

The Habitus and "Logic of Practice" of China's Trade Unionists*

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Accelerated state-induced market-oriented reforms in China threaten to catalyze labor explosion. How would the official trade union act in this situation? Focusing on a previously unexplored issue of the question—namely, that of China's unionists as social agents, this paper analyzes the "logic of practice" of China's unionists by means of Pierre Bourdieu's social agency concept of habitus. This paper finds that the unionists' habitus generates practices that reproduce their spontaneous and unforced subordination—as part and parcel of the state—to the Party in managing labor on behalf of the state so as to facilitate the implementation of market-oriented reforms. The implications of the analysis for the paradigmatic "dualist" and its derivative "corporatist" models of China's union are drawn out.

KEYWORDS: trade union; Pierre Bourdieu; habitus; China; labor.

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In August 2002, several Chinese academics issued a report entitled "The Most Severe Warning: Social Instability Behind the Economic

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Prosperity."¹ After successfully breaking the "iron rice bowl" (鐵飯碗, *tie fanwan*) of workers in the public economic sector, the Chinese Communist regime now plans to do the same with the 30 million employees at state-funded institutions (國營事業單位, *guoying shiye danwei*) in the next five years.² The official urban unemployment rate is around 4 percent, but unofficial estimates made by both mainland and overseas experts generally put the real rate at around 10 percent. The regime well understands that social explosion threatens to erupt. Thus, at the Chinese Communist Party's (hereafter the CCP or the Party) Central Publicity Work Conference (中央宣傳工作會議) in January 2003, the media was instructed not to give coverage to social unrest.³ This potentially explosive social situation puts the official trade union⁴ under the spotlight. How would the union act as the state continues to push ahead with market-oriented reforms which adversely affect labor?

Following the convention of Western studies of official unions in state-socialist societies, previous literature on the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU, 中華全國總工會) has, without exception, applied the Leninist "dualist" model.⁵ In this model, the union stands as a two-way "transmission belt" between the party-state and labor, transmitting the party-state's policy downwards towards labor (in performing the production function mentioned in note 5) and reflecting labor's views and interests upwards to the party-state as a channel of articulation and representation (in performing the protection function). In other words, the union is seen as occupying a position in between the party-state and labor, constantly being

¹*South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), August 10, 2002.

²*Ibid.*, January 8, 2003.

³*Ibid.*, January 10, 2003.

⁴In China, unofficial unions are forbidden. Unions are established at the grass-roots level in work establishments. These come under the territorial (not industrial) union organ. The national organ of the territorial structure is called the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. For convenience, its acronym "ACFTU" will be used here also to refer to official unions overall according to the context.

⁵In the Bolshevik union controversy in 1920, Lenin argued that the union played and should play a double role: to engage in production propaganda and ensure labor discipline for the state (the production function), and to defend workers' interests even against the employer-state (the protection function).

tom between the frequently contradictory demands of both.⁶ The literature prior to the 1990s sees this contradictory position as being resolved in favor of the party-state by locating the ACFTU at the production end of the production-protection continuum.⁷ Since the 1990s, however, the union has come to be seen as developing into a "corporatist" "adversary" of the Party, acting as a "workers' advocate"—i.e., as having swung to the protection end.⁸

The primary purpose of this paper is not to re-examine the role of the ACFTU in general. Instead, I propose to address the question of how the union would act under the current socioeconomic and sociopolitical situation from a fresh angle by focusing on a particular aspect of the issue of the union's role not previously explored—namely, the practices of China's unionists *as social agents*.

For this purpose, I employ Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus,⁹ which has been highly influential in recent years.¹⁰ In formulating the concept, Bourdieu is concerned about the major defect of objectivist

⁶For instance, O'Leary has stated that "the frequently contradictory demands of these roles ... have been responsible for most of the major difficulties the ACFTU has experienced." See Greg O'Leary, "The Contemporary Role of Chinese Trade Unions," in *Contemporary Developments in Asian Industrial Relations*, ed. Sukhan Jackson (Sydney: Industrial Relations Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 1994), 30.

⁷Merton Don Fletcher, *Workers and Commissars: Trade Union Policy in the People's Republic of China* (Western Washington State College Program in East Asian Studies Occasional Paper no. 6); and Lai To Lee, *Trade Unions in China: 1949 to the Present* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1986).

⁸Anita Chan, "Revolution or Corporatism? Workers and Trade Unions in Post-Mao China," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 29 (January 1993): 31-61; Gordon White, "Chinese Trade Unions in the Transition from Socialism: Towards Corporatism or Civil Society?" *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 34, no. 3 (1996): 433-57; and Jude Howell, "Looking Beyond Incorporation: Chinese Trade Unions in the Reform Era," *Mondes en Developpement, Tome 25-99* (1997): 73-90. Chan's article is the trend-setting paper, since which the ACFTU's "shift towards prioritizing the interests of workers" has become received wisdom. See Jude Howell, "Trade Unions in China: The Challenge of Foreign Capital," in *Adjusting to Capitalism: Chinese Workers and the State*, ed. Greg O'Leary (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 157.

⁹Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990 [1980]).

¹⁰The term "habitus" is subject to different interpretations. This paper follows the one in Raymond W.K. Lau, "Habitus and the Practical Logic of Practice: An Interpretation," *Sociology* (forthcoming in 2004).

social-theoretic models such as Claude Levis-Strauss' structuralist model—namely, that these models proceed directly from structural conditions to social regularities, without specifying the mechanisms whereby social agents are constituted to engage in actions or practices which display the regularities. In other words, these models lack a concept of social agency, which leaves them open, justifiably or not, to the charge of reductionism. Habitus is precisely an agency concept that specifies the mechanisms linking structure and practices-regularities.

For Bourdieu, habitus is a non-reflective dispositional sense, possessing an automatism analogous to motor skills (such as swimming and typing), formed on the basis of social experience in the historical-structural conditions of agents' social (class, group, and institutional) milieu. This dispositional sense generates the agents' social practices. Thus, the concept involves three aspects: the *formation* of habitus; habitus as a *dispositional sense*; and social agents' *practices* generated by this sense. It should be noted that while habitus, as a dispositional sense, is basically non-reflective, some of its elements exist in a preconscious state in the sense that they are capable of surfacing to varying degrees of awareness under certain conditions, such as when social agents are induced to reflect on their practices.

Bourdieu refers to habitus' *formation* by such terms as "structured structure" (meaning that habitus is a structure that is itself structured by its formative conditions) and "internalized history" (since habitus' formative conditions are *historical-structural*); with reference to its *generative* side, he calls it a "structuring structure" (meaning that it is a structure that structures—i.e., produces definite patterns in—the social agent's practices). As such, habitus generates practices that reproduce its own formative conditions. In sum, habitus' "mechanism" is conceptualized as dispositional sense, while its "contents" are explained by the historical-structural factors in its formation. Together, they constitute social agents' "logic of practice." I have elsewhere¹¹ specified habitus' "mechanism" into several components

¹¹Ibid.

to be discussed and applied in section four.

The following analysis, therefore, begins with the formative conditions of the habitus of China's unionists, namely, the structural conditions of the unionists' work—i.e., the union's institutional position within the CCP regime, and the union's history. With regard to the structural conditions, section two will show why and how the Party wields both institutional and operational control over the union. With regard to history, section three will explain the union's past relationship to the Party. It is under these structural-historical conditions that China's unionists have been "brought up." It is on the basis of this "upbringing" experience that the habitus of China's unionists is formed. Section four then provides an analytical examination of this habitus in terms of three components—namely, what we refer to, in abbreviated form with reference to the first two components, as belief-premises, perception-appreciation, and a practical sense of the objective possibilities of actions and events and of what will be forthcoming in life's routines. In the course of this examination, the unionists' practices generated by their habitus will also be shown. It will be seen how the unionists act in accordance with a dispositional "logic of practice" congruently with the historical-structural conditions of their work, thereby reproducing them.

My analysis of China's unionists as social agents shows that unionists are and dispositionally "see"¹² themselves as part and parcel of the state managing workers on behalf of the state for the attainment of the state's objective(s). They do not stand between the party-state and labor. From this vantage point, section five discusses why it is mistaken to apply the "dualist" model to the ACFTU as well as why the derivative "corporatist" model of the ACFTU is untenable.

Methods and Data

The empirical data for this study derive from the existing literature,

¹²The term "see" is in quotes because habitus is basically non-reflective.

documentary sources, journalistic reports, and fieldwork undertaken in 1998-99. The fieldwork originated as a general investigation into China's urban sociopolitical conditions under the impact of market-oriented reforms. Among other things, it included in-depth open-ended qualitative interviews with twelve unionists in three different municipalities in different parts of China: six in one municipality and three each in the other two.¹³ These unionists included seven grass-roots unionists (from unions of different work establishments of different administrative ranks) and five unionists from different territorial unions (ranging from municipal to prefectural [区, *qu*] unions). The interviews lasted from two to over four hours, and were conducted in the native language at office premises with the exception of one, which was conducted in a quiet restaurant. Two of the interviews continued into post-interview informal discussions at restaurants. Labor is a highly sensitive issue, hence arranging these interviews involved great difficulties—troubles which have only been compounded since 2001 when two overseas researchers were convicted of espionage. In view of this, all identities have been kept confidential.

The interviews were conducted on the basis of an interview guide prepared beforehand, which covered subjects and issues related to union work and labor of different degrees of specificity. The interview guide contained nine categories of questions ranging from the respondent's biographical data to the relationship between the union and the Party. An example of a general question was: "What is the relationship between the union and the Party?" An example of a more specific question was: "Have you encountered any difficulties in discharging the duties of the 'two protections' [see below]?" Obviously, general questions were followed up by extensive probing during the interviewing process. Probing was also widely used even in the case of more specific questions. Generally, given the nature of the type of interviewing being employed, it is unsurprising

¹³Given that habitus is a dispositional sense, it would be ideal if ethnographic observation could have been used in addition to in-depth interviewing. However, for obvious reasons, that was hardly possible in studying China's unionists. Nonetheless, as the subsequent analysis will show, habitus does become discernible in in-depth interviewing.

that the length, breadth, and depth of the discussions with different respondents varied. Close rapport was established with the majority of the respondents. In the following, quotations from respondents will not be attributed except in the case of multiple (including non-fieldwork) sources, but quotations from different respondents will be kept separate in order to ensure authenticity.

As noted, the fieldwork was conducted several years ago. However, habitus changes only over the long term, hence the data acquired are in no way dated. These data are analyzed qualitatively by means of the analytical categories employed in this paper. Thus, the data are grouped under such conceptual categories of habitus as belief-premises and the like (see above) as well as categories such as the unionists' practices.

To illustrate the habitus of China's unionists, the respondents are quoted from extensively. As previously noted, as a dispositional sense, habitus is basically non-reflective. Hence, the significance of some of the quotations requires conceptual interpretation to be discerned. However, as also noted, some elements of habitus exist in a preconscious state capable of surfacing to varying degrees of awareness. In most of the interviews, researcher and respondent engaged in extended, wide-ranging conversation, sometimes going into areas entirely unrelated to the research. It was through such a process that the preconscious sometimes surfaced to awareness or quasi-awareness. For this reason, as will be seen, some other quotations from the respondents indicate a certain degree of reflective awareness on the respondents' part and can be interpreted straightforwardly.

The Structural Formative Conditions of the Unionists' Habitus

The historical-structural conditions of the formation of the habitus of China's unionists consist of two components—one historical and the other structural. In this section, the structural conditions are examined. These conditions refer to the ACFTU's institutional position within the CCP regime.

The CCP regime comprises various "systems."¹⁴ The relevant ones for this discussion are the Party, the administration (management in enterprises¹⁵), and the "mass organizations" including the union. All systems are staffed from one and the same unified pool of cadres with a unified rank structure and pay scale. The Party controls the *nomenklatura* under which cadres are deployed to the different systems.¹⁶ Many cadres remain in the same system for life, but cross-system transfers also occur. In the enterprise, the heads of the above three systems are the Party secretary, the manager, and the union chair. The latter is a half-grade below the other two in rank. He is nominally "elected" by the workers, but is actually appointed by the local Party committee, which in principle should consult the local union beforehand. The local Party committee also appoints the local union chair, again supposedly in consultation with the super-ordinate union organ. In reality, "consultation" in both cases is usually made *ex post facto*. Even if the union is unhappy with the *fait accompli*, "can you oppose?"¹⁷

The union's leadership at the municipal level and above is held directly by the Party through a mechanism known as the "party core group" (PCG, 黨組 *dangzu*). The PCG of a non-Party body is an appointed organ consisting of the body's leaders belonging to the Party. Wielding real power in the body instead of the nominal leadership (where this is held by non-Party members which occurs in some cases), the PCG is directly responsible to the Party, not the body's super-ordinate organ.¹⁸ Thus, the PCG of a municipal union reports directly to the municipal Party com-

¹⁴Huai Yan, "Understanding the Political System of Contemporary China," *Papers of the Center for Modern China* 10 (August 1991).

¹⁵The union exists in all public work establishments (known as work units or *danwei*) including public (state and collective) enterprises and state-funded institutions. We focus on state enterprises for simplicity.

¹⁶John Burns, ed., *The Chinese Nomenklatura System: A Documentary Study of Party Control of Leadership Selection 1979-1984* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1989).

¹⁷Author's interviews.

¹⁸Zhao Bo, *Zhongguo gongchandang zhangcheng cidian* (A dictionary of the CCP constitution) (Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, 1991); and Carol Lee Hamrin, "The Party Leadership System," in *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision-Making in Post-Mao China*, ed. Kenneth Lieberthal and David M. Lampton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), chap. 4.

mittee, not the provincial union.

The *nomenklatura* and the PCG underpin the Party's institutional control over the union. Another mechanism ensures the Party's operational control. In the past, at every administrative level, the Party committee had specialized secretaries and counterpart departments (對口部門, *duikou bumen*) responsible for every aspect of state work. In addition to giving policy guidelines, they operationally directed the daily work of the state agencies, leading to a merging of party and government. In 1987, these secretaries and departments were abolished.¹⁹ For the union, however, the mechanism has remained intact. Thus, unions are in principle under the operational "dual leadership" of the Party and the super-ordinate union, in that order of priority. In practice, the Party often ignores the latter.²⁰

Union members do not have to pay dues. Enterprises are required to disburse 2 percent of the total wage bill to the enterprise union as its revenue irrespective of membership. This is shared with the territorial unions up the hierarchy. Unionists at work units (known as grass-roots unionists) are on the work unit's payroll; unionists working at territorial unions, on the other hand, are paid out of the government's fiscal budget. In sum, in the enterprise, the Party is the union's institutional-operational boss, management its paymaster.²¹

It is necessary to note the functions performed by the grass-roots union for which its institutional position is designed. I have argued elsewhere²² that the work unit is a post-1949 substitute collectivity for the traditional Chinese village, in which its leadership performs the same combination of repressive-ideological and mutual aid-welfare functions in a close-knit collectivity as indigenous rural elites performed in the village. This combination of functions constitutes a form of collectivistic

¹⁹Pen Hsiao, "Separating the Party from the Government," in *Decision-Making in Deng's China: Perspectives from Insiders*, ed. Carol Lee Hamrin and Suisheng Zhao (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), chap. 13.

²⁰Author's interviews.

²¹Author's interviews.

²²Raymond W.K. Lau, "Socio-Political Control in Urban China: Crisis and Changes," *British Journal of Sociology* 52, no. 4 (December 2001): 605-20.

sociopolitical control at the grass-roots level, in which the work unit leadership acts as a "parent authority" maintaining sociopolitical control partly through repressive-ideological means and partly through taking paternalistic care of the employees' mutual aid-welfare needs. Hence the common reference to work units as "villages in the city" and the ethical precept of "loving your work unit as your own family."

Within the work unit leadership, many of the above functions are performed by the union under the Party's and management's supervision. Hence, the union is also referred to as the "employees' family" (職工之家, *zhigong zhijia*). "When someone falls ill ... the union pays a visit; it's visit by the family [自己人 *zijiren*, or 自家人 *zijiaren*]." In the course of my fieldwork, I came across numerous references which illustrate how the union acts as the "employees' family." Thus, in one instance, a female worker was frequently battered by her husband; after intervening unsuccessfully, the union hired a lawyer to take the husband to court. In another instance, a worker and his spouse died in an accident, leaving a ten-year-old child and a seventy-year-old grandfather without any caretaker. The grandfather had a stepson rusticated in Shaanxi (陝西) during the Cultural Revolution who had since settled there. The union contacted the stepson, secured a household registration (戶口, *hukou*) for him to return to look after the grandfather and the child. The references to "villages in the city" and "employees' family" are not merely official propaganda. Just as the value of the "parent official" (父母官, *fumu guan*) still remains ingrained among the general population today, post-1949 workers have always relied on the work unit leadership as a "parent authority," although this leadership has been instrumental to their subordination. As will be seen in section five, while the resemblance of the work unit to the traditional village is widely recognized in Western scholarship, the significance of this for understanding the part played by the union in work units is generally missed.

The Historical Formative Conditions of the Unionists' Habitus

I now come to the historical conditions of the formation of the habitus

of China's unionists. Given that the objective of the present paper is not to analyze the ACFTU in any comprehensive way, the examination in this section will be schematic.

The ACFTU was founded in 1925, went underground after the Nationalist government's massacre of communists in 1927, and henceforth existed in name only. It was recreated in 1948 when the CCP's army was well on its way of crushing the Nationalist government. Li Lisan (李立三, 1899-1967), as the union's first vice-chairman and PCG secretary (concurrently Labor Minister), became its *de facto* leader. In 1951, Li was purged for "economism" and "syndicalism."²³ Li was a labor leader of the 1920s, went to Moscow in 1930, and returned to China in 1946. Given his extended Moscow sojourn, Li was thoroughly versed in Bolshevik terminology.

Li's "economism" consisted of his demand to let the union focus on the workers' immediate distributional interests, leaving the long-term interests of production to management. In short, adopting the Bolshevik "dualist" model in conceiving union issues, he wanted to free the union from the politics of production propaganda. However, it should be noted how Li understood the union's distributional functions. As remarked, these functions are paternalistically performed in the work unit as a form of sociopolitical control. Hence, despite Li's use of Bolshevik terminology, it would be inappropriate to interpret his "economism" in the adversarial sense of Western unionism.

Li's "syndicalism" was to consider the union as the "highest form of organization of the working class," evidently betraying his knowledge of the Russian Workers' Opposition. I shall have more to say concerning

²³The following analysis of the purges of Li and his successor is based on Fletcher, *Workers and Commissars*; June M. Heam, "Whither the Trade Unions in China?" *Journal of Industrial Relations* 19, no. 2 (1977): 158-72; Lee, *Trade Unions in China*; Kevin Jiang, "The Conflicts Between Trade Unions and the Party-State: The Reform of Chinese Trade Unions in the Eighties," *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences*, no. 8 (1996): 121-58; and the author's general knowledge of Li's career, unless indicated otherwise. Li's case bears close scrutiny because while the "corporatist" view makes much of his purge, it has never analyzed what Li's alleged errors actually referred to, but instead takes them at their face value within the Bolshevik lexicon.



"syndicalism" in a moment. Meanwhile, the Hungarian events of 1956 sparked off unrest in China including workers' strikes. The Party initially encouraged the people to critique it so as to forestall bigger troubles. The union, under Li's successor Lai Ruoyu (賴若愚, 1901-58), followed the Party's lead.²⁴ When the Party reversed course in the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign (反右運動), Lai was purged for "syndicalism." Both Li's and Lai's "syndicalism" actually refers to greater operational autonomy.²⁵ Operational dual leadership over government organs was, as noted, abolished in 1987, without undermining the Party's institutional control over them. Hence, Li's and Lai's "syndicalism" simply amounted to a demand for a more relaxed dual leadership, and did not signify any demand for institutional independence from the Party.

Li's and Lai's purges had immense impact on unionists. After Lai's purge, unionists would refer even the minutest daily operational matters to the Party for instructions. Alarmed by the resulting immobilization of union work, the Party urged unionists to overcome the attitude of "there is work when there is assignment from the Party, and there is no work when there is none."²⁶ Nonetheless, union work continued to decline. On the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the union was dissolved altogether as a result of intra-party factional struggle.

Local unions began to be revived in 1973. The ACFTU itself was restored in 1978. In the enterprise, the Staff and Workers Congress (職工代表大會, *zhigong daibiao dahui*)—the nominal organ of employees' democratic management controlled by the union, which had been abolished during the Cultural Revolution—was re-established. In November 1978, the Beijing Spring Democracy Wall movement broke out. The Polish

²⁴Elizabeth Perry, "Shanghai's Strike Wave of 1957," *The China Quarterly*, no. 137 (1994): 1-27.

²⁵See Heam, "Whither the Trade Unions in China?" 161; Lee, *Trade Unions in China*, 82; and the post-purge editorial of the ACFTU organ *Gongren ribao* (Workers' Daily) on July 1, 1958, cited in Fletcher, *Workers and Commissars*, 58. In section two, the difference between the Party's institutional and operational control over the union is explained.

²⁶Cited in Fletcher, *Workers and Commissars*, 64.

events erupted in July 1980, sparking off strikes in China.²⁷ The following month, supreme leader Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) called for bold democratic reforms. This sparked off lively debate, in which one major theme was how to separate party and state—i.e., relaxing dual leadership. In September, at the Party's behest, the union began debating union reform, in which operational autonomy and the rehabilitation of Li Lisan and Lai Ruoyu were raised.²⁸

At the ACFTU's 10th Congress in 1983, top Party leader Li Xiannian (李先念) formally rehabilitated Li and Lai, stating: "Unions working independently [in the sense of operational autonomy] in accordance with their duties and powers" did not constitute "syndicalism."²⁹ Union chairman Ni Zhifu (倪志福) called on the union to protect the state's long-term interests and workers' immediate interests at the same time, but in that order of priority.³⁰ The "two protections" (which remain the union's guiding principle today), he stated, must not be counter-posed to one another. That is why Li Lisan was rehabilitated for his "syndicalism" only, but not his "economism."

In 1986, political reform again came on the Party's agenda. The union was instructed to submit its own reform program.³¹ In 1988, the union's 11th Congress adopted the "Basic Designs for the Reform of the Union."³² Union self-management of the *nomenklatura* was put forth as an abstract objective. The concrete demand was, however, limited to asking local Party committees to "consult" with the union at the super-ordinate administrative level on the nomination of the local union leadership. This

²⁷Jeanne L. Wilson, "Labor Policy in China: Reform and Retrogression," *Problems of Communism* 39, no. 5 (1990): 44-65.

²⁸Jiang, "The Conflicts Between Trade Unions and the Party-State," 126.

²⁹Li Xiannian, "Address to the 10th Congress of the ACFTU," *Gongren ribao*, October 19, 1983.

³⁰Ni Zhifu, "Work Report to the 10th Congress of the ACFTU," *ibid.*, October 27, 1983.

³¹Jiang, "The Conflicts Between Trade Unions and the Party-State," 130.

³²All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), "Gonghui gaige de jiben shexiang" (Basic designs for the reform of the union) (1988), in *Zhongguo gonghui zhongyao wenjian xuanbian* (Selected important documents of China's unions) (Beijing: Jixie gongye chubanshe, 1990), 99-110.

merely amounted to a request that the Party honor its own *nomenklatura* principles. "Independence" and "autonomy" were also called for, again merely meaning operational autonomy from the Party's direct "taking on of everything [包攬, *baolan*] and interference in the union's daily matters," indicating how little had changed despite 1983's rehabilitations.

In 1989, despite expressing massive sympathy for student fasters, workers as a whole did not join the protests.³³ Realizing the importance of this, after June 4th, the regime put forth the slogan "wholeheartedly rely on the working class," which has been retained until now. With political reform off the Party's agenda, union reform did not figure at the ACFTU's 12th Congress in 1993. In 1994, union chairman Wei Jianxing (尉健行) spoke of protecting the workers' "political status" (as fictive "masters of the state/enterprise") and "democratic rights."³⁴ Its background was that beginning in late 1993, enterprises were to be transformed into corporations. Calls were made to drop the "masters" slogan,³⁵ thereby threatening workers' supposed "political status"; many enterprises abolished the Staff and Workers Congress (SWC) in corporate transformation, thereby annulling workers' supposed "democratic rights" (in reality, weakening the union which controls the SWC). It should be noted that contrary to regulations, enterprises had begun abolishing the SWC since the mid-1980s. Under the regime's corporate transformation policy, its retention is not even formally required.³⁶ Enterprises retaining the SWC nevertheless ignore it

³³Raymond W.K. Lau, "The Role of the Working Class in the 1989 Mass Movement in Beijing," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 12, no. 3 (September 1996): 343-73.

³⁴Wei Jianxing, "Speech at the 2nd Plenum of the 12th Executive Committee of the ACFTU," *Gongren ribao*, December 13, 1994.

³⁵*Gonghui lilun yu shijian* (Union: Theory and Practice), February 1996, 12-14; March 1996, 7-10.

³⁶All-China Federation of Trade Unions, State Economic and Trade Commission, and State Commission for Economic Restructuring, "Guanyu Guowuyuan queding de baijia xiandai qiye zhidu shidian zhong gonghui gongzuo he zhigong minzhu guanli de shishi yijian" (Implementation proposals concerning union work and employees' democratic management in the one hundred pilot modern enterprises selected by the State Council), *Zhongguo gongyun* (China Labor Movement), June 1996, 15-16; *Gonghui lilun yu shijian*, March 1996, 19; and *ibid.*, April 1996, 33.

in practice.³⁷

Official policy requires the retention of the union in corporate transformation. In practice, however, unions are often disbanded or amalgamated into management.³⁸ Where the union is retained, a party deputy secretary or a deputy manager frequently doubles as the union chair.³⁹

The union's 13th Congress convened in 1998, with the entire Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) attending the opening ceremony, showing the Party's concern about labor issues. In his address to the Congress, PBSC member and state vice-president Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) reaffirmed workers' "masters' status" only but, in line with the Party's corporate transformation policy, did not endorse workers' "democratic rights."⁴⁰

The union suffered a severe blow in November 2002 at the Party's 16th Congress, which adopted the theory of "three represents" (三個代表)—meaning that instead of being the proletariat's vanguard, the Party now represents the people as a whole, all advanced productive forces (an euphemism for private entrepreneurs), and all advanced culture.⁴¹ Union chairman Wei Jianxing stepped down from the Party leadership. At the union's Executive Committee meeting in December 2002, Wei stepped down as union chairman and was replaced by Wang Zhaoguo (王兆國). Unlike Wei who was a Politburo Standing Committee member until the Party's 16th Congress, Wang is only a Politburo member in the new Party leadership. Hence, his replacement of Wei signifies the Party's downgrading of the union's position, a move that is consistent with the theory of "three represents."

In sum, the union's history is one of its domination by the Party. The

³⁷Author's interviews.

³⁸*Zhongguo gongyun*, June 1996, 40; December 1996, 39; and April 1997, 39.

³⁹Author's interviews.

⁴⁰*Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), October 19 to October 26, 1998.

⁴¹It might be thought that since the Party has never really represented workers, such nominal change does not mean much. Such a view is mistaken, however. In CCP practice, such "nominal" change signifies the Party's formal acceptance of an already obtaining state of affairs, which has great substantive consequences: in this case, it means entrepreneurs' and management's encroachments on the union's interests will be further tolerated by the Party.

next section shows how this history is both part of the formative conditions and partial product of the unionists' habitus.

The Unionists' Habitus and "Logic of Practice"

In this section, I analyze the unionists' habitus, their "logic of practice," and their practices as social agents. Since habitus is formed on the basis of its historical-structural formative conditions examined in the previous two sections, references will be made to these conditions where appropriate.

I have elsewhere⁴² specified habitus' "mechanism" into several components—namely, schemes of taken-for-granted or implicit beliefs and assumptions (hereinafter belief-premises), dispositional perceptions and understandings (hereinafter perception-appreciation), and a practical sense of the objective possibilities of actions and events and of what will probably be forthcoming about life's daily routines. Obviously, these components are closely inter-linked. For instance, belief-premises can influence perception-appreciation, the latter can affect the sense of possibilities, etc., as will be seen below. I follow the above categorization in examining the habitus of China's unionists, in the course of which their practices generated by it will also be shown.

I begin with the unionists' belief-premises. At the start of section two, I have explained how one and the same unified pool of all cadres staff the various "systems" of the CCP regime in accordance with the *nomenklatura*. It should also be noted that a high proportion of all cadres consists of Party members. As noted towards the end of section two, there is up to the present an ingrained value of the "parent official" among the population. In this context, cadres (especially cadres belonging to the Party) are the post-1949 equivalent of the traditional mandarins (官, *guan*), sharply distinguished from the ordinary people. Under these circumstances, there

⁴²See note 10 above.

exists among all cadres (especially those belonging to the Party) a self-definition of themselves as a caste separate from and in contradistinction to the general population, and an identification with this caste. I shall, for want of a better term, call this cadre caste "the state managerial corps."⁴³ This self-definition as, and identification with, the state managerial corps (hereinafter referred to as self-definition-identification for short) exist despite the existence of conflicts between different bureaucracies within the regime. In the case of the union, it will be recalled from section three that the post-1948 ACFTU came into existence not on the basis of any worker movement, but was created anew by state fiat, and was (and has since been) staffed from the moment of its creation from the pool of the state managerial corps that the CCP quickly built up. Hence, it is not surprising that China's unionists dispositionally define themselves as, and identify with, the state managerial corps. This is the most striking belief-premise that I found among the unionists.

I was able to discern the unionists' self-definition-identification from my extensive exchange with the respondents.⁴⁴ Thus, in one municipal district, an administrative department overseeing thirty enterprises formed itself into a corporation, which was managed by a branch of the local Party committee. A branch member-cum-veteran unionist was assigned as the corporation's union chair, hence simultaneously straddling the Party, administrative, and union systems. Twenty-five workers had just lost a labor dispute court case against the corporation. Dismissing their case as groundless, he commented: "In the end, we won." As the workers' union chair, he identified instead with the "we." This "we" refers not so much to management as to the state managerial corps as a whole (cf. the unionist's current threefold position). In another case, a foreign investor with cash flow problems had not paid wages for four months. The prefectural union

⁴³The term "managerial" refers to the regime's goal (now partially abandoned) of establishing a managed society and economy.

⁴⁴It should be noted that the above logic of exposition is the reverse of the logic of discovery. That is to say, the discernment came first; it was only then that I enquired into the formative conditions of the unionists' self-definition-identification, which are explained in the previous paragraph in the text.

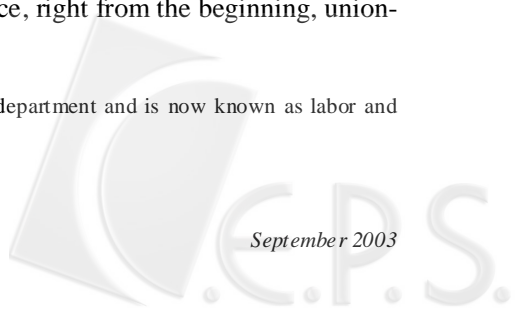
chair obtained the debtors' list from this investor, and by means of his connections as a middle-ranked cadre, recovered most of the receivables, half of which the investor, as agreed, used for paying wages. Whereas potential unrest was one of the unionist's consideration, his taking up of the managerial task of solving cash flow difficulties is comprehensible only when viewed in the light of the "we" identification. Since the late 1980s, tripartite government⁴⁵–labor (union)–management labor arbitration committees have been set up. Often, only one or two parties are present to adjudicate cases. "It doesn't really matter," a municipal unionist states, "we [referring to the three parties] are all working for the same objective." The same "we" again. The importance of this dispositional "we" self-definition-identification among China's unionists, to which I will return on different occasions below, cannot be over-emphasized. It is the key to understanding the unionists as social agents.

Unionists do grumble about the Party (e.g., not honoring its own *nomenklatura* principles), but I discerned a genuine conviction among them that it is the duty of the union to follow the Party's leadership. A veteran unionist confesses: "Since my participation in union work, there has been a deep-rooted concept—that is, the union must be under the Party's leadership, consciously and actively accepting it." For unionists, the Party defines the state managerial corps' goal, which constitutes "the interests of the state"; "the duty of the union is to ... ensure ... the attainment of the Party's objective"; "the union's work and activities must revolve round the core work of the Party"; and "whether it is the administration or the union, they must not stray away from the Party's leadership.... Whether it is the Party, the administration, or the union, they stand on the same front,⁴⁶ for the interests of the state."

The third belief-premise concerns the union's mission. As noted, the union was created anew in 1948 by state fiat and staffed from the state managerial corps' pool of cadres. Hence, right from the beginning, union-

⁴⁵The government is represented by the labor department and is now known as labor and social security departments.

⁴⁶As part of the "we," it can be added.



ists did not represent labor. Hence, it is no wonder that I did not discern among my respondents any concept of their mission being to represent workers; instead, as part of the "we," their mission is to manage the workers on behalf of the collective elite so as to facilitate the achievement of the Party-defined state's objective. Since 1992, the state's objective is to establish the "socialist market economy," which has resulted in widespread layoffs and disputes. "We work closely with the Party and management to short-list workers to be retired early or made redundant." "We spend a lot of time explaining to workers the demands of a market economy." Workers laid off from the state sector are reluctant to find private sector employment in which conditions are Dickensian. "A major task of the union today is to educate redundant workers to 'change the concept of employment' [a Party slogan]." Generally, "the task of the union today is to harmonize labor relations for the purpose of economic development." In this harmonization, unionists "take the standpoint of your superiors under all circumstances." Unionists "do not go on strike. On the contrary, you work on the employees," i.e., pacify them in case of unrest or potential unrest.

Thus, unions "in China do not and should not play a confrontational role," not only in relation to the state and the Party-management in the public sector, but also in relation to foreign and domestic private enterprises, since the Party vigorously promotes private investment. Many foreign enterprises refuse to set up unions. "I told [foreign investors] our union is, after all, under the leadership of the Communist Party.... The Party invites you to invest in our country; you need to make profits, and our union's work is to protect your stability, ... help you make profits, not let workers make troubles for you. If you don't let us set up [unions], when [workers] make trouble, there won't be anyone to resolve these matters for you [cf. 'working on the workers']. Foreign investors are wary about unionization because they don't understand the nature of unions in China." If foreign investors are not convinced, however, "nothing can be done. We are not going to agitate among workers in these enterprises to demand unionization," for that would only "create instability," which is contrary to the state's objective.

Of the above three belief-premises, the first lies in the deepest non-

reflective layer of the unionists' habitus. It never surfaced directly, but is discerned on repeated reflection on the fieldwork data. Why would unionists who otherwise harbor discontent with the Party and management still express such great dispositional commitment and loyalty to the Party-defined policies/objectives without any feeling of being used like a tool? Vested interests, to be examined in a later context, are involved, but for many lowly grass-roots unionists, they are meager and disproportionate to the above commitment/loyalty. Similarly, why did unionists who could show parent-authoritarian compassion for suffering workers never once impress on this author that they saw themselves as representing the workers, but instead took such a natural managerial attitude from the state's standpoint? Without the "we" identification, this would not have made sense. The belief-premise concerning the unionists' mission was also not articulated directly. However, it non-reflectively (sometimes even quasi-reflectively) underpins the unionists' various reflective formulations of what the tasks of the union are. The second belief-premise is the most consciously held, probably because Party leadership is a value explicitly stressed not only in official propaganda, but also in the formal and informal training of cadres.⁴⁷

I now come to the second component of the unionists' habitus, namely, perception-appreciation, the major one of which is the ubiquitous sense of the union's weakness and powerlessness. In view of the union's institutional position, its history of subordination, and its decline at the grass-roots level especially since 1993, this sense is unsurprising. Commenting on enterprises' widespread default on disbursing the union's revenue, one unionist self-pitifully stated: "The union is a pauper union, management regards you as superfluous, workers see you as useless." "Superfluous" because the cost is now seen as unnecessary; "useless" because without

⁴⁷Hence, the second belief-premise shades from dispositional to normative commitment. It should be noted that the dispositional and the normative are conceptually opposed categories, but in practice they need not be mutually exclusive. For instance, the adoption of the normative (e.g., goals) can be matter-of-fact, while what was once consciously normative in the Parsonian sense may also in time become dispositional.

revenue the union is unable to provide welfare for which it is responsible or organize recreation for workers.

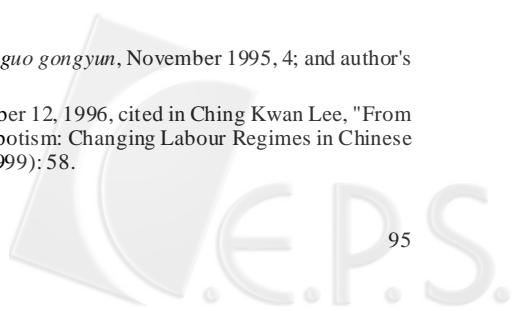
A corollary of the above is the sense of the union's reliance on the Party. "Look at this document [a municipal union document]. There are over thirty clauses in five sections specifying the authority of the Staff and Workers Congress. Who [referring to management] has implemented it? ... The only way [that it can be implemented] is to have the [municipal Party committee] issue a document." That is to say, management would not bother about the union unless the Party intervenes.

I now turn to the unionists' practical sense of objective possibilities of actions and events and of what will probably be forthcoming. As noted in section three, under corporate transformation the union is often disbanded. Even when the union is maintained, a Party deputy secretary or deputy manager frequently doubles as the union chair, which apparently makes a joke of union work. Paradoxically, unionists welcome this as "useful," making unions "more efficient and effective."⁴⁸ Why? First, the Party, management, and union all belong to the "we" whose goals are identical. Hence, unionists do not see doubling as problematic. Incidentally, this is also why in labor arbitration cases, the union chair often represents not labor, but management. For instance, in one district in Guangzhou (廣州) in 1996, this happened in 20 percent of all labor arbitration cases.⁴⁹ Second, given the sense of the union's powerlessness, they also sense that doubling is indeed "more effective."

The Staff and Workers Congress is formally entitled to examine management's entertainment expenses. "What can you do if management refuses?"—which it usually does. By itself, the union can do absolutely nothing. This brings up another apparent paradox. While the Party has never honored its pledge of giving the union operational autonomy, not

⁴⁸Guangdong's provincial union cited in *Zhongguo gongyun*, November 1995, 4; and author's interviews.

⁴⁹*Nanfang gongbao* (Southern Labor), September 12, 1996, cited in Ching Kwan Lee, "From Organized Dependence to Disorganized Despotism: Changing Labour Regimes in Chinese Factories," *The China Quarterly*, no. 157 (1999): 58.



only do grass-roots unionists not grumble about it, on the contrary, they are glad to have the Party secretary intervene in their daily work. "We actively seek the Party's leadership, ... make it understand our work and support our work." Why? This is because of the practical sense that "asking the secretary to speak [for us] carries more weight," which is itself underpinned by the sense of the union's powerlessness. One unionist relates how once a profitable enterprise refused to disburse the union's revenue. He turned to the Party secretary at the next higher level who made the manager pay up. Another unionist describes this as "leaning on the Party's authority" (借黨威, *jie dang wei*). "If the prefectural Party committee does not support something, the prefectural union can do nothing on its own. This is the same at every level."

With regard to "leaning on the Party's authority," the following—which concerns the union's 13th Congress in 1998—is illuminating. Prior to the Congress, it was widely rumored that Wei Jianxing (then a rising Party leader who joined the Politburo Standing Committee, the Party's top organ, in late 1997), chairman since 1993, was to step down, to be succeeded by Xie Fei (謝非, an aging ex-Politburo member who soon passed away). Would not unionists welcome such a move as a sign of relaxed Party control over the union, as the "corporatist" model of the ACFTU would lead us to predict? However, far from it, unionists interviewed before the Congress feared such a change, while those interviewed afterwards were relieved that it did not materialize. The reason is simple. If Wei did step down and was replaced by Xie, it would have signified the Party's downgrading of its concern for the union which had to lean on its authority. That would undoubtedly further accelerate the union's decline.

An alternative to "leaning on the Party's authority" in relation to the sense of possibilities is: "You make yourself useful to the manager [such as by] working on the workers." More funds will then become available "to do some minor things, otherwise no one [referring to workers] will pay you any attention." Addressing the issue of defending workers against management, the same unionist asked sarcastically: "Defending workers? You [grass-roots unionists] are unable to even defend yourself [against management]." Management's rough treatment of unionists has always

existed.⁵⁰ Since 1992, it has become more serious.⁵¹ Experience inscribed into the habitus makes this unionist sense what will be forthcoming if unionists do not dance to management's tune.

One unionist recalls the debate on union reform in the early 1980s. At one training course, a veteran unionist steeped in the union's historical experience since the 1950s warned the class of the futility of becoming heady with proposing reforms to the Party which might overstep the boundaries of what was permissible to the Party. He conveyed this by means of a rhyming metaphor: "The old peacock spreads its tail, what one-sided coquetry!" (老孔雀開屏，自作多情). What he meant was that the union was the "old peacock," since it possessed no attractiveness to the Party; for it to become too excited about proposing reform to the Party ("spread[ing] its tail") would simply constitute "one-sided coquetry." The union's subsequent history has borne out this dispositional sense of what the probable future held for the union.

Finally, the above analysis does not deny that as members of the state managerial corps, unionists have vested interests in the regime's maintenance.⁵² Thus, the stipulation holding enterprises responsible for the union's revenue is guaranteed only on the authority of the Party. One prefectural unionist invited this author to a sumptuous dinner. He drove in a union car reserved for his private use. He owns two houses, with one purchased from the union at nominal price. "I count myself as very satisfied," he confided. The unionists' support for the Party's outlawing of non-official unions can also be interpreted in this light. Without its Party-enforced monopoly, the ACFTU is liable to be severely weakened. However, this factor must not be exaggerated. As remarked, for many lowly grass-roots unionists, the privileges are tiny. It is their habitus that mainly accounts for their "logic of practice."

To summarize, this section has attempted to show how unionists act

⁵⁰See note 30 above.

⁵¹*Zhongguo gaige* (China Reform), March 1996, 36-37; and author's interviews.

⁵²Without going into details, let it be noted that these are straightforward material interests. Bourdieu's concept of "game"- and "field"-specific *illusio* is inapplicable here.

in their daily work as social agents. The argument is that they do so with a largely non-reflective dispositional sense. This sense—i.e., the unionists' habitus—is formed on the basis of the historical-structural conditions examined in sections two and three. As a result, the unionists dispositionally "see" themselves as part and parcel of the "we" with specific mission and duty, and possess both a spontaneous taken-for-granted understanding of the circumstances of their work (such as the union's powerlessness), and a spontaneous sense of practical possibilities (what can and cannot be done, and how union work can be done more effectively) and probable future scenarios (e.g., "The old peacock spreads its tail, what one-sided coquetry!"). This composite dispositional sense generates their daily practices such as explaining the demands of the market economy to workers, educating workers to "change the concept of employment," "working on the employees" in case of disputes and conflicts, "leaning on the Party's authority," and so on. These practices, in turn, contribute to their own reproduction as junior members of the "we," the union's history of subordination to the Party, and so on.

Discussion and Conclusion

The custom in Western scholarship has been to analyze unions in state-socialist societies in terms of the "dualist" model, as in the pre-1990s and the "corporatist"⁵³ views of the ACFTU. While this paper is not concerned with examining in detail why the "dualist" model is inapplicable to the ACFTU, my analysis of the habitus, "logic of practice," and practices of China's unionists does clearly imply a challenge to this paradigmatic position and the "corporatist-adversarial" view derived from it. Hence, it

⁵³There are two dimensions to this view—namely, that the ACFTU has developed, or is developing, into a "corporatist" organization, and that as such it is taking, or is developing the tendency to take, an "adversarial" position towards the party-state in shifting towards the protection end of the production-protection continuum. Hence, I shall hereinafter refer to this view as the "corporatist-adversarial" view.

is necessary to make a few schematic remarks on the "dualist" and "corporatist-adversarial" models from the angle of the present paper's analysis. This will also help throw the specific contribution of my analysis into sharper relief.

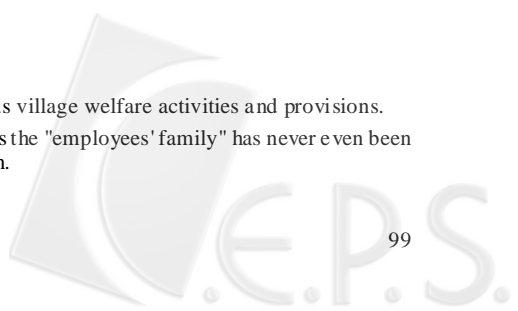
When Lenin put forth the "dualist" model, his reference point was the Russian unions of 1920. The October Revolution was based on massive worker-led collective actions, while the Russian unions had a strong tradition of adversarial unionism in the Western sense of the term. Thus, the Russian unions, steeped in the tradition of adversarial unionism, constituted a largely independent locus of power with a worker base that was separate from the Bolshevik Party, which had yet to be integrated into the party-state.

In direct contrast, the post-1948 ACFTU was founded not on the basis of any massive worker-led actions, but was created anew by state fiat as part and parcel of the party-state and staffed from the state managerial corps' pool of cadres. Moreover, the grass-roots unions were created as part and parcel of the work unit leadership; they performed, as indigenous rural elites did in the past, distributional functions⁵⁴ within its overall functioning as the "employees' family" as a form of paternalistic and collectivistic sociopolitical control. The resemblance of the work unit to the traditional village is widely recognized by Western scholars; despite this, however, the centrality of the union's functioning as the "employees' family," which is completely alien to the "dualist" model, has never been recognized.⁵⁵

In sum, despite the Party's and the union's adoption of Bolshevik terminology, the union was not a quasi-independent entity standing between the party-state and labor, and did not play a dual role torn between production propaganda and adversarial unionism, although it did engage in production propaganda. This role has not changed since the 1950s. The brief survey of the union's development in the 1980s and 1990s in section

⁵⁴Past indigenous rural elites sponsored various village welfare activities and provisions.

⁵⁵As far as I am aware, reference to the union as the "employees' family" has never even been mentioned in previous literature on the union.



three illustrates this at the macro level; the analysis of the unionists' self-definition-identification and their dispositional understanding concerning the union's mission evidences this at the micro social agency level.

Like the pre-1990s view of the union, the present analysis sees the union as being dominated by the Party. However, that view and the present analysis are non-comparable. First, because the pre-1990s view adopts the "dualist" model, the union is seen as being dominated by an external force (the Party); whereas I show the union to be dominated as a junior member of and within the state managerial corps at both the structural and social agency levels. Second, the pre-1990s view analyzes the Party's domination over the union as an empirical fact, whereas I analyze the union from the angle of the unionists' spontaneous dispositional submission to the Party.

The "corporatist-adversarial" view was originally founded⁵⁶ on flimsy theoretical-evidential grounds. Only when the historical genesis of the post-1948 ACFTU, its compositional basis (concerning its staffing), and its institutional position within the CCP regime are overlooked can the union ever possibly be posited as a "corporatist" entity. The "adversarial" thesis is not only implausible in view of the union's compositional basis and institutional position, the present analysis of the habitus and practices of the unionists also shows it to be mistaken at the social agency level. In fact, my fieldwork data turn up numerous apparent paradoxes that the "adversarial" thesis will find hard to resolve—such as "leaning on the Party's authority," seeking the Party secretary's help in undertaking union work, welcoming the doubling of the Party or management as the union chair, union representing management in labor arbitration cases, and fearing of the replacement of Wei Jianxing by Xie Fei in 1998.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Chan, "Revolution or Corporatism?" 31-61. This was a straightforward borrowing of the framework that Pravda and Ruble adopted to analyze East European unions in the early 1980s. See Alex Pravda and Blair A. Ruble, "Communist Trade Unions: Varieties of Dualism," in *Trade Unions in Communist States*, ed. Alex Pravda and Blair A. Ruble (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 1-21. The validity of Pravda and Ruble's analysis itself is of no concern to the present paper.

⁵⁷These apparent paradoxes are of the nature of Kuhnian anomalies. In a paper with more substantial fieldwork backing than the article which founded the "corporatist-adversarial" view, Anita Chan came across the anomaly of "doubling up." Failing to resolve it, she finds

Unfortunately, the "corporatist-adversarial" view has completely dominated the literature over the past decade, even though some of its problems have been recognized. Thus, Jude Howell, cognizant of the ACFTU's "integration into the party-state," nonetheless argues that in the reform era, the ACFTU is moving away from "incorporation" to "corporatist" "prioritizing [of] the interests of workers."⁵⁸ The same applies to Sek Hong Ng and Malcolm Warner who endorse the thesis that the ACFTU has been more assertive to hold on to "support from below," but conclude that "whether Chinese unions have in fact achieved a 'mature' degree of corporatism is another matter. Indeed, the very initial term implies a degree of parity between the social partners, which the ACFTU hardly possesses."⁵⁹ None of these authors has examined the union's institutional position in the party-state as thoroughly as has been done in section two, but they all realize its significance in general terms, and at least some of its implications for the "corporatist-adversarial" model. Nevertheless, they still endorse the thesis at least to the extent that the union is seen to be moving in the "corporatist-adversarial" direction.

If, according to these authors, the union is institutionally subordinate to the Party, then how is the union supposed to be able to move in the "corporatist-adversarial" direction? Furthermore, why should the union want to move towards that direction? None of the above authors has directly addressed these questions, but their underlying "dualist" model implicitly supplies them with the answers. Concerning the first question, in accordance with the model, the union is supposed to be not part and parcel of

it "contradictory" and "surprising." See Anita Chan, "Labor Relations in Foreign-Funded Ventures, Chinese Trade Unions, and the Prospects of Collective Bargaining," in O'Leary, *Adjusting to Capitalism*, 136, 140.

⁵⁸Howell, "Looking Beyond Incorporation," 73-90; and Howell, "Trade Unions in China" (cited in note 8 above). Howell's employment of the term "incorporation" is interesting, for it implies that the union at least originally existed as a quasi-independent entity from the Party (as required by the "dualist" model which Howell adopts) before it became "integrated into the party-state" in a process of "incorporation," which as shown is not the case.

⁵⁹Sek Hong Ng and Malcolm Warner, *China's Trade Unions and Management* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 1998), 6, 165. The same applies to White, "Chinese Trade Unions in the Transition from Socialism," 445, 452.

the party-state (despite its current institutional subordination to it) but possesses a social base in labor, which gives it a potentiality to assert independence from the party-state. Concerning the second question, with a supposedly congenital role of representing workers as part of its dual role, the union is presumed to possess an inherent potentiality to swing towards the protection end. This inherent potentiality is seen as being realized under the impact of increasing labor conflicts in the reform era.

My analysis of the unionists' habitus (their self-definition-identification, dispositional understanding of the union's mission, sense of the union's reliance on the Party and practical possibilities in union work, etc.), the union's post-1948 historical genesis, its compositional basis, its institutional position, and its core functioning as the "employees' family" shows how far removed the reality of the ACFTU is from the implicit "dualist" assumptions—that the union possesses the potentiality to assert independence from the party-state in "corporatist" manner, and has an inbuilt potentiality to "adversarially" defend workers against the party-state. On the contrary, the union is historically, structurally (i.e., compositionally and institutionally), functionally, and, on the part of its cadres, dispositionally part and parcel of, and a junior member within, the party-state, whose mission, dispositionally understood by its members, is to manage labor on behalf of the party-state to facilitate the attainment of the party-state's objective.

The "corporatist-adversarial" view sees the union as shifting "towards prioritizing the interests of workers." How would the present paper's analysis evaluate the possible developmental trajectory of the union under China's current circumstances? To address this question, it will first have to be noted that the accelerated pace of market-oriented reforms since the mid-1990s has led to a steady erosion of the work unit. As analyzed elsewhere,⁶⁰ the work unit's repressive-ideological functions have largely disappeared, while its mutual aid-welfare functions are dwindling. The union increasingly finds itself left on its own to salvage the "family of em-

⁶⁰See note 22 above.

ployees," so as to keep employees suffering from the impact of reforms turning to this "family" for grievance and problem resolution. As one unionist remarked, the union "should show up when things occur, let workers feel that we still care for them, ... and do more to attract their attachment." Another unionist related how he once visited several "households in extreme difficulties" (特困戶, *tekunhu*). After the visit, he raised several hundred *yuan* (*Renminbi*, 人民幣) from the union and gave each household one hundred *yuan* to subsidize their children's school fees. "Although it's a small sum, the families cried in gratitude." It can be seen from this that the paternalistic significance of the union in the weakening "family of employees" remains substantial. Objectively, we can see the union's salvaging efforts in sociopolitical control terms. On the other hand, as far as the unionists are concerned, they act in this manner mostly dispositionally.

However, the union faces great difficulties in its salvaging work because the regime is committed to implementing its economic reform program, which is the cause of all the union's current difficulties. Under these circumstances, contrary to the prognosis of the "corporatist-adversarial" view, the present paper's analysis shows that the union's continued erosion is far more likely to occur than the union switching over to the side of labor. Actually, as far as the unionists are concerned, the latter course of action is dispositionally nonexistent. As long as the CCP regime is able to maintain relative political stability, this situation is unlikely to change.