Chapter 4

China Identity Media

In contemporary Taiwan, people normally identify media as China identity through the terms they use to refer to China. As this chapter shows, the relationship between the media and national identity is not simple. Nevertheless, looking at how a medium refers to China is a good place to start.

China identity media in Taiwan present both the Republic of China (ROC, the official country name of Taiwan) and the People’s Republic of China as parts of China. These media refer to the People’s Republic of China as “the Mainland” (Dalu 大陸) or “Mainland China” (Zhongguo Dalu 中國大陸) instead of China (Zhongguo 中国), the term which most countries use to refer to the PRC. The terms “Mainland” and “Mainland China” were used to refer to China during the martial law period. In this national identity discourse, Taiwanese people are considered Chinese. The China identity media, especially newspapers, oppose Taiwan Independence, but not all of them support unification because most Taiwanese people oppose unification with China.

The China identity media also use the term Neidi 内地 (inner land) to refer to China, especially in entertainment news as many Taiwanese singers and actors have worked and performed in China and Hong Kong. Using the term Neidi to refer to the Chinese Mainland became commonplace in Hong Kong after its return to China in 1997. The Chinese government prefers Hong Kong people to use Neidi. For example in 1998, the Hong Kong superstar Leon Lai 黎明 used the term “Mainland” in a TV interview in China. The anchorman immediately told Lai that as someone from Hong Kong he should use the terms Neidi to refer to Mainland China and Neidiren 内地人 (people of the inner land) to refer to people in Mainland China (Minsheng Daily News 1998). In fact, Neidi is an official title for Mainland China. For instance, residents in both Hong Kong and Macau who want to visit the Mainland have to apply for a “Neidi” Travel Permit for Hong Kong and Macau Residents (Gang’ao jumin laiwang “neidi” tongxingzheng 港澳居民來往 “內地” 通行證). The use of Neidi in Hong Kong implies that Hong Kong is a peripheral, yet constituent, part of China, much as Taiwan was in relation to Japan during the Japanese colonial period. Hence, to use this term in the context of the relationship between China and Taiwan degrades Taiwan to a local part of China like Hong Kong. As such, the Taiwan identity media refuse to use this term.1

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1 Many Taiwanese condemn the term Neidi as degrading to Taiwan. Thus, more and more Taiwanese argue that the Neidi 内地 (literally meaning the “inner land”) of Taiwan is Nantou
The term Neidi has historical connotations in Taiwan beyond Hong Kong and its entertainment scene. During the Japanese colonial period, Japan was also called内地, pronounced Naichi in Japanese, in an effort to degrade Taiwan as a periphery of the Japanese colonial empire. Neidi was then used in Taiwan to refer to the Mainland during the 1945-1949 civil war period when the KMT regime controlled both Taiwan and large parts of China. In an interview, Jung Fu-tien 戎撫天 said that he first heard this term during his childhood in the 1950s, but never heard it again until the early 2000s (Jung Fu-tien 戎撫天 2011). This is because the KMT regime had no interest in denigrating the territory it controlled as periphery to the “real China” controlled by the Communists.

Since the mid-1990s, China identity media often use “fundamentalist faction” (jibenjiaoyi pai 基本教義派) to describe Taiwan Independence supporters while Taiwan identity media do not use such a negative term to refer to unification supporters. Different China identity media adopt different attitudes toward China identity. These attitudes vary between an extreme pro-People’s Republic of China view to those that have both pro-Taiwan and China identity content. Newspapers such as the United Daily News and the China Times, which continue their strong China identity from the authoritarian period, especially show their China identity in their editorials. Both the United Daily News and the China Times have remained China identity media since the lifting of martial law, but each has constructed a different China identity since democratization. In contrast, though the TV news stations may have an inclination toward China identity, the owner’s relations with politicians or political power also influences a medium’s stance on national identity.

This chapter examines how, in what ways, and to what extent the major China identity media have promoted or constructed a China identity. This chapter first discusses the development of political connections of the owners of the United Daily News Group, the China Times Group and four electronic media such as TVBS, CTi, the Eastern Broadcasting Company and ERA

南投 County, not China, in order to condemn those entertainers who go to China (Hsu Chien-jung 許建榮 2004). Nantou County is located at the center of Taiwan and is the only county in Taiwan that does not border on the sea or ocean.


3 For example, on December 6, 1994, the United Daily News implied that the swearing of Taipei City Mayor Chen Shui-bian in front of the ROC national flag was a failure of the Taiwan Independence fundamentalist faction (United Daily News 1994a).