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Constructing ethnic identity through Taiwanese Indigenous music and dance performances: The case of TITV

The effects of identity can be felt across all facets of life. Culture, ethnicity, language, and music and dance are all meaningful expressions of identity. This paper explores the identity of Taiwan's Indigenous ethnic groups through the lens of a traditional music and dance performance and the media platform of Taiwan Indigenous Television (TITV). Elements examined include the impact from the national system, the interaction between ethnic groups, and the sharing of music and dance, which may have negative impacts. How can ethnic media organizations such as TITV present these conflicts? As ethnic consciousness emerges, conflict may arise between the national system and the will of the community. How does ethnic media handle this kind of news? This paper analyses the controversy of the Pangcah / Amis Chi-mei tribe (Kiwit tribal community) intellectual property infringement that occurred in Taiwan in August 2018, identifying the problems that occurred between the government and the tribe. Through the observation and analysis of the media, the occurence has become an important reference for future disputes.

This study considers the dissemination of an ethnic group's music and dance through media. When culture, music and dance are likely to borrow from each other, how can a line be defined between simple consumption and infringement of intellectual property rights? The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples declares that governments should encourage the media to reflect the cultural diversity of its Indigenous peoples, and that Indigenous peoples have the right to establish media in their own language. Traditional folk music and dances in Taiwan have often been used as performances for large-scale government events. However, as Taiwan's Indigenous peoples have grown more knowledgeable

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and conscious of our rights and interests, we have begun to pay attention to ourselves and the common property of the tribe in recent years. After the government formulated the intellectual property rights of the aboriginal people, it became an important basis for protecting Taiwan's Indigenous cultures, skills and traditional habits.

The sixteen native peoples of Taiwan have frequently borrowed elements of songs and dances from each other. The spread of this pan-Indigenous culture has been unstoppable, with continual development and borrowing over the years. It is a different matter, however, when non-Indigenous people have directly used Indigenous cultural elements without paying respect to the originating ethnic group, as can be seen in the case of Hualien's Chi-mei tribe. The Chi-mei tribe case is also an example of the emergence of Indigenous autonomy as a concept. The Chi-mei tribe submitted an intellectual property (IP) registration to Taiwan's highest administrative organ for Indigenous affairs, the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP). The tribe hoped that its rights to its traditional music and dance could be protected through IP registration. Yet the CIP organized a performance of traditional Chi-mei music and dance when it hosted the 2018 Austronesian Forum, without the consent of the tribe. The tribe believes that the CIP did not respect the tribe and even violated the traditional intellectual property rights. This kind of fierce reaction is uncommon among Indigenous peoples, and it caused a heated discussion that drew media attention.

In interactions between tribes and states, tribes usually cannot let the state submit and admit mistakes, while trying their best to act autonomously. In the case of the Chi-mei tribe, the tribe members clearly feel disrespected. On the other hand, their actions are also a conscious performance. Similar music and dance performances have taken place in the past, in the spirit of mutual borrowing between the tribes, but they were explicitly presented as cultural sharing and not made part of formal occasions. Now that the government has legislated intellectual property protections for Indigenous groups, other cultural and musical achievements will face similar situations if intellectual property protection is sought. This is a manifestation of tribal subjectivity.

<u>Symbolic meanings of indigenous music and dance performance</u>

Whether music and dance performance is inextricably tied to ethnic identity has been the topic of much discussion. Music and dance performance is a central part of Taiwan's diverse cultures and frequently a medium for cultural exchange and learning. As a result, the true originator of a performance or style is often unclear. Taiwan's Indigenous peoples did not have written records in the early days, and laws on the subject remain poorly formulated. The Indigenous peoples of Taiwan have always been glad to share. However, as awareness of rights have grown in the past few years, along with a recognition of Indigenous subjectivity, the Taiwan government has also enacted IP protection laws both to protect the cultural assets of the tribes and to prevent misuse of culture. This legislation represents the recognition of the cultural rights of tribes and ethnic groups. However, the law may also have a chilling effect on whether other ethnic groups can use, publicly display, or even film a cultural performance. In the case under discussion, all use of traditional Chi-mei songs and dances by any other ethnic group, government agency, or other organization must be approved by the Chi-mei tribe. The tribe's complaint against the CIP was based on this law. The key question was whether the agency obtained the consent or even informed the Chi-mei tribe of the performance.
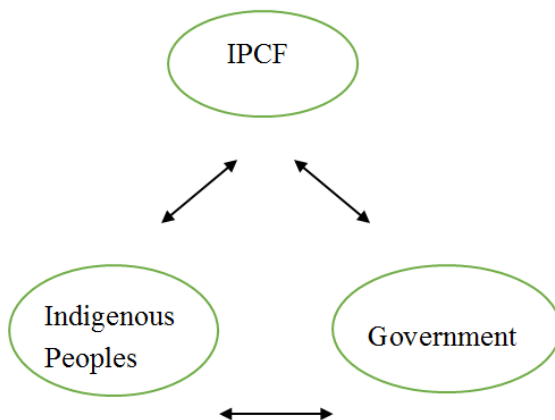
Legal issues have underpinned many conflicts between Indigenous peoples and the state. Past colonial attitudes can sometimes show through in how governments act, resulting in the violation of rights. Taiwan's Indigenous peoples hold the banner of the Indigenous Peoples Basic Law high in their calls for respect of their legal rights, but the law's implementation has always encountered difficulties. Under Taiwan's current media environment, giving voice to minority groups is not an important priority for media sources. The mainstream media still considers the Indigenous population a 'sub-culture' or an 'other' when reporting on their news. The founding of Taiwan Indigenous Television (TITV) has changed this situation significantly, providing a voice to balance the message of mainstream media.

A lack of media access has widened the gulf between Taiwan's cities and Indigenous communities and made it difficult for Indigenous people to fully understand and master media messaging, or to become aware of the long-term lack of balance in the structure of the field. Commercial news stations operate with extremely short lead times and make heavy use of exaggeration in their reporting, appealing to the audience's preferences but negatively affecting the social responsibility of

the media. Dissatisfaction and criticism of commercial media has quickly spilled into the sphere of social media, which has become the main channel for rapid dissemination of information.

The desire for a media source dedicated to Indigenous voices has been growing since the disastrous floods brought by Typhoon Morakot in 2009, and various discussions about how one media source can protect the interests of all of Taiwan's 750 Indigenous communities took place. The emergence of social media seemed to provide a virtual space that could connect Indigenous communities, with the real-time sharing of pictures and articles that it enables. However, social media remains unable to satisfy the demand for more professional and diverse coverage; traditional media must still be relied upon for these purposes. Taiwan's mainstream media has never provided in-depth coverage of Indigenous groups and their voices. Even when they cover Indigenous social movements and activism, they are often unable to truly understand the topics of concern.

Recent Indigenous activism has centred on land rights, nuclear waste disposal, and large-scale development of indigenous homelands; in many cases, decisions and actions taken without the consent of local Indigenous peoples, have led to conflict between tribes and the government. An Indigenous media source is a platform that could be used, but how should the media source present the subjectivity of Indigenous peoples? According to communication scholar Lin Fu-Yueh (2012), Indigenous subjectivity does not come only from seeing Indigenous people on camera; it should be revealed through the director as well as the filming and production process. Not only is it important for the people involved with the production to have Indigenous identities, they should also have a good understanding of the culture of the communities presented in order to convey the subjectivity of the communities.

Indigenous Identity

As human rights issues related to Indigenous peoples have gained prominence in the past few years, the position of Indigenous media in the protection of Indigenous groups must be recognised. Indigenous identity in Taiwan was stigmatised in the past because Indigenous groups were disadvantaged and shunted from the mainstream. Faced with disadvantages

both economically and politically, many Indigenous people have felt negatively about their own culture. For Indigenous people, recognising the stigmatisation of themselves by mainstream culture is also a means of cultural colonisation, which must be reversed through an awakening of consciousness which can be facilitated by an Indigenous media source. When minority groups demand that their own unique culture be recognized by society, it represents not only the commitment to defend the dignity, freedom, and self-determination of the tribe, but even more the willingness to contribute to the country. Multiculturalism is conducive to fostering mutual trust and thus uniting common interests (Kymlicka, 1998: 45).

Minority rights include identity, language, culture, education, media, and political participation. In addition to basic freedom of speech, there are also media rights including access to information and communication (European Manifesto, 2004; quoted from Shih, Cheng-feng 2006). Access to media and minority media representation are important indicators of minority representation. As for judicial reform, when it comes to controversial cases, minority groups expect the judiciary to be more tolerant and reduce tribal and national conflicts. In the past few years, the judiciary has tried to send officers into Indigenous tribes to better understand them. However, the rigidity of the decree has not allowed the grassroots law enforcement personnel to reach a consensus, and enforcement remains inflexible.

Over twenty years of interviews, the author has observed the developments in Taiwan's media sphere after the founding of Hakka TV in 2003 and TITV in 2005 as important platforms for minority groups to assert their rights to media access. Over the years, their ethnic media attributes have been strengthened, and cultural understanding and discourse have seen some improvement. Yet the questions remain: Why do others not understand our culture? Why do traditions and laws always seem incompatible? These are questions frequently asked by Indigenous people. The problems to be solved are not necessarily to with a lack of respect, but rather the issue resides in the core thinking behind how the country treats minority groups and human rights implementation. Over the past ten years, TITV has actively constructed its own cultural interpretation methods. With regards to the conflict between Indigenous communities and the state, TITV is

expected to construct a set of core values as an ethnic media source.

<u>Language and Cultural Heritage</u>

The Chi-mei tribe registered its traditional songs and dances as its intellectual property to the CIP. However, after the Austronesian Forum held in August 2018, the tribe protested that the government itself illegally used its songs and dances during the ceremony, in disrespect to the tribe. The incident was widely discussed among Taiwan's Indigenous groups. The question of whether such music and dance performances are an appropriate way to showcase the Indigenous culture and language heritage of Taiwan attracted the attention of the public and the media. In particular, the recordings of the performances have also come under question. The current dispute between the tribe and the government is ongoing, and ethnic media is expected to play a role in representing and guarding the interests of the tribe.

Many Indigenous protest movements have taken place in Taiwan over the past 30 years, but media coverage of the issues has generally been limited. In the early days, although there were Indigenous publications such as the South Island Times and the Indigenous Voice newspaper, there were no other Indigenous media platforms in Taiwan. Only after TITV was established did the feeling that Indigenous audiences were neglected gradually fade. TITV represented a breakthrough for Indigenous media access, transforming Indigenous communities' ownership of cultural interpretation.

Through showcasing Indigenous communities, TITV can both participate in and construct a narrative of the historical development of Indigenous survival. The development of ethnic media symbolizes the growth of the power of ethnic communities in culture and politics. Despite the important role that ethnic media plays, however, social media also influences the way people receive messages regarding important issues. Ethnic groups have high expectations of their media; at the same time, ethnic identity also means that journalists on the front lines of ethnic media can experience complex emotional and professional dilemmas when covering controversies involving their ethnic group.

In the era of social media, fans embrace cultural texts and collect cultural content that express their identity (Erikson, 2008). This concept of 'cultural collection' can be

seen in voters who add politicians to their friends lists, creating a collection that symbolizes their personal political beliefs and producing the cultural image that they want. Wang Tai-Li (2013) mentioned that social media has become more than an online platform for voters to collect information; it is a platform to interact with others by publishing political comments or sharing multimedia information. Kim and Geidner (2008, Quoted from Wang, 2013) argue that online social media can be defined as a network-based means of connection and maintaining contact with others (Ellison et al, 2007, Quoted from Wang, 2013).

In 2004, the development of social media broke through the critical point of mass users (History of Social Media, 2012, Quoted from Wang, 2013). The number of users quickly multiplied, and the user base was no longer restricted to young people. Social media is no longer a niche. It offers an opportunity for ethnic media to reach mainstream audiences in addition to the ethnic group they serve. Taking full advantage of social media is a question that must be considered by Taiwan's Indigenous communities.

Media as a Platform

Taiwan's Indigenous Peoples Cultural Foundation (IPCF) operates two Indigenous media sources: a television station, TITV, founded in 2005, and a radio station, Alian Radio, founded in 2017. The two broadcasting channels were founded as a platform for Taiwan's Indigenous peoples to showcase their traditional cultures, to connect Indigenous people with their languages and cultures, to become an important ethnic media source, and to ensure that Indigenous people can enjoy their right to media access.

TITV and Radio language usage
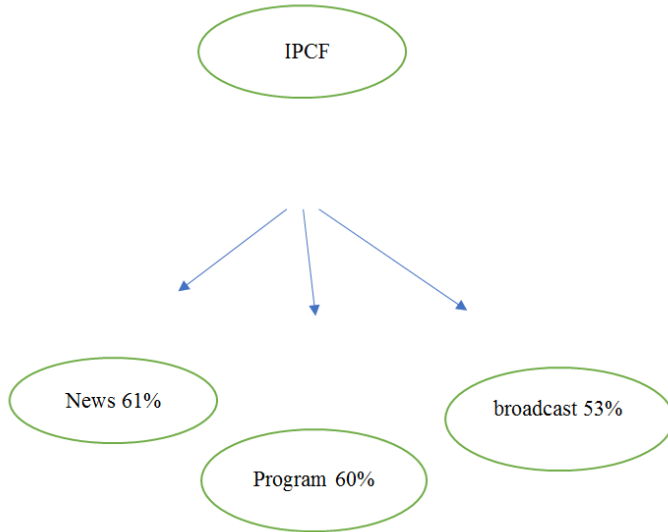
Currently, 61% of the television news content, 60% of the television programming content, and 53% of the radio content provided by the IPCF media sources are in Indigenous languages. This is a result of the Language Development Act, passed in 2017, which stipulates that at least 50% of the content provided by ethnic media sources must be in the language of the ethnic group. This is also a challenge for IPCF.

Despite government funding, Indigenous languages and cultures remain endangered, and the age of mass media has not helped. How can the languages of Taiwan's sixteen Indigenous nations be passed down to future generations? Will they have to rely on the media? As society changes and media technology develops rapidly, how can Indigenous journalists stake out a position for ethnic media in Taiwan's media environment? Under the constant emergence of major social issues, how can ethnic media help provide a platform for Indigenous people's voices to be heard?

When covering issues affecting their communities, Indigenous journalists often have to strike a balance between their sentiments as members of specific ethnic groups and their professionalism as journalists. TITV also experiences tension between empathy for Indigenous communities, many of which also have their own expectations for the role of TITV, and its mission as a journalistic outlet. Moreover, for many years, Indigenous people have been limited in their practice of traditional culture by laws and regulations, putting Indigenous communities in conflict with the state.

Although TITV was established only recently, it is nonetheless an important milestone in the history of Taiwanese media. Its role and interpretation function will only become more prominent as society changes and media becomes more diverse. Is a reporter obligated to report on everything? Does a reporter have the right to report? Is not reporting a story a dereliction of duty? Indigenous people do not expect reporters from mainstream media to show them good will, but when ethnic media repeats the misinformation, it becomes a kind of betrayal that can genuinely hurt the community.

Taiwan's media often takes on a very different tone with international and domestic news, central and local news, and Han and Indigenous news. The unfriendly attitude of the media to Indigenous people is something that Indigenous communities have long been unable to understand. It is important for Indigenous media to think about how to mitigate the harm caused by mainstream media. Indigenous media must be able to compete with mainstream media, while also establishing a new framework for reporting on Indigenous issues and producing a sufficient number of reports of high quality. It is not enough to achieve only the so-called construction of anti-discussion and excavation. Ethnic media must compete by highlighting the consciousness of the self-identified ethnic subject, giving voice to their own position and interpretations (Lin Fu-yue, 2012).

An Indigenous media that competes on high quality can also attract the appreciation of other ethnic groups. Indigenous journalists may be eager to defend the rights of their ethnic groups through their reporting, but they must also recognize the facts. TITV can ignore neither the voice of the tribe nor the demands of the journalism profession. Any practice that favours one side may be criticized, and the invisible pressure from the community can be substantial.
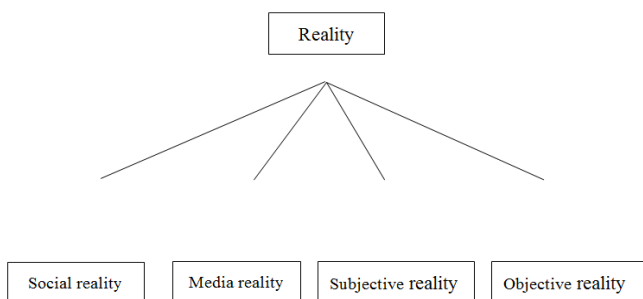
The fact that Indigenous media professionals are under scrutiny by their communities means that TITV is responsible for its professional conduct. The station must have a dispute resolution mechanism, to allow more room for discussion with Indigenous communities. The invisible pressure from our Indigenous communities can often pose a bigger challenge than the demands of the profession. This kind of pressure mainly stems from the Indigenous community's lack of media access and right to cultural interpretations in the past and present, especially in the face of ethnic issues. Indigenous media must listen to our communities and produce reports that meet their needs, whether it is current affairs analysis, in-depth reporting, issue highlighting, evaluation of ethnic issues, or giving voice to community leaders.

The tension between ethnic sentiment and professional journalism has become an issue frequently touched on by Indigenous journalists. This tension will only become a more important issue in the future, presenting both challenges and opportunities for ethnic media. For the author of this paper, both journalism training and practice has required that the news be neutral and balanced, with no exaggerations or any clear position taken. However, this standard of professionalism can be seen to lack any understanding of ethnic cultural values and dedication to helping the weak. To report not just superficial facts but the underlying truth, the journalist must gain a deep understanding of the issues, so that they may point out consequences and mistakes. To make this kind of judgement, journalists must be well-read and must have a deep well of accumulated knowledge to draw upon. In this way, media professionals must build a deep knowledge of issues and help their audience make judgments.

The Media Is Real

The conflict between culture and laws, and the media's attitude and behaviour, has always been given a high degree of attention, but Indigenous communities often have high expectations of ethnic media to further highlight the issue. Arjun Appadurai (1991), in 'Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology', coined the concept of 'mediascape' (media landscape), deliberately referring to earlier anthropological definitions, in order to point out the following two things: The mass media has become the center of people's life in the late 20th century, and the requirement of

coexisting with this phenomenon is that anthropologists should explore the significance of mass media in analysis and practice. On the one hand, it presents social reality, and it also presents the reality of the media. The subjective reality that the individual thinks will affect the objective reality. Adonic and Mane (1984) pointed out that in the real construction of media and society, the truth can be divided into several types:

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Social reality	Media reality	Subjective reality	Objective reality

Social reality refers to the facts of the event. The truth of any given incident is often confusing and diverse. Therefore, the facts do not necessarily equate to the truth. The consensus of the Chi-mei tribe was that the government disrespected its traditions. The CIP did not expect such a reaction, nor did it expect that the tribe would attach such importance to its own rights and interests. In this conflict between the community and the state, both sides had a different interpretation of the performance. Facts regarding the event can be identified, but none can be directly equated to the truth, so differing positions and discourses emerge. Mainstream media sources, reporting only on the superficial facts of the controversy; their reports did not consider how their reporting might affect the Indigenous community. Nor did they reveal the deeper truth. In this, the ‘social reality’ presented by the mainstream, non-Indigenous media was not necessarily true.

Also known as ‘symbolic reality’, ‘Media reality’ refers to the reality the communicator presents through media texts through literature, art (language, images, institutions, rituals, etc.) and reports. Generalists argue that media reporting

should reflect social reality. However, the content or structure of news reports often creates differences with the facts, failing to completely reflect the original event. Media reports therefore present multiple meanings, which different readers will interpret differently. The symbolic reality exhibited by the media is derived from the real world.

'Subjective reality' refers to the subjective cognition of the event by the audience. This kind of cognition is mostly derived from the social context and is influenced by the media construction and edification. These include the 'small social issues' of personal life experiences and 'big social issues' such as social order and public opinion ethics. Sometimes our attention is drawn by TV images, especially the images of ethnic conflicts. In the past, people accepted these images unquestioningly, without exploring the authenticity of news sources. The Taiwanese media has skilfully taken advantage of this tendency; under pressure to deliver high readership or ratings, media sources would lead with sensational images to attract viewers. Images of disaster and conflicts are highly effective to manipulate the mood of viewers. This is the mode in which the commercial media operates.

'Objective reality' is the 'real' truth, the original 'raw reality', with no addition or changes. Adonic and Mane pointed out that media (symbols) greatly affect an individual's understanding and belief in reality, as do an individual's ethical norms. However, the further away an event is from the individual, the less 'real' it is, and the more susceptible the individual is to the influence of media (symbols). This view reflects that the reality of the media will affect the audience's imagination of the real. Communication scholar McQuail (1987) points out that media organizations engage in knowledge production, reproduction and distribution, and play a role mediating between external objective reality and personal experience. According to communication scholar Dai Chenzhi (1999), the presentation of images on television is a 'phenomenon' or 'performance'; it does not mean 'truth'. This view acknowledges that while front-line reporters have their own cognitive biases, the images they transmit are usually first-hand information and the clearest representation of the truth. As the images are transmitted to the media organization, however, they are often re-packaged and re-produced; editors and producers can change the news content based on their own subjective consciousness. The images can then be reused once more on data screens. The further the

report of an event is separated from the original filming by the reporter, the less clear it becomes (Dai, 1999).

<u>The Role of Ethnic Media</u>

Ethnic media has a significant role to play in recording conflicts between communities and states, a role that can continue to be developed in the future. In giving more prominence to the cultures and characteristics of ethnic groups, ethnic media can also provide perspectives and ideas in practice that have not been recognised by media theory. Further, with the advent of social media, critical messages can spread quickly. The norms of government regulations must be universal, fair and technologically neutral; different regulatory standards should not apply to different information channels. The online world is even more difficult to police than the real world. Scholars found in the development of Inuit TV that in the case of Aboriginal People Television, supported by the public and Aboriginal people, Indigenous media producers do not assimilate into popular cultural forms. Instead of being mainstreamed, they use Western media technology to defend themselves. They use their own lives as their creative subject. This 'innovation traditionalism' phenomenon is something that producers of Indigenous journalism in Taiwan can learn from (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin, 2008).

Front-line reporters working for ethnic media organizations who are members of the ethnic group being covered often play an important role in convincing the community of the importance of the media organization. TITV is currently actively constructing such an ethnic mission. At present, the confidence crisis of the ruling party in China is often blamed on critical reports of the media, but this does not mean that the media itself is necessarily responsible. Improving the relationship between the media and the state is an issue that will require much thinking. For both society in general and Indigenous society, attitudes toward the tribes have changed. Indigenous media can play the role in communicating the facts and implications of such changes.

In Taiwan, the media has long relied too much on foreign sources of information. This has resulted in an 'American consciousness' or a 'Japanese consciousness' in Taiwan's media. The problem is not only the Taiwan media's lack of access to information, but the neglect of local perspectives. There is a reliance on the viewpoints of CNN and NHK, but no

initiative to present a Taiwanese viewpoint. As an Indigenous media professional, I have observed how the major events of my hometown in recent years have been covered by the media. The media has reported on Indigenous views, the history of migration, and the issues regarding land and construction. The ultimate goal of TITV is to construct a discourse that differs from the mainstream media, based on the subjectivity of Taiwan as an Austronesian nation. If TITV cannot break through its current positioning and financial constraints, its marginalization will become difficult to escape. It will become a 'protected species', entirely separated from mainstream television, and fall into a cycle of endless self-preservation.

In today's world, anyone with a smartphone can be a reporter. Citizens can come together on the internet. For organizations like TITV, the challenge is to nurture media talent. In Taiwan, the Indigenous movement has focused on calls to return traditional territories, activism surrounding land problems, national policy development, language revitalization, and population loss in Indigenous communities. Language loss is a worrying issue for Taiwan's indigenous groups. There must be better media access for Indigenous people, so tribal subjectivity can be strengthened.

Final Reflections

Modern media developments have changed lives, but the media also plays an important role in enhancing mutual understanding between ethnic groups. The author of this paper has been working in news for more than twenty years, witnessing Taiwan's emergence from martial law into the age of free press. In the martial law era, the media was a driving force behind breakthroughs. The tension between ethnic sentiment and professional journalism is a topic frequently touched on by Indigenous journalists. In the future, this issue will become more and more prominent. This is both a challenge and an opportunity. For the author of this paper, both journalism training and practice have required that the news be neutral and balanced, with no exaggerations or any clear position taken. However, this standard of professionalism lacks any understanding of ethnic cultural values and dedication to helping the weak. To report not just superficial facts but the underlying truth, the journalist must gain a deep understanding of the issues, so that they may point out consequences and mistakes. To make this kind of judgement,

journalists must be well-read and must have a deep well of accumulated knowledge to draw upon. This is not about bias, but about a supportive media. Under this concept of media development TITV must break through the current constraints of Taiwan's media environment. We do not need an authoritarian media, but we do need an authoritative one.

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