

## BOOK REVIEWS

Hui-Ching Chang & Richard Holt. (2014) *Language, Politics and Identity in Taiwan*. New York: Routledge. 232 pp.

Reviewed by Jennifer M. Wei (Soochow University Taipei, Taiwan)

The book studies five of the most prominent labels for China: communist bandits (*gongfei*, 共匪), Chinese Communists (*zhonggong*, 中共), the mainland (*dalu*, 大陸), the opposite shore (*duian*, 對岸), China (*zhongguo*, 中國) and the PRC (*zhonghuarenmingongheguo*, 中華人民共和國) by using textual analyses, archives and an online search for collocations. Tracing the origin, usage and pervasiveness of these names since the 1940s, the book aims to show how these labels/identity categories signify Taiwan's changing consciousness of the self and others vis-à-vis complex relations with China.

Seven chapters comprise the book. The first chapter introduces rationales for the choices of labels for China, explains that labels can serve as political metaphors and as discursive sites of struggle, and explains as well how unique features of Chinese language and Chinese attitudes toward words further make naming (an act of linguistic rectification) a pervasive act for political identity brokers in Taiwan. This chapter concludes by emphasizing that the succession and intertwining of the five labels indexes Taiwan's transition from a marginalized province of the ROC to a locale with its own national identity, and from out-of-focus ambiguity to concentrated understanding of Taiwan identity. Chapters 2 through 6 provide detailed analyses and relevant socio-historical contexts for the 5 labels, respectively and chapter 7 concludes the book. The book also provides a list of key events in naming China in Appendix A and transliterates key Chinese terms in Appendix B.

Understand the examples and analyses in the book and learning how labels for China have been used and abused as pervasive and persuasive metaphors is not and cannot be a straightforward matter. On the top five labels for China — communist bandits (*gongfei*, 共匪), Chinese Communists (*zhonggong*, 中共), the mainland (*dalu*, 大陸), the opposite shore (*duian*, 對岸), China (*zhongguo*, 中國) and the PRC (*zhonghuarenmingongheguo*, 中華人民共和國), we find the fingerprints of the main “identity brokers” in recent Taiwan history — Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Ching-kuo, Lee Teng-hui, Chen Shui-bian, Ma Ying-jeou. Each of these leaders of government is charged with different if not conflicting convictions, obsessions and ambitions for legitimacy, national status, international recognition

and economic survival for the new Chinese republic, the Republic of China on Taiwan, Taiwan, and the Republic of China, correspondingly. In addition to all the exhaustive examples and textual analyses, an appendix A lists key events in naming China from 1945 to 2014 and an appendix B transliterates key Chinese terms. For anyone who wants quick overall views of the complexity behind the top five labels, these appendices are concise and helpful.

As much as the reviewer appreciates the exhaustive examples (perhaps the most detailed and exhaustive treatment of labels for China and Taiwanese identity so far) and the socio-historical contexts provided, the reviewer will offer references, theoretical points and some reservations related to the time period chosen in the hope that these can better benefit potential readers with keen interest in understanding how labels/metaphors can function as political symbols in general and Taiwanese identity in particular.

First, a metaphor is important in political discourse; it can serve as more than a literary embellishment, also serving cognitive and political purposes (Chilton 1993). Metaphors can highlight certain aspects of history and hide others for deliberate political purposes. The author has detailed the obsessions of each identity broker with respect to the choice and abuse of a particular label for China, and most of the analyses focus well on tumultuous political contexts. This much being said, the analyses don't really add up to a full account of the power of the metaphors as political symbols, or of the full complexity of the evolving Taiwan/China relationship. For example, progressive economic development has been a trump card played by the KMT establishment to win support and gain legitimacy ever since the 1930s, but its failure to sustain implemented policies during the civil war was one of the major reasons why confidence in the KMT government was lost and the party was driven from the mainland. Subsequently, economic development in the 1950s and 60s generated the "Taiwan miracle" of the 1980s, but it was easy for all to see that aid from the USA made this success possible. Much as happened in China, the KMT in Taiwan tried to use economic development and stability to differentiate itself from all political opponents — everything that wasn't and isn't the KMT.

The issue of Taiwanese consciousness is another important topic that deserves more attention and connection to labeling China. Chang (2003) among others has traced the origin of such consciousness to the 1895–1945 Japanese occupation and successive island development since then. To reduce the origin and development of Taiwanese consciousness to a footnote is hardly the best way to present the complexity of Taiwanese identity.

The choice of 1949 to 2014 as the time period for the study is deliberate, as the author states and explains on page 10, but the reviewer is relieved to find that 1945 is included in Appendix A. The inclusion is a very important one because that

was the year that Taiwan's national status officially changed from model colony of Japan to part of Republic of China after 50 years of colonization. Had this year and this event been received attention in the main text, we would have had a chance to learn more of the complexity of Taiwanese identity, rather than simply Taiwan's relationship to China. Claims made by identity brokers in Taiwan are one thing and those brokers' convictions and obsessions another, but a properly critical study of the rhetoric involved should go beyond the obvious by tapping into the full picture of power relations, ideological differences, and routes of modernization and economic development. These are primary critical objectives for discourse analysis, but we find them merely listed in keeping with methodology, not taken up seriously in the analyses (the references don't include major names/work from CDA).

## References

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