese media in broader and more appropriate terms. It may create a blind spot in our academic visualization which leads to ignorance of some important changes in the Chinese system that cannot be defined by traditional liberal terminology. The development of community-cable television, in my opinion, is one of such changes.

Local Groups/Small Groups and Communication

Although there are no studies in the West that focus directly on the *danwei* media, a number of scholars paid specific attention to the importance of local groups or small groups in mass communication in China.

Jacques Ellul was among the first scholars who noted the horizontal dynamics of small groups in the political propaganda in China (Ellul 1971, 80-81). This view of locally oriented group communication was later elaborated by Martin King Whyte and Godwin C. Chu. Both of them analysed the effectiveness of organizing local or small groups in promoting the communist agenda to the population and enforcing mass compliance (Whyte 1974; Chu 1977). Chu noted that locally based groups became "local engines" for social change. The group communication which was integrated with the state mass media generated the social pressure in the local environment (Chu 1977, 255).[22]

Chu further elaborated that communication in the local groups had twofold functions for both the state and ordinary people: a) for the state, group communication was a "vital mechanism of social control as well as a stimulant of task performance (Chu 258); b) for individuals, the groups served as "a partial buffer between themselves and the state" (Chu 259). The importance of local communication, on the one hand, lay in the fact that:

> Without the social pressure generated from group communication, the Party would have to rely either on administrative orders, which are recognized to be ineffective, or to resort to the unmitigated use of coercion, which is impracticable. With small groups, however, the Party simply sends the directives to the local cadres and lets the groups find their own ways of implementation. The same social pressure keeps the

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[22] The research on group communication has a long history in the West. Landmark works include Charles H. Cooley's "primary group" concept, Freud's Group Psychology and the Analysis of Ego and Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleague's theory of "two-step-flow of information." All these works lead to the formation of the theory that small informal face-to-face communication sets "the moral standards and the consensual framework of individuals living in a highly individualistic macro-society" (Lerner 1976, 21). Interpersonal communication in a group setting is a fundamental process in forming and maintaining social relations (Lerner 24). Studies by Whyte and Chu on the communist local/small groups indicates an obvious effort to apply the group theory to the Chinese context.

> group members away from the temptation of nonconformity and deviance. Thus, a population as large as that of China can be rigorously steered along a path designated by the Party. (258-259)

On the other hand, local groups served as "vital links between the state and the individuals" (Chu 259). Local groups could to some extent re-define the Party commands at the local level and make them more bearable (Chu 259). Local communication also gave people some sense of involvement (Chu 259).

Following a similar line of argument, Whyte elaborated on functions of "small groups" in the Chinese system in 1979. He argued that small groups played three important roles in communication. First, they were a vital vehicle of downward communication used by the centralized government to get their message across to the masses. Second, they helped create group pressure for the purpose of public commitment and persuasion. Third, they contributed to upward communication and provided a channel for officials to monitor the mass reactions towards government policies (Whyte 1979, 116-118).

These aforementioned insights constitute the basis of my analysis. The "buffer" notion of local organizations being the middle stratum between the state and individuals sheds light on the evaluation of the role of the *danwei* media in the communist state. To a certain extent, this study is intended to be a field-test of Chu's hypothesis in 1990s' China. Focusing on the social and cultural functions of these specific Chinese organizations, *danwei* (coined by Chu as "local groups"), my thesis attempts at the reconstruction of those "local groups" in relation to a more concrete theoretical framework. In other words, Chu's intuitive conception of "local groups-state" forms a threshold for a new visualization of the mass media system in China, particularly in the post-Mao era when Chinese society as a whole has

become greatly decentralized and market oriented.

I realize that there are discrepancies between Chu's notion of local group communication, Whyte's small group communication and my theme of *danwei* and *danwei* media. One of the differences is my construction of "*danwei* media" as a part of the state media system in contrast to Chu's "local groups" as inter-personal communication channels beyond the state mass media. "*Danwei* media" are the use of various media technology by locally-based organizations to both reinforce the state propaganda at the grass-roots level and to communicate for internal purposes. They stand partly as informal media organizations within the state media structure and partly as a formal media itself within the *danwei* organization. In other words, my study focuses only on the particular practices of communication in Chinese work units, namely the organization and application of media technology, such as the print medium, the wired broadcasting and cable television by the Chinese *danwei*. I am not specifically concerned with other types of inter-*danwei* communication - face-to-face meetings, interpersonal conversations, sign languages - in the workplace environment unless such ways of communication are in connection to the practices of the work unit media.

Danwei Media in the State System of Mass Media

The perspective of "*danwei*" and "*danwei* media"offers a new vision for the study of the Chinese media system. It attempts to examine the nature of the Chinese mass media beyond the framework of the antithetic models of "powerful" or "powerless" media. It centres on the issue of how the state media are organized and coordinated at the grass-roots

level and how this organizing pattern has been changed in the past two decades. The state media system is considered much more than just a single apparatus organized only within the state bureaucracy. It is a complex phenomenon of interwoven webs of the state propaganda and social, cultural life at the community level. As an "instrument," the state media structure does not have only one pillar -- the formal media, but also countless extended branches at the *danwei* level - the informal media or *danwei* media.

However, the media function of the work units should not be viewed as the practices that are under the complete command of the party-state, particularly in the reform era when Chinese workplaces have obtained a considerable degree of autonomy in economical and personnel management. The *danwei* media present a site where the state interests interface with that of the local group and community. By incorporating the local resources into the system, the state is rendered more penetrating ability. However, the localization of the state media also contributes to a variety of possibilities for the basic level work units to assert their own interests and agenda within the system.

"Informal media" of the state

Chinese *danwei* media were created first to pursue the interests of the state by infiltrating into the daily life of ordinary workers, in mobilizing them for better task performance and in monopolizing information and knowledge at the basic level of society. They were formulated as a supplementary instrument to the official mass media of the state propaganda. They constitute the "informal media" of the state.

The Chinese media system is characterized by an hierarchical structure, featuring the

centralized Party and government media organizations on the top, such as the People's Daily, the Xinhua News Service, China's Central Television (CCTV) and China's Central Radio Station. These elite media played a predominant role in constructing and disseminating the official ideology. All the "top voice" of the Party and the state are disseminated through them to the masses. One rank below them, there are media organizations controlled by central ministries and regional governments, some of which have become increasingly popular and enjoyed a large audience in the Dengist period, such as East Television (Shanghai), South China Weekends newspaper (Guangzhou), China's Youth Newspaper (the National Youth League) and so on. Beneath them are a variety of local newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations affiliated with city, county governments and other government agencies and associations.

However this media system encompasses not only professional party and government media organizations which occupy the top and upper ranks of the media hierarchy, but also hundreds of thousands of small-scale media outlets operating at *danwei* levels. In other words, the Chinese state media in fact comprise two categories of media organizations. The first category which I define as "formal media" includes professional media entities which are established to perform the single task of mass communication and always affiliated with higher party and government authorities. These formal media organizations, which are operated by a large professional workforce through a very complex organizational structure, are created principally to carry propaganda tasks to an external readership or audience much larger than the workforce or population within these organizations themselves.

The second category is defined as "informal media." It includes all the other small-

scale media groups organized within *danweis* with an attempt only to solicit an internal audience. Such media outlets, be it a newsletter, a wired broadcasting station, or a cable television station, usually are operated as a department attached to *danweis*. Their workers are *danwei* employees.

This state media is structured as described in Appendix II.

The "formal media" are constructed parallel to the governments at various levels. They functioned as a mass persuasion tool through which governments at various levels addressed their subjects.

However, the scope of the Chinese media system does not end at the government levels. It extends to the basic units of Chinese urban society, *danwei*. Characterized as "informal media," *danwei* media outlets represent an extension of the state media on the local level. They substantiate the extensive reach of the monopolized media system attempting to penetrate every *danwei* in society.

Although local media outlets are affiliated with and managed by grass-roots *danwei*, they are also subject to the supervision of propaganda departments from the senior level of the state bureaucracy. In other words, these *danwei* media have to be accountable to authorities at both the government and *danwei* levels. It is designated as their "duty" to transmit messages from the centralized state media and to adapt them to the local environment. This localization of communication has to conform to the state policies and ideology. Thus they are submitted to the centralized command directed from the upper level of bureaucracy (vertical). In addition, since they belong to *danweis*, they are directly governed by authorities at the local level (horizontal). For example, a factory wired

broadcasting station is not only supervised by factory leaders, but also by the propaganda officials of the superior organization which supervises the factory.

Danwei Media outlets were created first and foremost to serve the interests of the state. For the central government, these grass-roots media outlets helped relay state messages manufactured and distributed by the formal media organizations to the masses at the bottom of the social ladder. The involvement of local resources in re-telling and re-transmitting these messages could highlight the significance of the state authorities and consequently may drive home the state messages.

Danwei-run media are an indispensable tool of mass persuasion for state propagandists. First, they provide unlimited grass-roots resources - physical facilities, local finance and manpower - to be at the disposal of the state propagandists. The central state is able to utilize the *danwei* media, be it wired radio or cable television, as a local arm of its own propaganda machinery. Without these centrally coordinated, yet locally oriented media practices in the workplace, it would be economically impossible and technically inapplicable for the state to have its messages delivered to virtually every home of its huge population in a vast territory.

Second, the *danwei* media contribute to the "localization" of state ideological propaganda. The involvement of the *danwei* in assisting the state propaganda task renders a "local facet" to the state message both in its physical form and content. The state propaganda becomes "localized" since it is locally produced and delivered. It is also "localized" in the topic and language since a lot of local flavour is added into the content of programmes (Lee 1994, 28). Thus it drives home the official messages with a considerable

local pressure. The state ideology is not something invisible and far away, it is carried out locally and thus more pressure was created for local participation and compliance.

Third, the *danwei* media transform the exposure to the state propaganda into a process of community routine. For example, in the case of loudspeaker broadcasting in the 1960s-70s, the *danwei* audience was completely passive. He/she was not even in control of his/her receiving action. The public broadcasting was turned on and off on a daily basis in the community according to a fixed schedule. Gradually, the daily routine of its programming would create an impression of naturalness of broadcasting. It was accepted as a part of a community's everyday life. The medium that was originally imposed on the audience became a "natural" phenomenon, and the content of the medium was transformed into a ubiquitous cultural environment.

A site of control and contestation

One of my hypotheses is that the localization of the state propaganda in the form of *danwei* media may create a site of control and contestation for information and entertainment at the grass-roots level.

D*anwei* media could not be considered as a complete "state mouthpiece" in local disguise. By introducing a local/community supervision and flavour into the system, *danwei* media would transform the universal facet of the state propaganda into a local phenomenon. The centralized media have to make a concession to the localization of the state propaganda in return for a greater penetration and possibly more effective mass persuasion.

Since *danwei* media are practically financed and operated by the workplace and

aimed at the internal audience, they are closely integrated into the political, economic, social and cultural life of the *danwei* community. Consequently, they may become an apparatus to serve the interests of the work unit.

For *danweis*, local media outlets could provide channels for internal communication. They could be used to provide effectively information concerning the community. They could also bring some economic benefits to the *danwei* if such operation is allowed to become commercial as is the case of cable television. In addition, they could serve to promote the local prestige of *danwei* leaders. Furthermore, they offer medium venues for *danwei* people to practise amateurish journalism. Finally, *danwei* media may contribute to the enhancement of the sense of *danwei* belonging and *danwei* solidarity.

Taking into account of peculiar attributes of the Chinese workplace described in the previous chapter, my thesis is concerned primarily with the following issues in regard to the *danwei* media:

First, is there a possibility that the *danwei* media would carry something contrary to the officially sanctioned ideology? In other words, what is the mechanism within the state system and at the *danwei* level that assures that the practise and content of the *danwei* media conform to the state ideology? And to what degree could the *danwei* media contest the external authority of the state bureaucracy and to assert the *danwei* interests and agenda?

Second, I am concerned with whether the *danwei* media could become a tool to serve the interests of the work unit. The Chinese *danwei* is characterized by such features as principled particularism, consensus politics and strong relationships (Walder 1986; Womack 1991). How are these characteristics reflected in the local media practices? What are the roles

the media outlets play within the political, economic and social *milieu* of the workplace community? Who controls the media within the *danwei*? Are these media jobs the scarce resource that is rewarded to loyalists or clientele of the community leaders or are they open to members of the community at large? To what degree is the autonomy of the *danwei* media submitted to the internal constraints of the *danwei*?

My last assumption is that the workplace media contribute to the enhancement of the awareness of community affairs and identity. They help cultivate a sense of *danwei* belonging. One of the distinctive features of the Chinese work unit is this acute sense of belonging individual Chinese have toward their *danwei*. Chinese do not work in the *danwei*, they virtually belong to the *danwei* (Henderson et al 1984; Francis 1993; Lü et al 1997). The *danwei* identity is among the most primary identities a person acknowledges. Do *danwei* media have anything to do with this attachment? How and to what degree could the locally oriented media practices facilitate the cultural creation of being a *danwei* man/woman?

These are the major issues I will examine closely in the later chapters. However, to place my case study of *danwei* cable station in a more appropriate perspective, I will first provide some background information on the development of *danwei* media in general in communist China from the 1950s to 1990s.

To sum up, the Chinese *danwei* media is a basic site where the state organizes its propaganda and monopoly. It is also the site where local interests and agendas may be negotiated within the state media system. To study the Chinese media from the perspective of "*danwei*" and "*danwei* media" is not only a rediscovery of the importance of "local

groups" and local communication elaborated by the "powerful media" theorists 20 years ago, but also an attempt to delineate the characteristics of Chinese media through micro approaches and beyond the framework of the "liberalist/communist" tradition. By introducing "*danwei*" and "*danwei* media" into the research of the state media in China, the organizational and localistic nature of the Chinese media system could be examined under the microscope. The *danwei* based media outlets constitute, on the one hand, the "informal media" of the state propaganda at the basic level of society. One the other hand, they are the locus of contesting interests and agendas between the state and the local community. They provide a clearer clue to the changing path that the Chinese media have gone through in the past two decades.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT OF *DANWEI* MEDIA

*Danwei*media hold the key to building connections between the current media and the media system in Mao's era. Established in the mid-1950s, the workplace media, which reflected one of Mao Zedong's innovative creations of mass communication, played an important role in assisting the state propaganda in penetrating the mass population in the pre-reform period. With the advent of economic reform and the development of television, the central state intended to continue the tradition of involving basic work units in building mass communication networks. Such an intention was clearly reflected in its gigantic project of building a nation-wide cable television network in the 1990s. But this time, the centralized propagandists did not seem to be as successful as before. They have encountered a great deal of local defiance and disobedience. To understand how the locally based and oriented media practices have functioned in the state propaganda system and how these practices have changed in the past decades, it is necessary to review the development of the workplace media from a historical perspective.

The involvement of the *danweis* in the building of the state media network constituted an integral part of the communist government's strategy of mass communication. The use of media technology by basic work units to facilitate the state agenda of propaganda originated in Mao's China. It was in fact one of the early goals of Chinese communist propaganda policies established soon after they founded the People's Republic in 1949. In January 1951, the Communist Party issued the decision to set up a nation-wide network of

Party propagandists to promote state policies to the masses at the grass-roots level (Liu 1993, 973, 1005, 1025).[23] Many educated and articulate Party members, Youth League members and young activists were selected as "propagandists" (*xuan chuan yuan*) in urban workplaces and rural communities to carry out the task of explaining the new Chinese government policies to the people in their own communities. These locally based propaganda activities were organized, step-by-step, with the help of a variety of communication media including wall newspapers, work unit presses, radio-listening groups, wired broadcasting and so on. As a result, it was common for a Chinese *danwei* to have several different media outlets under its control such as a work unit newspaper, wired radio station, or community cable television.

The establishment of such functions in *danweis* reflected one of Mao's ideals for communist mass persuasion. Mao believed that communist propaganda should be carried out by every communist cadre and every unit of communist workforce so as to achieve its maximum effectiveness (Mao 1964). As several scholars acknowledged, Mao's method of communication distinguished itself by its emphasis on direct contact with the masses - the so-called "mass line" communicating process between the leaders and the led (Chu 1977; Singh 1979). In such a process, ideological persuasion did not involve

> just a few leaders talking to the populace through the mass media about what they should do. Rather ... a case of almost everyone talking to everyone else, horizontally as well as vertically, upward as well as downward, regarding the ends and means of mobilization and development. (Chu 1977, 4).

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[23] See "Decision on the Establishment of a Propagandists Network of the Party to Communicate to the Masses" of the Central Committee of the CPC, January 1951.

The Maoist propagandists undertook this unprecedented multi-level and multi-direction communication in an attempt to bring about complete changes to the Chinese people as well as the nation. They were faced with immense tasks of introducing extraordinarily novel ideas and values to a populace who, for the most part, were illiterate, isolated in their villages and traditionally indifferent towards any political manoeuvres from above. They had to mobilize these peasants to take an active part in the communist revolution and industrialization, and to transform them into the model of the New Chinese Man envisioned by Mao. What made such tasks more challenging and almost impossible to fulfill was the fact that the Chinese communists had to exercise this massive persuasion with minimum reliance on materials and technology. Given the size of the population and the spread of the territory, any similar attempts normally would require substantial financial resources and advanced communication technology. Lacking either, the communist propaganda planners made an innovative use of community resources in their endeavour to enter every Chinese household (Houn 1961; Yu 1964; Liu 1971; Chu 1977, 1978; Hsu et al 1979; Chu et al 1983; Chao 1985). Grass roots workplaces hence became the main target of the state planners of communication development. Every major medium of technology was designated to be a tool which should be associated with the *danwei's* function as an active participant of the centralized propaganda and to play a specific role in mobilizing the Chinese population in implementing the state policies of the time.

Work Unit Press

The most common form of the *danwei* media is the workplace press, which is similar,

to some degree, to the organizational newsletter in the West. It can be either regularly or irregularly published by a work unit and circulated within the *danwei*. The workplace press became widespread in the mid-1950s in urban China and contributed greatly to the implementation of the Party's infamous purge of intellectuals in 1957 and the socialist economic movement of the "Great Leap Forward" in 1958-59. Following the Soviet communist tradition of placing great emphasis on the revolutionary press, Chinese communists attached primary importance to the mass mobilization through the print medium. It was a long established practice to publish workplace-based newsletters and to use the print media -- fliers, posters or booklets -- to promote the ideas of revolution to the masses. In a Communist Party resolution in 1929, it advocated that one of the most essential propaganda approaches was to have grass-roots Party groups publish newspapers in their factories (Liu 1993, 1025).[24] After the communists took power, they carried on this tradition of press propaganda on a grand scale, which resulted in the establishment of countless *danwei*-run presses in the country.

The *danwei* press was instrumental in promoting the state agenda of political and economic movements in workplaces in the 1950s-1960s. Normally under the direct control of the Party branch in a workplace, it presented itself as an official "mouthpiece" of the local Party leadership. Things published in it would usually include resolutions made by work unit Party meetings, speeches given by the *danwei* Party chief, discussions of local Party members on implementing state tasks, and so on. This medium contrivance amplified the importance

[24] See "Resolution on the Propaganda Work" passed by the Second Meeting of the Sixth Party Central Conference of the Chinese Communists in June 1929.

of the local Party authorities by publishing their names and words in printed format, which was very significant to people who lived in a culture deeply rooted in the worship of the written word. However, to the state propagandists, the work unit press as a propaganda tool was still limited as far as its penetration capacity was concerned since the print medium only made sense to those who could read. They were faced with the task of how to communicate the state propaganda to a vast majority of the Chinese population who were not only illiterate but also scattered over a huge territory. Their solution was the implementation of wired broadcasting.

Danwei Wired Radio Service

The Chinese communist government, following the Soviet Union, immediately started to set up a well-organized radio broadcasting network after it came to power in 1949. However, one of the biggest problems faced by communist propagandists was how to mobilize, with very limited resources, the mass population who were impoverished, illiterate and inhabited a vast territory. They came up with the solution of setting up locally based and locally oriented wired broadcasting, particularly in rural areas.

Wired broadcasting requires simple and cheap equipment such as amplifiers, wires, poles and loudspeakers. With these materials, a well-organized system of mass communication was set up. From the county radio station, wires were extended to broadcasting offices of communes on its territory. From the commune broadcasting office, wires were extended to all villages within its jurisdiction and connected to loudspeakers mounted on poles in public places, or speakers in individual's homes. By 1964, it was

reported that 95% of the counties and towns in rural China had been connected by this wired network (Liu 1971, 119). In 1965, there were about 9 million loudspeakers (Lee 1994, 27). In 1980, the number had risen to 99 million, penetrating half of all rural households (Lee 27).

The project of networking the basic communities and workplaces into a broadcasting system was originated from the idea of radio-receiving and -transcribing stations promoted by the communist government in 1950. Immediately after the communist takeover, the new regime issued a decision to establish locally based radio listening groups (Liu 1993, 831).[25] The policy was to have every workplace set up an office in urban areas whose job it was to receive and distribute news from the state radio (Wu et al 1992, 53-54). Each *danwei* government was equipped with a radio set by the state and a person was assigned the job of listening to the radio everyday so as to transcribe news and information and distribute it within the *danwei* organization. On some occasions when there were important news and Party decisions, a collective listening to the radio was organized.

By 1952, there were reportedly 23,721 radio-receiving stations established in the country (Radio and Television in Modern China 1987, 35). In April 1952 Jiutai County in northeastern Jilin Province pioneered the project of transforming the radio-receiving and transcribing station into a wired broadcasting service. The success of the Jiutai experiment inspired the central government's decision in October 1955 to build a nation-wide network of mass communication through wired loudspeaker broadcasting, specifically in rural areas (Radio and Television in Modern China 1987, 35).

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[25] See the "Decision on the Establishment of Radio-receiving Network" by the Central Government in April 1950.

Although concentrated on the regions encompassing the impoverished countryside, the efforts of wired broadcasting development were also expanded into workplaces and urban communities. The popularity of wired stations was so widespread at the time of the "Cultural Revolution" in the 1960s that almost every *danwei* or neighbourhood was equipped with wired broadcasting facilities. Unfortunately, there have been few studies which have documented the development of wired broadcasting in urban *danweis*. My interviews with wired radio workers of Tianjin University conducted in my field trip to the northern city of Tianjin in the spring 1997 indicated that *danwei* radio stations were the most popular medium in China's urban centres in the 1960s-1970s. This factor contributed enormously to the mass mobilization in the early years of the "cultural revolution." Since 1980, the importance of *danwei* radio declined dramatically following the advance of television into Chinese families. The number of loudspeakers decreased, down to about 82 million in 1990, or 37% of rural households (Lee 1994, 27).

Both the workplace radio station and the village wired broadcasting were organized in line with the same principle of local penetration and participation, and a similar technology of media. However, they performed slightly different functions in regard to urban and rural environments. Radio sets entered Chinese families in the cities between the mid-1950s and 60s whereas they were still considered a luxury for a majority of rural families during that period. For city residents, workplace wired broadcasting was mainly a supplement to the state radio programming they received from radio sets at home. Its presence was most commonly associated with tweeters attached to poles in the neighbourhood or speakers in workshops, meeting halls or canteens. However, in rural

communities, wired broadcasting meant more than a loudspeaker in the centre of the village. It was a speaker in every peasant's home, which carried the only "outside voice" to the villagers. For an extended period of time, such wired speakers usually were not furnished with an "on-off" switch. Thus, listening to the programming carried by them became mandatory. It was only in later days that the home speakers were installed with a switch and villagers could turn them off when they did not want to listen.

Generally speaking, a *danwei* wired broadcasting station usually employed 2-3 full-time workers and was operated under the supervision of the workplace propaganda department with financial subsidies or technical assistance from the central government. A major part of its programming was to relay broadcasts by provincial, or central radio stations (Lee 1994, 28). It also produced local programming, such as *danwei* news, which was usually about local implementation of state policies.

My interviews with propaganda officials and workers of the wired radio station in Tianjin University in 1997 indicated that the wired radio station was operated very professionally in its heyday of the 1960s. Established as early as 1956, the campus wired radio employed two full-time technicians and over 100 students as part-time journalists and announcers in the 1960's. There were speakers installed in every classroom and student dorm and wired to the campus station which broadcast three times a day starting at 6:30 each morning. There were also a number of loudspeakers attached to huge poles on campus and in residential areas which carried the broadcasting virtually to every corner of the *danwei*.[26]

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[26] A major part of the information was from my interview of one of the wired radio station workers in Tianjin University. Lu Fengling of Tianjin, interviewed by author, May

Besides relaying the central radio programming, the campus radio also produced its own programming of news and entertainment. Most of the self-made programmes were in connection with the theme of how the university people were dedicated to the tasks of the Party. In addition, the wired station also broadcast music programming from its own gramophone player (Lu 1997). On many occasions, major events at the university, such as the National Day celebrations or when Chairman Mao issued his new directives, a massive group listening would be organized. The whole community would be out in the open space listening to the broadcast together.

However, in the 1990s, such instrumental wired broadcasting was virtually obsolete. On the Tianjin University campus in 1997, there were only about 20 speakers left. Most of them were installed in the student cafeterias and on street lamp poles. The wired station had only two people whose job it was to run the radio broadcasting routinely three times a day; one at 6:30 in the morning for 10 minutes of music to wake up the community, one at 10:30 for a 10-minute-exercise-music break and the last one at noon for 15 minutes of newspaper reading and pop music. It had become merely a decorative medium to provide some supplementary entertainment for community life. It no longer served the function as the local extension of the state propaganda and intra-*danwei* communication.

Danwei Cable Stations

The Chinese government's efforts to establish a national network of television by way

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30 1997, Tianjin.

of developing community/organizational cable television in the early 1990s were obviously derived from its successful experience in developing a national radio broadcasting in the 1950s and 1960s.

By the early 1990s, China had developed a four-tiered government television broadcasting system featuring the central television station on the top and provincial, city and county stations at the following three levels respectively. By 1995, television penetration covered 88.3 percent of the population (People's Daily 1995), a sharp increase from the 30 percent penetration rate in 1980 (Wu et al 1992, 52). There were 980 television stations nationwide in 1995 (People's Daily 1995) compared with 38 in 1980 (Zhu et al 1993, 40).

Television was the fastest expanding medium in China in the 1980s, which was due partly to the increasing prosperity of the nation whose development energy was unleashed by the market-oriented economic reform beginning in 1979-1980, and partly to government initiatives to develop a national television system (Yu 1990, 69; Zhu et al 1993, 29-39). Having realized television's great propaganda potential, the central government made it a priority to develop a national television system in the 1980s.

However, despite a spectacular development of television, the government television system still faced the problem of how to reach the remaining 20 percent of the population, most of whom live either in geographic regions where it is difficult to receive television signals or in sparsely populated areas too costly to be covered by television stations (Liu 1994, 20-22).

Apart from this concern with penetration, the state media faced a more urgent challenge of audience alienation in 1990 after the communist government sent in tanks to

crush the pro-democracy student demonstration in Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989. The audience resistance to the state media took various forms from shunning the state media to wide-spread street gossip of political satire. The estrangement from the state propaganda was also reflected in the increasing popularity of video movies made in Hong Kong and Taiwan and radio programming broadcast by Western nations. To the great dismay of state propagandists, there was a booming underground business in pornographic videos.[27] The state media suffered from a credibility crisis, which undermined its role as the guardian of communist ideology.

The Chinese government attempted to tackle the aforementioned problems by introducing cable television into local communities and organizations. It was obvious that the government intended to restore the effectiveness of the state media by developing a television/cable network similar to that of radio/wired loudspeaker broadcasting. This television network would feature the four-tiered government television stations as a central structure and be reinforced and supplemented by cable television that would be managed and operated at the community and organizational levels. By recruiting community and organizational resources to build cable television, the central government planned to achieve its ambition to penetrate into every Chinese household with the state television.

However, before the state propagandists could come up with a concrete plan of cable development, cable television had already taken the nation by storm. It seemed that many

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[27] I explained in a detailed manner the everyday forms of audience resistance in 1990s China in my comprehensive examination paper which has been re-written as an essay and will be published in a forthcoming academic journal on Chinese communication.

Chinese cities, districts, townships, work unit communities were jumping on the idea of having their own cable stations established. By the end of 1990, there were an estimated 314 cable companies run by local governments and 771 cable stations by *danweis* (The Editorial Commission of A Guide to China's Television Stations 1994, 341). Before long, cable television became a fierce competitor to the centralized station. This situation prompted the central government to issue its first decree on the establishment and management of cable television in November 1990 in an attempt to put the rampant cable development in local communities under the strict control of the central authorities.

This regulation ratified for the first time the legal status of *danwei*- run cable stations and licensed the co-existence of two cable systems: a) cable television covering governmental administrative territories -- "District cable" and b) cable television run by *danweis* -- "*Danwei* cable." However, it set very strict rules for *danweis* in order to qualify for a cable license. A *danwei* had to meet the following requirements:

a) The proposed cable project does not run into conflict with the development plan of the television/cable network of the city or region where the *danwei* is situated;

b) The work unit has to have a specific office to manage the cable service and is able to be staffed with full-time reporters, editors, cameramen, broadcasters, producers and technical personnel;

c) It has to have sufficient funding;

d) The quality of its video cameras, editing and broadcasting equipment has to be certified in accordance with the state technical standards by the broadcasting and television management agencies at or above the provincial rank;

e) It has to have a permanent place for programming production;

f) The quality of its transmission system has to be certified in accordance with the state technical standards by the broadcasting and television management agencies at or above the provincial rank;

g) It has to have a permanent place for broadcasting. ("Provisional Regulation on Cable Television Management" 1990, 331)

The conditions for a *danwei*-based cable station were regulated more strictly in the following year by the Ministry of Broadcasting and Television. The new regulations made it more difficult for work units to obtain a cable license. Additional requirements included: a) Not every work unit could apply for a license, it had to have a county or above county rank in the state organizational structure; b)The *danwei* cable should have at least 15 full-time staff, half of them should have education of university or technical school levels; c) It required that a *danwei* cable should have in its possession at least three sets of professional equipment for news coverage, two sets of editing and production equipment and one complete set of broadcasting equipment. It also stipulated conditions on the construction of cable networks and management of cable programming (The Editorial Commission of A Guide to China's Television Stations 1994).[28]

In assessing the impact and consequences of community cable television, as this study

[28] I will examine closely the state regulation of cable programming in Chapter IX.

intends to do, three important factors that separate the development of television from that of radio have to be considered.

1. The structural decentralization in the development of television. The government television system is much more decentralized in relationship to the central government than the former radio broadcasting system.

In Mao's era, the radio broadcasting was only established at the top two levels of government bureaucracy - the central and provincial government levels. The lower ranks - the city and county levels - were not allowed their own radio broadcasting stations except for relay stations (Wu et al 1992, 56-67). Radio stations were submitted to the control of two authorities - central and provincial governments. The central government was responsible for funding and issuing ideological directives to radio stations. Regional governments supervised the management and operation of provincial radio broadcasting (Wu et al 1992, 56-67).

In contrast, Chinese television broadcasting was organized at four government levels. Due to cost considerations, the Chinese government decided in 1983 to encourage local governments at the city and county levels to set up their own television stations (Gu 1994, 170-172).[29] This decision triggered a rapid growth of television stations throughout the country.

To ensure that the central television programming remained dominant, state

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[29] This policy was also applied to radio broadcasting. Since 1983, prefectural and county governments were also permitted to run radio broadcasting stations. However, in this study for the purpose of clear comparison, I use the radio broadcasting system in Mao's time as reference.

regulation decreed that city and county stations must make the relay of the central news and programmes a priority (The Editorial Commission of A Guide to China's Television Stations 1994, 318-319). However, in practice, the burgeoning growth of local television posed a threat to the domination of the central television - a domination it used to enjoy. Local stations would rather broadcast their own programmes than the ones emanating from central television.

2. The decentralization and diversification of finance. Unlike the radio system in which the central government was the sole investor, the financial resources of television development were greatly diversified and decentralized.

Most local stations were financed from a local budget. By the end of 1990, there were over 22,724 television transmitting and relaying facilities, and 13,573 satellite receiving stations. A majority of them were funded by local governments and local organizations (Wu et al 1992, 61).

The most significant change in funding came from commercial revenues, especially advertising. The first use of advertising in broadcast was by the Shanghai Television Station on January 28, 1979 (Yu 1990, 83). This signified a turning point in Chinese communist media history - the commercial-free, state-controlled media could no longer reject advertising as a source of financing. In November of that year, the central government gave the go-ahead to all media organizations on media advertising.

The growth of television advertising was phenomenal. While it brought in revenues of 3.25 million yuan in 1979 (Yu, 83), this figure rose to 95 million in 1985, about 1.005 billion yuan in 1991 (Lu 1991, 13-14) and 2.05 billion yuan in 1992 (Lu 1992, 4). CCTV was

the biggest generator of advertising income with a revenue of 1.2 billion yuan in 1994 (Guo 1996, 41).

3. The diversified content in television programming. Television which offers more diversified and more entertaining programming than did radio broadcasting during the 1960s and 1970s, has become "a major source" of mass entertainment (Yu 1990, 79).

Instead of acting as a monotonous propaganda machine, television provided a wide variety of programming that is deemed pure entertainment. Its content is significantly different from that of radio broadcasting in the 1960s-1970s which placed ideological purity as the top priority. One of the important factors that contributed to the diversified content of television came from the film industry's decision to stop providing free films to television stations in 1979.

Before 1979 Chinese television had no production teams of its own (Yu 1990, 79). Telecasting films provided free by Chinese movie studios constituted the principal part of its programme. When the film industry suddenly cut off the supply due to economic reasons, television stations faced the urgent task of finding new sources of programmes. In addition, more television stations came into being, which put more pressure on TV programmes (Yu 1990, 79-80, Zhu et al 1993, 30). To meet the increasing demand for programmes, Chinese television stations started purchasing and broadcasting, for the first time in their history, foreign programmes. The first Western television drama - the French movie "Red and Black" - was aired on national television in 1980 (Zhu et al 1993, 35). This was followed by many television dramas from the United States, Japan, Switzerland, Britain, France, India, Mexico, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Brazil and other countries (Yu 1990, 82). In 1984 China's Central

Television (CCTV) signed a contract with the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) to agree to broadcast its programming 64 hours a year (Zhu et al 1993, 36) including segments of "60 minutes," "Animal World," and "Spotlight on Sport" in exchange for a share of the commercial revenue (Warren 1986, 24).

The foreign content in Chinese television was also represented by segments of foreign made international news broadcasts on the national television news. This foreign news, received through an exchange contract with VISNEWS and UPI, demonstrated a completely new style of television news in the Western world and hence set the standard for Chinese television news crews (Zhu et al 1993, 32). In the years that followed, many western techniques of news reporting were adopted by Chinese television news. TV news started becoming more immediate, colourful and investigative. Many new entertainment programmes such as sports, comedy shows, soap operas, educational programmes and service shows were aired.

In addition to all these changes, one of the fundamental elements that distinguish television from radio as a medium should not be underestimated. Television is the medium that transmits messages in both audio and visual forms.

With reference to Harold Innis' concept that monopolies of knowledge develop and decline in part in relation to the medium of communication on which they are built (Czitron 1982, 156), it would be an interesting issue to examine how television, as a visually oriented medium, would effect the monopoly of communist power. Derrick de Kerckhove notes that communist rule relies heavily on print medium for control (de Kerckhove 1984). The collapse of the Soviet Union was believed to be hastened by the introduction of electronic

media, primarily, the fax machine.

Other scholars note that the development of television in China corresponds closely with the nation's economic development which features the decentralization of political and economic activities, and the introduction of market forces (Lee 1994, 29-30). Following a technological perspective, it may also be valid to argue that the increased use of television has brought about the rapid pace of industrialization. However, as this study attempts to interpret China's development of television more from a social-structural perspective than a purely technological viewpoint, I will not elaborate more on the possible influence of television as an audio-visual medium on the state media monopoly other than offering a few highlights on this aspect.

First, television as a medium is more entertaining in nature. Compared with the press and radio, television provides information or propaganda in a more sensuously attractive fashion. It addresses itself simultaneously to more than one of the human senses. Thus, it becomes a communication vehicle that is more appropriate for carrying moving images than just the written or spoken word. In other words, it is a medium that addresses the audience by stimulating both their ocular and auricular senses. Its function as a propaganda institution depends, to a large extent, on how good it is at entertaining the masses.

Second, television as an image medium offers more room for interpretation by audiences. Thus it is deemed more objective in presenting information by the Chinese audience (Zhao 1991, 18) who have developed sophisticated skills in "reading between lines" of the state media. Television images usually offer more than what the state media are willing or able to tell. As a result, viewers can render their own alternative interpretations of these

electronic images by studying unintentional or subtle details of the images provided by the state television (Lull 1991, 87).

Last, the use of television is primarily meant for entertainment purposes. Entertainment is the number one reason why Chinese viewers turn to television (The Editorial Commission of China Radio and TV Yearbook 1994, 431). This data confirms the above-mentioned statement that television is an entertainment vehicle.

To sum up, the development of *danwei* media in the People's Republic originated from the communist tradition of grass-roots communication and mobilization. It was also a practical solution to the dilemma of the new regime's urgent need of communicating to the masses and its lack of material resources and media technology. The development of *danwei*-based cable television evidently reflected the state's ambition to incorporate local resources into the building of a television network that was parallel to the national radio-wired broadcasting system established in the pre-reform period of the 1950s-1970s.

However, there were several new elements introduced into the Chinese mass media system alongside the development of television in the Dengist era of 1980s-1990s. As a whole, television has become more decentralized in management, diversified in financing and programming and less ideologically oriented. The practices of involving *danweis* in the nation-wide television-cable network did not seem to hold a great promise for the state propagandists. As the following chapters concerning the case study of a community cable station in Tianjin demonstrate constant control, contestation and reconciliation have been evident at the grass-roots level.

CHAPTER VI

DANWEI COMMUNITY: TIANJIN UNIVERSITY

Tianjin University (hereafter referred to as TU) is a typical *danwei* community which possesses all the attributes I described in Chapter II, namely "Chinese *Danwei* as Transfigured Community." Established in the early 1950s after the newly founded communist government decided to re-organize Chinese higher education following the Soviet model, the school is currently one of the top ten universities in China specializing in the education of science and technology. It employed 5,300 people of which 2,300 were faculty (Zuo et al 1995, 30). There are over 11,000 students, including 2,200 at the graduate level. The following chapter will examine this *danwei* institution in a detailed fashion.

Geography

Tianjin University covers an area of over 329.4 acres in the so-called "university zone" in the western part of Tianjin City (Editorial Group 1995b, 421). It borders Nankai University to the south, Tianjin Teachers University to the north, Tianjin Television Station to the east and a high-tech industrial park to the west (See Map I). These borders, clearly designated by the Tianjin government, are carefully protected with walls, fences, buildings, lakes and guarded gates. The university, although not the owner of the lands, has an administrative jurisdiction over the territory. It can decide what to build on the land and how to manage the life within its estate.

The university compound is divided into two major domains: a school area and a

residential area. In the attached Map II, the pink colour indicates the facilities that are associated with the university's main task of academic education such as classroom buildings, libraries, research centres, factories and administration offices. The brown areas represent other auxiliary structures including residential buildings, student dormitories, cafeterias, guesthouses, hospitals, daycare centres, elementary and middle schools, public bathhouses and recreational facilities. The students' dorms are apparently separated from the residential area inhabited by university faculties. The university cable station is situated in the central part of the academic area.

Like most Chinese communities, TU has been plagued by a tension between a fast growing population and a scarcity of land resources. In the last four decades, its geographic territory remained stable,[30] while the number of faculty and employees increased nearly fourfold. About two thirds of its buildings were built in the past two decades after the country took the course of economic reform in 1978. The school had to carry out its development projects within a limited space. At the moment, there is virtually no empty land on the school proper. Almost all its land has been used for building classrooms, apartments and other facilities. Even some lakes have been filled in to provide additional space for construction. Any new development plan from now on would involve tearing down old structures.

Ten years ago, there was no gate separating the area where academic activities took place from the area where the faculties resided. It was only in the last seven to eight years

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[30] In 1994 TU acquired additional land of 16.47 acres from the city government to its current western border. It will take several years for the school to remove the old construction on the land and build its own apartment buildings.

that the school administrators made an obvious effort to separate its two areas of function. There are now fences along the roads dividing the two areas (See Map II). The school plans to demolish the remaining employee housing in its designated academic area in the next five years and to relocate the residents to newly acquired land to the far west of the territory (See Map II). By then, the school hopes to have an academic area completely clear of employee residential units.

An administration building housing the university leaders is located in the central part of the academic area (See Map II). This is where the central power of the community has been located since the day the university was established in the current location in 1952. The building distinguishes itself from the surrounding buildings by its grandiose front steps and unusually colourful roof which bears an uncanny resemblance to that of buildings pictured in ancient architecture (See Picture VI). The building faces a large open space -- a square where mass gatherings of people from the university used to be held between the 1950s and 1970s.

History

Although TU was officially established in 1951, its people proudly believe that it has enjoyed a long history as being the first modern university in China because of its direct link with Peiyang University. Peiyang University, founded by the imperial government of the Qing dynasty in 1895, was the first higher learning institution in China to offer a Western-style, university-level education. TU was a merger of engineering and science faculties of several universities and colleges, of which the faculty from Peiyang made up the largest

number. For years Tianjin University made several attempts (although in vain) to have the Ministry of Education approve the move to change its name to Peiyang University. Nevertheless, it was able to re-write its history by encompassing the traditions and continuity of Peiyang University and celebrated its first centennial in 1995.

Peiyang University, predecessor of TU

In 1894, China suffered a defeat in a navy battle with Japan. Reformists in the imperial court believed that the loss was mainly a consequence of the out-of-date educational system which was severely lacking in the teaching of science and technology. They started to advocate the establishment of modern schools. On October 2, 1895, the Chinese Emperor approved the plan to set up the first Western-style university, Peiyang University [31] in the northern city of Tianjin (Editorial Group 1995a, 15-16).

Funded by the imperial treasury, the school was modelled after American universities. Since no one in the imperial court had any knowledge of Western higher education, an American missionary, Charles D. Tenuey, was hired to run the university as president. Most professors in the faculty were also hired from the United States. In its early years, the school offered four-year university programmes and some short-term special programmes. The early disciplines included law, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, metallurgy and mining (Editorial Group 1995a, 28-31). Between 1895 and 1911, 385 students graduated from the four-year programmes.

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[31] Its early known English name was the "Imperial Tientsin University." "Tientsin" was an old spelling for "Tianjin."

In 1905, the imperial court abolished the tradition of the Confucius-style education and imperial examination system which opened the door for more rapid development of modern education in China (Li 1992, 183). "New schools" were the only option for Chinese youths who wanted to be educated. Peiyang University hence became one of the prestigious schools. It became increasingly popular among young people who sought to become career engineers, lawyers and business managers.

By 1934, Peiyang had become an established public educational institution with a 61-member faculty and 313 students. Almost all the professors were Chinese, many of them having studied and obtained degrees from institutions of higher learning in Western countries. It had four departments: civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and metallurgy and mining. Located in northern Tianjin, the campus was composed of one classroom-building, two research buildings, a library and several well-equipped laboratories. A total of 861 students graduated between 1920 and 1937 (Editorial Group 1995a, 15-16).

The worst setback to the school came in July 1937 when Japanese troops invaded Tianjin. They occupied the campus and set up their military barracks on the premises. The school had to relocate to Xi'an, thousands of miles west of Tianjin, to merge into a polytechnic school with three other universities. It was not until 1946 (after Japan was defeated in World War II) that the Peiyang people were able to return to the campus in Tianjin and rebuild the university. The damage caused by the Japanese was estimated to be around 1.6 billion *yuan* at the time (Editorial Group 1995a, 336).

The re-establishment of Peiyang University had a brief period of development in

1946 and 1947. It expanded into a two-faculty and 17-department university in 1947 with 139 faculty members and 1,167 students (Editorial Group 1995a, 344-345).

However, the following period of 1947-1949 witnessed a turbulent civil war between the Nationalist government and rebel communists. Universities were afflicted with a tremendous shortage of funding due to the enormous deficit of the Chiang Kai-shek government, which led to a growing resentment among students and professors toward the government and sympathy towards its adversary. Meanwhile the communists carefully established an underground network of student activists in almost every major university in China. Student demonstrations organized by communists were rampant on campus. Peiyang University became one of the centres of the pro-communist student movement in Northern China. When communist troops finally won the war and marched into Tianjin, these student activists were among the first people who came out to welcome them. The underground communists were finally able to work in the open and they became part of the new leadership in the New China (Sha 1996, 583-667; Editorial Group 1995b, 5).

TU in the early years of communist China (1952-1966)

The communist government decided to have Peiyang and another polytechnic school merged into Tianjin University in 1951. However, it was not until late 1952 that TU was firmly established in its current location after more reshuffles and mergers with several other universities. In fact, the so-called "school and department adjustment" move of the new government in 1952 was one of the most significant manoeuvres on the part of communists to reshape Chinese higher education into a state-planned system.

Before 1952, universities in China were modelled after the Western, mainly American system. There were both public and private universities, each with its own sets of rules, programmes and academic criteria. The new government passed an "adjustment motion" in 1952 which changed this system completely. It merged private and missionary schools with public universities; and it re-organized the higher education, based on the Soviet model, into three basic types of schools - universities specializing in science and technology, universities specializing in social science, humanities and liberal arts, and universities specializing in particular sectors or fields. It also cancelled a number of social science programmes, such as sociology, anthropology and political science which were deemed to have been influenced by American ideology. The adjustment caused many reshuffles and mergers among departments and schools. By 1953 the communist government had laid the foundation for its own system of higher education -- clear of private ownership and easily accessible to the central planners.

There were other reasons underlying this move on the part of the government. Embarking on a vigorous drive towards industrialization, the communist government had an urgent need for a large number of scientists, engineers and other professionals. It was particularly in need of such professionals who supported their cause and ideology. Reshuffling and re-organizing universities could provide the new government with a more efficient system of training professionals who were in high demand. At the same time, the perfect opportunity was provided to have loyal communist members penetrate the old elite

leadership of the universities who did not have much trust in the new rulers.[32]

The newly founded Tianjin University represented one of the key projects in the central governments drive to build a communist-style higher education. Directly under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, the school was designated to focus on science and technology, offering 18 programmes in seven departments including mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, civil engineering, power plants, chemistry, textile and hydraulic engineering. As of 1952, there were 444 faculty members and 3,575 students (Editorial Group 1995b, 73). The curricula were designed in accordance with the unified education plan of the Ministry of Education which followed closely the pattern of the Soviet educational system.[33]

This period also witnessed the increasing penetration of the Communist Party's power at the university leadership level. A Communist Party branch was established in parallel with the school's administrative bureaucracy. Its early leaders were usually those local communists who led the anti-Nationalist student movements before 1949. Later on, more and more veteran communists who had served in Mao's revolutionary army were dispatched to the university to head the Party positions at various levels. In 1956, the school's Party commission had 500 members under its direction and was given the

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[32] One of the most revealing accounts of how these changes affected the academic elite in the Chinese universities in this period is the book by Lu Jiandong, entitled The Last 20 Years of Chen Ying Ke (Beijing: Life, Book and New Knowledge Sanlian Books, 1995)

[33] The first nationally unified education plan for higher education was introduced in the period of 1953-1954 by the Chinese Education Ministry with the help of Soviet education planner (Editorial Group 1995b, 77).

extraordinary powers over the board of directors in running the university (Editorial Group 1995b, 115). It was not until the mid-1980s that the supreme position of the Party chief at the university became more subdued. This period also saw the initial efforts of setting up an internal communication system in the school to propagate the Party's policies and to mobilize the support in the community. It was composed of a school newspaper established in 1954 and a wired radio service in 1956.

China's new leader Mao Zedong had his own vision of the country's higher education. He wanted it to be more revolutionary, more self-reliant, and less elite. Several major movements were launched in Chinese universities between 1956 and 1966 to feed Mao's imagination of building this new type of school. These included the so-called "anti-Rightists" purge in 1956, in which 55 million educated Chinese suffered from political persecution due to their dissenting opinions of the communist government. In TU alone, 350 teachers and students fell victim to the purge (Editorial Group 1995b, 122).[34]

Another government operation was the "Work and Study" movement (*qin gong jian xue yun dong*) in 1958, which encouraged schools and universities to set up their own farms and factories so that the schools could become self-sustaining. One of the more pressing objectives in this campaign was to have teachers and students, who used to enjoy an elite social status in Chinese society, become more integrated with the classes of workers and

[34] The "anti-Rightist" purge was condemned and the political and social status of all its victims were rehabilitated in 1979 as one of post-Mao efforts to woo back the support of Chinese intellectuals.

peasants through manual labour.[35] Within a period of nine months, 114 factories had been set up on the premises of TU proper, including several iron and steel making furnaces, wood mills, plastics factories and metal workshops (Editorial Group 1995b, 134). TU also ran a number of experimental agricultural and animal farms with an annual production of 40,000 fish, 1,000 chickens, 50 pigs, and a lesser number of rabbits and sheep. A great amount of rice and vegetables were also produced in 1958 (Editorial Group 1995b, 130). This latter business provided TU employees with basic food stuffs in the following years when a major famine (1959-1961) reportedly claimed 30 million lives throughout the country according to unofficial estimates.

During this period, teachers and students worked days and nights in classes, the factory and farm jobs. It was not unusual to have a situation where a lot of people just lived and slept in their workplaces. The school's three-year plan was to rebuild the institution as a completely self-reliant organization which consisted of not only classrooms and research centres, but also of factories, farms, fisheries, husbandry, orchards and other services (Editorial Group, 129). Because of TU's outstanding achievement in the "Work and Study" movement, it attracted a large number of top leaders who visited the campus including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlan and Deng Xiaoping. The photographs of these visits became one of the most treasured items in TU's history book, although the movement itself, along with many of its outcomes, such as the steel furnaces, fish farms, the ideal of self-reliance, the ethics of integrating with workers and peasants etc. had long been abandoned.

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[35] Mao believed that the more an educated person integrated with workers and peasants, the more likely he/she would become a good revolutionary.

However, one of the legacies of this movement was that the university, for the first time, took on many functions other than its specialized goal of academic education. Although most of its student-run factories were closed within a year or two, a dozen of the factories survived. These student-run enterprises developed into multi-*yuan* businesses, providing the school with not only "made-on-campus" jobs but also with enormous economic benefits in the later reform era of the 1990s. Similarly, there were other community-based services, such as cafeterias, tailor shops, shoe repair stores, bicycle repair areas, kindergartens and medical clinics. These services, provided either by school employees or by their family members, had played an integral part in giving the life on campus a sense of community.

In late 1964, another movement was underway which required teachers and students to go to the countryside for six months to participate in the so-called "socialist education" programme. Nearly 5,000 people (about 44 percent of the total number of students and faculty) went to villages in Northern China, lived and worked with peasants and helped them with the study of Mao's books. Another 2,100 students and teachers went to a military camp for a two-month military training. The normal classes were virtually suspended. When these people returned to school in mid-1965, they had no idea that a more radical movement was brewing. This was the "Cultural Revolution."

TU in the years of the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-1976)

The "Cultural Revolution" was considered extremely disastrous to Chinese intellectuals and universities. Mao had lost faith in the Party bureaucratic system and decided to use his charismatic power as the leader to address directly the masses, particularly, the

students in universities and high schools in his fight against "comrades-in-arms-turned-rivals" within the Communist Party. Universities were the first place where the confrontation between the two camps took shape.

On June 1, 1966, the central radio station broadcast nationally a "big-characters poster" ("*dazibao*" in Chinese)[36] written by seven teachers from Beijing University which called for the masses to rise up against all "capitalist roaders"[37] within the Party. The move, orchestrated by Mao himself, signalled the start of a 10-year political fanaticism in the country.

Students at TU responded to the call by immediately putting up posters of their own on the campus demanding that the school leadership cancel classes immediately so that they could devote themselves to the "Cultural Revolution" (Editorial Group 1995b, 216-217). The old order of the school authority was shattered. On August 7, radical students staged a humiliating parade involving well over 400 professors and officials. (Editorial Group 1995b, 218). They beat them, spat on them, shaved their heads, hung heavy placards on their necks, or dressed them like clowns. This parade rocked the very foundations of the whole community.

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[36] It is a type of hand-written poster used extensively in the "Cultural Revolution" by the masses as a means to express their viewpoints.

[37] A widely used political jargon in the "cultural revolution" which referred to the communist officials who belonged to Mao's rivalry camp headed by Liu Shaoqi, President of the PRC of the time, and Deng Xiaoping who turned China to the course of economic reform after Mao's death in 1976.

On August 10, Mao met some of the "Red Guards"[38] in a public meeting in Beijing. This act prompted the mushrooming of Red Guard organizations all over the country and encouraged millions of young people to take the journey to Beijing hoping to see Mao. By the end of the year, Mao staged eight public meetings on the grounds of the gigantic Tiananmen Square in which tens of millions of Chinese youths all over the country participated.

In TU, many Red Guard groups were set up, which later were broke up into two major opposing factions who fought vigorously in order to gain access to the top power position over the school. Media outlets on campus such as the wired broadcasting station, the school newspaper, and the printing mill became highly contended possessions between these two groups. There were reportedly fierce combats and even bloodshed in gaining or re-gaining control of these community media.

By mid-1968, Mao realized that the Red Guards were gaining too much power[39] so he ordered a joint troop of factory workers and PLA soldiers to take over power at the universities. An army of workers and soldiers (about 5,000 throughout the years) entered TU on August 20, 1968. They disbanded the fractious Red Guard groups, confiscated all their property and media outlets, and hurriedly established effective control of the school.

Classes were suspended and no students were enrolled until 1971. The majority of

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[38] It is the name generally referred to those young radicals who were members of the organizations formed in the "Cultural Revolution" by students of universities and high schools.

[39] It was said that some of the star Red Guard leaders had become difficult to control and started to pose a threat to Mao's authority.

the professors and officials were considered the "enemy" of the people and suffered an intimidating persecution. They were constantly asked to engage in "self-confessions" and to denounce themselves in front of former colleagues and students. Some were even locked up in their classrooms -- effectively barring them from going home for nearly a year. Once released, they were ordered to do menial jobs which included sweeping streets, scrubbing toilets, cleaning office buildings or distributing mail instead of teaching and doing research projects; positions for which they were highly trained and qualified to carry out. Whole departments were dismissed, and instead, the faculties were re-organized as army units of battalions, companies, platoons and squads. The army people and workers headed the top positions at various levels of the university. Libraries were closed because they offered foreign-language journals and periodicals. Research labs were also the target of destruction. Of the 49 well-equipped, expensive labs, 20 were destroyed (Editorial Group 1995b, 234).

The university started enrolling students again in 1971. That year 557 students were admitted. They were not selected through national examinations as was previously the case, but were selected by workplaces such as factories, communes or army units where they worked. Their academic levels varied; some had only a Grade 6 level of study and the majority of them had a Grade 9 schooling. These students with various academic backgrounds created great difficulties insofar as university teaching and research was concerned. TU started restoring some of its academic standards and administrative order beginning in 1973 following the return to power of Deng Xiaoping and several other more pragmatic communist leaders. From 1971 to 1976 (when the "Cultural Revolution" was

officially ended), 8,987 students were admitted to the university which by then consisted of seven departments mostly in engineering fields.

TU in the reform years (1977-1997)

When Deng Xiaoping finally took supreme power of the country following Mao's death in 1976, one of the first things he did was to abolish all of Mao's policies that had been carried out in universities during the "Cultural Revolution." He wanted Chinese universities to return to their conventional role as academic, professional and elite educational institutions. This started a major shift in the re-structuring of the major universities.

All "soldier- or worker-turned" school leaders were dismissed. The TU leadership sought out people who were not only communists, but were also professors or academics in order to bolster its image as an academic institution. Higher education degrees hence became one of the crucial criteria in selecting Party and administrative leaders. Promotional opportunities were limited (and sometimes denied) to those who did not have a higher education level even though they may have been loyal members of the Party.

The respect for professors and academics was restored with the reinstauration of a system of academic ranking. Scholars with higher academic titles would enjoy more privileges such as higher pay, larger apartments or paid vacations to government-owned resort spots. More and more senior academics were invited to hold honorary positions in various governments. Some of the most famous ones were rewarded by the state or community with medals, trophies or even money awards.

The practice of allowing students to enter university without passing strict entrance

exams was terminated. The central government reinstated the national entrance examinations for all university and college admissions in 1977. Hundreds of thousands of young people (many of them at that time were already in their early 30s) who had been denied the chance of a higher education and sent to work on farms or in factories during the "Cultural Revolution" took the state entrance exams and were later admitted to universities. The entrance examinations since then have become the most crucial event in young peoples' lives. In 1977, TU enrolled 1,117 undergraduate students. The number increased to 1,324 in 1978 and 1,844 in 1981. TU also started offering MA programmes in 1978. That year 108 graduate students were enrolled (Editorial Group 1995b, 275-292). The number of graduate students totalled 2,183 in 1994, of which 359 were doctoral students (Zuo et al 1995, 10).

Deng was also credited for having opened the door of the Chinese universities to the West. After nearly 30 years, the first group of scholars from the People's Republic arrived in the United States on December 26, 1978 (Qian 1996, 13), which later turned into a 15-year surge of an influx of Chinese students to universities of all Western countries. In TU alone, an estimated 500 teachers and students were sponsored by the school to pursue their studies in Western universities and research centres (Tianjin University News Letter 1997). For those who did not have the chance to go abroad, they were encouraged to publish their research papers in foreign journals or participate in international competitions of scholarly research. The school also had exchange or joint programmes with over 70 universities in 20 countries (Zuo 1995, 34). Many foreign scholars were invited to give lectures or conduct joint research programmes on campus. There were also well over 100 foreign students studying at TU at that time.

Since the mid-1980s, efforts have been made to incorporate more social science or humanity programmes into a school curriculum which had predominantly focused on science and technology. The School of Business and Commerce and the School of Humanities were established to provide students with more diversified course options so that they would be equipped with more skills besides their engineering majors. Currently, the university is composed of 21 departments, schools of graduate studies, adult education and vocational education and an education management training centre (Zuo 1995, 30).[40]

Organizational Structure

TU is characterized as a *danwei* in the centralized organizational structure of the Chinese state. Although it is composed of many sub-*danweis* within its own structure, its status as a state unit is principally determined by its direct connections to the state system of organization and planning. Its leadership has to be appointed by the state bureaucracy and it constitutes a basic unit in the government budget allocation.

TU as a *danwei* ranks at the "bureau level" in the state hierarchy which consists of five basic levels: the central, ministry/province, bureau/city, division/county, and section/township (See Appendix IV).[41] The organizational status usually reflects the importance of the *danwei* in the eyes of the central planners. It indicates the rank of the *danwei*'s top leaders and defines their salaries and the level of access to privileges and

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[40] At present TU is in a process of re-organizing its departments into several schools, an obvious effort to follow the trend in North America.

[41] It used to be on the "deputy ministerial level" in the 1950s.

internal information. For example, if a *danwei* is ranked at the "bureau" level, its leader would be of equal rank to people who are mayors of medium-sized cities or hold the position of bureau chief in the central or provincial governments. This rank would entitle him/her to have a salary of a bureau chief and enjoy certain privileges designated to his/her level, such as the size of apartment he/she should be given, the kind of limousines he/she should have access to, etc. One of most important privileges that comes with the title is the access to government meetings and information. He/she is entitled to participate at the "bureau" level meetings and have access to state information which is allowed to circulate to the bureau-level officials. The benefits are obvious. The more officials he/she gets acquainted with and the more information he/she obtains, the more he/she has knowledge and leverage to influence the decision-makers in the government.

TU is under the direct leadership of the Ministry of Education in regard to its finance, professional activities and administration. Its president and vice presidents are appointed by the Ministry. It receives educational directives and annual funding from the Ministry. However its Party system is under the supervision of the local Party Committee of Tianjin City which is responsible for appointing Party leaders of the school and supervising the ideological and security aspects of school work such as political studies, propaganda campaigns, campus security, recruiting new Party members, and so on.

This dual supervision results in two parallel systems of directives within the school power structure, one is the administrative order and the other the Party order. Appendix V summarizes TU's internal organization structure in a simple chart. The university's top leadership is represented by two overlapping councils: the board of directors headed by the

president and the Party committee by the Party secretary. Yet the president and the Party chief also sit as members in the other's group.

Under the president, there are usually 3-4 vice presidents, each responsible for one specified aspect of work, such as teaching, research, management and logistics. They control such administrative divisions as the personnel departments, teaching departments, research departments, financial departments, general management departments, the foreign liaison office, construction departments, equipment departments, etc.

Below this central administration, there are faculty departments, research centres, factories and other service facilities. Within a department, there are teaching groups organized on the basis of programmes. Under the command of the department director, they are the smallest administrative sub-units within the school *danwei*.

Parallel to the executive system, there exists a Party branch. The Party chief also has 2-3 deputy secretaries to help him supervise the propaganda campaigns, students' ideological or moral education, recruitment or security work. The Party-controlled central divisions, include the propaganda department, organization department, security department, youth department, trade union, etc.

At the faculty level, each department has a Party head which is a full-time position directly responsible to the school Party committee. His/her job is to implement the Party policies or initiatives at the grass-roots units. He/she organizes Party activities with the faculty members of the department. He/she also has a number of political tutors under direct command whose job it is to supervise the ideological, moral or psychological well-being of

students.[42]

Specialised Activities

As a modern organization, TU has the specific goal of providing higher education. The specialized activities that are organized follow the normal pattern of a university, not much different from a university in the West. There are departments, colleges and research institutes (See Appendix VI for detailed information).

The Chinese school year starts on September 1 with the winter session finishing sometime in January. There is a three week winter vacation for the Chinese New Year. The classes resume two weeks after the New Year celebrations and end in mid-July. During each session, there are two official examinations, mid-term exams and end-of-term exams.

The activities are conducted basically in the format of classroom teaching, lab tutoring, reading, writing and field studies. Professors usually prepare their classes at home or in offices. They go to meetings with their colleagues in their teaching groups or departments to discuss matters such as curricula, class schedules, teaching methods, evaluations, research funding and teacher training. With the exception of those who are political tutors, teachers do not have much contact with undergraduate students after class.

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[42] The political tutor was not a very desired job to university graduates in the 1980s when most of them wanted to pursue a more rewarding academic career. However, the Communist Party started to make it more attractive and rewarding to young people by establishing it as a specific profession - the political educator. Now a person in the field could become a professor of political education. The move is one of the Party's escalating efforts to strengthen the Party presence at university campuses after the nation-wide student demonstrations rocked the country in the spring of 1989.

They usually go to classes, give their lectures and leave. A closer student/professor relationship is developed only when the student enters a graduate programme.

Unlike Western universities which are not responsible for finding jobs for their students, Chinese universities *assign* positions to their graduates. One of the planned economy's legacies is to make sure its university elite have a job. In old times, the government sent a job-vacancy list to the school and the school decided who would get what job based on numerous criteria - academic merit, school performance, political affiliation, family background, competence, personality, health concerns, hometown location, marriage status, etc. Everyone was guaranteed a job, but there were good jobs and "not-so-good" jobs. However, things changed in the reform era as both employers and students wanted to have more say when it came to the job market. Students, particularly those with marketable skills and talents, preferred to find a job themselves. Companies and government employers also preferred to make a selection of potential candidates from a number of sources. More and more job fairs were created on campus. But for those who were unlucky in their job hunting search, they could always be assigned a job in the end.

Financial Resources and Economic Activities

TU has been a public school throughout the years. In the 1950s to 1970s, it relied primarily on government funding. However, the situation changed dramatically in the last 15 years as the school was given more autonomy to generate its own funds. In 1994, TU generated a total revenue of US$27 million (224 million RMB), of which the education and research funding allocated by the government budget accounted for only 29 percent (about

US$7.88 million). The remainder of this amount was either raised by the school through various sources or produced as business income from university enterprises.

All university employees had a basic salary which was designated by the government salary system based on the position, academic title, education, and seniority. In addition they were awarded bonuses by different levels of the organization, such as the university, the department or the research group they belong to, based on their performance and the financial situation of these organizations. The government budget covered only the basic salaries and all the extra income would necessarily have to come from other sources.

It was just a few years ago that university students did not have to pay a fee for their study. There were no tuition fees, textbook costs, medical insurance, dormitory rent, etc. Everything was covered by the state including a paid student monthly allowance for food. This situation no longer exists. Since the cost of education has been soaring and state funding dwindling, the university started charging students tuition fees and other costs. In 1997 a student had to pay about US$240 (2,000 RMB) for the four-year tuition fee. This was not a lot of money for urban students, but a financial burden for students coming from the poor countryside.

In addition to TU's specialized educational activities, the university was also engaged in many business enterprises. TU owned seven factories, one hi-tech development company, four campus hotels and several service companies. It also partly owned six hi-tech manufacturing companies in the Tianjin Economic Zone or other cities in the fields of chemicals and pharmaceuticals with a total investment of US$27 million (Zuo et al. 1995, 23). These businesses became increasingly important for the school as it had to depend more

and more on financial resources outside the state budget provisions.

The top priority for the school leaders gradually became focused on funding -- how and where to find more money to support projects, to raise bonuses for teachers, to build more apartments for employees, and so on. Everyone in the community was encouraged to bring in money to the school. TU even set up a rule that allowed a person who obtained financing for the university to keep a certain percentage to him/herself as a bonus, even if the money obtained might be only used for research purposes.

Another strategy was to contract out some university businesses to TU employees. The school provided the initial investment, offices, facilities and salaries, and the employee contractors provided management, operation and profit earning. Each year the contractors would hand in a certain percentage of the business income to the school and keep a portion of it for themselves. Any school business activity, ranging from a specific research project, adult education centre, printing press, school cafeteria, campus hotel, clinic, bus service, could be arranged based on this type of business relationship. The campus cable station, which is the focus of this thesis, is managed under such a contractual agreement.

This increasing diversity in funding created both advantages and disadvantages for the school as a community. First it gave the school leaders more leverage in pursuing the agenda that fit the interests of the school. Since the government funding became less and less important, the university itself had more say in running it. It could come up with some policies that served the best interests of the community, rather than the state.

Secondly, it made the school leaders's job more accountable to the needs of the people. As the community's welfare basically depended on the leaders' ability to raise more

money, people would watch the leaders very closely. Anything deemed unconstructive or harmful to the goal of building a better community would become unacceptable. School leaders had to be careful so as to project an image of working for the community, and not for themselves.

However, there was also a considerable negative impact on the community. The gap in income distribution grew increasingly wider. An associate professor earned about US$87 per month as a basic salary. If his research group or department did not obtain any additional funding or business income, he ended up with a very limited bonus. However, a professor living next door might earn a bonus five to seven times his basic salary if he happened to work in a research group which had been able to acquire extensive research funding. Being a member of a richer department which had a number of lucrative businesses was definitely an asset. Such an income disparity created tension in the old harmonious life of the community where people used to have almost equal salaries.

Self-Contained Community

As a *danwei*, TU carries other functions far beyond the specialized activities of higher education. It is a social organization in which its members are able to satisfy a wide range of their needs including a job, socialization, leisure activities, children's education, social welfare and so on. For most TU people, they virtually live their lives in the *danwei* to which they belong.

One of the essential factors that characterize TU as a *danwei* community is that its employees live on the university compound. About 70 percent of the TU people live in the

apartments owned and assigned to them by the university. As a rule, TU is responsible for providing housing to its employees. Taking into consideration the lack of land and an ever increasing population, the housing aspect, consequently, becomes one of the major, yet most troublesome, tasks of the university.

Every year the school had to allocate a certain portion of its funding to build new apartments. It then had to assign them to its employees based on a very complicated point system which took into account various elements such as, not only an employee's position, academic title, age, sex, marriage status and seniority, but also his/her performance, spouse's *danwei*, children's age and sex and so on. In later years, it also required employees to put down a certain percentage of the payment so that the university could raise more money to build more apartments. Although about half of the school construction projects built over the years were to house employees, there was always a shortage of housing.

Besides housing, the university also provided other social welfare functions. It took care of its retirees by paying them a pension and providing them with seniors' centres and cricket playgrounds. The medical care was largely covered by the university which had a sophisticated hospital on the campus with about 100 beds. The school also paid for a regular medical checkup at its faculties. There was a university-run kindergarten on campus which took care of employees' children from six months to six years old. For children between seven to 18 years old they could go to the elementary school or middle school affiliated with TU.

The university offered other service facilities too. It had its own switchboard for the school telephone system. It had its own credit cooperative, grocery stores, faculty restaurants,

health clubs, cinemas, sports facilities, travel service, a shuttle bus to Beijing, a cable television station, etc. In practice, a TU person could have almost all his/her needs met without as much as stepping outside of the campus. A number of years ago when food was not as abundant as it is currently, the school also distributed food such as fish, chicken, pork, apples, oranges, or even rice to its people during the holiday season. One could recognize such times when the same fish smell would come out of everyone's kitchen.

Social Relations

The tie that binds a *danwei* employee to his/her *danwei* is not based on a contractual relation. It is based on an unwritten commitment the employee pledges to the *danwei* which is a local embodiment of the state. He/she is not hired by the *danwei*, he/she is assigned by the state to work in this *danwei*. As such, no one in the *danwei*, not even the leaders of the *danwei*, has the authority to annul this relationship. For many years, an individual's bond to a *danwei* was a lifetime commitment: he/she committed him/herself to the development of the *danwei* and submitted him/herself to its surveillance in his/her political, ideological or social life. In return he/she was guaranteed a lifetime security of a job and all the perks and benefits that went along with that job. He/she could not be fired unless he/she quit. He/she virtually belonged to the *danwei*.

However, in the past 15 years, this close union started to change. People were allowed to move more freely between *danweis*. There was also an increasing number of people who chose to give up their *danwei* job and became employed by the private or semi-private sector based on contractual relations. Meanwhile, *danwei* leaders were also given

more power in managing the usually oversized staff. Each *danwei* was allocated a fixed size of staff. *Danwei* leaders would decide who should stay in what job. Those who were left were either transferred to other departments or organized together into special projects or training programmes.[43] There was also a growing diversity in the type of employment. Many were still assigned as full-time employees by the state and some were hired on a contractual basis by the *danweis*.

In TU, the majority of the people were still full-time *danwei* employees. However more and more marginal jobs, such as carpenters, plumbers, doormen or cafeteria cooks became contractual positions. The contract workers were not entitled to the many benefits such as housing, medical insurance, pension of the *danwei* that were enjoyed by permanent staffers.

Another feature of the social relations among *danwei* members is that people tend to be related to each other by the multiple definitions of relationships (*guanxi*) beyond the formal workplace connections of employer/employee, supervisor/supervisee, or superior/subordinate. Everyone is linked to one another in a variety of particular relations defined not only by affiliations in the workplace, but also by shared past experience, the region from which they originated, the school they attended, mutual family connections, etc.

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[43] The problem of downsizing became more acute in *danweis* in industries than in government and education *danweis* since the recent reform attempted to transform the state enterprises from the *danwei*-styled organization to a full-fledged modern business based exclusively on the principle of specialization, efficiency and profits. Millions of state factory employees had been downsized from their former jobs and pushed into the job market. They usually receive about US$25-40 monthly allowance from their factories to stay home.

A *danwei* co-worker is not just a colleague; he/she could also be a former class-mate, a fellow-townsman, a former comrade-in-arms in the military, a relative or a family friend, or all of the above combined. He could also be a friend of a former class-mate, or a fellow-townsman of a family relative. All these particular connections mean that this co-worker could be counted on as an alliance when power politics occur in the group or be taken care of in case of distribution of scarce rewarding resources such as housing, promotion or overseas training.

People in the community have very frequent personal contacts everyday. In addition to working together, they would do morning or work-break exercises together, or go grocery shopping together after work. Since most of them live in the university compound, there are a lot of social contacts and activities among fellow-workers and their families in their spare time. People would drop by colleagues' or friends' homes, very often delivering food or gifts, chatting, or enjoying meals together. They know each other's spouses, children and other family members. They would help each other whenever assistance was needed such as babysitting, painting, moving, furniture deliveries, repair of electronic appliances, or nursing the sick. They provide advice and opinions on almost everything from a career move, future spouses, to children's education, in-laws relationships, food bargains, size of television, colour of furniture, or brand of bicycles, etc. It is worth noting that in the community environment, such exchange of favours or gifts is remembered and calculated more in terms of an event between two people in a continuing reciprocal relationship rather than transactions that are conducted based on market exchange of equally valued goods or services.

The close social contacts within the university community are sustained by the fact that the membership in the community is quite stable and continues throughout the generations. As one of the privileged *danweis*, TU has no problem attracting employees. Once employed by it, people would most likely stay permanently. This was particularly true with the older generation of TU faculty members who were recruited in the 1950s-1970s when the mobility among employment and cities was very rare, if not totally impossible. Since the late 1970s, the problem of unemployment in Chinese cities grew so acute that individual *danweis* started assuming a new responsibility of providing jobs for the children of its employees.

In TU, it is not uncommon to have families whose second or third generation members work in TU too. The second generation would live in the same compound where they grew up and send their kids to the same nursery or schools they themselves used to attend. They may work in the same office buildings or departments where their parents had worked. Even in the cases where many of them are not TU employees, they may continue living in the community compound even after they started their own families due to the difficulty of acquiring new apartments in the city. In such a continuous social ecology, individual contacts become associated with family relationships, present exchange of transactions becomes mingled with the memory of past interactions. Rather than being seen as an individual, self-responsible TU employee, he/she would be seen as someone's son/daughter by the community members. He/she thus would have to inherit the legacy of relationships and responsibility his/her parents or even grandparents established. It is this continuity in membership that has added the crucial component to the long process in which

TU has been transformed from a communist work unit into a modern-day Chinese urban community.

CHAPTER VII

THE TIANJIN UNIVERSITY CABLE TV STATION

The Tianjin University Cable Television Station (TUTV) was founded in July 1993 in the wave of the rapid development of cable television in China. It was one of the first *danwei*-run cable stations set up in Tianjin. Currently its cable network covers the whole territory of the university with about 4,000 household subscribers, [44] which accounts for 80 percent of the community population of faculties and their families.[45] Carrying 26 channels including its own programming, the campus cable service is operated as a self-financing business under the umbrella leadership of TU. This chapter provides a general description of the campus cable in terms of its organizational structure, financial budget, operation, programming and reception. An analysis of its status and function in relation to the university as a community will be presented in the following two chapters.

Development of Cable Television in Tianjin

The development of cable television in China was never a homogeneous process. It evolved into a variety of models in terms of control and management. Each metropolitan area in China took its own course of cable development differing from others depending largely on how cable television was initiated in a particular locale. Some cities had more

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[44] The cable network also covers a residential section of neighbouring Tianjin Teachers' University of about 300 households (Zhou 1995).

[45] At present, the school's cable service is not available to the students dorms yet. TUTV's newest plan is to provide cable service to the student dormitory areas on campus.

decentralized cable systems, others more commercialized. For example, cable television in Shanghai featured a highly integrated system which permitted no district or *danwei* cable stations. The municipal cable station controlled all the territory. Guangzhou demonstrated another kind of experience, which was the only major city in China that allowed its cable station to carry four channels directly broadcast from Hong Kong. By comparison, cable television in Tianjin City featured one of the most decentralized examples of cable development in the country.

Tianjin metropolitan, the third largest city in China, covers an area of 11,000 square kilometres with a population of nine million. By 1994, the city territory had been divided into several cable districts. Major districts (similar to city districts in Canada) including Hexi, Heping and Nankai, had established their own cable networks within their own territories. The municipal cable network covered only part of the city.

The disjointed cable systems resulted from the fact that the Tianjin government had been slow to recognize the potential of cable technology. Between 1987 and 1990, the city concentrated its financial resources on building one of the tallest television transmission towers in the country. It planned to provide six local channels upon the completion of the TV tower in the early 1990s. Even in mid-1992, when several major cities in China including Shanghai and Beijing were speeding ahead with cable projects, the Tianjin government still hesitated at the idea of cable television. A document issued by the city broadcasting bureau in August 1992 insisted that cable television should not be the priority objective of television development in Tianjin (Wang 1995).

It was not until the summer of 1993 that the city finally decided to throw its weight

behind the establishment of a municipal cable station. But it was already too late. By that time, several major districts and large territorial *danweis* had already launched their cable projects. The Hexi District inaugurated the first cable programming in the city in February 1993. And several other district and *danwei* stations were busy building cable networks within their own territories. Before the municipal cable station was finally completed in June 1994, the city had already been carved up into several cable zones controlled by administrative districts and large *danwei* communities. District or *danwei* cable stations had their own satellite reception and transmission facilities and a cable network covering their respective territories. They offered a variety of programming including foreign video films and programmes directly broadcast through satellite from Hong Kong. They also carried advertising to generate additional income.

Immediately after the Tianjin Cable Station was established in June 1994, the city's Broadcasting & Television Bureau began pushing for a project to integrate all district and *danwei* cable stations into the city's cable system, hoping eventually to monopolize cable television. Needless to say, this plan encountered strong resistance from local cable companies. None of them were willing to give up this lucrative business to the city. Backed by the city government decrees and regulations, the city cable company finally connected all the cable networks to its transmission system at the end of 1995. In doing so, it removed the ability of district and community cable companies to receive and broadcast programmes directly from satellites. Only the municipal cable station was allowed satellite reception. Other cable companies could only distribute what they received from the city system. However, this move did not lead to the elimination of local stations since the city could not

afford to buy up all the district cable facilities and networks established by local resources. The district and *danwei* cable stations were allowed to exist, although under more restrictions. The Tianjin University Cable Television represented one of these struggling cable services.[46]

Early Development of TUTV (1993-1995)

By the early 1990s, television had become a household item in the community of TU as well as in urban areas like Tianjin. However, viewers had a very limited choice of channels. There were only five channels available in 1990 -- two channels from the Central Television Station (CCTV) and three local channels from Tianjin. The reception of TV signals was lamentable because it was often interfered with by the features of the city environment such as high buildings or passing vehicles.

The early 1990s was also a period of audience alienation from the state media. This was basically the result of massive public disapproval of the government's use of force against the student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. The audience resistance was particularly evident on university campuses. A growing number of people, shunning the official media, turned to video films made in Hong Kong and Taiwan, or to radio programmes broadcast by Western nations. People were in a depressed mood and sought entertainment to make them get over the fear and anger they experienced during the June 4 massacre.

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[46] Detailed examination of the control and contestation over local cable television in Tianjin City will be provided in Chapter VIII and IX.

Meanwhile, the governments at various levels, particularly local governments and the community leadership, were trying hard to win back people's confidence in the system. In Tianjin, both municipal and district governments made a painstaking effort to launch projects dubbed "doing good things for the people," such as giving shabby neighbourhoods a face-lift, renovating old buildings, setting up more public washrooms and installing new sewage systems. They tried to find and promote projects that were popular with the local population. One of the district governments in Tianjin started promoting a district cable project that produced immediate benefits. The project was not only greeted enthusiastically by its residents, but also turned out to be a lucrative business for the local treasury as well. Cable television then became the pet project on top of the list of "doing-good-things" projects for district governments in Tianjin.

One such district cable plan caught the eye of Wu Yongshi, the TU president at the time. He read a document issued by the government of Nankai District (where TU was located) which described a plan for cable television in the district. He thought it was a good idea to set up a locally run cable station which could provide more entertainment to the community (Wu 1997). He asked leaders at the Electronic Education Centre to conduct a feasibility study of how to set up a cable television system at TU.

The Electronic Education Centre was originally established in 1979 when universities began to revive during the post-Mao period of economic reform and industrialization. It imported several sets of equipment for TV production and broadcasting for the purpose of television education. However, the centre was never fully used due to the fact that there was never sufficient funding to equip classrooms with television sets and there were few people

who had experience in running an audio-visual facility. Before long, all the equipment became obsolete and the centre had to import new equipment which formed the foundation for future cable facilities (Zheng 1997).

Zheng Jiayang, Chief Engineer of TUTV, was the only person in 1993 who knew anything about cable television. An electrical engineer by profession, he had been involved in providing consulting services for the establishment of the Nankai District Cable Television which was put into operation in December 1993. Zheng advised the university that a campus cable station could be funded by the installation fees it charged to the subscribers without substantial investment from the university. His plan of a self-financing cable service was approved by the school authority and the construction of a satellite transmission centre and a cable network were established in due course.

With the construction of a transmission centre underway, workers at the newly-established cable station were busy soliciting customers in the school's residential area. They went door-to-door asking people to sign up with the service. One of the most cited reasons they used to sell the service was that they would provide Hong Kong (HK) TV programming received directly from the satellite dish. Since none of the existing TV stations were permitted by the state to carry such programming, people were eager to sign up with the campus cable (Zhang 1997). The station began its first broadcasting on July 1, 1993.

In addition to HK programming, the campus cable also carried over 15 channels featuring programming from provincial TV stations which used satellite to transmit their signals. There was also the TUTV channel showing video films and programming made by the campus cable. The TUTV daily service in the early days included the playing of two

feature films on videotapes (mostly films made in Hong Kong, Taiwan or the United States) and 40-50 minutes of community programming, such as the campus news and a science education programme for children.

My first field research conducted in the spring 1995 indicated that cable television by then had become a prevalent medium in the community. Nearly all the families I visited had been connected to the community cable. They had access to a variety of programming including HK television and American movies which no state or regional television stations would carry at that time. The HK programming and English-language American films were popular among the audience. There was also a fascination on the part of the viewers who could see themselves or their friends on television in the community programming. People who worked with community cable were also very enthusiastic about their jobs. They talked continuously about how to improve their community-based programmes.

On my second trip to the community two years later (in 1997), I found that the original fascination with cable had diminished. Cable had become such an integral part of community life that people took it for granted. Meanwhile, I noticed that the variety of programming provided by the community cable was reduced, which was one of the indications of the continuing government efforts to institutionalize the community cable into the state apparatus of mass media. Between 1993 and 1997, the autonomy of the campus cable was dealt several major blows.

The first blow came from the municipal security bureau which contacted TUTV about six months after it began broadcasting. It ordered TUTV to stop broadcasting programming from Hong Kong citing that such an action violated the state regulation which prohibited

receiving and transmitting television signals broadcast from abroad. TUTV ignored the order for several months, continuing to show programmes from Hong Kong. On one particular day, people from the city security bureau just entered the campus, disconnected the satellite transmission and confiscated some of the equipment. The Hong Kong programming was stopped immediately amidst a loud and boisterous outcry from cable subscribers.

The second setback was the restriction on the transmission of videotaped films by cable companies. At the beginning, there were no regulations respecting copyrights. Any cable service could play whatever videotapes it had laid its hands on. Later on, cable services were required to show only the videotapes that were rented from the government-broadcasting bureau. The newest rule was that the community cable could present only those videotaped films that had been shown by the regional or district cable services.

The most serious step on the part of Tianjin City to institutionalize *danwei* cable television came in late 1995. In essence, the municipal government issued a mandate demanding that all the district and *danwei* cable stations be integrated into the cable network run by the municipal cable company by the end of 1995. It was obvious that by doing so, the competing local cable stations would be incorporated into the signal network of the cable television system controlled by the city. This move, in fact, deprived the local cable services of their original functions of independently receiving and transmitting satellite signals. At the same time, the Tianjin City municipal government also promoted the interests of the city-owned cable service by taking advantage of the existing resource of cable networks

developed by various districts and communities.[47] Under the mandate, TUTV was connected to the city cable network on December 31, 1995.

Though the campus cable still maintained its satellite facilities in 1997 and had full ownership of its cable network in the community proper, it no longer broadcast programmes received directly from its own satellite dishes. Its main job was to assure that the transmission of cable programming from the city cable station to the school system worked smoothly. (In light of these changes), what follows is a detailed examination of the university community cable system.

Location and Offices

TUTV is situated in the central part of the university campus, two blocks from the Administration Building, where the leadership of the school is located. It shares the three-story building with the Department of Oceanology and Shipbuilding. In fact, the sign at the main entrance of the building only bears the name of "Electronic Education Centre" instead of TUTV. This may indicate that the legal status of the campus cable as an independent entity remains somewhat undefined.

The cable station occupies the western sections of the building on both the second and third floors. There are iron-bar security gates on each floor separating the area dedicated to the cable station from the remainder of the floor which houses classrooms and offices. Such unusual security signifies the importance of the cable station. Its high security status

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[47] I will closely examine the significance of this move in Chapter IX.

offers a glimpse into both its role as a central medium and a valuable property of the community. Except for the director's office, which is on the second floor, the facilities and main activities of the cable television operations are all located on the third floor of the building (See Map III).

Organization and Responsibilities

TUTV has the rank of deputy bureau in the organizational structure. It is a unit that is subordinate to the direct leadership of the vice-president who supervises the education and research development of the university (See Appendix V and VII). This supervision connection reflects an important divergence of the TU leadership in viewing cable television as a community medium. Unlike other community media outlets such as the newspaper and wired radio stations which are considered a propaganda instrument and controlled tightly under the directives of the Propaganda Department of the school Party Committee, the cable station is more of an entertainment medium. It keeps an obvious distance from the direct command of the Party.[48] The school has a seven-member leadership group which is composed of a vice-president, a deputy Party secretary and representatives from other administrative departments and cable stations. The group meets once a year to discuss the general direction of the campus cable.

The cable station itself is an organization with a clearly defined hierarchical structure. The director is responsible for reporting to the superior offices and at the same time

[48] I will explore the issue again in more detail in the next chapter.

receives directives and information from them in regard to the cable business. He then forwards these directives or information to the deputy directors. He supervises the cable station in general with a specific focus on its business management and development. He has a secretary/bookkeeper under his direct supervision, whose job it is to collect cable fees and assist the director with office work.

The deputy director (technical) is responsible for making decisions regarding technical aspects of the cable station. He has four technicians under his supervision whose job it is to provide technical maintenance to the central system and the cable network. They are also responsible for the installation of and repairs to the system.

The deputy director (news) is the chief editor and also the leader of the Party group in the station. He writes news scripts and supervises the news and programming production and broadcasting. Under his supervision, there are cameramen, editors and announcers. There are two cameramen who go to various events in the community to shoot television footage. They do not conduct interviews in the field. The written materials are usually provided by the groups which organize the events. The station has one programming editor who correlates, arranges, synchronizes, trims or cuts TV footage to make a final version of the programming. Another position under the supervision of the programming editor is that of a news announcer/interviewer. This is a part-time position, usually filled by an attractive female graduate student who is selected to do the job. She reads the transcript given to her by the chief editor. There is also an English news broadcaster who is a teacher of English and does the job part-time. Every week, he translates the community news into English and broadcasts it. Other positions include a person working in the reference room to manage a

library of videotapes, and three seniors (retired personnel from the university) working on three shifts as security guards in order to provide twenty four hour security and monitoring of the central control system.

Business Operation

TUTV is run under a form of self-financing known in China as the "contract-responsibility" business. It is a mixture of public ownership and commercial operation. The campus cable is owned by the university which provides the building, the initial investment for equipment and the basic salaries for the full-time employees. However, its operation has been contracted out to people who work in the station on terms of "assuming the sole responsibility of profits or losses." They are responsible for soliciting cable subscribers to finance the establishment of the cable service including a cable network, part of the required equipment, maintenance and repair costs, labour costs for part-time workers and the bonus for the salaried staff. The university did not provide extra funding for the cable project in 1993. The investment of ¥1,200,000 (US$144,578) came entirely from the installation fees (¥200 - about US$24.10 per household) and subscriptions.

The cable service now charges ¥5 (US$0.60) a month for a basic service of 22 channels, and an additional ¥3 (US$0.36) for an extended service of 26 channels.[49] With a yearly subscription income of ¥384,000 (US$46,265), it has to pay the municipal cable

[49] An average monthly income in Tianjin in 1997 was about ¥500 (US$60.25). For ¥8 people could buy 2.2 kilos of rice, or 4.5 bottles of locally brewed beer, or 2.29 cans of Coca Cola.

company about ¥30,000 (US$3,614) as the connection fee. The rest would be used to cover maintenance and repair costs, hydro and water bills, production costs and other related expenses. The people in the cable service frequently complained to me that money was very tight. It was barely enough to make ends meet.

They were reluctant to disclose just how much bonus they would receive each year. However, I was given some figures about the rates of production bonuses. For example, a cameraman would receive ¥10 (US$1.20) for each piece of news he shot which appeared in the Community News programme. For an editor or news reporter, he would receive ¥10 for two pieces of broadcasted news stories he edited or wrote. A news announcer was paid ¥500 (US$60.24) per month for roughly 15 hours of work while a security guard's monthly earning was about ¥200. Since most of them have a basic salary or pension of ¥300-700 a month depending on their positions, education or seniority, it is evident that working for the campus cable provides a comfortable way of earning extra money.

The cable service also yields a small advertising income. During my field research period of March-June 1997, it ran one single 30-second commercial daily before its 8 o'clock evening news. The ad featured a local optical company which offered optometric services on campus every Friday afternoon. The cable people did not reveal the earnings from advertising revenues insisting that this revenue was minimal since it had a very limited audience base . However, it is important to note that the cable service, in comparison to other sub-units in the school, has one of the most lavish budgets that are the envy of many other departments and groups on campus. My impression is that their financial situation is in a much better state than what they would admit publicly. It is, after all, to their benefit to whine

as loudly as possible about the shortage of funds. It is also in their best interests to minimize their revenues in order not to be squeezed by the school authority to hand over some of the profits generated by the cable service. Finally, it is not wise to arouse jealousy on behalf of other members of the community who have difficulty accepting the fact that their cable service neighbours would earn more than themselves.

The cable station's newest plan is to build a cable network in the student dormitory areas so that it could provide television service to over 10,000 university students living on campus. Director Zhou insisted that the campus cable could not be sustained by the current revenue of 4,000 subscribers. By connecting student dormitories to the cable service, he believed that his cable station would be able to generate more revenue, either through subscription fees or advertising income, and still maintain a highly satisfactory service (Zhou 1997).

Programming

The cable station offers a basic service of 22 channels and an extended service with four more encoded CCTV specialty channels. The channel list is as follows:

Figure II. Channel List

Channel No.	Station Name	Location/Owner
1	Chinese News	Central Government
2	TJTV	Tianjin City
3	CCTV 7 *	Central Government
4	CCTV 1	"

5	China Education TV 1	,,
6	CCTV 3	,,
7	Xinjiang TV	Xinjiang Autonomous Region
8	TJ CATV	Tianjin City
9	Nankai District CATV	Nankai District
10	CCTV 2	Central Government
11	TJTV 3	Tianjin City
12	Beijing TV 2	Beijing City
13	TJTV 2	Tianjin City
14	Hebei TV	Hebei Province
15	Xizang TV	Xizang Autonomous Region
16	Beijing TV 3	Beijing City
17	Shandong TV	Shandong Province
18	**TUTV**	**Tianjin University**
19	Zhejiang TV	Zhejiang Province
20	CCTV 4	Central Government
21	CCTV 8 (Performances) *	,,
22	CCTV 6 (Movies) *	,,
23	Yunnan TV	Yunnan Province
24	CCTV 5 (Sports) *	Central Government
25	Sichuan TV	Sichuan Province
26	Home Video	
27	China Education TV 2	Central Government

Note: * indicates encoded specialty channels.

It is obvious that the state television dominates the programming with 11 out of 26 channels. The local Tianjin government TV companies are the second most important players with four channels. The remainder are mostly provincial-level television stations,

given permission by the central government, to transmit their programming through satellite.[50] However, it is worth noting that community and neighbourhood cable stations are able to occupy two channels in this hierarchy of programming. One is the cable service run by the Nankai District where TU is geographically situated and the other is the channel of the TU campus cable. The school cable service offers self-made programming of about three hours a week. The typical weekly schedule of the service is as follows:

Figure III. TUTV Programme Schedule

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>19:55</th><th>20:00</th><th>20:10</th><th>21:00</th><th>21:30</th></tr>
<tr><td>Monday</td><td rowspan="7">Programme Listing, Community Information, Advertising</td><td colspan="3">Academic Talents</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Tuesday</td><td colspan="3">Campus Topics</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Wednesday</td><td colspan="3">Academic Talents (Repeat)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Thursday</td><td colspan="3">Campus Topics (Repeat)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Friday</td><td>Campus News</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Saturday</td><td>Campus News (Repeat)</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Sunday</td><td>Campus News (Repeat)</td><td colspan="2">Special Programme</td><td>English News (7-8 Minutes)</td></tr>
</table>

The "Academic Talents" is a 45-minute programme featuring interviews with university professors who have made a distinctive achievement in academic research or teaching and are renowned in their special fields. These professors, interviewed by a campus

[50] The Chinese government has very strict rules about which regional television stations could be permitted to have their programming carried out through satellite. It is only those TV services, which are owned by provincial governments and cover a vast mountainous area where satellite transmission is the only option for television penetration, that are granted satellite rights.

reporter either in their office or at home, would normally talk about their educational background, academic achievement, teaching experience and current projects. The cable station plans to produce 100 interviews featuring 100 of the best known professors at the school.

The "Campus Topics" programme focuses on the current and important tasks of the school in regard to major policy changes and implementations such as a new housing purchase plan, modified security measures, and so on. Usually it is the Chief Editor who interviews the school leaders who are responsible for a particular new project. The leaders would explain to the community audience what the new tasks are and how they should be performed. This is supposed to be a regular show. But in my research period of March-May 1997, the programme did not appear every week.

The "Special Programme" features some irregularly produced shows on specific events or topics. It is usually an extensive coverage of unusual performances, public speeches by important figures or important issues. For example, one of the special programmes in March 1997 featured a two-hour presentation by the president of the TU Alumni Association's Hong Kong Chapter on the situation of Hong Kong prior to the Communist takeover on July 1, 1997. The speech was well received and attracted many viewers in the community. Another programme contained the full coverage of a special concert given on campus by one of the most popular opera troupes in China.

The station devoted most of its efforts in making the 10-minute Campus News which airs every Friday evening and is repeated the following Saturday and Sunday. It usually contains 7-8 news items. The following list indicates the news programme broadcast on May

25, 1997:

Figure IV. Sample Topics of the "Campus News"

News Order	Topic
1	University leaders meet with a university alumnus who has become a billionaire in Hong Kong and is donating about US$7 million to the school.
2	The billionaire is awarded the school's honourable professor title.
3	The university holds a student sports meet.
4	A painting and calligraphy exhibition is held on campus.
5	A campus quiz is held to promote the knowledge on the Party.
6	A renowned radio anchorman gives a lecture on speech communication to students of liberal arts.
7	A public performance by student groups to celebrate the coming return of Hong Kong to China and the July 1 birthday of the Communist Party .

Among the seven news stories, No. 1 and 2 are related to the school's financial improvement. In fact, this particular donation is one of the largest TU has ever received; No 5 and 7 are on the activities in connection to politics (Party); No 6 is about an academic event; and No 3 and 4 are on the social life of the community. This seems to be the pattern of the "Campus News" which attempts to present community events through a balanced lens of categories (i.e. economic, political, academic and social).

Another prominent feature of the campus news stories is that they are all based on communal activities. There was not one piece of the news in all the "Campus News" I studied that was on an individual act or about a single person. The events that are deemed newsworthy by the community cable are obviously those activities that involve many people. The typical reported events are meetings involving school leaders, and gatherings or

activities that attract a large number of members of the community such as a sports meets, celebration performances, public lectures, collective exercises etc.

Work Schedule

A common work schedule in TU started at 8:00 in the morning and finished at noon. Then there was a two-hour lunch break. Most people would go home for lunch and take a nap. The afternoon work began at 14:00 and finished at 18:00. However, the cable station was run under different schedules. In the morning, there were very few people in the office except secretaries. The directors, editors and cameramen showed up usually around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. They would exchange information, read newspapers or some internal documents, make telephone calls and chat with people who dropped by or among each other. Then some of them would go out to cover stories or on whatever errands needed to be taken care of. They would go home for supper around 17:30-18:00. Then key persons would come back around 18:30 to write scripts, edit tapes or prepare broadcasting equipment. The person on duty would start broadcasting the community programming at 19:55. The programming finished at 21:00. After that, there would be some additional work such as examination of equipment, preparation for tomorrow's assignments, and so on. The people would finally leave for home around 22:30-23:00 except for the nightwatchman.

Figure V. Work Schedule of the Campus Cable

Time	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Adm.	Work				Lunch Break		Work				Home				
Editorial	Home							Work							
Cameramen	Home	Work based on the assignment													
Network Repair	Work				Lunch Break		Work				Home				
Technical/ Security	Work on three shifts for around the o'clock security														

The busiest time was on Thursday evening from 6:30 to 9:30 when the part-time broadcaster came in for the pre-recording of the news programming to be broadcast the following evening. The pre-recording started at 8:00 in the evening. By then all the scripts had to be written. The broadcaster usually read the script in the studio. After that, an editor would synchronize her broadcasting with television pictures shot by cameramen during various community events.

Cameramen were seldom seen in the office. They were in high demand in the community because many organizers of community events wanted to have their news appear on cable so they sought hard to have the cameramen present in their assemblies. Sometimes, they had to run from one meeting to another just to shoot a small footage of the event.

Reception

Since my research concerns more the campus cable as organized activities in a Chinese workplace in relation to state domination of mass communication and is intended to examine this media phenomenon through qualitative description, the issue of the audience

reception is never a major focus of this thesis. However, I conducted a small scale random survey of the audience opinions in an attempt to place the whole issue in the perspective that the some comprehension of the feedback to the campus cable service could be attained based on comparable quantitative figures.

The viewers' responses to the campus cable were solicited through two ways; one was from casual conversations with people I met on campus and the other through questionnaires.[51] Since nothing substantial materialized from my conversations, I will focus on the results of questionnaires to illustrate the general reaction of the people in the community towards the cable service.

In the month of May 1997, I distributed randomly 40 questionnaires at both the workplace and residential areas of the university. Some (who received the questionnaire) were people I knew and met before and some were total strangers. 27 questionnaires were collected later (see Appendix VIII for a sample questionnaire). Among them there was only one family who had no connection to the cable television. The summary is as follows (also see Figure VI in Page 145).

There were 18 female and 7 male respondents. 13 of them were in the age range of

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[51] I found that both approaches were not tactful enough to collect the real opinions of cable viewers. In the casual approach, people were usually unprepared and had very little to say besides "It's OK" or "I seldom watch it." In the case of questionnaires, they took it seriously and gave some in-depth comments. But because of the seriousness they saw in the survey, they always had to know first for whom I worked and why I needed this form. My usual answer was that I was a media researcher and worked neither for the campus cable nor the university. I had to assure them that the questionnaires they filled out would be used only in my research. However, some of them still saw me as someone with a connection to the cable station. Such an impression undoubtedly affected their responses to the questionnaire.

30-65 and 12 were over 65. Among them, 10 were identified as teachers, nine administrative staffers, three workers, one engineer and one medical doctor. 18 persons who responded had a university education and 6 with high school backgrounds. Twenty-two were TU employees or retirees and three were family members of TU workers (Some questionnaires did not provide personal information).

In all cases except one, they said that they had watched the community channel. 38 percent of the respondents watched it occasionally, 35 percent watched it some of the time and 23 percent very often. The reason that one respondent did not watch the programme was due to the fact that he had problems with the reception on the channel. About 52 percent expressed an average level of satisfaction with the campus programming. 24 percent said they were satisfied and 8 percent were dissatisfied.

The most watched community programme was the "Campus News" with 84 percent of viewers who responded to having a preference for this show. The popularity of other programmes was: the "Academic Talents" 40 percent, "Campus Topics" 32 percent, "Special Programme" 28 percent, video films 24 percent and "English News" 20 percent. About 12 percent of the viewers responded with a dislike of the "English News" and video films.

As for the positive comments on the community cable, 56 percent of the viewers agreed that the cable station informs them about major school policies and its leaders' activities. 48 percent cited the reason that it provides them with school information that concerns an individual's employment and life. Other areas of contributions were: it keeps the community informed of academic achievements and technological developments of the school (44 percent); it publicizes the activities of sub-*danweis* in the university which

otherwise may not be known by the community at large (36 percent); it provides information on students and graduate students (24 percent); and it covers children's activities in kindergarten, elementary and middle schools (20 percent). There were other aspects of the cable service that interested viewers too: such as, they could see themselves or their friends on television (24 percent); they could watch the programming produced by themselves or their friends (8 percent).

The most cited criticism on the cable was that there was not enough information provided (60 percent). Another big problem was the low quality of cable pictures (60 percent). Other problems included: the relatively expensive monthly fee (32 percent); no HK/foreign channels (28 percent); too short and irregular broadcasting schedule (28 percent); repeated programming (24 percent); too many leaders' activities and too little ordinary people's voices (24 percent). Some also complained about low quality and taste of video films, boring English News and so on. The frequently expressed opinion on the improvement of the service was to have more community-made programming and high quality video films.

Figure VI: Summary of Questionnaires

Total number of
Questionnaires distributed: 40
Questionnaires collected: 27

Period of distributing and collecting questionnaires: May 10-June 12, 1997

Methods of distributing questionnaires:

1) Random distribution on campus by myself
2) Asking TU persons I know to distribute them to their friends and colleagues

Methods of filling out questionnaires:
1) I filled out the form during interviews
2) Viewers filled out the form in front of me
3) Viewers filled out the form together in offices
3) Viewers filled out the form individually at home

Summary of respondents' Information:

Age:	13 respondents are between the age of 30-60; 12 in the range of 65 and up; 2 forms do not specify the age.
Sex:	Female 18; Male 7 and 2 forms do not specify the sex.
Occupation:	Teachers: 10; Workers: 3; Doctor: 1; Officials: 9; Engineer: 1. Three forms do not specify the occupation.
Education:	University and up: 18; High school: 6. Three forms do not specify the education.
TU Employee:	22 TU employees; 3 non-TU employees. The rest do not specify in this column.

Summary of responses to questionnaires:

1. Do you have cable television at home? 26 yes 1 no

2. Do you watch programmes made by TUTV?

Often:	6 (23%)
Sometimes:	9 (35%)
Occasionally:	10 (38%)
Never:	1 (4%)

3. Which TUTV programmes do you watch?

	Watch		Don't Watch	
	No.	%	No.	%
Campus News	21	84	1	4
Academic Talents	10	40	1	4
Campus Topics	8	32	1	4
Special Programmes	7	28	2	8
Video Films	6	24	3	12
English News	5	20	3	12

4. Are you satisfied with the programmes you watch?

Very satisfied:	6 (24%)*
Satisfied:	13 (52%)
Fairly satisfied:	2 (8%)
Not satisfied:	4 (15%)

5. In which aspects are you satisfied with TUTV programming

	No.	%*
Informing me of major policies of the school and leaders' activities	14	56
Providing school policies & information concerning my work & life	12	48
Information on academic achievements and research development	11	44
Informing me of activities of other sub-units of the school	9	36
Students' & graduate students' activities	6	24
Seeing myself or my friends on TV	6	24
Activities in the kindergarten, elementary and middle schools	5	20
Interesting programming	2	8
Seeing the programming made by myself or my friends	2	8
Others (Please specify):		

6. In which aspects are you not satisfied with TUTV programming

	No.	%*
Too little information	15	60
Blurry pictures	15	60
Programming time is too short and broadcast irregularly	8	32
High monthly subscription fee	8	32
No TV programming from abroad	7	28
Repeated broadcasting	6	24
Too many leaders' activities, and too few voices from ordinary people	6	24
Low taste of video films	5	20
Others (Please specify):		
English programming is boring	1	4

7. Your suggestions on how to improve TUTV:

(1) More shows of good quality video films and English language movies (2)
(2) Do not repeat CCTV's programming (1)
(3) More self-produced programming (2)
(4) Timely campus news to represent teachers' opinions (1)
(5) Distribute TUTV schedule (1)

* The percentage is calculated based on the valid number of questionnaires out of 25. One form does not answer Question 4, 5 and 6.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAMPUS CABLE STATION AND THE *DANWEI* COMMUNITY

The cable station, as one of many sub-*danweis*, is well ensconced in the political, social and cultural life of the TU community. It provides an auxiliary way of internal communication between the school leadership and ordinary members as well as among various sub-divisions of the community. By offering an opportunity for local people to appear on television and to participate in the production of the TV programming, it delivers the television/cable medium closer to the grass-roots level. More importantly, it reinforces the existing sense of the *danwei* identity by maintaining a channel wholly devoted to events and activities occurring in the *danwei* community itself. However, as a full-scale property of the community, it also submits to the political and social cultures of the *danwei*. Subservient to the community, it also operates under several major constraints, such as ideological correctness, funding shortage, demand for professionalism, and technological availability. To better comprehend the complex nature of the campus cable in relation to the community, I will focus on the analysis of some distinguishing attributes of the cable station as a community media institution in this chapter, based largely on my field research.

Relative Independence within the *Danwei*

Although the cable station has become an integral sub-unit of TU, its dependence on the university is not as complete as the average sub-units. It has achieved a substantial autonomy in its operation as a separate entity from the university budget as well as the

propaganda machinery of the school Party Committee.

First, as a self-financing entity, the cable station has a limited dependence on the school budget. It relies on the school only for basic salaries and office space. Its operation is maintained completely by its own revenue generated chiefly from subscription fees and advertising. It keeps its own accounts, hires part-time staffers and maintains its own pecuniary rewarding system. The university is under no obligation to provide funding to the cable service. Nor does the station have an obligation to contribute certain earnings to the school treasury. As a result, the dependence of the station on the school is very limited, at best, as far as finances are concerned.

This financial autonomy is in stark contrast to the complete dependence of other community media outlets on the school budget. The school newspaper, for instance, is operated entirely under the school budget of ¥40,000 a year, which covers the costs of labour, printing and distribution. It has no advertising revenue, nor can it charge subscription fees, as a result of state rules expressly forbidding commercial activity by internal communication-oriented newspapers.

Second, the cable station also has considerably less dependence on the political directives of the school. Unlike other school media such as the university newspaper and wired radio service, which function under the direct care of the propaganda department of the school and as a sub-unit of the propaganda apparatus, the cable station has a somewhat nebulous status. It is supervised by a diverse and roving leaders' group consisting of not only Party representatives but also representatives from academic and administrative sectors. While it is still considered a media tool by the school leadership, it cannot be used purely as

a mouthpiece of the Party's ideological propaganda since other leaders have their own agenda to promote as well. For instance, a leader responsible for academics and teaching may very well be interested in using the cable to promote talented professors rather than loyal communist Party members. In addition, this so-called leaders' group convenes only once a year to review the general performance of the station. During rest of the year, the cable service is basically left on its own to make its daily decisions.

The campus cable's distance from the superior power is also a direct consequence of its geographical location. Contrary to the tradition that requires all school media outlets to be in the same building where the top authorities of the school are situated, the cable station is located in a building a few blocks away from the power base of the university. This geographic distance makes it inconvenient and impossible for the school authorities to conduct daily surveillance of the cable operation, and employees do not have to fret that a senior cadre of the school could walk into their offices at any time. During my field research in 1995 and 1998, I never witnessed any visits from the top leaders at the station. It is quite possible that a different story would have emerged if they were situated in the same building, when a leader's sporadic visits could occur during tea breaks or lunch hours or even just between meetings.

Conversely, the school newspaper and wire radio station are both situated in the school's administration building. In fact, the radio station which was once in a different locale, was moved into the same building during the turbulent period of the "Cultural Revolution" by the leadership of the time in order to have better control over the radio service. It now lies just one floor above the office of the propaganda department whereas the

editorial office of the school newspaper has always been next door to the propaganda bureau.

In theory, the editorial activities of the cable are supposed to be under the supervision of the propaganda department. But administratively, the station is linked directly to the office of the university vice-president who is responsible only for academics and teaching. There is no administrative link between the propaganda bureau of the Party and the campus cable and, consequently, there is an obvious lack of means for the propaganda office to enforce any practical control of the cable station. This supervisor-supervisee relation is further complicated at times by the exchange of services and money. The cable station compensates the officials of the propaganda bureau for stories they write for the cable programming.

It should be noted at this juncture, though, that neither geographic distance from or the lack of administrative control by the propaganda department all together allow cable editors to ignore the propaganda office. The relationship between them is very delicate. The cable editors are very careful about following the directives from the propaganda office. During my time at the station, they never openly contested the propaganda office's editorial authority over them in front of me. Furthermore, they gave more attention to stories contributed by propaganda officials and tried not to edit or shorten them too much. There was an obvious intent on the part of the cable editors to maintain harmony with campus propagandists. In contrast, an official at the propaganda bureau did little to conceal his dissatisfaction with the lack of administrative control of the cable station during an interview with me. He stressed that the cable station did not play an adequate role as a propaganda tool. But he stopped short of blaming the cable workers for the problem. Instead, he insisted that it was a result of myopia on the part of the school leadership who were reluctant to invest in

cable service and thus failed to maximize its propaganda potential.

Finally, the relative independent status of the cable is reflected in its horizontal relation with other departments and sub-units. Although it shares the office building with the Department of Oceanography, there does not seem to exist any close relation between the two units. I never saw any people from that department dropping by the cable office. Nor did I witness any warm exchange of greetings between the two camps in the hallway. This barrier was even demonstrated in the "Campus News" programme -- there was not one single news item devoted to or contributed by the Oceanography Department during my research period in 1997.

This estrangement between sub-units of the community may be the result of the organizational structure of the *danwei*. The *danwei* is organized principally through the vertical connection of directives and supervision. The horizontal linkage between the sub units has always been weak and ambiguous. Usually there is no supervision relation among them, nor are there any joint budget accounts. In fact, these sub-units are usually rivals both vying for a larger piece of the school budget pie. It is interesting to note that these sub-units are often referred to in the polite language of community communication as fraternal units, a manifestly cultural approach to downplay the division and self-interestedness of sub-units within the *danwei* community.

The *danwei* is also organized by categories of specialized professions. Every department or division has its own specific activities, standards and goals. Professionally, every sub-unit is a single entity independent of others. Consequently, the professional division may lead to the disengagement of people working in each sub-unit. The detachment

may grow further apart among the groups whose specialized professions are in completely different fields such as Oceanography and cable television. In contrast, the sub-units which are specialized in similar fields often demonstrate a closer relationship. For instance, the cable station has frequent contacts with the faculty from the Department of Electrical Engineering since both units are engaged in similar fields of technology of telecommunication. The department provided an initial technical consultancy to the cable station and assisted it in building both the satellite reception system and cable network on campus. The station still relies on the department for technical expertise.

Community Resources and Participation

Cable television is a total community property. It is entirely supported by *danwei* resources -- its personnel resource, financial revenue and technical expertise. It is also a channel for community purposes with its content wholly devoted to community events and activities. However, the involvement of community members in the cable practices is not as unlimited as one would expect of a cable station with such a broad base of community orientation.

The TU cable is the community-oriented medium in terms of resources. Its full-time staff -- editors, cameramen and technicians -- are TU employees. The part-time workers are hired within the community, too. Some are teachers and graduate students, while others are TU retirees, or family members of the faculty. They are all amateur journalists and have generally learned TV journalism and production by working in the station.

The funding of the station depends, to a large degree, on the community as well.

Besides the provision of office space and capital equipment, the school budget covers only a small portion of the cable operation costs: the basic salaries of the full-time staff. The rest of the expenses are generated by the subscription revenue. There are no state subsidies for the operation, nor is there funding available from the local government or local television stations. In fact, the community cable has to pay the city cable company a connection fee amounting to ¥15,000 a year.

The cable station also draws on the technical expertise and on already existing facilities and equipment of the university. In fact, it offers a solution to make full use of the professional expertise, facilities and equipment of the Electronic Education Centre which, originally designed to assist classroom teaching with television technology, was not being utilized to its maximum potential at the time when the cable service began. Because the school did not have sufficient funds to equip every classroom with a television set and to set up a transmission-reception network, the centre did not have much to do in producing and broadcasting television teaching programmes. The studio facilities and production equipment remained idle most of the time. The technicians and cameramen, although trained professionals, did not have enough work to do either. Most of them worked outside of the university offering consultancy or other services on a contract basis to cable companies or television crews. The establishment of the cable service within the centre provided an oasis of new job opportunities for these workers, and instantly turned the inactive teaching centre into a functional community service.

One of the most remarkable advantages the campus cable enjoyed was that it could tap into the internal resources of the community for all the technical support and expertise

that was required for the cable service. As a major engineering and technology university, TU was known for its programmes in electrical engineering and television technology. Its faculty of Electrical Engineering had a satellite reception system set up as part of the research efforts in the early 1980s and pioneered several training programmes in television technologies for local TV stations and cable companies. In fact, the university was the launching pad for many cable engineers and technicians and had some of the most authoritative specialists in cable technology in the city. As a result, the whole task of building a cable network and satellite reception-transmission system was handled by an internal company associated with the Department of Electrical Engineering. The faculty expertise also came in handy whenever the cable station needed technical consultation for its operation and expansion.

In contrast, neighbouring Nankai University, which had a similar opportunity to set up its own cable station in 1993, failed to have it established, due mainly to the fact that it did not have its own cadre of specialists in cable engineering. As a university specializing primarily in pure science, social sciences and humanities, the school lacked the engineering personnel to launch its own campus television. Later it had to turn to the city cable company for help and was left with no choice but to be connected with the city network.

Although the campus cable relied almost exclusively on the internal resources of the community, it should be pointed out that the involvement and participation of the community members were relatively confined to a small group. The community at large was not actively involved in the cable practices, particularly in the aspects of programming production and audience feedback solicitation.

What I discovered during my field study was that people were very engaged in doling out opinions about the campus cable, such as how it should improve its service etc., yet they demonstrated little desire to be involved in making programmes or contributing stories. The production of campus TV programmes was not as participatory as I had expected. There was, of course, some degree of voluntary participation from the community, but generally speaking, the operation of the campus cable as a whole was restricted to a limited circle of people - cable workers, propaganda or public relations officials, and a small number of graduate students and faculty members enthusiastic about practising amateur TV journalism.

The important actors in the programming production were those who first worked as editors, producers and cameramen of the cable station. In the fact, the person who made daily decisions on the content of the programming was the chief editor. He selected news stories, wrote or edited the news scripts and decided the order in which the stories would appear. The finished script was then pre-recorded by an announcer and synchronized with video footage shot by the cable's cameramen.

Other active players in news production were propaganda and public relations officials, who contributed a large number of stories and informed the cable station of campus events and activities organized. One of the practices at the cable station that was different from conventional big media organizations was that it did not have a team of reporters. The campus service relied entirely on voluntary contributors in sub-units of the community for reporting. Many of these contributors were either school propaganda officials or those in charge of public relations for individual sub-units. Once they had contacted the cable station about coming events, the station would dispatch its cameramen to these

occasions depending on their schedule and the news value of the activities. The people who organized these events would later submit written texts to the chief editor who would then summarize and edit them into news stories.

It should be noted that this contributing network was very informal and on a voluntary basis. The distribution of the news writers did not correspond to the organizational structure of the university. Some contributors were more enthusiastic and active than others. Consequently, activities in some sub-units were reported more often than those of other groups; and some groups were seldom covered by the cable service.

This is in sharp contrast to the well-organized correspondent network in relation to the university newspaper. The network consisted of two teams: one was a team of student reporters recruited from among about 40 student writers from various departments; the other team consisted of officials. The school policy specified that the Party secretary in each department was the official correspondent for the school paper. He/she was responsible for contributing stories on the activities of his/her department to the campus press. Linked closely with the formal structure of the school organization, the network had the capacity to penetrate every sub-unit of the community and to present a picture of the school on a broader scale. In comparison, there was no parallel correspondent network in the cable service.

Another aspect of community participation is related to the cable station's effort to solicit feedback from its audience. There was a palpable lack of effort on the part of the campus cable to canvass public opinion on the service. It did not have a specific person to collect audience opinions on its programming, nor did it employ anyone in particular to handle customers' complaints. Their understanding of the audience reception was mainly

based on telephone calls, casual conversations with friends and neighbours, or when people came to the office to pay the annual subscription fees.

During my field study, I conducted a random audience survey (See Figure VI and Appendix VIII). I was surprised to see that people had so many opinions about the cable service. They wanted to see more community news and entertainment programming. A number of them complained about the chronic problem of blurry signals. When I asked them why they had never expressed their opinions to the cable people, they replied that they had never been asked to do so by them. Sometimes, when they called the station complaining about technical problems, their requests were not well heeded.

There are several elements that limit the participation of the community in cable activities. First, a wider and more active involvement of the community is hampered, undoubtedly, by the overall doctrine of communist ideology on mass communication. The communist concept of the media as a tool of the Party to implement its tasks allows little room for the media to display maverick opinions or opposing ideologies. Even for the local community media like the campus cable, the ideological correctness is an ingrained principle, allowing no content that contests the legitimacy of the Communist Party as a ruler or the supremacy of the communist doctrine to be displayed. This ideological purity is safeguarded by Chinese law. Upon reviewing samples of the cable programming collected in 1995 and 1997, I found that ideological correctness was an absolute condition for programming content. Although many texts could be categorized as non-ideological or non-political, there were absolutely no texts that contested, even obscurely, the official ideology of communism. This pre-requirement for political loyalty and purity would obviously discourage the

participation of those in the community who may have dissenting opinions about the Party and the role of media. Some people stated to me that they had little interest in campus cable because it was a propaganda tool. "Why should I be involved with the propaganda for the Party?" one person said.

Interesting, though, persons with such a critical view make up a minuscule group. The majority of the people were not actively involved in cable production due mainly to the fact that they did not know how to participate in it. In other words, they were not accustomed to the idea of participating in the media practice as an entitled right. In a culture where the media are considered a communication tool for the leaders to address the masses, ordinary people were more likely to see themselves as outsiders of the propaganda system rather than participants. They expected the community cable to be closer to their lives and to meet their needs, but they did not see the point of themselves taking an active part in TV production.

Ironically, however, the semi-independent status of the cable service within the *danwei* organization seems to hinder the involvement of the larger community. As I pointed out before, the *danwei* is not a loosely connected association-type of organization. It is structured in an orderly fashion to exert vertical command from the unit's leadership to its sub-units. In the case of the university newspaper, the participation of the Party groups in sub-units was assured by the direct supervision of the Party's propaganda department, providing specific to contribute articles to the paper. As for the cable station, it was not linked so closely to any of the existing directive networks, neither the Party network or administrative network. This status had a mixed effect: on one hand, the cable station enjoys more autonomy in daily management than other community media due to the somewhat

hands-off superior command; on the other hand, its ability to mobilize the participation of the workplace community is limited because it does not have any subordinate units under its supervision. Nor can it take advantage of its superior's authorities to tap into more community resources at its disposal.

Another point that should be made is that active community participation was discouraged by the self-reliant financial status of the cable service. Many people would hesitate to offer voluntary service since they considered the campus station a semi-commercial undertaking. They expected to be compensated for whatever they would contribute. However, the cable station -- a small-scale self-financed campus operation -- did not have a sufficient budget to offer a remuneration attractive enough for a large number of people. It could only afford some token remuneration to contributors who would do the job mostly for the love of it rather than out of material incentives. The cable service used to have an education programme on science devoted to children hosted by a senior teacher. It was quite popular among children and parents. But it was cancelled in 1996 because the station did not have enough funds to cover the costs. The Chief Editor told me that the tight budget was prohibitive in letting them recruit more part-time journalists and conceive more local programming.

The technical issue is possibly another factor which limits the participation of university members. Unlike writing for the university newspaper, which only requires pen and paper, freelancing for cable television involved a certain knowledge of television production. To participate, a person had to be familiar with specific equipment such as video cameras, microphones or editing machines. Such skills cannot be acquired but through

learning and practice, and very few people on campus had the opportunity to get such training or practice. The external participation became particularly difficult due to the fact that the access to the equipment was highly restricted to the crew members of the station who regarded their equipment as their property and were reluctant to have outsiders touch it.

Finally, a larger community might have backed away from participating because of the effort and expectation for professionalism. It was quite obvious in my field study that the standard of professional programming was one of the top concerns of the cable station. The directors talked about how they had achieved progress in producing professional-quality programmes and beamed with pride when mentioning that one of their programmes was broadcast on the city television station in 1995. The workers also took the professional standard very seriously. When asked about their jobs, they emphasized the many years of professional training they had acquired and how hard they worked to become more professional in their field. Viewers talked about professional journalism too. Although they seemed to accept the fact that the campus service was more or less an amateur television operation, they tended to evaluate the community cable by so-called professional standards, the ones they were familiar with from national or regional TV networks. Their assessment of the campus programming was borne by a belief that the campus cable should set professional standards as its ultimate goal: the more professional quality, the better.

Though both cable workers and viewers agreed that there should be more community-based programming, none of them suggested the idea of more participation of TU members at large as a solution. It is evident that the main concern, for both cable workers and viewers, was how to improve the quality of programming, not encourage more

participation from amateur television journalists.

Consensus Politics

One of the major issues concerning community cable is the question of control. Who exercises command over the campus cable and in what manner? My initial assumption was that the cable station might be controlled by *danwei* leaders. However, my research findings point to a different conclusion: the community cable is in fact under greater authority by the cable directors vis-à-vis the community leadership. Specifically, the cable service is managed by the rule of consensus politics, in which everyone knows the positions of others and tries to maintain as much a compromise and confrontation-free work environment as possible.

One of the distinctive characteristics of *danwei* politics, as Womack observes, is a normal ethic of consensus. Public confrontation, or even a mere public expression, is cautiously avoided since everyone involved is consigned to living under the same roof within the work unit for a long time, if not a lifetime. Political decisions are made by a kind of consensus achieved mainly through private discussions and arrangements (Womack 1991, 26-27). I discovered that the cable station, although organized into an orderly, formal hierarchial structure of supervision and subordination, was not operated by a similar fashion of formality. In fact, it was managed by a manner that could best be described as being casual and informal.

I used to work in a formal media organization and was familiar with the operational routine of news rooms, including daily conferences, reporter beat schedules, news selection, etc. All the practices were conducted in a orderly fashion. But the campus cable operated

differently. There seemed to be no daily conference and no well-planned agenda for reporter's beats or the Friday news. Even the work schedule seemed to be quite flexible. Workers arrived at the station at different times, some would not show up in the office for a couple of days as they were either on leave or assignments. What interested me was the frequent absence of directors in the office, particularly the first and second directors who were seldom seen in the station. I was told that they were busy planning fundraising events, attending meetings or having social functions.

The only leader who seemed to supervise the daily business of the station was the Chief Editor who usually arrived at the office around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Between 3-5 o'clock, the office got busier when editors, cameramen, friends or contributors began dropping by. Telephones also began to come in from either the Director or Deputy Director, the propaganda department, the school's president's office or other departments. The reporting and editorial decisions were made during these informal conversations.

A typical decision-making session would follow a similar pattern. It went something like this: the Chief Editor received a call from, say, the Graduate Student Centre, which informed him of a celebration party in the evening. The Chief Editor would talk to a cameraman on duty to see if he had other assignments and whether he would like to film this event. If the cameraman had already been booked by another organization, then the discussion would then move to which event was more important for the news programming, whether another cameraman was needed for the assignment. If they decided not to cover the story, they had to put their heads together to construct a good excuse to give to the organizer. In the event that the cameraman went to film the celebration, he would usually arrive at the

office the next day with a script written by the organizer on the event. The Chief Editor would re-write it into a news story.

I was told that there was no need for formal daily meetings. Almost everyone had worked there for several years and knew the routine practice very well. They knew exactly when they were expected to be present in the office, what they should do and not do and how they would do the job. I never witnessed any formal meetings during my field studies in 1995 and 1997 -- not even a meeting of directors. When asked how major decisions were made in the station, the Chief Editor told me that these decisions were usually reached during lunch hours when three directors would manage to find some time to discuss issues and exchange opinions. "We met, talked about it and made a decision. It didn't take long to do so," he said.

Though the direct control of the school authority over the cable operation was limited, except for an annual meeting of the Leaders' Group, the university leadership, particularly the Propaganda Department, maintained their supervision by regularly watching its programmes and issuing guidelines when necessary. In most cases, the leaders' directives were given in an informal manner, often conveyed by individual telephone conversations. For example, a director of the Propaganda Department might telephone the station's Chief Editor at the cable station informing him that his department was circulating a new security regulation and requesting that the cable station help promote it. The Chief Editor would look into it and probably plan either a news story or a special programme on it, depending on how much weight he felt the issue deserved and how serious the leader's directive sounded to him. He would also have to consider whether the leader would be featured in the programme and in what fashion.

Under normal situations, there was almost no possibility that the cable station would turn a blind eye to this request. First, the leader's request was politically valid since one of the station's basic tasks was to assist the university leadership to promote its key agenda. The community cable was perceived not as an independent watch-dog of the university power, but rather as an instrument to serve the interests of both the leaders and the community. Second, the request was valid in terms of its hierarchical command in an organization. The leader in the superior position had the right to give directives to subordinate units. The person under supervision should comply. Finally, in a *danwei* environment, the politics of who was giving directives to whom and in what manner also involved the art of networking social relations. A leader would usually contact those subordinates who were considered as one of his clientele to impart instructions. And for the subordinates, they would take the directive as a sign of trust and, in turn, try to implement the task to the leader's satisfaction.

A similar pattern of consensus politics was also witnessed within the cable station, though it was carried out much less diplomatically, but more interwoven into the daily interacting activities. Workers were quite conscious of the hierarchical structure of the group, often referring to themselves as "little commoners" (*xiao lao bai xing*) and the directors as "bosses" (*touer*). They often said things like: "Our boss asked me to do so;" or "Ask the boss what to do." However, their daily dealing with the directors appeared to be on a more communal and friendly terms. I witnessed no single case of an authoritative boss giving out an order to employees, nor did I see an open complaint or friction between the directors and workers. As Womack points out, consensus does not imply unanimity; it is a result of the common recognition in a work unit that confrontation is more costly than

compliance (Womack 1991, 27). The political consensus was sought by both leaders and workers. In the case of the community cable station, no director could afford to act as an authoritative supervisor because he needed the co-operation of the worker force to implement the tasks delegated by their superiors at the university level. Their competence and promotional future were closely linked to how well they could impress their superiors in the performance of the task. Uncooperative and grouchy workers could sabotage the leader's plan of good performance and eventually their own dreams of moving up in the organization.

Nor would workers want their interests to be disadvantaged by challenging the leaders. Though most of them (full-time workers) did not depend on the leaders for their employment, they relied on them for other benefits including bonus stipends, paid job training, future promotions, etc. Being on good terms with them was advantageous in securing these scarce resources. In addition, maintaining a good relationship with their superiors also helped the community-cable employees to boost their image in the eyes of their peer group in the community. For example, a cameraman who was requested by his friend from a sub-unit in the university to film an event usually needed an approval from the Chief Editor. If he was held in good standing in the eyes of the Chief Editor, he could easily persuade him to get his friend's event shown on the campus news programme, thus earning a certain amount of respect from his peer group as someone who was capable of doing things for a friend.

Strong Relationships

Consensus politics ultimately occurs in a group environment where membership is stable and social interactions are not only frequent, but also conducted more on the basis of specific bonds of friendship and family traditions rather than on a rational calculation of equal exchange for fair market value. Like every work unit, the campus cable organization features a particularly intense social relationship.

This strong relationship at the community cable organization flowed from the fact that membership in the group was almost permanent. Nearly all of the full-time staffers in the cable service had been working there since 1979 when the Electronic Education Centre was established by the university. These original members formed the inner circle of the cable station. They were familiar not only with each other, but also with their spouses, children, and parents. Most of them were living in the residential area of the community and visited each other frequently after work. The workplace thus became almost a family "get-together" where people shared many things with each other. When they were at work, the office became sort of a chat room in which all kinds of information and gossips were circulated; much of them having nothing to do with the specialized tasks of running the community cable. During work hours, people were chatting about the newest events in the community, sharing information about a possible pay raise, housing reforms, bonus plans, children's education, shopping, etc.

The busiest time was between 3:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon. Directors and cameramen arrived in the office with news and gossip. People from outside of the cable service also dropped by just to pass on more gossip and jokes. Secretaries who usually worked in other offices would then come to the main office to join in the conversation.

People would bring in some special snacks or other food items to share with others. The station even reconfigured one of the studios into a table-tennis room where people could play during their breaks or after work. The most popular ping-pong time was between 5:30-6:30 every afternoon. The Chief Editor and some of the cameramen were active players, often setting off on their programming work after the ping-pong games had drawn to a close.

People who were in the outer circle were part-time workers hired on a contract basis. Working mostly in auxiliary positions like secretaries, reference workers, technicians and nightwatchmen, they did not have the same job security, welfare benefits and other perks as those of full-time employees. However, they were not hired at random from outside sources such as the classified sections of newspapers or personnel agencies. Most of them were offered the job because they had in one way or another some personal connection with the station's full-time staff -- a former colleague's daughter, a neighbour's wife or a friend's friend. In such a situation, everyone was able to relate to each other beyond the formal bond of colleagueship. There was no circumstance whereby a "total stranger" could join the group.

The specific personal relationship also prevailed in interactions between cable workers and outsiders, the cable directors and the university leadership. For example, the Chief Editor previously worked in the Party's sub-unit in charge of moral and ethical education for students and, thus, had a close relation with a network of people on campus who were professional Party propagandists.

This specific tie provided him with unusual access to the propaganda agenda of the school's leadership, details of positions school leaders held on certain issues and a network of people who were active in providing news sources and articles to the community cable

programming. Some of his former colleagues were among the most active contributors to the community news. They often visited the cable office, discussing a news story idea with the Chief Editor while socializing with other cable workers. Sometimes, they brought some small presents with them, such as candies or fruits and offered them around.

The Chief-Editor's specific bond with school propagandists might also serve as a network of protection in case any political trouble arose. If the cable service broadcast anything deemed improper from the point of view of the Propaganda Department, he could always find an ally in that department who could help settle the problem.

The other directors in the cable service also had their own specific network of personal connections at the university. For instance, the technology director used to work in the Electrical Engineering Department and had close relations with the faculty there. This connection provided the cable service with access to constant technical assistance and consultation from the department whose sub-company was the key recipient of an ¥800,000 ($133,000) contract to build the community cable network in 1993.

The Principle of Community Harmony

One of my research issues concern how the community cable people view the role of community media in the community. My findings confirm that cable television is operated under the principle of maintaining harmony within the community. The preoccupation with harmony not only directs the content of the community programming, but is also observed faithfully by cable workers and accepted by the community.

The principle of harmony embraces four elements: a) respect for authorities; b) no

exposure to controversial issues and the negative side of life; c) emphasis on collectiveness; and d) promotion of community identity and harmony. It is worth noting that this rule of media practice differs fundamentally from the Western ideal of media as an independent watchdog. Instead of seeing itself as a separate entity that surveys the community leadership, the cable station acts more as an integral part of the community which has the double function of serving the interests of both the leadership and the larger community.

The cable programming respected the establishment of the community by devoting a considerable amount of time to reporting activities of school leaders and promoting their agenda. When leaders were interviewed, they were filmed in a positive light and tough questions were fervently avoided Their image as undisputed authority figures was projected and enhanced when their activities were consistently featured in the news stories broadcast on cable television. In addition, an unwritten rule mandated that the top stories featured every Friday evening were reserved for the public functions of the top leadership of the school, including meetings, conferences, public speeches, attending shows or exhibitions, and so on. To a certain degree, the news value of a community event depended on who attended it. The higher the leading attendant's position was, the more likely, the event would be featured in the community news.

The respect for authority was congruous with the policy of minimum criticism. The cable programming seldom challenged the authority of the local leadership. My study revealed that of all the cable programmes I examined between 1995 and 1997, none of them was critical of the school leadership and its policies. Instead, they presented a picture of community leaders who were working hard to implement professional tasks and improve

living standards in the community. The leaders were shown to be present at various meetings, seriously addressing the issues that concerned the community, eg. how to raise funds for the school, increase the academic ranking of programmes, build more apartments for the faculty, provide better education for the children, etc. They were also presented as participating members in community events: the tree-planting festival, sports meets, calligraphy and painting exhibitions, and so on.

This soft position on authorities led to a kind of media practice which patently avoided controversial issues and negative comments. Judging from the topics covered by the cable programming during my field trips, I found that the cable service was very cautious when it came to covering those issues considered "sensitive" and prone to trigger a turbulent debate. One such example was the housing issue. Like most *danwei* communities, the university allocates apartments to its faculty and employees each year. As one of the most scarce resources, the housing issue often arouses a great deal of emotion and resentment. There were always people who were dissatisfied because they did not get what they expected. The issue became more sensitive in 1997 when the university introduced a new policy allowing people to purchase the apartments they lived in. The cable service broadcast the new policy in its entirety and the programme was watched attentively by the whole community. Although the issue was debated vigorously and thoroughly within the community, the programme did not mention anything on these hotly debated discussions.

It was also very rare for cable television to expose the negative side of university life which might be construed as contrary to the harmonious image of the community. For instance, in 1997 the university people were extremely concerned about the increasing

polarization of the distribution of wealth. Under the old socialist system they used to earn similar incomes, but the salary gap had grown wider and wider in the reform era. A professor from a rich department could be eligible for an income that was triple or quadruple to that of a professor from a poor department. This issue was one of the frequently talked about subjects at the university. However, no television programmes covered this story. Nor, was there any coverage of the consequences of budget cuts in medical care which also raised a violent outcry from the community, particularly among senior retirees. But all these "negative" aspects of life were carefully avoided on the community cable. What was seen on TV were "positive" images of community life: healthy and self-content retirees practising *taiji* on campus, middle-aged professors singing their hearts out in a university choir, and so on.

One of the most important elements in this harmonious community image was the sense of collectivity. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, all the community news stories I examined covered collective activities: meetings, sports meets, group celebrations, choir singing etc. It was obvious that an individual activity was not considered a community event. In fact, one of the major criteria for news worthiness was the sheer number of people who participated in an event. The more people who were involved, the more important the event would become, and as a consequence, the more likely it would be telecast on the cable channel.

The sense of community identity and belonging was an essential part of the principle of harmony. Aimed only at an internal audience, the cable service was the best vehicle to convey this sense of belonging to every home in the community and to reinforce it by

presenting a moving montage of community-based activities on the television screen. As I pointed out earlier, the identity with the *danwei* was one of the primary identities in the Chinese life. The campus community cable accentuated the feeling of belonging by highlighting the magnificence and glory of the community -- the historical past, the high-ranking academic status, the international reputation, academic achievements, responsible leadership, talented and industrious faculty, beautiful campus, new apartment buildings, harmonious choirs, jubilant celebrations, care-free children, etc. These pictures of the community were made by the community for the exclusive audience of the community. They contributed to the integrating process of creating TU as a community and helped perpetuate the unique identity of being a proud TU member.

The principle of harmony reconstructed life in TU into the image of an extraordinarily sanguine community. Negative facets of life on campus were obliterated, while real-life controversies and problems seldom unfolded in front of the television camera. The community that was created by means of the community cable reflected an idealistic view of human society built according to a 2,000-year-old philosophy of harmony. Though a stratified group with a hierarchical power structure, its members could live in harmony because each knew his/her place in the group and was related to every other individual within this group by the bonds of family ties, friendship and community identity. This ideal of harmonious community was translated into electronic images on the screen of the community myth, an image of ideal community, or desired community, which in turn conditioned the audience's perception of the environment they live in and sustained a strong sense of belonging and identity.

People at the campus cable organization were fully aware of the function of cable television as a tool of community building. Instead of seeing it as a public forum where everyone was entitled to voice their opinion, they interpreted it as a "neutral" apparatus whose primary function was to enhance the bond of community and balance the interests of the school leadership and ordinary people. They believed that the ethics of harmony would serve this purpose better than that of public debate and criticism. One of the deputy directors put it very clearly:

> We could have focused our programming on problems and criticism. But negative reporting and uncovering problems would not help build our community. We need to inspire our people with good things in the school and enhance their morale in order to work together to make TU a better community. We should present those good things in our community and make everyone not only love our country, but also love our school and our *danwei*. (Zheng 1997)

Ordinary people in the school seemed to share, to some extent, this view of the cable service. The summary of questionnaires (See Figure VI) demonstrates that people complained most about not having enough information and blurry pictures. Only 24 percent of them were dissatisfied with the fact that the cable programming gave too much time to leaders at the expense of ordinary voices. Only one respondent suggested that the campus news should present more opinions of ordinary teachers. In my interviews with them, people expressed their desire to see more community-made programming, particularly more entertainment-style programmes, but none of them raised the issue of lack of criticism in the cable programming. Evidently, the custom of showing a perpetually sunny picture was a widely accepted notion when it comes to community media.

CHAPTER IX

COMMUNITY CABLE AND THE STATE MEDIA

The community cable service shares several similar attributes with community television in the West in the way they both relate to the mainstream media. This includes: a) it is supplemental to the mainstream media in terms of media production and provision of information, entertainment and education; b) it is based on community resources and used mainly for community purposes; and c) it provides channels for non-professionals to participate in the production, and distribution of information within the community. Beyond these shared traits, though, the campus cable in China is a wholly different beast when it comes to its grass-roots media practices.

The community cable, first and foremost, is designated as a local or grass-roots arms of the state propaganda apparatus responsible for relaying government messages to the university's internal audience. Assisting the state instrument of formal mass media to penetrate into ordinary people's homes, it serves the interests of the state propaganda. However, as I demonstrated in previous chapters, the campus cable station should not be considered as an absolute instrument of the Party-state. Instead, it is a total property of the *danwei* community, not only managed and operated by the local resources, but also submitted to the political and social cultures of the *danwei* environment. It is a vehicle for advancing specific community interests. As such, it constitutes the intersection where local resources and interests are meet with those of the state.

During my field study at the TU cable station, three major issues emerged around the

issue of community cable relating to the state system of mass media. First, the *danwei* cable is essentially an indispensable part of the state propaganda system. Although supplementary to the state apparatus of mass communication, the community-based cable service plays an important role in presenting the state propaganda agenda in the *danwei* locality.

Second, the *danwei* television, is not entirely subservient to the control of the state propagandists. The control of the *danwei* cable is more in the hands of those who run it locally and on a daily basis, rather than under the control of state propaganda institutions. It has achieved a relatively independent status even from the local propagandists of the Party. There is considerable leverage on the part of the community to assert its own agenda, interests and interpretations of state policies through its cable programming, thereby serving the interests of the community.

Finally, because of its dual functions as a servant of the state as well as an accessory to the work unit agenda, the campus cable becomes a site of control and contestation in relation to the domination of state propaganda and entertainment in the workplace. The central state has adopted many measures to maintain tight control not only over the local practice of cable television, but also over the local domain of information communication and entertainment. The negotiation on behalf of the community cable to claim a larger locus of its own within the state-dominated system of mass media has been an ongoing process which, at the current stage, does not forecast any cataclysmic disaster for the centralized media institution. However, the locally based cable station has defied and has the potential of defying the state control of propaganda and unquestionably remains a thorny problem for the central propagandists in the coming years.

State Interests of Propaganda in the Workplace

My research finding confirms the presumption that workplace cable services are designed to help deliver the state propaganda and agenda to local communities. Although the campus cable is essentially a community property which serves only an internal audience and does not submit itself to the direct control of the state propaganda institution financially and administratively, it is invested with the function of assisting the formal media of the state by disseminating the state propaganda to the *danwei* internal audience. It supplies not only the *danwei* resources to facilitate the penetration of the state television to local households, but also provides a supplementary role of re-packaging the general language of the state policy and ideology into more locally oriented television programming. Ideologically, it is a tool in the hands of the state propagandists to reinforce mass persuasion in the workplace. It is a manifestation of the state media system at the grass-roots level.

As I pointed out in Chapter IV, the Chinese state media consists of two streams of media organizations -- the "formal" media institutions and "informal" community media. With regard to television, the "formal" TV organizations are those dominant stations, such as CCTV and Tianjin TV, which are controlled tightly by the central and regional governments. Their principle task is to promote the agenda and ideology of the Party-state. Local cable services including district and *danwei* stations constitute the "informal" arm of the state propaganda. Supplemental to the dominant state media, they are designated to relay and restate the state propaganda at the basic level of society.

The communist propaganda basically comprises two orientations: a) long-term indoctrination of communist ideology; and b) media campaigns to promote current

government agenda or policies. The long-term ideological preaches that all media content must comply with the basic principles of the state -- the communist ideology and the rule of the Communist Party. The propagation of the official ideology should be constant and prevalent. It must be the dominant message imparted by all the mass media -- namely, that the rule of the Communist Party is legitimate and undisputable, and that the communist ideology is the gospel truth. Such a message should be conveyed repeatedly not only by mainstream television, but also by local cable services.

The second orientation of the state propaganda focuses on current and short-term campaigns. The Party's propaganda institution regularly issues directives on the "current propaganda emphasis" (*xuanchan zhongdian*), which provides guidelines on the agenda setting or reporting perspective to mainstream television and community cable services on particular issues. The "propaganda emphasis" is usually in relation to issues that top the government agenda at any given time, including major policy initiatives or crucial events. It directs short-time media promotional campaigns. Such a campaign is usually commenced by the central media organizations, such as CCTV and the People's Daily, then picked up by regional TV stations and newspapers, and finally trickles down to grass-roots cable services and newsletters.

In Chapter V, I explained how the hierarchical system of the state propaganda works through both the "vertical" and "horizontal" commands. The system performs effectively during these short-term "propaganda" campaigns. The directives on the "current propaganda emphasis" would be passed on vertically from the central state to regional governments and then to local authorities. Consequently, the governments at various levels could give this

"propaganda guideline" to media organizations under their respective control. Before long, all the media organizations in the country would cover similar news with a similar line of argument.

Penetration

My research finding indicates that community cable stations are a device of the state to assist the long-term task of ideological indoctrination by facilitating the penetration of the state propaganda into community life.

The campus cable in TU presents messages that endorse communist policies and ideology. In fact, such messages are implied constantly in its programming. Very rarely does it happen that the validity of the state ideology is contested in the programming. However, it is important to point out that community cable is never considered as an authorized representative of the supreme power of the Party. In fact, it merely occupies the lowest rank in the Party's propagandist hierarchy. At most, the voice it represents is that of the community leadership. Therefore, one of the principle functions of *danwei* cable as the Party's propaganda tool is not to act as the "mouthpiece" of the Party-state like those of the dominant central media, but rather to relay what the "mouthpiece" has broadcast and to infiltrate the central messages into the local space. Rather than an agent of the propaganda for the state, it is the transmitter of the Party propaganda.

When looking at the TU cable station, it was obvious that the community service helped to deliver the central programming to local households. Among 26 channels carried by the cable, 11 were from the stations controlled by the central agencies, accounting for 42

percent of total channels. Compared with only two central channels before the cable was established, the number increased fivefold. The domination of the central programming was evident.

One of the interesting practices I observed of the cable station in my 1997 trip was that it would often broadcast the No.1 Channel of CCTV (the most dominant channel in China[52]) in the community channel during the time slot when it had no home-made programmes to broadcast. Sometimes, when people were sitting in front of their TV waiting for community programming at 8:00 pm, the channel would have nothing to broadcast but what was shown in CCTV. At first, it looked quite redundant to see that there were two channels broadcasting the same programming. Why couldn't it just leave the channel blank if there was nothing to be shown, I asked myself. On second thought, I recognized that this was another example of penetration of the central programming. By showing CCTV's programming on its own channel, the campus station readily rendered its own terrain to the agenda and programming of central propagandists, providing an additional channel for the central television to spread its message and expose loyal viewers of community programming -- who otherwise might not watch CCTV -- to the central programming. It is no wonder that the audience complained about this practice.

The campus cable people never explained why they did so. I doubted that they would have realized consciously that such practice submitted the community audience and space to the central interests of propaganda. Most likely they did it because they did not have

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[52] More detailed explanation on the domination of CCTV channels will be given in later sections of this chapter.

enough "made-in-house" programming to fill the time slot. It was also safer for them politically to relay the CCTV programming instead of showing other programmes.

In addition to the domination of central television, the cable grid also carried four channels run by the Tianjin municipal government. This figure indicated that the Tianjin government ranked second after the central government in dominating the community television space. However, in comparison to three Tianjin television stations before the cable was set up, the cable network did not seem to reinforce the domination of local stations. In fact, it brought in more competitive stations from other metropolitan capitals such as Beijing, Hebei, Shandong, Zhejiang, and so on.

Localization of the central propaganda

The most important and useful function of workplace television for the state propagandists lies in the fact that the *danwei* cable is one of the most effective devices for short-term propaganda campaigns. It couches its message in local content, thus makes it less alien to the community audience.

As mentioned previously, the central government regularly issued "propaganda emphasis" directives to all propaganda institutions from the very top to the most basic levels. Such directives then would first dictate the agenda setting and reporting perspectives of the dominant media controlled by the central state. Media organizations at the lower regional level would adopt a similar pattern in covering the "emphasized story" except with a somewhat "local colour" content. Finally, grass-roots media would follow suit.

One of the examples from my field study in March-June 1997 was the massive media

campaign waged about the return of HK's sovereignty to China on July 1, 1997. When I arrived in China in early March, the mass media including television, radio, newspapers and popular magazines were already building up a general tone of optimism and celebration. The coming event was interpreted as one of the "most glorious and significant" events for China in this century. It symbolized the end of national humiliation imposed by Western imperialists in the second half of the last century through the "Opium War," and the rise of a more prosperous and powerful China in the new millennium. Every day, the mainstream media would have substantial space devoted to the HK subject including news related to HK, celebration activities, historical reviews or documentaries on HK, TV dramas, feature films, MTV programming etc. As the final date was approaching, there were even more and more stories everyday on HK.

The most significant media scheme to accentuate the poignancy of the event and the festival atmosphere was the countdown clock on the return of HK broadcast by CCTV just five minutes before its prime time "CCTV News" at 7:00 pm, the most watched programming in China. Not only did it announce the time left for China to take control over HK, it also exhibited a couple of minutes of television footage on historical events relating to the Hong Kong issue. This television clock also echoed a physical countdown clock of gigantic size erected in Tiananmen Square, which had become a hot tourist spot itself, attracting tens of thousands of visitors each day.

In addition to the all-out campaigns in the central media, the regional television station of Tianjin was also saturated with a variety of local celebration news and reviews of historical connections the city had with HK. Thus, the national story of HK's return to China

was transformed into a theme of regional history. At the community cable level, the HK subject became even more localized. It focused on community events and activities that were organized specifically to mark the occasion. The focal point was how this topic of the national agenda was reconstructed into a concrete theme that was closely related to the workplace community.

The campus television devoted a considerable amount of time covering activities to the HK topic. In early March 1997, it broadcast a three-hour speech by the president of TU's Alumni Association of HK on the situation and public opinions in the British colony. The programme was widely received on campus. Since the speaker was a TU graduate residing in HK, his talk was taken quite seriously by the local audience as balanced, first-hand information rather than government propaganda. Several people I spoke to during my field trip made reference to this speech when they talked about the HK subject. They seemed to value his view more than the news stories on the same subject flooding in the mainstream media.

Starting in May, an increasing number of events took place on campus commemorating the return of HK. Such activities included alumni choirs, teachers' concerts, student performances, photo exhibitions, painting and calligraphy shows, etc. Many of the celebrations were reported on the campus cable. Many sanguine images abounded on television: university students singing "Hong Kong, Pearl of the Orient;" senior professors exhibiting calligraphic scroll reading "End to the National Dishonour;" kindergarten children dancing jubilantly for "Hong Kong being reunited with the motherland "..... The screen presented a picture-perfect portrait of a community rejoicing in unison over the HK victory.

It is important to point out that the short-term campaign of propaganda, besides being promoted through the vertical and horizontal lines of command, embodied two crucial elements in regard to the propagation in the *danwei* terrain: a) it had to involve locally orchestrated activities; and b) these activities then became the content of the local media. In the above-cited example, the campaign was not limited to the use of media only. In fact it was first a campaign of mobilizing local actions. Through the vertical and horizontal directives, the "promotional emphasis" was delivered to various departments and subdivisions, which in turn would stage certain events -- a guest speaker, a choir, a student performance, or a photo exhibition -- to demonstrate that they followed the "directives" from the superior order.

At the same time, the community cable was given the directive by the propaganda office of the school that the programming "focus" should be on HK related events. It would undoubtedly give particular attention to such activities, either as staged actions or natural occurrences. The fact that HK-related events were shown more often on the community channel might, in return, encourage sub-units to organize similar activities so that their events would stand more of a chance of being featured on the campus television.

It was through such interactions of *danwei*-orchestrated activities and community cable presentation that the central agenda of the propaganda was transformed into a local text. The theme of "HK back to China" was no longer something abstract that simply concerned national leaders, politicians or bureaucrats. It became a solid local subject featuring a variety of community activities, fanfare, joyful performers, radiant celebrators. HK's return to China was no longer a story of national politics; it became integrated with the

daily lives of people in the work unit. This process of localization contributed to the working and publicizing of the state propaganda in the grass-roots community.

Dictating the agenda of the community

The campus cable, as a state propaganda vehicle at society's most rudimentary level, played a significant role in inserting the state agenda of propaganda into the community life, no matter how much local sheen it came with. First and foremost, it assisted the state propagandists to dictate the community agenda in communication and entertainment.

By studying mainly the "Campus News" programme, I observed that about one-quarter of the news items were related to the propaganda agenda of the state. Like the HK example, these stories were localized versions of what was promoted for the interests of the central government. Although connected to community activities, they were not derived directly from community initiatives and demands. Conversely, these events were mainly staged and orchestrated following the "propaganda directives" from the state bureaucracy. One example was the story of a school conference to draft a programme improving the "spiritual civilization" in the community, which was apparently a local move to follow the Party's new campaign to make the population more "civilized" in the face of materialistic capitalism sweeping the country. Another example depicted a group of senior professors involved in a vigorous discussion on the documents passed by the annual assembly of the National People's Congress in late March.

Again, let's look at the example of HK's return to China. Since it was the "top propaganda interest" of the state in the early half of 1997, it had a tremendous influence on

the agenda of the community. Numerous events were organized throughout a period of several months. A great number of people were involved too. What was at issue was that the community cable reported them all in front of the local audience. By so doing, it made the agenda of the state dictate the agenda of the community.

Had there not been community cable, the HK news could still have dominated the mainstream media. But the difference was that the mainstream media would never have been able to construct the national theme as a community affair. Consequently, the audience might have felt indifferent toward the whole issue. It was the campus cable that brought the state agenda of propaganda closer to the lives of ordinary people by reconstructing it as the agenda of the local workplace.

Above all, the campus cable basically reflected the state efforts to dictate information and entertainment in local communities. Beside the two stations of TU and Nankai District, the complete channel grid was prescribed by the government. The state government also maintained rigid restrictions over programming and video shows by community stations, although such a state attempt had met with mounting resistance from the local level. For a better understanding of the issue, however, I will analyse it more closely in a later section entitled "Control and Contestation."

Representative of Community Interests

Community cable should not be considered as a complete "state mouthpiece" in a local guise. My analysis in the previous chapter demonstrated that the community had a great stake in maintaining the cable service for its own sake. The campus television was an

absolute property of the community in terms of physical, financial and human resources. Integrated closely with the political, economic, social and cultural life of the *danwei*, it no doubt served the interests of the community. The cable station, first, was a business venture which provided not only comfortable employment opportunities, but also a self-sufficient service to the community. It was also a handy tool for internal communication of information. Furthermore, it offered additional entertainment that was impossible to obtain from mainstream channels. Most importantly, it was invested with the function of creating and perpetuating the image of a harmonious community. Operating on the principles of consensus politics and social harmony, it facilitated the school leadership to promote the ostensible reality of a united and friendly community which, in turn, might affect the way people saw themselves. Thus, it served the interests of public relations for the community leadership.

Economic benefits

Campus cable was a business venture with more than one million yuan in assets and a gross revenue of ¥384,000 (US$46,265) a year. It was the community, not the state that owned it. Although the school did not collect any money from the operation, it benefitted considerably from hosting it. The establishment of a popular channel of public relations and communication within the community cost the school next to nothing. It equipped the university with a functional community-building tool without being too onerous on the school budget.

In addition, the cable station provided new job opportunities to the former staff of the

Electronic Education Centre who might have faced considerable layoffs had there been no campus television. It also presented a comfortable way for many people - graduate students, teachers, propaganda officials, retirees - to earn some extra money while practising amateur journalism.

This financial independence from both the state and school treasuries gave the cable station a strong leverage against submitting itself entirely to the command of the state propaganda, one that no other *danwei* media could ever enjoy. Traditionally, *danwei* media such as workplace newspapers and wired radio services depended totally on the money coming out of state allocation. Such dependence reaffirmed their dutiful role to serve the interests of the state propaganda. Even in 1997, the budget for such operations still came from the state budget. For example, the TU newspaper was allocated a budget of ¥20,000 annually and wired radio service ¥5,000 (Yang 1997). However, the cable station was run under significantly different financial conditions. It was impossible for the state to cover the cost of the *danwei* cable operation of nearly ¥400,000 a year. This cost was too high for any propagandists including the state ideologists.

A propaganda official at TU acknowledged that his office could not exert as much control over the cable station as it did with the university newspaper and radio service. He pointed to the fact that a cable operation required substantial funding and there was no way that the school or the central government could provide such financial support. As a powerful and popular medium, he said, the cable television should ideally be in the hands of school propagandists. However, he admitted that the school leadership was reticent about investing in it due to the high cost. He said:

> If we want to make the cable service an effective vehicle of propaganda, the school has to put in a lot of money. Since school leaders do not want to pledge any investment, we can't take it under our direct control. It would be a huge burden for us. (Yang 1997)

One way the cable service tried to generate income was by selling advertising. In my 1997 trip, I found one commercial on the community channel. The ad was broadcast just prior to the community news at 20:00 (Also see Page 154). The cable director insisted that advertising earnings were minimum due to the small audience. Yet he suggested that the station might have a chance of generating a substantial advertising revenue if it had an additional 10,000 viewers. This might underlie the current effort of the cable station in building a cable network in the student dormitories. It was evident that by connecting over 2,000 dorms, the station would have more than 10,000 viewers, which might give it more bargaining power in soliciting advertisers.

Information communication

Cable television was a useful tool for internal communication of information concerning the community. Covering an area of 329.4 acres, TU was a large community with about 5,300 employees, 11,000 students and about 8,000 family members. It consisted of numerous departments, colleges, research institutes, factories and service companies. The need for effective inter-communication between the numerous and diverse sub-organizations was crucial to the management of the *danwei* community.

The need for a productive channel of internal communication became increasingly imperative in recent years as life in the community grew remarkably diversified. More and

more people moonlighted outside of the school and spent less time in their sub-units. Meanwhile, the administrative control became more relaxed; there were fewer and fewer group meetings to pass on directives or exchange information in regard to teaching or research projects. Several people told me that they had become less aware of what was happening in the community and who was doing what in which field.

Generally speaking, the communication within the *danwei* was conducted through four major channels: formal meetings, document circulation, informal oral communication and community media. Formal meetings referred to those group meetings officially organized in line with the ranks of the Party or bureaucratic systems. They were held regularly or irregularly to inform people in charge about the directives from higher levels, to discuss task performance, to adopt problem-solving approaches and to create some sort of consensus within the group.

Document circulation indicated the way in which verbal directives, decisions, problems/solutions and task-implementing measures were recorded or summarized in written format and circulated within the hierarchical structure of the *danwei*. The process provided insurance that directives and information communicated through group meetings were accurate and could be traced as evidence of proof at a future time.

Informal communication basically meant the process of oral and personal conversations conducted during daily and informal social interactions.[53]

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[53] A thorough analysis of communication within Chinese *danwei* would require a separate lengthy study beyond the scope and framework of the current thesis which focuses primarily on the role of community media practices in relation to the state propaganda

Community media, as the central focus of this thesis, constituted the fourth channel of communication. They were used by the leaders to facilitate the communication to reach a larger audience apart from the circles of the Party and administrative bureaucracies.

In Chapter VI, I explained how TU was organized through two parallel systems of the Party and administration. The formal communicative courses of group meetings and document circulation were basically directed along the line of the two systems. For example, within the Party order, there could be a meeting of heads of department Party branches or a meeting of Party members in a department. The administrative order would hold meetings such as department chairs' meetings, division directors' meetings and so on. It was a common rule that the higher a person's position in the hierarchy, the more meetings he/she would attend, and the more official documents he/she would have access to.

However, for a large number of people who were neither in cadres' positions nor Party members, there were fewer formal meetings to attend and consequently limited access to school documents. These people were marginalized in relation to the official communication channels, and the situation became more manifest in Deng's reform era, particularly in the 1990s when fewer and fewer formal meetings included ordinary people.[54] Community media were handy tools for the school to deliver information to those people who were felt ostracized or detached from the power orders.

Thus, it was no big surprise to see that the most important factor the community cable viewers cited for watching the community channel was to be informed of important policies

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[54] This was in contrast to Mao's era when public rallies and group meetings of workers, peasants and soldiers were the ritual of almost daily practice.

of the community and activities of the leaders (56 percent). Also, they were keen on learning from the campus cable the information and new motions of regulations concerning individual persons in the community (48 percent).[55]

The community media were also instrumental in channelling to people information relating to sub-units in both vertical and horizontal directions within the *danwei* structure. As I pointed out in previous chapters, the *danwei* was constructed in a hierarchical manner linked by an effective vehicle command, but weak and loose in horizontal connections. Sub-units which were led by different departments had limited contacts and the communication between them. Most of the sub-groups had little idea about what other groups were doing. Community media, including the cable station, functioned to build a communication conduit among these sub-units. By publicizing news, interviews and reports of various departments and research centres, the campus cable assisted in disseminating the information and knowledge of specific sub-groups to the general public. As my random questionnaires exhibited, people were content with this cross-subunit communication benefit of the cable service. About 44 percent of the respondents cited being informed of academic achievements and research development of various departments; 36 percent of the people said they became aware of activities of other sub-units; 24 percent responded that they learned more about students and graduate student activities; 20 percent were interested in learning how children were doing in the kindergarten, elementary and middle schools.

In comparison with community newspaper and radio service, cable television was a

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[55] These were the findings from my random questionaries. See Chapter VII for the summary of the questionnaire results and Appendix VII for a sample questionnaire.

profoundly accessible information medium. It entered into the living room of every household in the community. People could access it by simply clicking the channel button at 8:00 in the evening. Furthermore, the cable service also made information more easily digestible and entertaining because it was delivered in dazzling visual pictures combined with sounds and music.

However, one of the principle problems with the cable television as an information vehicle was that it was exorbitantly costly to produce programming; the amount of information provided by the campus cable was minimal compared with the demand for information by the community. The audience was not satisfied with the 10-minute weekly news programme; they demanded more locally made news coverage. One of the two most cited complaints by the viewers was that the information provided by the school cable was not enough (60 percent respondents). They wanted additional "in-house" produced programmes.

Entertainment promotion

The establishment of community cable was basically derived from the local need for more entertainment than what the dominant television stations supplied. It reflected the interests of the community to gain some control over the content and types of diversion at the grass-roots level. The community benefitted from the cable service not only by having access to the entertainment programming that would otherwise be unavailable from the mainstream television, but also by publicizing on television screens locally based entertainment programmes such as campus concerts, student performances, teachers choirs

or children's celebrations. The use of cable television in promoting community entertainment activities enriched the cultural life in the work unit.

Unlike other types of local media which were initiated and promoted from the top for the interests of state propaganda, community cable television stemmed from demands at the bottom. Local people demanded entertainment which, at the very least, was not prima facie ideological. In the early 1990s, people in Tianjin received only five television channels -- two from the Central Station and three from the Tianjin Station whose programming was tightly controlled by the central and regional authorities. CCTV's programming was under the supervision of the Central Ministry of Broadcasting, Television and Films while Tianjin TV was directed by the Tianjin Bureau of Broadcasting, Television and Films. The programme choice was very limited.

The early 1990s also begot a dramatic audience alienation from the state media. People basically lost faith in the central media, particularly central television, after the central government's bloody crackdown on the student demonstration in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989. More and more people turned to Western short-wave radio programming for information as well as video films from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Western countries for entertainment.

In my previous chapters I explained at some length how cable stations mushroomed in China. Their rapid development was basically a clear sign of popular demand for control of local entertainment. Both local leaders and community populations wanted to have more choice of entertainment on television screens in their living rooms other than what was offered by the government controlled television. In the early days of cable development, the

top priority was to provide more entertainment unendorsed by the official television. For example, the campus cable in TU started off by offering television programming directly broadcast by Hong Kong stations, which was known for being pure entertainment. Other popular programmes included showing video films on the internal channel.

In my first field study to the campus in 1995, I discovered that it seemed to be the "Wild West" out there as far as video shows were concerned. Soap opera series from HK and Taiwan, HK martial arts movies, and movies made in Hollywood, Japan and Britain, Germany etc. dominated the airwaves. They were all pirated copies since China had yet to join the International Copyright Organization. Many of these movies were in English with Chinese subtitles. Every day there was a four-hour video show offered by the cable service, and every Sunday afternoon there were another two hours of English movies. Inevitably, the government wrestled back control over this aspect.[56] But the function of the campus cable as an entertainment vehicle is clear and undisputable. In my second trip to the school in 1997 when the HK broadcasting was disallowed and video shows were minimal, I heard complaints from many people about this decrease in entertainment programming. Several of them still cherished the memory of the early days of cable television.

Another aspect of local entertainment was in relation to the cable broadcasting of locally organized cultural and recreational activities such as concerts, art exhibitions, student performances, sports meets, ping pong tournaments, fishing contests, etc. These entertainment-oriented activities were quite popular and often attracted a sizeable audience.

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[56] In the later sections, I will examine closely the issue of control and counter-control in the terrain of local entertainment.

By displaying the activities on the campus channel, the cable service enhanced the importance of local, diverse activities and re-constructed them into popular entertainment shows on the screen. This would lead to a greater enthusiasm on the part of the community to organize more locally entertaining activities.

Creating a desired image of community

The community cable was invested with the function of cultivating a television image of the perfect local community, in which people lived happily and harmoniously. It was not used as a venue for public debate or dissenting expression, and nor was it a tool employed for an internal struggle of political power. The most prominent role it played in relation to the interests of the community was that it constructed the local life into a utopian community tableau. Such screen "reality" helped publicize the existing rhetoric of the united and harmonious *danwei*. It was definitely to the benefit of the school leadership to promote this presentation of solidarity and happiness. This screen "reality," in essence, helped to positively influence the perception of identity and community among the university members.

The campus channel was seen as a public domain of the community. However, in the norm of the community politics of consensus, such a public forum was not used for debate or criticism which, many believed, might eventually lead to antagonism within and disintegration of the community. Conventional wisdom suggested that a community public terrain should be a venue for creating and promoting positive elements of the community such as unity, brotherhood, harmony and so on and so forth. Anything that was perceived as

detrimental to the public image of community unity, such as criticism, arguments, open debates etc. should be carried out behind the scenes, and not be exposed in front of the general audience.[57]

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how the cable station was subject to the political culture of the *danwei* community and operated under the principle of harmony. In a social environment dominated by consensus politics and strong relations, it was in the best interests of the cable service to remain not only amicable to any particular interest group, but also be positive in reporting their activities. The cable had to maintain a very delicate balance that would please as many interest groups as possible. There was a long list of these particular groups: the school leadership, the propaganda office, peer groups, patronage, clientele, former teachers, former colleagues, former classmates, family friends, relatives, friends' relatives. The list just is endless.

Therefore, criticism or even negative comments of any person or group on the community channel would be a behavioural atrocity in such a closed and relationship-oriented society, causing an avalanche of emotional responses. To use the community media to advance the political interests of a particular group against that of another was vigorously avoided. In their programming, any indication of complaint, dissatisfaction, disagreement, negative comments and conflicts of interests were barred. People spoke positively about the school, the leaders, their colleagues, their sub-units, their neighbours, etc. The leaders were

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[57] Such view of the campus media might also be influenced by a long-held belief that open criticism and confrontation in front of the public was a humiliation and should be avoided at all costs. However, I would not go any further on the subject since it involves a lengthy analysis far beyond the scope of this study.

respected and their speeches were greeted with applause and support. What appeared on the screen was a publicly staged consensus politics.[58]

As far as the community interests were concerned, the chief promotional function of the cable service was a fabricated presentation of the university as utopian community, a vision congruous with the rhetoric of the community. TU was promoted as a solid social entity with a series of extraordinary qualities including a distinguished academic reputation, respectful leadership, renowned faculty, talented students, glorious history, and above all, a harmonious community with minimal conflicts. It was such a distinguished *danwei* that every member should feel especially proud of being part of it.

Of course, the promotion of such an image served the interests of the school leadership. The positive portraits placed the school leaders in a good light, implying that they were competent and should be given credit for their contribution to the glorious community. By promoting the television "reality" of a perfect community, local leaders might expect to influence the perception of people living in the real world of the community.

However, it is worth noting that the TV image of the harmonious community contributed to the process of the community building as well. Through a wide range of

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[58] It is important to point out that community media could be very vulnerable to the power struggle within the *danwei*, specifically in the time of political turbulence. The most extreme example of workplace media being used as a tool of political confrontation was exhibited during the "Cultural Revolution" when various factions of Red Guards in TU waged a strenuous and bloody fight for the control of the wired radio station in the community. At one point when the school was divided into two opposing camps, each hosted a high-powered loudspeaker service in its territory, accusing publicly and vigorously the other side of being the enemy of the people.

activities in the *danwei* framed as that of a harmonious community, the campus cable reinforced, and perhaps perpetuated, the sense of the community. The emphasis placed on only the positive elements of the community accentuated the "desired" aspects of the *danwei* life in the public and affected the way members of the community perceived their environment. Such ideas might, in turn, encourage more activities to be organized to fit into this "desired" image of the community.

Control and Contestation

As I demonstrated in previous sections, the community cable, on the one hand, reflects the state interests of propaganda at the basic unit of society and on the other hand, it embodies the agenda of the community in terms of economic benefits, internal communication of information, provision of entertainment and community building. This medley of state-influenced propaganda and the community interests makes the campus cable station a site of control and contestation for information and entertainment at the grass-roots level. The community space of cable operation is never a completely autonomous sphere. It is subject to various restricted conditions governed by the state rules, regional regulations and local supervision. However, it is important to point out that the community also has considerable leverage in promoting its own agenda and interests which may run contrary to that of the state. The resistance against the state domination of information and entertainment remains a visible and continuing phenomenon at the grass-roots level.

State regulations

The control over the community cable came first from the central state. Faced with rampant development of local cable television, the state government issued a series of regulations between 1990 and 1993 attempting to regain command over television production and consumption at the local level. These regulations imposed strict conditions on the establishment of *danwei* cable stations.

The state bylaw had strict regulations on which *danwei* was qualified to apply for a cable operation licence. It stipulated that only those *danweis* with an organizational rank of county or above were qualified. This condition greatly limited the number of work units that could own their cable services since not many work units had privileged rank of county or higher in the state organizational structure. There were also conditions on technical and equipment requirements, number of personnel and their education requirements, permanent office space, funding capacity and so on. For example, the regulation required that a *danwei* cable station should have at least 15 full-time staffers, half of them with university or technical school levels (The Editorial Commission of A Guide to China's Television Stations 1994). The technical requirement included at least three sets of professional equipment for news coverage, two sets of editing and production equipment and one complete set of broadcasting equipment (The Editorial Commission of A Guide to China's Television Stations 1994).[59] It was clear that such conditions restricted the privilege of owning cable stations only to those *danweis* that were rich in resources, encompassed a large enough

[59] See Chapter V for a detailed account of the regulations.

territory and were powerful in lobbying the government for a cable licence.

The central government, in addition, imposed strict regulations on the content of programming shown at local cable stations. It stipulated that the principal task of the local cable companies was to carry the channels of the central and regional television stations. Local content of the programming was only their secondary function. To guarantee the predominant position of the prime time news programme of CCTV, the government regulation specified that no entertainment programmes should be shown simultaneously when CCTV's evening news was on the air between 19:00 and 20:00 ("Temporary Provisions on Programming Management of Cable Stations and Outlets." 1992).

Regulations on broadcasting of television programming and video films stipulated that:

a) Foreign (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) made films and programmes should not exceed one-third of the total time dedicated to video programming;

b) Foreign video tapes shown on cable television should be rented from authorized video programming distributors under the leadership of central, provincial and city bureaus of broadcasting, television and films;

c) Foreign television programmes should be purchased and distributed to local cable stations by the state monopoly: The China Television International Service Company;

d) Domestically produced television and video programming could be shown by cable stations only after they were approved by regional governments and

granted a release permit. ("Temporary Provisions on Programming Management of Cable Stations and Outlets." 1992.)

The same bylaw forbade the showing of programmes that were:

- against the state constitution, laws, regulations and policies;
- pornographic, reactionary or posing a threat to the national security and social stability;
- not given the broadcasting right by the cable stations concerned;
- domestically produced programmes not yet given a release permit;
- foreign programmes not approved to broadcast by the Ministry of Broadcasting, Television and Films
- video products without permits to be shown on cable television
- television programmes broadcast directly from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan;
- foreign (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) television programming received directly from satellite stations. ("Temporary Provisions on Programming Management of Cable Stations and Outlets." 1992.)

It was evident that the state macro-control was primarily concerned with how to keep the content of cable television under the strict supervision of the state so that the central propaganda and ideology continue to blanket society. One of the top considerations in regulating cable programming was to ensure that there would be no competition to CCTV's programming, particularly its prime-time news and other important shows.

Another important means of control was to establish a sophisticated system of review

of all television and video programming content. Domestically produced TV dramas, soaps and other programmes had to be reviewed and approved for a release permit by government authorities. The same authorities would also be responsible for screening films and music videos to be shown on cable television. As for foreign TV programming -- films and videos -- there was a limited number of state authorized companies controlling the purchase and distribution of these products. These measures were meant to ensure that everything shown on cable channels was scrutinized by government authorities.

Regional control

Community cable stations were submitted to the command of the regional government as well. In the case of the TU campus cable, it was under the supervising control of the Tianjin municipal government and the city's Bureau of Broadcasting, Television and Films.

In Chapter VII, I gave a brief introduction of the development of cable television in the city. As one of the most decentralized examples of cable development in the country, the city did not have a monopoly over the cable systems in its territory. The municipal cable company covered only part of the city; the rest were divided into several district and *danwei* cable zones. This was in contrast to the monopolized situation enjoyed by the city television station before the advance of cable services. Traditionally, the whole territory of the city was covered by a single TV station owned by the city government, which relayed two central television channels and broadcast three local channels.

The rapid development of local cable stations brought down the city monopoly in

1993. District and *danwei* cable services, backed by the district and *danwei* authorities, began offering a variety of channels received directly from satellite dishes to their subscribers. To regain the control over the territory, the city TV station established its own cable company in mid-1994. As soon as it was completed and put into operation, the city cable station started lobbying the municipal government to launch a plan of integrating various cable networks into the city system. At the same time, it tried to lobby the government to outlaw *danwei* cable stations. In May 1995, when I interviewed leaders of the Tianjin Cable Company, they emphasized several times that their goal was to have the municipal government support the idea of "one city, one cable system" (Wang 1995). Furthermore, they stated that *danwei* cable services like the TU campus cable were illegal operations since they did not obtain a permit from the city government.

However, when I told people at the TU campus cable of this allegation, they dismissed it completely. They said that this was another scheme on the part of the city cable station to monopolize the business. "It came late into the business," a director said, " now it wants to kick us out by calling us illegal" (Zhou 1995).

Two years later during my second field trip, it seemed that the plan to outlaw community cable services collapsed. The TU campus cable was still in operation. However, the project of "one cable system" succeeded. The city government issued an act in mid-1995 ordering all the local cable stations to connect to the cable transmission network of the Tianjin Cable Company by the end of 1995. The campus cable connected to it reluctantly just

before the deadline.[60] Although the connection to the city network improved the quality of the transmission as the city cable was based on a fibre optic cable system, the move took away the autonomy of the campus station in transmitting channels from satellite dishes. In addition, the school cable service also had limited choice in channel selections, as the channel grid was packaged by the city cable company. It was interesting to note that even though the campus cable now had limited power in channel choices, it was still able to add an extra channel from the Nankai District Cable Television to its service. This addition of an extra channel was a unmitigated act of defiance against the programming monopoly of the city cable company.

Apparently, the control imposed by the regional government was more related to the monopolizing the local market rather than a concern for ideological purity. It was particularly true at the time when advertising revenue became the principal source of business financing and the number of subscribers was a crucial factor in determining commercial rates. The struggle over the local control of cable networks became increasingly a fierce battle over the potential source of income. Even the city's project of network integration had a price tag attached to it. The TU cable service had to pay the city cable company annual fees for connecting to its system.

Local contestation

The development of community cable originated from local demand for some decent

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[60] A chronologic description of the state and regional regulations and local defiance is provided in the next chapter.

entertainment instead of blatant propaganda. It reflected the grass-roots initiatives to assert local interests in choosing information and entertainment in the *danwei* community. Despite all of the incessant efforts of the state authorities to retain control over the community media, there had been a constant insubordination against the central domination of the local television screen.

One of the most revealing examples was in the case of transmitting Hong Kong television programming by the TU campus cable.

When the cable service started in 1993, it carried a channel broadcasting TV programmes from HK received directly from satellites. In fact, the HK programming was the top benefit cited by the cable workers to attract subscribers, as at the time no national or regional TV stations were allowed to do so. People rushed in to sign up. Within a couple of months, about 3,000 households were connected to the service. This was an irreverent move against the state restriction on overseas broadcasts. Several months later, the cable station encountered trouble. It was asked repeatedly by the security bureau of the Tianjin municipal government to cancel the HK service. The community cable ignored the request. A couple of months later, the city government, impatient with the silent response, finally dispatched several people to the campus to dismantle the satellite reception system. Consequently, the HK television was deleted from the programming list of the campus cable.

Another interesting example concerned the compliance with the state-pledged respect for intellectual property. Until 1996 the cable service was able to show foreign videos including Hollywood movies, HK, Taiwan dramas etc. quite regularly during weekdays. Every Sunday afternoon, there were English language movie hours. The videotapes came

from various sources -- some were recorded from foreign satellites, some were rented from local videos stores, and some were smuggled in from abroad. It was one of the most popular programmes. However, there were fewer and fewer such shows in 1997. This was partly due to the fact that the government started getting serious about respecting the copyright of video tapes shown by cable services, and partly due to the increased restriction on video rentals.

According to the government regulations, cable stations could not show just any videos they were able to acquire. They had to rent them from an authorized video rental office under the control of the local Bureau of Broadcasting, Television and Films. Not only did the rental price of videotapes increase, but there were tighter restrictions on video rentals as well. The newest restriction stated that community cable stations could only show those videos that had already been shown by the city or district cable companies. This was evidently to the benefit of the city cable company because it was given the privilege to run popular videos first. No wonder a leader in the campus cable complained angrily: "Why should I pay for the videos that have already been shown on television?" That was one of the main reasons why the campus cable greatly reduced its video film hours.

Although both cases are explicit of the government restriction on community cable, it should be pointed out that there was no sign of the state applying further pressure on the campus cable for compliance. Besides being disconnected from its HK programming, the cable station was left to do business as usual. No one in the station was penalized or fined for illegally broadcasting HK programming. If a similar case had happened in the 1960s-1970s, the consequence would have been completely different -- the whole station would have been closed down and key persons locked up in prison. Now, no one really cared. In

fact. people in the community cable were quite frank about their open defiance against the state authorities. They looked very proud when they told me how they were able to run HK programming for several months without complying with the government rules.

What was even more significant was that there had been no pressure from the university leadership to penalize the campus cable for their defiance. On the contrary, both community leaders and the general audience seemed to take the side of the cable service. People, including school officials, complained openly about government intervention. Such reactions spoke volumes about the grass-roots resistance against state domination of television programming.

The cable service was perceived by both the community leaders and residents as a media undertaking different from that of other community media. Its main function was to provide good entertainment to the community rather than to blatantly propagate the state ideology. Unlike other community media outlets, such as the newsletter and wired radio, which were placed directly under the thumb of the university propaganda department, the cable station was not a unit affiliated with the propaganda division. It was established as a self-financing business operation directly reporting to the school administration. Such organizational arrangement indicated a decidedly different role from other *danwei* media. Community cable was designated more as a supplementary device for community entertainment than as a propaganda tool for ideological indoctrination.

Although the campus cable station did represent, to some extent, the state interests of the propaganda in the workplace, it was far from being an unconditional mouthpiece of the Party propagandists. As a common property of the *danwei*, it did not depend on the state

budget to survive. It was sustained almost entirely by the resources of the community, such as subscription fees, internal personnel, workplace facilities and so on. Therefore, its service was accountable to the general audience who preferred to be entertained rather than be preached to.

It was evident that the cable service became more oriented towards the interests of the community than towards the interests of the state propaganda. The vertical surveillance from both the propaganda agencies outside of the university and the propaganda office within the school was so minimal that it was difficult to detect it from the surface. Except for the extreme case when the city security bureau sent in people to dismantle the satellite reception facilities, the monitoring and intervention from outside Party institutions was almost nil. The state control was mostly enforced by way of government regulations. This was in clear contrast to the revolutionary fanaticism in Mao's era of the 1950s-70s when surveillance over *danwei* media from the external Party offices was vigilant and constant. Everything published in the university newspaper or broadcast in the wired radio service was carefully monitored. Unorthodox expressions could easily lead to a political purge in the community.

"The times, they are a changin' " (apologies to Bob Dylan). Nowadays even the propaganda office of the university did not have much power concerning direct control over the school cable station. Its authority had been tremendously reduced to a point where it was hardly visible in the daily handling of cable business. The cable station was operated more according to the rhythms of political, social and cultural norms of the *danwei* community, while the authoritative command of the propaganda officials was subdued as long as the cable station did nothing to provoke, or openly challenge, communist ideology.

The most decisive factor in the shifting landscape of the community media and the state lies in the fact there has been an increasing autonomy of TU as a powerful *danwei* community which contributes to the nurturing of a strong sense of community identity. With the state government decentralizing in almost every aspect, *danweis*, particularly those large and resourceful work units have adopted many crucial functions that were used to be performed by the state, such as the provision of job security, housing allocation, medical care, pensions, child care, etc. To be a member of TU, one of the most prestigious and economically strong *danweis* in Tianjin city, is genuinely desired by many people. It means not only job security and a promising career, but also better social benefits, respectable social status, good education for children, a variety of cultural activities, comfortable living quarters and so on. Its membership is cherished more and more as an increasingly large number of state work units have become insolvent under the market-oriented economic reforms.

As the state is gradually withdrawing from the local scene, the importance of the *danwei* stands out prominently. Having attained more autonomy in managing activities in its territory, the *danwei* dictates considerable agendas at the grass-roots level including the media efforts of promoting the work unit's own image and interests. All these factors contribute to the strengthening of the existing sense of the *danwei* identity and even transforms it into an allegiance to the community. In some cases, when the community interests are at stake, people in the *danwei* pledge their allegiance first to the community instead of the state.

The case of broadcasting HK television programming was a typical example of how people in the community, both leaders and ordinary members alike, formed an alliance to

contest the state monopoly of entertainment in the local space. Although the central government set the rule in 1990 banning all direct broadcasting of overseas television programming, the campus cable contemptuously ignored it and was able to go ahead with the project without any warnings or objections from the school leadership. Even after the municipal government discovered the illegal broadcasting and issued several "suspension" notices to the school, the HK programming continued to be aired until some external authorities intervened and physically tore down the satellite system on campus.

At issue was the prime interest of the community to establish its own cable television. A *danwei*-owned cable station would serve a variety of community needs. It would offer additional entertainment, a new and effective way of internal communication, a venue for amateur journalism and community participation, and above all, a medium to elevate the prestige of the community leaders and to boost a "perfect" image of the *danwei* community. Since the school could not provide funding from its own budget, the only option was to build the cable system by subscription fees collected from internal viewers. And the only way to have them as subscribers (and collect subscription fees from them) was to lure them with HK television programming.

In fact, it was to the political benefit of the community cable station and leaders to have external authorities come to the campus to demolish the broadcasting facilities. It demonstrated to the community that the cable station and school leadership were actually defying the state authorities for the interests of the audience. The event directed the ire of cable subscribers away from the local authorities and, instead, towards the state and regional governments.

However, it is naïve to assume that the community cable could become a locus where local democratic activities could be organized to contest the authority of the Party-state. There seems to be no desire among the cable workers to utilize the medium as a political venue to promote some sort of liberalistic pluralism. Nor do they demonstrate any yearning to be a community gatekeeper to place the *danwei* leadership under surveillance. There is apparently a self-imposed political consensus among the cable workers to be positive in their coverage of community life and community leadership. The chief principle, a leader in the cable station stated, was to promote the "merits" and "harmony" of the *danwei* as a community and to elevate the morality among the *danwei* people. This unity as a community does not necessarily run counter to the state interests, although the communist state did insist on total loyalty from its subjects to its ideology two or three decades ago. The state has become much more tolerant now towards other interest groups, specifically, *danwei* communities.

CHAPTER X

NEGOTIATING CONTROL OVER LOCAL SPACE

The blend of control, contestation and conciliation we see occur between the central state, the regional government and the work unit when it comes to community cable television is emblematic of a quintessentially Chinese negotiating process. The term "negotiation" is used to symbolize a complicated and multi-level process of testing, regulating and adjustments, which does not involve an extensive face-to-face deliberation of actors as the conventional meaning of the word suggests. This process, examined primarily from a structural point of view, also features collective actors -- structurally defined organizations in regard to the state system of mass media -- rather than individual players. None of the involving groups have appointed negotiators. This chapter investigates how this interactive procedure took place and how the arrangement over community cable was finally settled within the centralized state media system.

Actors and Their Structured Positions

The actors involved are three distinctive groups -- the central state, the Tianjin municipal government and TU. Each group has some television or cable television operations under its command. The contestation, regulation and negotiation predominantly revolve around the issue of who should control the cable television operation in the *danwei* community.

It is important to note is that this process of negotiation takes place within the

structured system of state media. As I demonstrated in previous chapters, the Chinese state media is organized as a hierarchical structure parallel to that of the political system (Appendix II, III). It features the overarching status of the state television (CCTV), followed by provincial TV and cable stations, and then TV and cable undertakings run by county governments. At the township level, television broadcasting stations are not permitted, but local governments are allowed to establish cable stations. All television operations associated with governments at various levels are defined as the "formal media" -- meaning that they are managed as professional media organizations and their function as an official vehicle of whatever governments they represent to deliver state propaganda.

At the very nadir of this hierarchy is what I define as the "*danwei* media" -- newspapers, wired radio and cable operations run by work units. As the "informal media," they are organized into the state mass media mainly to facilitate the penetration and propaganda interests of the central government in the local space of communication. Aiming exclusively at an internal audience, they represent an extension of the state media to the local level.

Within this state hierarchy of mass media, the status and responsibilities of media operations at each level is clearly defined based on government regulations, established political culture and years of common practice. The central media -- in this case, CCTV -- which represent the official voice of the national government, are ratified to have a dominant status. By law, every TV station and cable company ought to carry or relay CCTV programming. Its key programmes, such as the prime-time news between 19:00-19:30 and the "Focus" (news magazine) at 19:30-20:00 every evening, should be relayed by every

station at the same time. Moreover, they are guaranteed a prominent status by the state regulations which forbid any other stations and channels from airing competing entertainment programmes at the same time.

Provincial TV and cable stations cover the regions under the jurisdiction of respective provincial governments (in this case, Tianjin Television Station and Tianjin Cable Company have the equivalent status as the provincial ones). They are considered the magisterial voice of the regional governments. On the one hand, they are required by law to re-transmit CCTV's programming to the audience in their territory. On the other hand, they also have command over lower ranking TV and cable stations (county television, cable stations and township cable stations) which function to carry and relay their channels.

A similar relay obligation and requirement are also applied to county TV and cable stations. They have to carry both central and provincial TV programming. At the same time, the subordinating township cable stations have to re-transmit county channels. The lower the rank in the hierarchy, the smaller the territory a cable station will cover, but the more relay obligations it will assume.

Grass-roots media operations, with its limited internal audience of the workplace, occupy the lowest rung of the media ladder. Traditionally, *danwei* media, such as wired radio services, were strictly supervised by various governments and superior radio organizations in order to ensconce them as part of the state broadcasting system. They were charged with the major task of re-broadcasting programming of the central and regional stations. However, despite the fact that the *danwei* media were created to serve the interests of state propaganda, it is important to point out that the media operations based in work units have a *legitimate*

status in the Chinese order of mass media. In other words, it is a centrally approved or even encouraged practice that work units and grass-roots communities establish media functions.[61] This structurally entitled right for *danweis* to carry out media operations constitutes one of the crucial factors in the evolution of community cable television in China.

Process of Negotiation

1. Initial move of *danwei* community

Community cable television was initiated by grass-roots *danwei* communities in Tianjin at a time before any clearly specified regional regulations were put into place. After the bloody crackdown of student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, the central propagandists were preoccupied with damage-control schemes to re-attract an alienated Chinese audience to the state media. Hence, during this period that they allowed more entertaining, yet less ideologically explicit programmes to be shown on Chinese TV.[62] Meanwhile, local governments and community leaders tried to promote popular community-oriented projects that would restore people's confidence in their governance as well. Locally based cable television, once introduced into Tianjin in early 1992, became immediately attractive to both TU leaders and ordinary people.

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[61] It is worth noting that in the media system of PRC, private persons do not have a legitimate role. It is stipulated by law that no individual persons could own media operations like newspapers, radio stations or cable television.

[62] The most popular one in Chinese television history was CCTV's soup series "Yearning" which, some scholars believed, has contributed to the success of the government public relations efforts to re-capture the audience to the state TV (Ma 1998).

For the leaders, it offered several practical advantages: a) it was a project that did not require a lot of investment on their part and could be sustained by itself; b) it could provide them with an effective media tool for public promotion and relations; c) it was politically beneficial as it fit into the government agenda of "doing good things for the people;" and, d) it was politically correct as well since it conformed to the communist tradition of carrying media operations to the work unit. For the community members at large, it provided them with better-quality TV pictures, more variety of channels, and a promised access to Hong Kong entertainment and news programming -- all at reasonable costs.

TU got its cable operation off the ground following the suit of several district and *danwei* community cable stations in the city. The university had no problem obtaining a license from the local television and broadcasting bureau largely because there were no local rules at the time on the establishment of cable television. By re-organizing its electronic education centre into a cable station, the school easily met all the requirements stipulated by the central government to qualify for a *danwei* cable operation in terms of organizational status, finance, equipment, facilities, technical support and professional personnel.

Though the state government at that time had issued strict regulations on receiving and transmitting satellite programming from abroad, all the local cable companies ignored this policy by offering Hong Kong channels received from satellite. The campus cable in TU was no exception. It used this HK programming as an important hook to entice cable subscribers. The inauguration of the campus cable was a celebrated event in the community on July 1, 1993 which fell on the national holiday marking the 72nd birthday of the Chinese Communist Party.

At the outset, the campus cable provided much greater choices in programming than did the dominant television system. Prior to the establishment of community cable, there were only five channels on local television. The cable service brought in 15 channels including Hong Kong television programming received directly from its own satellite earth station. There were also four-hour-a-day video films from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, UK, US, France, Germany and Russia (they were either pirated videos or movies taped through the satellite system.). Furthermore, it offered 20-hour-a-week self-produced community programmes such as the "Campus News," the "Campus Topics" on current affairs of the school, the "Ocean of Science" aimed at teaching children science, and so on.[63]

2. City Security Bureau's crackdown on broadcasting HK programmes

After a few months of operation, the cable station received a notice from the Security Bureau of Tianjin City demanding that it stop broadcasting HK programmes. It stated that receiving and broadcasting television external programming was illegal and that this practice should stop immediately. The cable people ignored the notice and continued the programming. Later, the same agency issued the same notice to the cable service a number of times. Finally, after several months, the Security Bureau lost patience. Without any advance notice, some of the officers from the Bureau just came to the campus, dismantled the satellite reception system and confiscated the satellite dish and other equipment. The HK television programming was stopped immediately.

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[63] The "Science Ocean" programme was cancelled in 1997 due to the shortage of funding.

Aside from this action, the security agency did not do anything to further punish the school and its cable service. There were no fines or violation charges. At the same time, the campus cable station began sending letters to the Security Bureau asking it to return the satellite dish and other equipment to the community. No answer was forthcoming from the agency, up to the time that I conducted my field study in May 1997.

3. Tianjin Cable Station joined the game

Tianjin City did not have a city cable station until May 1994 when the Tianjin Cable Station started transmitting programmes through the cable network. A subsidiary of Tianjin TV under the leadership of the Broadcasting and Television Bureau of Tianjin (BTBT), Tianjin Cable was intent on monopolizing the city's cable business right from the very beginning. It tried hard to lobby the city government through leaders of BTBT to promote the plan of "one city, one cable network." The immediate goal of the plan was to integrate the separate district and *danwei* community cable networks into the city network. Its ultimate objective was to eventually dissolve those cable companies and make Tianjin Cable the monopoly operation in the city. For Tianjin Cable, *danwei* cable services like TU cable television were minor competitors. Its chief rivals were those district cable companies; each of them covered a territory of about 200,000 households and claimed 80,000-100,000 cable subscribers in 1995. The district cable services, a lucrative business for the district treasury, had strong support of their respective district governments. They did not lack the lobbying influence either.

The city government convened several meetings to discuss the plan. These meetings

consisted of city propaganda officials, leaders of BTBT, Tianjin TV, major districts and *danwei* communities. The opposition to the plan was near-unanimous although few openly discredited the principle of network integration. But none of the district or *danwei* communities were willing to give up their network to the city right way. The city government endorsed the plan in principle, but decided not to issue an official document for fear of strong opposition and resistance from district governments and communities. It was not until the summer of 1995, after the central government had ratified the decision of the Ministry of Broadcasting, Television and Films to proceed with the strategy of "one region, one cable network," that the Tianjin government put forth a directive demanding the network integration of all district and *danwei* cable stations with Tianjin Cable on December 31, 1995 at the latest.

4. The state's tightening up of its regulations

The central government's position on grass-roots cable stations became tougher and tougher. The top priority for the central propagandists was to maintain the domination of central television. However, as I elaborated previously, to achieve that goal they required the cooperation from regional governments and local communities. They had to let regional and local governments control part of the media undertakings in their respective territories in exchange for a greater penetration of local space.

In 1990 when local cable stations started burgeoning in the country, the central government encouraged the move by issuing several documents to promote locally-based cable stations. Obviously it had in mind its successful experience of building a nation-wide

system of radio broadcasting and wired delivery system in the 60s-70s. It planned to establish a national television/cable system similar to that of radio/wired radio network. In the first state regulation on cable television management issued on November 1990, the central government ratified the legitimate right for both administrate areas (such as townships or districts) and *danweis* to set up their own cable services. Although there were a number of financial, technical and personnel requirements for such operations, these conditions were much milder than the regulations issued in the following years.

In the second government decree on cable television in 1991, the government limited the work units that were eligible to own their cable stations to those with the rank of "bureau level" in the state organizational structure. Such a decision would greatly reduce the number of *danweis* eligible for a cable license. It also imposed tougher conditions on financial sources, office space, the number and professional qualifications of employees, the quality of equipment and so on. All these conditions were indubitably intended to make it difficult for work units to set up cable stations.

Another aspect where the state regulations got tougher was on the integrated plan of cable networks. In the early decrees of 1990-1993, the state government never explicitly stipulated that there should be only one cable network in one region, though it did grant local governments the authority of approving district and community cable stations. One of the conditions for *danwei* cable services was that they had to "conform to the comprehensive plan of the regional television coverage network" (The Editorial Commission of A Guide to China's Television Stations 1994, 331). The state government used this kind of general and unspecified wording to indicate its position that the establishment of community cable

stations should not be in conflict with the interests of regional governments and their television/cable operations.

But in the spring of 1995, the central government's position on the issue became more decisive after several reports by regional broadcasting and televisions bureaus made it clear that the rampant development of local cable stations had infringed upon the interests of regional television and threatened the domination of the centralized system. The state finally issued a decree stipulating that one region should have only one cable distribution network. Such a regulation gave the Tianjin government a leverage strong enough to proceed with its own cable network integration plan.

5. TU Cable's strategy before the cable network integration

TU's cable station was reluctantly integrated within the Tianjin Cable Company's network on December 31, 1995. It waited until the last day to do so. After the integration, it lost its original power in satellite reception, transmission and channel selections. In addition, it had to pay the city cable station annual connection fees. The integration plan dealt a serious blow to the autonomy of the campus cable.

Prior to the network integration, the strategy adopted by the university and its cable station in gaining control of local cable space was as follows:

a) It seized the opportunity immediately and set up its own cable station -- before the city government and television authorities realized the potential consequences;

b) It ignored the existing regulations in terms of broadcasting overseas programming and presented a *fait accompli*;

c) It offered passive resistance to the commands from the city authorities. They just did business as usual and paid little attention to either the demand of the Security Bureau on stopping overseas programming or the "illegal operation" accusation coming from the Tianjin Cable Company;

d) It formed an alliance with more influential district cable companies, specially the Nankai District Cable, to resist the Tianjin Cable's attempt to monopolize the cable business. The leaders of TU cable station and Nankai Cable had very close working and personal relations. The Technical Deputy Director of TU Cable was also a technical consultant for the Nankai Cable. They often exchanged information on the issue over the phone.

6. TU Cable's strategy after the cable network integration

Although the integration plan was the biggest setback to TU Cable, taking away from the community some of the autonomy over satellite reception and distribution, the university cable was able to maintain its ownership of the cable operation. It still owned the cable distribution system in its territory. In addition, it had its own channel under its control.

To counteract the imposed integration plan and strive to survive, the approaches adopted by the TU Cable after the integration included:

a) It maintained a passive resistance. Since the TU Cable had to pay the city cable annual connection fees which were calculated on the number of subscribers, the TU cable did not present the Tianjin Cable a real figure. The number they reported to the city cable company was about 1,000 fewer than the actual number. This way, the

campus cable got its revenge by paying less to the city;

b) It stopped renting video tapes from the local BTBT which owned the Tianjin Cable;

c) It continued to carry a channel devoted to its ally: the Nankai District Cable's programming;

d) It continued the effort of expanding its network to student dormitory areas hoping to add another 2,500 subscribers to its service.

7. Current state policy

On August 20, 1997, the Chinese government made public the "Broadcasting and Television Management Regulations." The decree stipulates very clearly that only one broadcasting and television delivery network in one administrative region is permitted. All cable stations in the region should be connected to the single network in accordance with the regional plan.

However, even in this most recent rigid stipulation, the legitimate status of *danwei* cable stations continues to exist. The difference is that the state has re-captured part of the control over local cable operations by regulating individual cable stations that are now integrated with the centralized television broadcasting and delivery network.

8. Current position of the city government

Despite the network integration, the Tianjin Cable Station still felt threatened by district and work unit cable stations. Its ultimate goal was to gain ownership and control of the complete distribution network currently owned by district and *danwei* cable companies.

It wanted them to become more or less like those community channels in the West. The city cable provides a couple channels for these districts and *danweis* to show self-produced programming in different time slots. But under the current circumstances, it is impossible for the Tianjin Cable to proceed with such a radical and unrealistic plan.

Negotiation as Collective Actions

What I have outlined is a structurally interactive process of contestation, control and reconciliation. One of the distinctive features of this negotiating process is that it involves mainly collective acts. None of the parties have an appointed negotiator, and individual actors tend to be anonymous in the process. During my interviews in 1995 and 1997 with leaders of three cable stations -- Tianjin Cable, Nankai Cable and TU Cable, they had a habit of using "we" or "they" to describe the moves and actions made by individual persons. When they gave opinions, they often used the phrase "we think" rather than "I think." It is obvious that in such circumstances, acts of individuals become meaningful and accountable only when they represent the collectives, be they government agencies or city cable companies or community stations. As such, contesting opinions and manoeuvres taken by individuals were translated into actions in the name of and for the interests of collectives.

Defying the state or regional authorities in the name of collectives, rather than as individual acts, is a palatable approach for local communities. Chinese culture is rich in proverbs explicit of this political wisdom. One old saying goes: "No laws could curb mass disobedience" (*fa bu zhi zhong*). Another well-known proverb is: "The bird that sticks its neck out gets shot at first" (*qiang da chu tou niao*). For instance, in the case of broadcasting

HK programmes, every cable company in the city did the same thing despite government regulations. Many people in the community seemed involved, yet there were no individual persons who could be singled out as responsible for certain decisions or practices. Not only was it done by every cable worker who designed the project and solicited subscribers; but it had been approved by the whole leadership because they all supported the project and subscribed to the service. Furthermore, it had been endorsed by much of the community at large because over 4,000 households signed on with the programming. Consequently, when the practice was repressed by the city's Security Office, it was impossible for it to penalize any one individual since the whole process of defiance was anonymous.

Negotiation without Face-to-face Communication

This process of negotiation is marked by manoeuvres at a distance and lobbying efforts behind the scenes. It seldom features a "face-to-face" bargaining session and compromise. Nor does it involve key players sitting in a closed-door conference room explaining their differences and negotiating terms and conditions. From a structural perspective, the negotiation entails give-and-take, back-and-forth manoeuvres initiated by various involved parties at a distance.

The initial contestation was launched by local communities which jumped at the opportunity of setting up a satellite-transmission-distribution network of cable television in their own territory. The central government responded by imposing consecutively tougher regulations on grass-roots cable operations, including the compulsory relay of central TV programming. At the same time, the cable company owned by Tianjin governments

attempted to re-claim the cable territory already occupied by district and community cable companies by introducing regional regulations, particularly the network integration plan. However, the integration move of the regional government could not proceed without the central government's "one region, one cable network" policy. The local cable stations responded to these measures with a variety of acts and techniques in order to maintain control over the grass-roots media space.

It is important to note that my study of negotiation focuses primarily on the structural interactions between collective actors whose positions are structured within the state system of mass media. I am concerned more with the negotiating process at the systematic level rather than at the personal communicative level. Since the negotiation takes place, first and foremost, in an established system of hierarchy, each involved player is stapled to a fixed position in relation to other players. Its boundary and entitled responsibilities have been more or less defined by the system. What the TU Cable has been negotiating for is an opportunity to redefine its own territory, no matter how limited it seems, with the established system.

In the process of interactions I examined between 1990-1997, the role of the state was like a remote authoritative ruler who issued laws and regulations to protect the central interests of state propaganda. Its dominant position and authority had to be conformed to by other players in the lower ranks such as regional governments and *danwei* communities. The state, in essence, had to take into consideration the interests of regional governments and grass-roots communities because these organizations were also functional in serving its propaganda and penetration agenda.

The regional government acted like a state representative in the local negotiation. It

had direct contacts with grass-roots communities, but did not enjoy the undisputable authority of the state. Its rules and conditions, if not sanctioned by the state legislation, could be contested. The most effective strategy the regional government instructed communities to comply to was the lobbying of the central government for tighter regulations.

The community cable station started as a riposte to the established rule of mass media. At the beginning, it employed the strategy of deliberate neglect towards the state and local regulations. After it had been forced to comply with state decrees, it adopted several techniques of passive disobedience. Its priority presently is to remain within the system. Future possibilities include the expansion of its service and the hope that opportunities may turn in its favour down the road.

Once again, it should be noted that during the entire process there was no single occasion that the representatives of the defined key players met face-to-face nor did a leader from Tianjin Cable ever contact the leaders of TU cable either by telephone or in person, demanding that they be connected to the city cable system. The commands usually came from the city government in the form of official documents.

A similar approach was adopted by TU cable as well. Its leaders never talked to the director of Tianjin Cable in person (although they all knew each other) to back off from its integration plan. What they did was to push the leaders of the university to lobby the city government not to take sides with Tianjin Cable and go ahead with the project.

Evidently, this process features structural interactions of testing, regulating and readjustment, and indirect, behind-the-door lobbying and manoeuvres rather than a negotiation of "face-to-face" communication in the conventional sense of the term. Of

course, from a perspective of communicative negotiation, the whole interactive process involves a great deal of personal communication, "behind-the-door" lobbying and alliance strategy. All these could be further examined as part of an interesting inquiry into the Chinese political culture or negotiating communication. But these are obviously beyond the interest and scope of this current work.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

The Chinese *danwei* community occupies a cardinal place in the state system of propaganda, which effectively retains a monopoly over ideology, information and entertainment. It is in the ultimate interests of the state to control media undertakings in order to shade regional communication and entertainment with the official language and ideology. However, this task of absolute control is infinitely impossible for the central government, particularly in this current age of economic reform -- a time when the omnipotency of the Party-state has withered remarkably in their influence on the daily life of *danwei* communities. The state monopoly of media is confronted with a hopeless dilemma brought about by the rapid development of cable television in local communities: while it needs those media upstarts to draw on the resources of basic units of society for the purposes of ideological penetration and even indoctrination, these community-based organizations also pose a significant challenge to its established system of control and monopoly.

Derived mainly from a community desire to seek control over local television entertainment from that of the state, the *danwei* cable services embody a common interest among the *danwei* to oppose the rigid facet of the central propaganda. Community-cable television's daily operations are subject more to the political and cultural environment of the workplace to which it belongs rather than to the direct commands of the external authorities. Its programming agenda and interests are not always compatible with that of the state. At times, these local concerns are even in obvious conflict with those of central and regional

governments.

At present, it appears on the surface that community cable television has been finally institutionalized into the state system of mass propaganda after several years of control, contestation, regulation and resistance. However, the fact that community-cable stations continue to exist today, despite persistent government efforts to control them, indicates that the battle over the grass-roots space of media communication is far from over. Community cable faces a foggy future and may head in several possible directions, namely: a) cease to exist by being merged with the state cable system; b) become an independent commercial operation; and c) remain more or less the same as it currently exists. How it will evolve depends on many factors, most of them external determinants beyond the control of a single community or community-cable service, such as the prospect of the state-control mass media, the future of *danwei* communities, and even the fate of the communist state itself. These questions are evidently beyond the scope of this thesis.

Absolute Control Attempts of the State

Community-cable TV is never, and has never been, a gift given by the state to local work units for them to assert their own interests or to express themselves by a new medium technology. It is an outcome of two factors that seem quite unlikely corresponding partners: a) a popular demand initiated from basic communities for non-state-controlled entertainment and information; and b) the communist tradition to organize basic workplaces and communities into the state system of propaganda. To some extent, the establishment of cable TV in grass-roots communities reflects the ingeniousness on the part of local *danwei*s which

cleverly took advantage of the communist model of workplace media practices and turned the operation to their own benefit.

What is at issue is that the central propagandists had no intention of giving up the state domination of mass communication in the local domain. With the help of government legislation and regulations, the state attempted to recapture the terrain of media enterprises it had lost to grass-roots communities at the outset of cable TV evolution. All the central regulations and acts demonstrate the fact that the state system of mass media is based on the principle of maintaining ultimate control over the content of mass media so that the purity of ideology can be ensured, not only in the dominant "formal" media, but also in the community sphere of media undertakings. Any non-community programmes shown on local cable TV, such as soap operas, dramas, films, music videos and so on, are subject to approval, one way or another, by government authorities.

However, the monopolistic control over the content of mass communication constitutes only half of the picture in the propaganda enterprise of the Party-state. For centralized propaganda to achieve its objectives, it has to be able to penetrate extensively into the very basic level of society and be made easily accessible to ordinary people. It would be a nightmare for the state propagandists if the system were to be made unavailable to a large segment of the population. Propaganda requires penetration, and for ambitious communist propagandists, their scheme demands an extremely high degree of infiltration. The ways to achieve the penetration can be deliberately imposed in the sense that the state dictates the central agenda and programming upon the community audience without even viewers' voluntary action of using the media. The most illustrative example of the imposed

penetration was the wired radio service in the 1960s when public loudspeakers routinely broadcast Central Radio's programming in the community. Local residents did not need to turn on the radio to be exposed to the state propaganda. Apart from such an extreme case, most penetrating schemes consist of a combination of both imposed choices and the voluntary act of watching television on the part of individual viewers.

To the dismay of the central planners of propaganda, this absolute domination of the state media infiltrating into every cell of society remains a highly infeasible objective to achieve, even though propagandists in Mao's era were quite close to accomplishing this feat. There are many constraints that work against the total domination of the state propaganda in local space, such as a shortage of financial resources, unavailability of media technology, lack of skilled media workers, and so forth. One of the most crucial factors is whether the central state has the power in directly dictating the activities of media undertakings in local communities beyond the means of issuing regulations.

In Mao's time, the state government was extremely powerful in coordinating local operations of media like wired broadcasting and *danwei* newspapers. The funding for such functions were allocated from the government budgets, and regional media organizations received training from propaganda offices and a concentrated effort to supervise them to ensure that they would toe the line of the Party. The situation changed significantly with the emergence of community cable TV. The state authorities have withdrawn almost entirely from the financial commitment of community cable as well as the supervision of its daily operation. The state control has taken on a remote and macro command at the central-policy level, instead of the functions of surveillance and rulings in the daily affairs of the

community.

Another significant factor lies in the attitude of the local audience toward the state domination of mass media. It may be a relatively easy task for the central propaganda machine to infiltrate local activities in the grass-roots if the state programming appears attractive to the local audience. However, the penetration would be extremely difficult if the general viewers at the basic level are alienated from state propaganda and deliberately seek information and entertainment from other sources. The grass-roots resistance against the central domination of media is clearly explicit in the development of community cable, as the case study of TU cable station makes manifestly clear. The fact that campus cable used the direct broadcasting of Hong Kong programming as a selling scheme to sign on subscribers indicated that the dissatisfaction with government media was markedly prevalent in the community. The subsequent defiance against the government warnings and regulations that forbade direct broadcasting of HK programming was not an act of the cable station alone. It signified a joint resistance on the part of the whole community -- both the leadership and the ordinary viewers -- against the central monopoly of media in the local space. The state had to resort to external force (the city's security bureau) to press the community-cable service into compliance.

Community Cable TV: A Negotiated Locale of Control and Contestation

Community-cable television represents a negotiated locale of control, contestation and concession. On the one hand, it embodies a compromise on the part of state propagandists who have to come to terms with the fact that it is impossible to achieve

absolute control over the basic segments of society. Thus, they have allowed communities to manage part of the local media communication in exchange for a greater penetration of the state propaganda. One the other hand, it represents a concession of *danwei* communities as well. For the communities, the top priority at the present is to retain firm ownership of their cable services. They have to accept the fact that the very issue of existence of community cable depends largely on how it complies with the state authority of propaganda. The survival of *danwei* cable television, to a considerable degree, hinges upon the condition that it will not challenge the state interests of propaganda and pose a threat to the dominance of centrally sanctioned information.

The state system of propaganda benefits from locally based cable television by utilizing it for its own penetration purposes. Without local efforts in building cable networks. it would cost the central government much more time and fiscal resources to have a cable network connected to every local household. By stipulating that all cable stations must carry central television channels, the government takes advantage of community cable networks for its own propaganda interests. The community cable provides the central propagandists with ready access to local families.

In addition, the community cable transforms the general language of the central propaganda into locally based, and locally oriented texts. It adds specific flavour and content to the otherwise general and indistinct concepts promoted by the central media which concern more the central government and broad spectrum of population than they do local communities. The *danwei* cable service could bring the central propaganda closer to the lives of ordinary people in the grass-roots by translating it into a local subject, local event or a

local concern under the cloak of local recreational activities. It renders a more effervescent alternative to the banality of the Party propaganda. This local cover may help the state more insidiously infiltrate its message into the everyday life of the community.

However, there remains an evident discrepancy between the cable service owned and operated by the community and that predominantly controlled by the state. Despite its function as an "informal" arm of the state propaganda machinery at the *danwei* level, community cable never plays a role as a total "mouthpiece" of the Party-state. It represents more the interests of the community rather than that of the state. Closely integrated with the political, economic, social and cultural life of the community, it cultivates a particular domain of public interest within the community. It is a self-sufficient business venture, an effective vehicle for internal communication of information and a channel for supplementary entertainment. Most importantly, it was invested with the function of community building by creating and perpetuating an image of "desired" community in which people live happily and harmoniously. Based on the principles of consensus politics and social harmony, it is not intended to be a public forum for debate or expressing dissent. Nor is it employed as a tool for an internal struggle of political power, at least in the present time. Rather, it is construed as a public face of the community. The most prominent role it plays is that it reconstructs on the screen a utopian picture of a perfect community. Such screen "reality" publicizes the existing rhetoric of a united and harmonious *danwei* and may positively influence the perception of identity and community identification among local residents.

It is evident that all these interests asserted by the community cable are not always compatible with that of the state. In many cases, they may be in conflict with each other. One

example is the decision of transmitting Hong Kong programming, which meets the entertainment demand of the local community, but contravenes state legislation. Furthermore, the community cable itself may be in conflict with the interests of the government cable company which has a commercial agenda to monopolize the local territory.

Undoubtedly, with the increasingly autonomous local *danweis* and ever-fading presence of the state in the community scene, community-cable TV will become oriented more towards serving the interests of the community rather than serving as a local branch of the state propaganda system. It is more an integral part of the *danwei* community than it is a instrument for unmitigated ideological indoctrination. Eventually, this may lead to a possible dissociation of the community media from the state centralization of mass communication.

The interactive process of control, contestation and conciliation carried out among the central state, the regional government and the work unit over community cable television is demonstrative of the Chinese negotiating process. The negotiation is first proceeded within the structured system of mass media featuring a complicated and multi-level interactions of testing, regulating and adjustments. Second, it involves collective actors -- structurally defined organizations in regard to the state system of mass media -- rather than individual negotiators appointed to represent collectives. Finally, the negotiation signifies a distant process rather than "face-to-face" bargaining and compromise. The interactive process evolves through a great deal of give-and-take, back-and-forth structurally defined acts and counteracts and behind-scene lobbying and manoeuvres initiated by keys parties at a distance. It is essentially a process in which the community cable strives to define and

redefine its status and boundary within the auspices of an established structure.

Future of Community Cable Television

It is difficult to predict how the community-cable will evolve in the years to come. Even the people who are involved in the business are not certain of the future. At present, the TU cable station is busy expanding its cable network into the student residential area. The leaders hoped that the project would add more subscribers and, consequently, provide an audience large enough to generate substantial advertising income for the cable service. Eventually, it could become a more commercially oriented business than the current arrangement allows.

Meanwhile, the pressure to merge with the city-controlled cable company is still there. The Tianjin cable company never recognized the legal status of the campus cable. After it successfully integrated all the cable networks into its own system, it reportedly still attempted to lobby the city government to let it monopolize the cable market altogether. That meant having all the local cable stations merged with the city cable station. So far, the city government is very cautious about the plan, since it may be opposed vigorously by some of the most influential districts in the city which own their own cable stations.

There are other suggestions too. One official from the university propaganda department put forward a plan to set up a media group incorporating all the university owned media -- newspapers, a radio service and cable station -- under the direct control of his office so that there would be more coordinated efforts among various media operations. He believed that such an organization would allow cable television to play a more active role

than it has previously in promoting the agenda and interests of the school.

Of course, the future evolution of the cable service depends not so much on local factors as on what will happen in larger environments: such as, what the city will decide on vis-à-vis its cable system, what the state policies will be on *danwei* communities, how the state system of mass media will develop, and if the communist state will surrender to democracy? None of these things is certain at the moment.

Suggestions for Future Research

This thesis examines the development of cable television from the perspective of *danwei* media and *danwei* community. It begins by conceptualizing the significance of the *danwei* and *danwei* media in relation to the Chinese system of state propaganda. It then traces the evolution of grass-roots media operations within the context of the communist tradition of mass mobilization and persuasion. Following that, the study concentrates on a close examination of a single cable station (Tianjin University Cable Station) run by one of the communal workplaces (Tianjin University). It attempts to delineate a negotiated locale of media communication at the basic level of society in relation to the state domination of propaganda. Additionally, it makes an effort to outline the changing path of control and contestation which occurred in the grass-roots use of media technology in the past four decades, beginning with Mao's era and ending with the current age of reforms. Lastly, the thesis illustrates how the structural interactions of control and contestation proceeds over the *danwei* cable operations.

My analysis of the community cable is principally devoted to three key issues: a) the

grass-roots cable television in relation to the centralized domination of mass media; b) its place and function within the *danwei* community; and c) the process of structurally dialectical interactions of command, resistance and reconciliation among the state, the regional government and the *danwei* over the local space of media practice.

As I have reiterated throughout the thesis, the emergence of community cable has flowed from two conditions -- the communist tradition of establishing media operations at *danwei*work units and the prevailing alienation of local audience from the centralized media. The *danwei*-based media undertakings are functional in facilitating the mass penetration and persuasion of the state propaganda. But at the same time, they bear the potential of challenging the centralized authorities over information and entertainment. However, it is very naïve to think that community cable could become a vehicle for dissident expression against the state domination of ideology. Any such attempts would not only be unrealistic in the current situation, but also politically suicidal for the very survival of community cable service. The best it could do at present is to assert some of the community interests in its programming agenda and maintain firm ownership control of its assets of cable distribution network in its own territory.

Community cable enjoys a singularly distinct status within the *danwei* environment. Unlike other *danwei* media outlets like the school newspaper or wired radio station, it is an economically independent sub-unit within the community and relatively distant from the local propaganda command. However, like all the other sub-units in the *danwei*, it is managed and controlled by the *danwei* culture of consensus politics and the web of social relations. Though seldom used as a public forum for community debate, it plays an essential

role in presenting a public image of the "desired" harmonious community.

The process of negotiating a community space of cable operation evolves basically through the structured system of mass communication. The community initiated the first move to redefine its role in the cable television operation at the grass-roots level. It staged the strategy of disobedience against the state regulations and city government commands in controlling the content of local television. The state and regional authorities responded by imposing tougher regulations and enforcing the law to integrate separate local cable operations into a well-orchestrated, centralized system of television/cable communication. By finally integrating into this national network, the community cable was forced to give up a part of the its autonomy over programming choices and operation. It now clings to its last asset -- the ownership of the cable distribution network in its territory.

This research project offers only one of the initial efforts to investigate the complex and unique nature of Chinese mass media, and the development of cable television in particular. Cable development in China has taken on a very disparate course and involves various patterns in regard to different regions, cities and rural areas. More research projects and further studies are required to present a more comprehensive analysis of cable development in China, based, for instance, on a national or regional model.

One of the more important and interesting studies would be an exploration of cable television in rural communities which has become a prevailing phenomenon in the prosperous coastal villages and is spreading to the inland regions. Such a study would increase our knowledge about how the state control and local contestation are forged in the countryside which could act as an interesting comparative analysis to this thesis which

focuses on urban *danweis*.

To conclude, community-cable television in China constitutes one of the strategic conduits of control, contestation and concession in the state organization of propaganda in the 1990s. It embodies local and grass-roots resistance to the state domination of television. It represents an alliance formed between community leaders and ordinary members of the community to gain partial control of the local domain of television entertainment from the state. Moreover, it signifies the intelligent use of cable technology on the part of *danwei* communities which have taken advantage of the communist tradition of locally organized media operation for its own benefit; benefits such as: the creation of jobs and revenue for the community, a new vehicle of internal communication, a public relations tool for the community leadership, and a coherent cultural venue for community building.

However, community cable has also been the handmaiden for state propagandists to penetrate the basic units of society. It provides local resources to assist not only in the delivery of the state propaganda to work units, but also the re-packaging of the general language of state propaganda into more locally textured television programming. Ideologically, it is invested with the function of the state to reinforce mass persuasion in the workplace, through which it facilitates the state perfusion of the official ideology. In sum, it represents a unique experience of the Chinese people to assert their desire to recapture the local media and to negotiate their own space within the state structure of mass media. The negotiation is ongoing...

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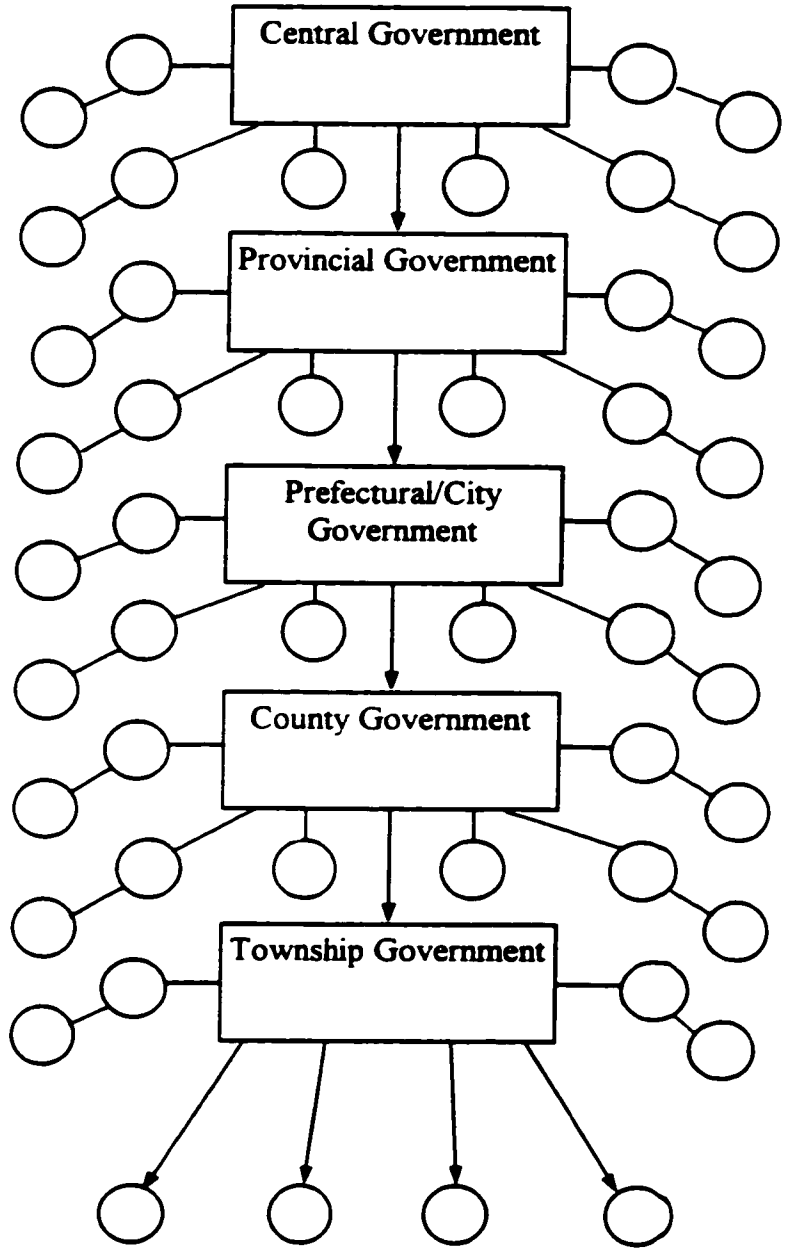
APPENDICES

Appendix I

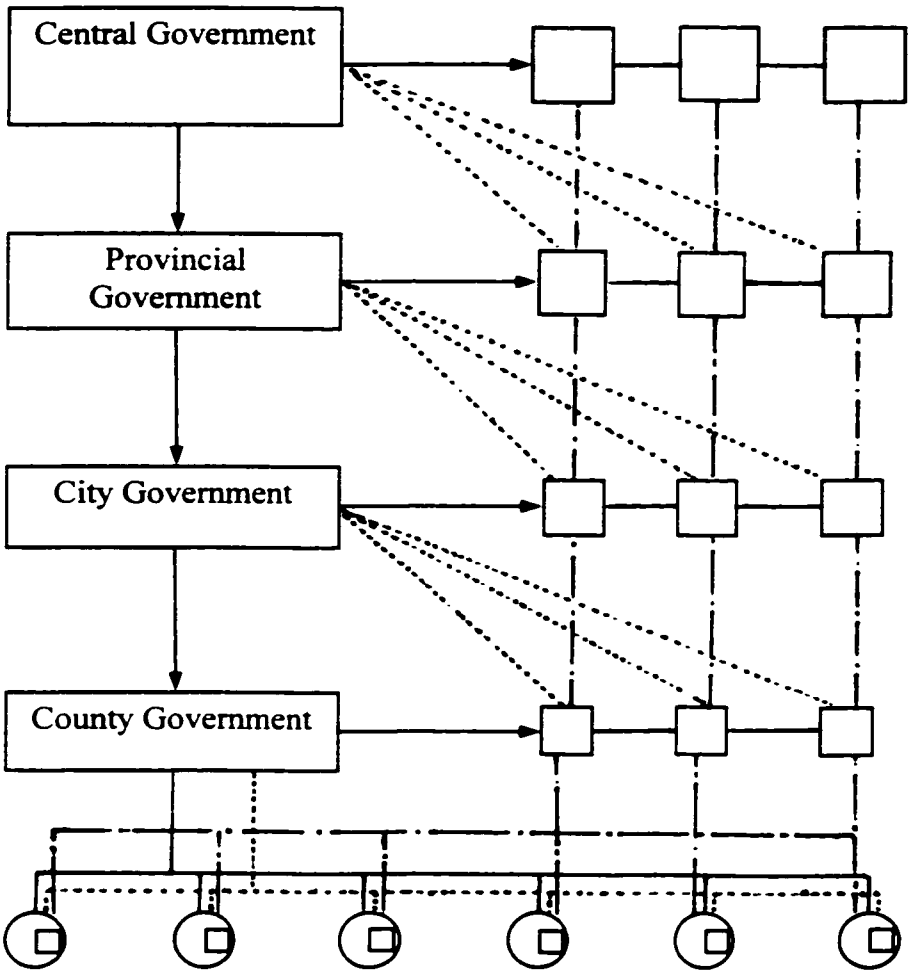
The Chart of Chinese *Danweis* and the State Organizational Structure



Note:
O stands for a Chinese *danwei*.
— indicates supervision.

Appendix II

Simplified Chart of the State Media System

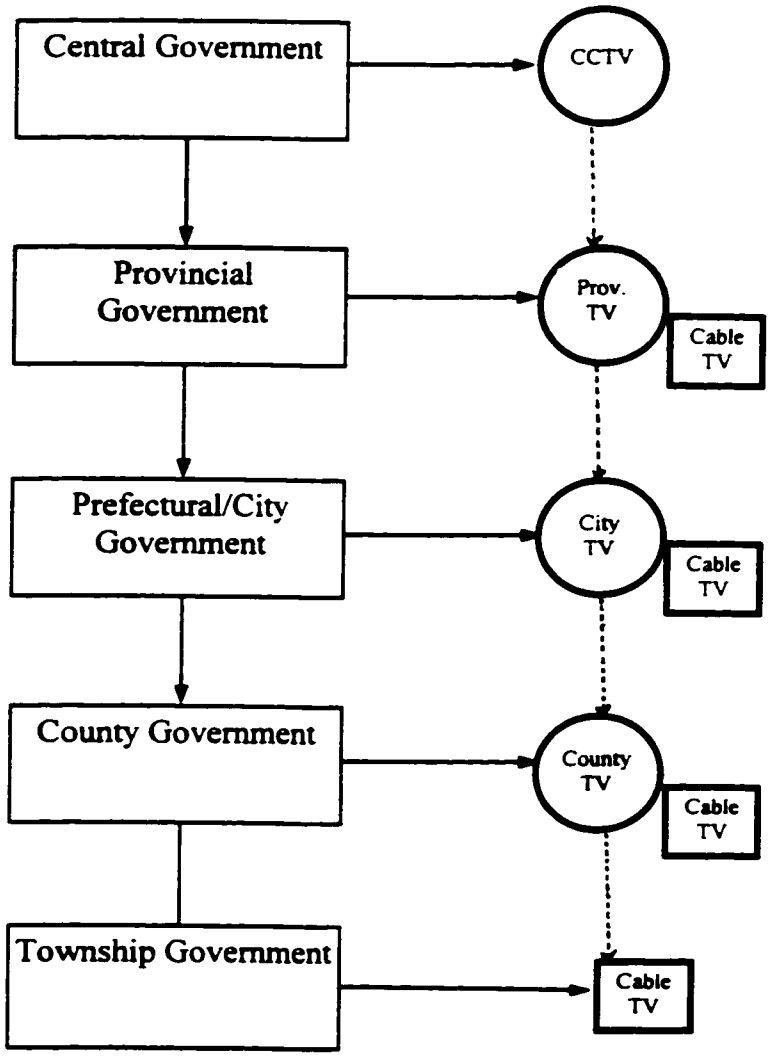


Note:

- □ Indicates a formal media organization.
- ◔ Indicates a *danwei* with media operation.
- — Indicates the direct supervision.
- ..... Stands for the propaganda supervision.
- -·— Indicates a required relay of some centrally produced messages .

Appendix III

Television/Cable Broadcasting System



Note:

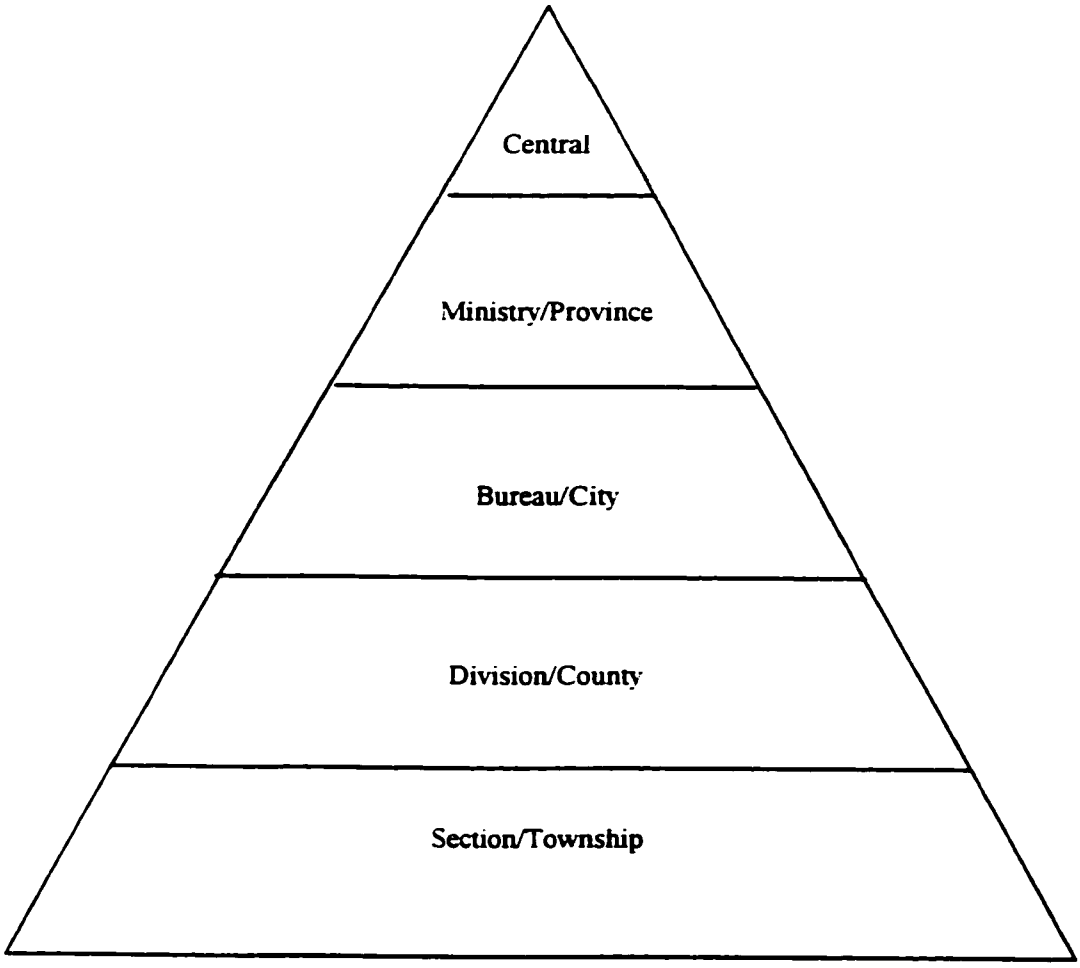
○ Indicates television broadcasting stations.

— Indicates the direct supervision.

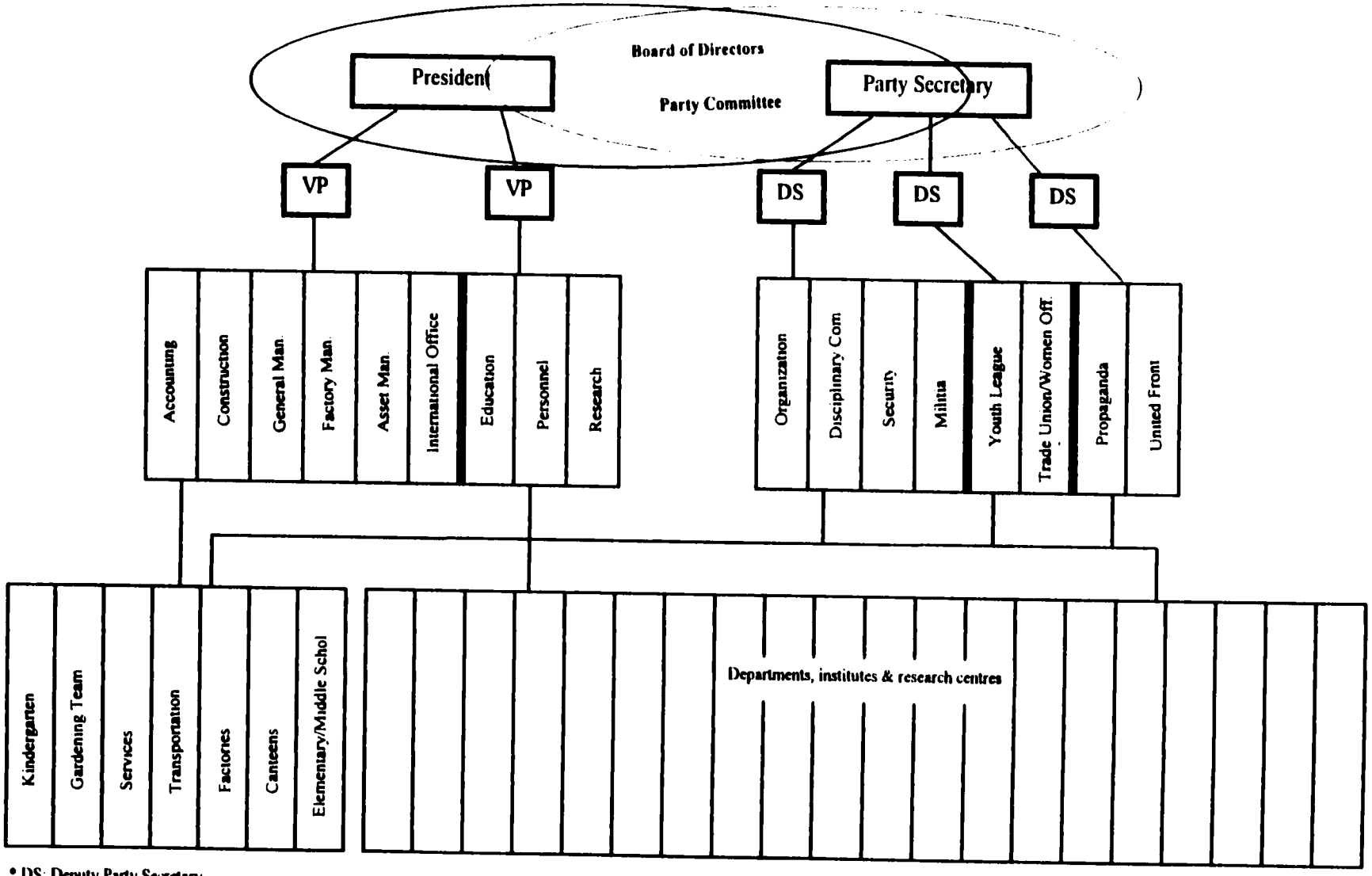
····· Indicates the compulsory relay requirement.

Appendix IV

Five Basic Ranks of Chinese Bureaucracy



Appendix V
Organizational Structure of TU



* DS: Deputy Party Secretary.

Appendix VI
List of Departments & Research Institutes in Tianjin University

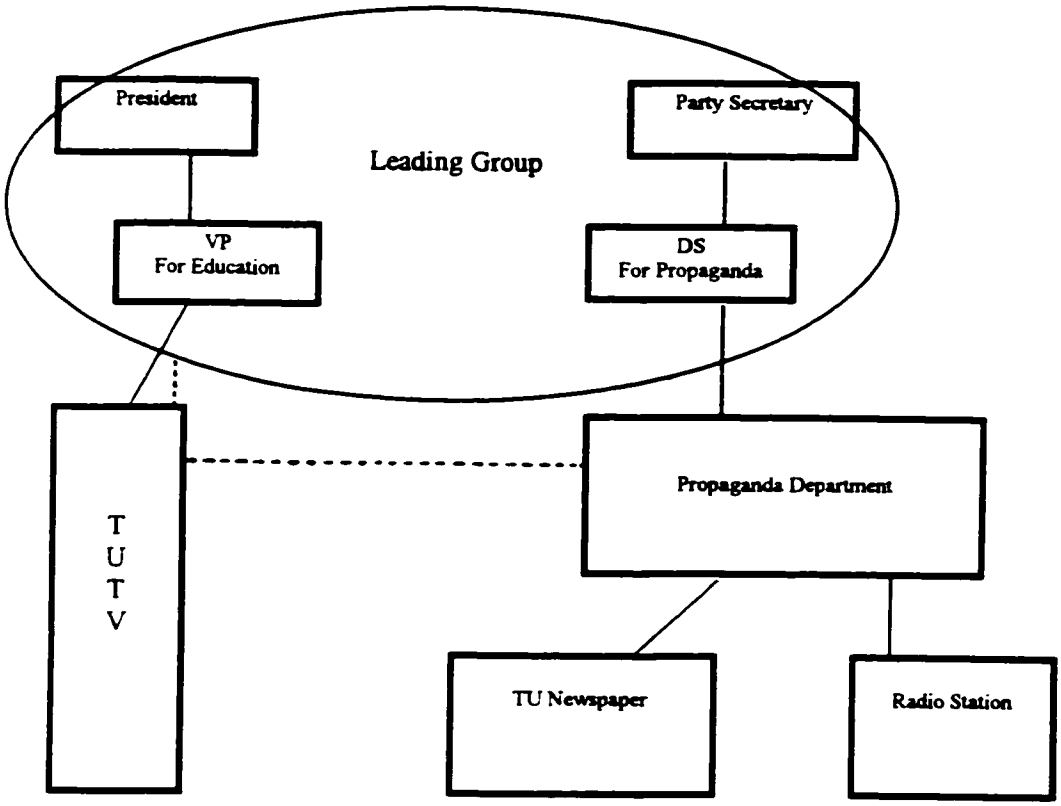
Department:

Applied Chemistry
Applied Chemistry and Fine Chemical Engineering
Applied Mathematics
Applied Physics
Architecture
Automation
Automobile Engineering
Biochemical Engineering
Biomedical Engineering and Scientific Instrumentation
Catalysis Science and Engineering
Chemical Engineering
Chemical Engineering Equipment & Machinery
Chinese Language
Civil Engineering
Communications & Transportation Engineering
Computer Science and Technology
Constructional Equipment Engineering
Electrical Power Engineering
Electronic Information Technology
Engineering Economics
English Language
Environmental Engineering
Hydraulic & Hydra-Electric Constructional Engineering
Industrial Engineering
International Enterprises Management
International Project Management
Inorganic Non-metallic Material Science & Engineering
Law
Management Engineering
Management Information Systems
Mechanical Design
Mechanics
Mechano-Electronic Engineering
Metal Material Science and Engineering
Microelectronics
Naval Engineering
Ocean Engineering
Opto-Electronic Information Engineering
Organic Synthesis & Polymer Chemical Engineering
Polymer Science and Engineering
Port Engineering
Precision Instrument Engineering
Social Sciences
Thermoenergy and Refrigeration Engineering
Urban Planning

Research Institute:

Advanced Ceramic Material Research Institute
Applied Chemistry Research Institute
Architectural Design and Theory Research Institute
Biomedical Engineering Research Institute
Chemical Engineering Research Institute
Chemical Reaction Engineering Research Office
Coal Chemical Industry Research Institute
Distillation Research Office
Electrical Power & Automation Engineering
Electronic Materials and Components
Electronics and Information System Research Institute
Environmental Engineering Research Institute
Experimental Mechanics Research Institute
Functional Material Research Institute
Geotechnical Engineering Research Institute
Higher Education Research Institute
Hydraulic Engineering Research Institute
Illumination Technique Research Institute
Information and Control Research Institute
Intelligent Machinery Research Institute
Internal Combustion Engine Research Institute
Laser Technology Research Institute
Material Science Research Institute
Mechanical Engineering Research Institute
Modern Optical Instruments Research Institute
Natural High Polymer Research Institute
Nuclear Chemical Engineering Research Institute
Ocean Engineering & Special Construction Research Institute
Offshore and River Engineering Sediment Research Office
Optical Fibre Technology Research Institute
Optoelectrical Measurement and Control Research Institute
Precision Machinery for Light Industry Research Institute
Research Office of System Engineering of Chemical Engineering
Sensor Engineering Research Institute
Structural Engineering Research Institute
System Engineering Research Institute
Thermal Energy Research Institute
TV and Visual Information Research Institute
Vibration Research Institute
Wang Xue Zhong Art Research Institute

Appendix VII
Structured Supervision of TU Media



— Indicates an administrative supervision.

--- Indicates a policy guidance.

Appendix VIII
Sample Questionnaire
(English Translation)

Date:

Viewer Information

Age Sex Occupation Education TU Employee Yes ☐ No ☐

(Please check the following columns accordingly)

1. Do you have cable television at home? Yes No

2. Do you watch programmes made by TUTV? Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Occasionally ☐ Never ☐

3. Which TUTV programmes do you watch?

	Yes	No
Campus News	☐	☐
Academic Talents	☐	☐
Campus Topics	☐	☐
English News	☐	☐
Special Programmes	☐	☐
Video Films	☐	☐

4. Are you satisfied with the programmes you watch?

Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Fairly satisfied ☐ Not satisfied ☐

5. In which aspects are you satisfied with TUTV programming

Providing school policies & information concerning my work & life	☐
Informing me of major policies of the school and leaders' activities	☐
Informing me of activities of other sub-units of the school	☐
Information on academic achievements and research development	☐
Students' & graduate students' activities	☐
Activities in the kindergarten, elementary and middle schools	☐
Seeing myself or my friends on TV	☐
Interesting programming	☐
Seeing the programming made by myself or my friends	☐
Others (Please specify):	

6. In which aspects are you not satisfied with TUTV programming

Too little information	☐
Programming time is too short and broadcast irregularly	☐
Repeated broadcasting	☐
Blurry pictures	☐
High monthly subscription fee	☐
No TV programming from abroad	☐
Low taste of video films	☐
Too many leaders activities, and too few voices from ordinary people	☐
Others (Please specify):	

7. Your suggestions on how to improve TUTV:

(Chinese language questionnaires attached)

天津大学有线电视观众意见调查表

年　　月　　日

观众　　年龄　　性别　　职业　　文化程度　　是否天大教职工

(请在下列各栏中依据情况划勾)

1. 你家是否有有线电视:　　有□　　无□

2. 你是否收看天津大学有线电视台的节目:　　经常看□　　有时看□　　偶尔看□　　不看□

3. 你喜欢或不喜欢看的天大有线电视台的节目:

	喜欢	不喜欢
校内新闻	□	□
学科荟萃	□	□
校园访谈	□	□
英语新闻	□	□
专题节目	□	□
录像片	□	□

4. 你对上述节目的满意程度:　　很满意□　　满意□　　一般□　　不满意□

5. 满意的方面:

- 提供与个人工作生活有关的学校政策/信息 □
- 了解学校大政方针和校领导活动 □
- 了解校内其它单位的活动 □
- 校内学术成果和科技动态 □
- 大学生研究生活动 □
- 幼儿园附中附小活动 □
- 可以在节目中见到自己或认识的人 □
- 节目有趣 □
- 可以见到自己或认识的人拍摄的节目 □

其它(请具体列出):

6. 不满意的方面:

- 信息量太少 □
- 播放时间短/不定 □
- 重复播放 □
- 图像有时不好 □
- 月费偏高 □
- 没有境外台 □
- 录像带格调低 □
- 反映校领导活动多，群众声音少 □

其它(请具体列出):

7. 对天大有线电视台有何改进意见:

MAPS

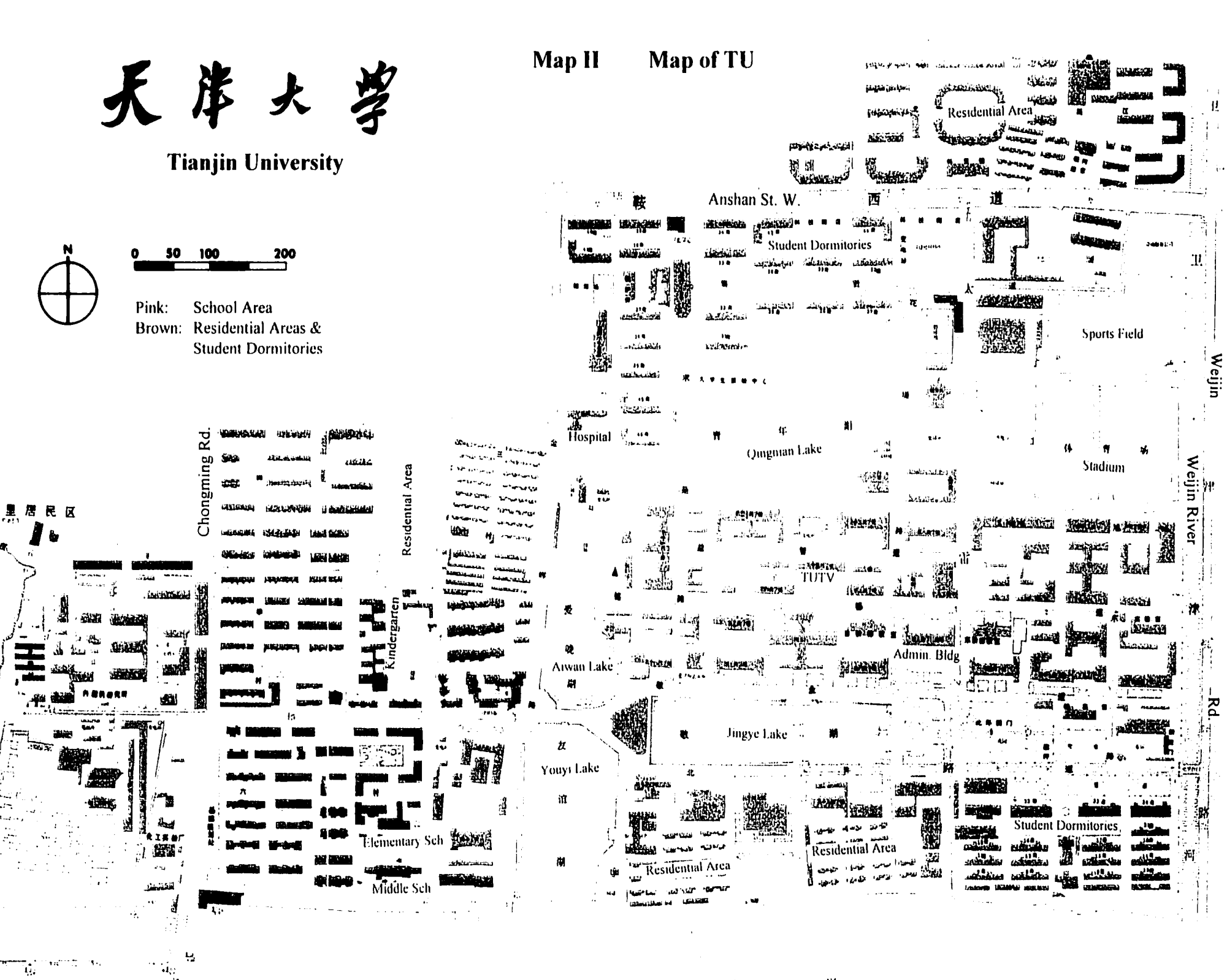
Map I

Map of Tianjin

天津大学

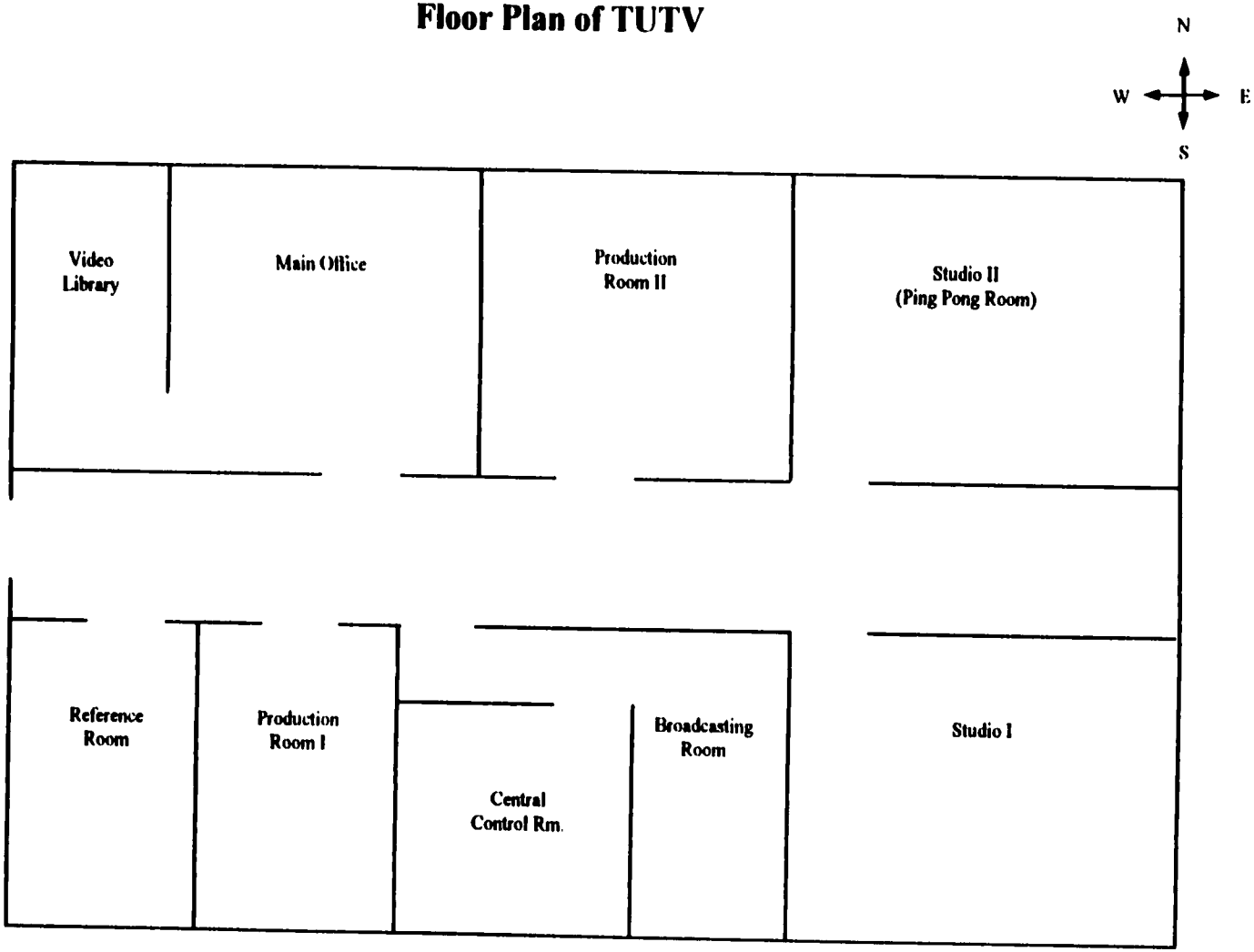
Tianjin University

Map II Map of TU



南 开 大 学

Map III
Floor Plan of TUTV



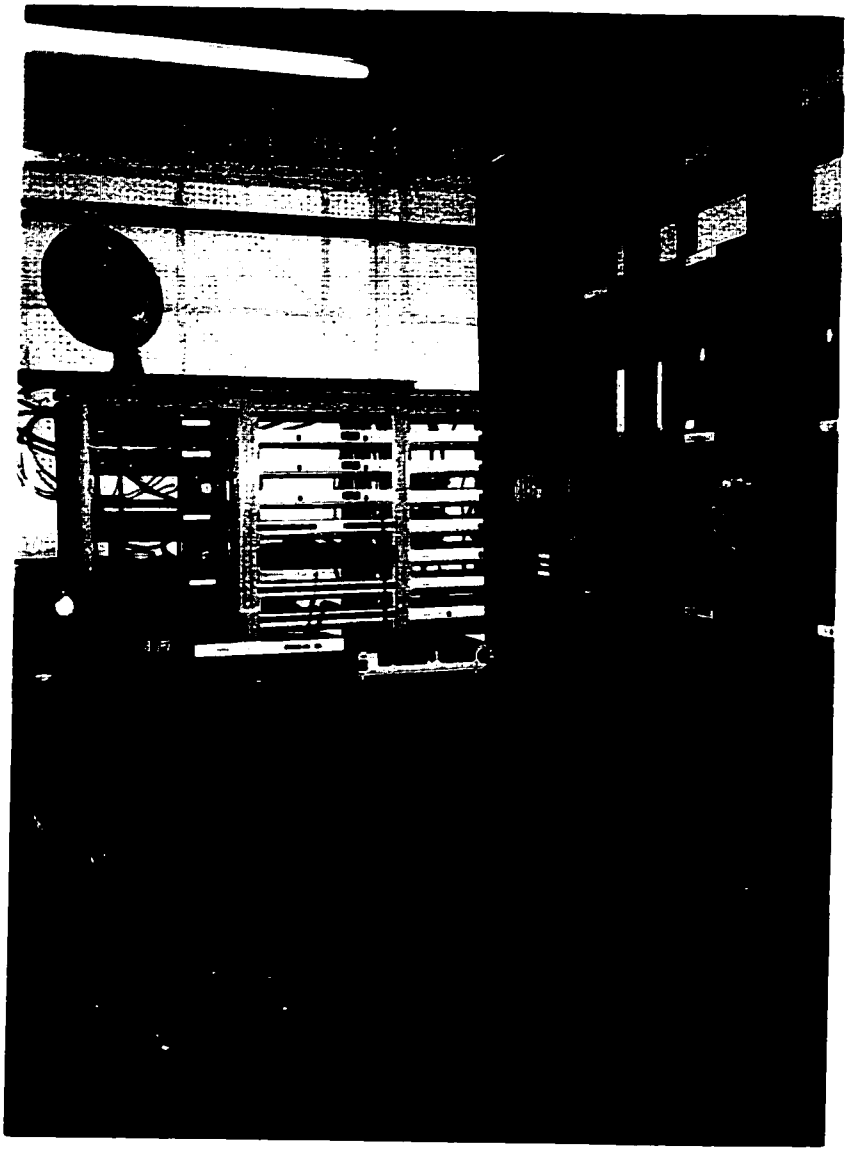
PICTURES

Picture I Main Office of TUTV

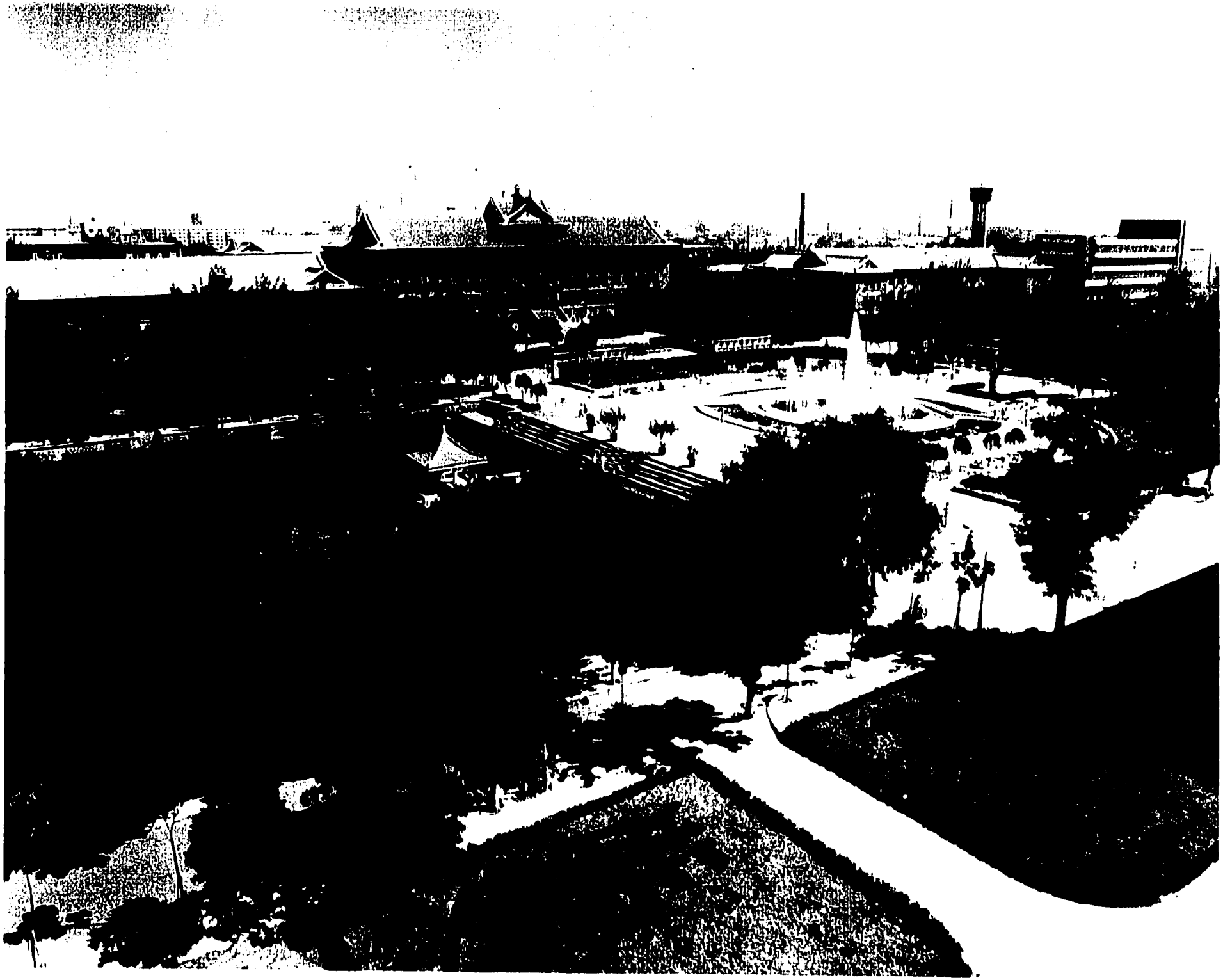
Picture II The Front Entrance to TUTV Building

Picture III Broadcasting Room of the Campus Cable Station

Picture IV Video Library



Picture V Central Control Room



Picture VI Peiyang Square in Front of the Administration Building