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Taiwan's Ethnicities and their Representation on the Internet

Jens DAMM

Abstract: This paper examines various Web applications of the four “officially” recognized ethnicities in Taiwan and aims to identify the links between information and communication technologies (ICTs), ethnic identities and issues related to Taiwanization and its contestation. To give some background, the paper introduces Taiwan’s more recent multiculturalist policies, which should be seen as part of the broader Taiwanization and nation-building project. These multiculturalist/ ethnicity-related policies, directed toward the wider population as well as the specific ethnicities, are presented on the Internet by various government organizations and government-supported organizations. This paper also employs a discursive analysis of popular websites and blogs to examine the roles played by various societal and civic actors (ranging from NGOs to individuals) within Taiwan’s ethnicity discourse.

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Keywords: Taiwan, cyberspace, ethnicity

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Introduction

The number of ethnicity-oriented websites in Taiwan with various kinds of site owners and users has been steadily increasing during recent years.¹ An analysis of these websites can offer valuable insights into Taiwan's more recent multiculturalist policies, which should be seen as part of the broader Taiwanization and nation-building project. Insights can be gained from two different perspectives: First, a number of government organizations and government-supported organizations have been employing the Internet to stimulate discussions on ethnicity-related policies and cultural issues among the specific ethnicities and the wider population. Second, the conceptual framework of multiculturalism allows the various societal and civic actors (ranging from NGOs to individuals) working with blogs and other applications to play an active role in the ethnicity discourse. The aim of this research is to examine various Web applications of the four "officially" recognized ethnicities in Taiwan in order to identify the links between information and communication technologies (ICTs), ethnicities, and Taiwanization-related issues concerning cultural and historical identity. On a micro level, discursive practices are revealed that form part of the social construction of ethnic identities, taking into account personal histories, political stances and the official policy, including their political contestation in contemporary Taiwan.

The paper is structured as follows: The first section deals with the social and political construction of ethnicities, including their general representation online. This is followed by a description of the specific situation in Taiwan with regard to the introduction of a multiculturalist policy, and the e-readiness of Taiwan compared with other "ethnic Chinese" (華人, *huaren*) societies, East Asian states and entities. After some explanatory remarks on the critical discourse analysis which has been employed, an outline of the procedure is provided, including the classification and choice of websites, the data-gathering methods and the various discursive practices found. The data thus obtained are compared and contrasted, and then categorized under the headings of the various ethnic groups. Finally, possible options for future development and research are provided.

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The Social and Political Construction of Ethnicity Online

The role played by the new media in the construction and empowerment of marginalized (ethnic) groups as well as in the development of a civic society has been widely discussed and has brought forth varying results: As early as 1996, Zurawski went so far as to say that “the Web offers new possibilities for self-determination and self-representation whereby ethnic minorities can construct their own identities in their own image” (quoted in Mengin 2004: 35), while in 2001, broader sociological research found that the Internet does not have any “intrinsic effect on social interaction and civic participation” (DiMaggio et al. 2001: 319). More moderate statements claimed that

Internet use has never been an isolated phenomenon, and if we continue to regard the use of the Internet as separate from the social realities of disadvantaged user communities, then true empowerment of individuals in such groups via the use of the Internet will never be gained (Mehra and Papajohn 2007: 799).

In 2007, however, UNESCO issued a statement based on the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity that sounded a much more positive note:

[A]cceptance and recognition of cultural diversity – in particular through innovative use of media and ICTs – are conducive to dialogue among civilizations and cultures, respect and mutual understanding (UNESCO 2007).

And Linda Leung argued that the use of the Internet

embodies a wide range of experience[s], including those [of] people of colour, of imperialism, of religion, of migration. Thus [...] the meaning of ethnicity is a site of struggle and therefore, in seeking representation of ethnicity, the research examines Web sites or Web pages which articulate the struggle between hybridity, pluralism, diversity – and essentialism (Leung 2005: 12).

This also raises questions with regard to authenticity and the task of procuring locality (Appadurai 1996: 56). UNESCO clearly rates the new ICTs as highly important for the promotion of cultural diversity; it cannot be disputed that the Internet and Internet-related new media offer an accelerated rate of communication, providing unique features which serve to foster new diversity and hybridity within the worldwide diaspora

and thus create new structures in the globalized world of this new millennium (Chiu 2005; Franklin 2003; Ignacio 2005; Mengin 2004; Ong 2003). Up to now, however, only a limited amount of research has dealt with the relation between the new ICTs, questions of multiculturalism and the representation of ethnicities. Zurawski, who was one of the first to problematize the representation of ethnicity on the Internet, focused on the historical continuities, which manage to persist alongside the modern communication technologies. He regarded the changes that they undergo as new interpretations of certain customs which have emerged in response to the challenges of the information age (Kymlicka and Patten 2003). Stuart Hall offers the following definition for “representation”:

[W]hile there may be an external reality to which symbols and images refer, it is only within the realm of representation that we can engage with it. However, the process of representation is political, biased in its particular modes of conveying meaning (quoted in Kymlicka and Opalski 2001: 443).

Linda Leung described in detail the difficulties arising from the representation of minorities within the new ICTs, taking power relations into account:

The study of representation in the media and on the Web is a means of contesting regressive constructions of race, and a beginning point for formulating ways of transcending these in the production of new images (Leung 2005: 30).

The Translation of Multiculturalism into the Taiwanese Context

Over the last two decades, Taiwan has changed dramatically: In terms of technology, Taiwan now numbers among those places with the highest degree of digital literacy in the world, while democratization processes have led to Taiwanese society being redefined as a multicultural society composed of various ethnic groups rather than as a Han Chinese society.

After the period of liberalization and democratization in the late 1980s and 1990s, Taiwan, with a new identity as a postmodern globalized society, started to thrive: There was an increasing emphasis on multiculturalism, and discussions began to take place on how to overcome the rifts between the various ethnic groups in order to create “a community of 21 million with a shared fate” composed of “the new Taiwanese”, as

described by former President Lee Teng-hui (Li Denghui) (*1923, president of the ROC 1988-2000). The first official claims of multiculturalism in Taiwan occurred in 1997, when Lee Teng-hui was still president. Multiculturalism reached a peak under the rule of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP); Chen Shui-bian (Chen Shuibian) (*1950, president of the ROC 2000-2008) stated that the ROC on Taiwan was a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, that multiculturalism would be the basic national policy, and also that Taiwanization would “enable Taiwan’s own cultures to interact naturally with Chinese cultures and world cultures” (Wang Li-jung 2003: 301). After 2000 in particular, a raft of measures was introduced under the rubric of “multicultural Taiwan”. Democratization and liberalization were accompanied by the intensive process of Taiwanization (that is, indigenization and localization, but not necessarily de-Sinicization) and a focus on the cultural and ethnic diversity of Taiwan. In this respect, multiculturalism in Taiwan may be seen as an appropriate tool for bringing together the various ethnic groups in Taiwan and establishing a national identity which is not rooted in the idea of a monolithic ethnic nation (Wang Li-jung 2007: 876).

The Taiwanese discourse on multiculturalism currently focuses mainly on the four ethnic groups mentioned in the official discourse in today’s Taiwan: the Hoklo (福佬, *fulao*), the Hakka (客家, *kejia*), the mainlanders (外省人, *waishengren*) and the Aboriginal peoples (原住民, *yuanzhubumin*). Although Mandarin – once called the “national language” (國語, *guoyu*), but today usually called “the language of the ethnic Chinese” (華語, *huayu*), a term invented in Singapore and Malaysia in the 1960s – remains the main language of instruction in the educational system and administration, native-language education now provides ample space for a variety of officially recognized “mother tongues” (母語, *myyu*), including Hakka, Hoklo and the Aboriginal languages.

The Taiwanese academic discourse on multiculturalism falls under three main headings: first, the translation of the works of Western authors, in particular those dealing with Canada, the discussion of these works in universities and colleges, and the possibility of adapting and employing multiculturalist policies in Taiwan; second, the deconstructivist discourses which have analysed the conceptual development of ethnic groups and denied the essentialist understanding of fixed ethnic boundaries; and third, the wide range of mainly empirical studies that focus on specific groups. These studies have often been based on an essentialist ethnic discourse. The Taiwanese interest in works on multi-

culturalism by Western authors derives from certain similarities that have been observed between Taiwan and Canada, but references have also been made to Australia, the European Union and general statements by UNESCO (UNESCO 2007) on the recognition of cultural diversity within one nation-state. Taiwan is regarded as a settler state (Huang 2010: 167) similar to Canada (and Australia), with an Aboriginal population that, historically, has been unfairly treated (Liang 1996). Furthermore, Wang Li-jung, who has carried out extensive research on Taiwan's policy of multiculturalism, contended that the two strands of multiculturalism, the liberal and the postmodern variants, can both be found in Taiwan: the "liberal multiculturalism" which follows the belief of "traditional liberalism" that individuals should be viewed as equal with regard to their ethnic group, gender, sexual preference or religious affiliation (Wang Li-jung 2003: 302), and the postmodern variant which shows the complexity of multiculturalism through the ideas of "cultural hybridity" and "multiple identities" (Wang Li-jung 2003: 304), thus linking the Taiwanese experience to transnationalism and globalization. The deconstructivist discourses, which deal with the construction and politically motivated boundaries of ethnic groups in Taiwan, are sometimes supportive of the new policy, as in the case of Wang Fuzhang, a sociologist at the Academia Sinica (Wang 1998, 2002, 2003, 2005). Wang Fuzhang, and Chou Wan-yao (Chou 2006), probably the most well-known academics in Taiwan writing on multiculturalism and ethnic groups there, emphasize the fact that popular sentiment has been integrated in the new discourses on multiculturalism and that these have been accepted by the representative organizations of the various ethnic groups which are today independent of the state due to the existence of a strong civil society. Other authors, however, such as Shih Chih-yu (Shih 2003: 489), a political scientist at National Taiwan University, and Hwang Yih-jye (Hwang 2006, 2007), describe Taiwan's multiculturalism as a purely discursive construction of identity. The third part of the discourse sees ethnic differences as given and focuses on policy measures, governance, ethnic entrepreneurship, language policy and language practice. This category includes most of the Master's theses written at the newly established Hakka, Aboriginal and Taiwan studies centres.

More specifically, with regard to the use of the Internet by ethnic groups, research both in English and Chinese has been carried out that has focused mainly on the Hakka. Ann Shu-ju Chiu, for example, inves-

tigated the use of the Internet by Hakka and other Chinese overseas organizations, pointing out that the Internet does not only accelerate

the communications between people of similar interest, [but] also rapidly conveys the diverse ideologies of Chinese overseas establishments worldwide. This socio-technical media fosters a new communicative practice and an emerging terrain of online communities (Chiu 2005: 344).

Wang Li-jung included the Internet (to some extent) in her research on Hakka (Wang Li-jung 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007), and more extensive research has been carried out on the practice and theory of the Hakka media (Damm 2001; Lozada Jr 1996; Peng 2009). Wang Wenjun (2005) discussed the Hakka community websites of Taiwan as an imagined community on the Internet. Liao Jingting (2007) presented the Hakka identity and how it is shaped within a Bulletin Board System (BBS). Only an early article by Michael Rudolph, entitled *Nativism, Ethnic Revival, and the Reappearance of Indigenous Religions in the ROC: The Use of the Internet in the Construction of Taiwanese Identities*, dealt with rituals presented on Taiwanese websites in the context of identity construction (Rudolph 2006).

Taiwan and the Internet

The new ICTs can fulfil different roles: They can function as important tools for the promotion of ethnic diversity when true communication between various users from different backgrounds with different opinions takes place. At the same time, they can also act as a medium for the reinforcement of ethnic stereotypes and primordial understandings of ethnic/ national identity, when users mutually enhance their given prejudices. Compared with other East and Southeast Asian ethnic Chinese societies, Taiwan is a specific case with a high degree of digital literacy and a high degree of freedom of expression. According to the most recent statistics provided by the Taiwan Network Information Center (TWNIC 2010), 77 per cent of households in Taiwan have Internet access, and 69 per cent of households have broadband access. Mobile phones, universally available with a market penetration ratio of 105 per cent, are, in contrast to the situation in Japan, for example, less frequently employed to access the Internet (16 per cent). The user behaviour of Taiwanese netizens therefore resembles international user behaviour, with the use of search engines (53 per cent) and the use of email (23 per cent) more common than the use of Facebook and blogs (11 per cent), and a higher number of Web 2.0 applications for the ethnicity

applications/ sites being researched is also to be expected. It is also worth noting that in the eastern parts of Taiwan, which have the highest numbers of Aboriginal people, the Internet user rate is only slightly higher than 50 per cent, in contrast to the 75 to 80 per cent recorded in the urbanized parts of Northern Taiwan and in Gaoxiong (Kaohsiung).

In Taiwan, the right to freedom of speech has been guaranteed since the democratization processes of the late 1980s and 1990s and, in this respect, Taiwan differs distinctly from other ethnic Chinese societies, such as Singapore and the People's Republic of China. Singapore exercises stringent control in the form of multiethnic and multiracial harmony legislation which also includes regulation of the Internet; and the PRC, with its well-researched Great Firewall, is probably the most well-known example of a state pushing forward the digitalization of society while at the same time successfully controlling (at least to some extent) the content (Damm and Thomas 2006; Zhang and Zheng 2009). Furthermore, in China, in contrast to Taiwan, identity construction on the Internet is monitored by the state, which has the power to promote and also to ban certain discussions, although the Internet still provides “a huge variety of spaces facilitating the discursive construction of identities” (Giese 2004: 23).

What happens, however, in a pluralistic and democratic society, where state regulations are much weaker?: Does censorship in a narrow sense not exist, and are controversial opinions aimed specifically at the government seen as legitimate? In the case of Taiwan, for example, the research focus must be shifted to civil society, pluralization and ethnification.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Taking a social constructivist point of view, the critical discourse analysis model presented by Norman Fairclough (1992, 2001) and Teun Adrianus van Dijk (2008) is employed to decode the relations between social events – such as the introduction of a multiculturalist policy and the changing of names for the indigenous population, and the discourses that are shaped and shape themselves within these relations: This ethnicity was formerly referred to in pejorative terms as *shu fan* (熟番, “cooked barbarians”) if assimilated, or as *sheng fan* (生番, “raw barbarians”), if resident in the mountainous regions and non-Sinicized; the latter were later also referred to as *shandiren* (山地人, “mountain people”) (Turner

2008: 19) or *shanbao* (山胞). The neutral term, *yuanzhuamin* (原住民), meaning Aboriginal people, was officially fixed in 1993, when this term was adopted in the additional articles to the constitution of the ROC. Furthermore, the investigation builds on a Foucauldian concept of discourse as an empirical concept, as a kind of practice that belongs to collectives and is located in social areas or fields. Fairclough in particular regards texts and objects (such as the analysed websites) as “order[s] of discourse”, contextually ordered in time and space, and subject to social interaction (Banting and Kymlicka 2006: 276). Each part of the discourse is then influenced and shaped by the interactions between text and social environment. In my analysis, the discursive practices within websites are highlighted by taking into account the social practices and different owners – that is, the producers and users of websites. I differentiate between websites with a bottom-up perspective, with reference to civil society, and websites offering a top-down perspective, which highlights the ways in which the state has influenced this process through legislation and funding. This paper thus focuses primarily on Taiwan’s multiculturalism in the new millennium with regard to the various ethnicities. The key questions can be formulated as follows:

- What is the role of the new media and ICTs with regard to reshaping the way ethnicities deal with and construct collective/ cultural/ historical memory and (collective) identity?
- How much are state-led ethnic identity discourses reflected in the Web?
- How do ICTs create new horizons for ethnic groups (both as listeners and speakers)?
- How are interactive media environments such as blogs and forums changing the subjectivities of various ethnicities?
- How do the new communication media influence the “meaning-making” routines of the ethnic groups themselves?

This research seeks to trace the ways in which ethnicities and ethnic identities have been constructed and contested at a time when concepts of Taiwan as a homogeneous Chinese society forming part of the larger construct of the Republic of China are being questioned from various standpoints.

Procedure and Methodology

Taiwan's Internet offers all available Web 1.0 and 2.0 applications, although Web 1.0 is still prevalent. The "official discourse", in particular, is represented in Web 1.0 applications. For the bottom-up perspective, Internet forums and blogs were also taken into consideration because these Web 2.0 applications

facilitate interactive information-sharing, interoperability, user-centred design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web. A Web 2.0 site allows its users to interact with each other as contributors to the website's content, in contrast to websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided to them (Wikipedia 2010a).

In more detail, for the discourse analysis, a database has been compiled which consists of websites found by employing search terms such as "Hakka and blog", "Hakka and BBS" – that is, search terms related to the "four ethnicities" in Taiwan. The first 100 results obtained from either Google.tw or the specific Google Blog search were included in the database; websites not related to the research questions were then omitted. Mandarin Chinese and English were finally selected as the languages to be used for the search, but various searches had already been carried out in other languages which did not produce any fundamentally different results. The top-down perspective included government agency websites, such as councils, university research institutes, and museum websites. As the number of these websites is limited, these were all included in the database and categorized according to their specific representation of ethnicities.

This database, which is part of a larger research project on the scripting of Chinese ethnicities online, was also compiled on the basis of various criteria, such as the language employed, the terminology used to specify the ethnicity, the agents, the possibility of guest editing (including statements about the participants where applicable), and the various plots and stories narrated, which were then attributed to questions of historical, political, cultural and social identity, while paying attention to traditional considerations of ethnicity/ references to ethnicity or modern and hybrid ascriptions. The language used on the websites selected for analysis varies: Written standard Chinese and English predominate, but audio and video material in Hoklo, Hakka and Aboriginal languages can be found, particularly within Web 2.0, as well as written forms of Hoklo

and Hakka using Chinese characters or a romanized alphabet. For this research, the focus has been on selected websites representing top-down and bottom-up perspectives.

The static websites that were examined, such as museum websites and university and faculty websites, are usually maintained by professional staff and are often updated at irregular intervals. Some interactive elements, however, are integrated. Typical examples, analysed below in more detail, include the Taipei County Hakka Museum <www.hakka.tpc.gov.tw> (this and all following websites were accessed 15 December 2010) and the various National Taitung University websites related to Aborigine Studies, such as the Institute of Austronesian Studies website <http://dpts.nttu.edu.tw/ioas/contents/menu/menu_view.asp?menuID=418&menuChoice=html>, and the Kavalan at the Digital Museum Project <www.dmtip.gov.tw/Eng/Kavalan.htm>. This Digital Museum project was one of the outputs of a larger project initiated in 1998 by the National Science Foundation, when National Taiwan University, Academia Sinica, the National Central Library, the National Palace Museum, the National Museum of History and the National Museum of Natural Science started to digitize their resources in order to emphasize the educational value of the cultural and scientific content for the general public and students in Taiwan.

Blogs (Web logs), usually maintained by individuals, were also found to play an important role: They sometimes offer opportunities for readers to leave comments, which renders these applications “semi-interactive”. Since there are no restrictions on webhosting in Taiwan, popular blogs are usually hosted on various different sites, such as <www.wretch.cc>, later acquired by Yahoo, myBlog.com and Blogspot.com. According to Wikipedia (Wikipedia 2010b), Wretch (無名小站, *wuming xiaozhan*) is the most well-known blog community in Taiwan also providing Bulletin Board Systems hosting services, where an even greater degree of interactivity can be found. Various examples of popular BBS, which are partly blocked in the PRC, include in Chinese languages (including Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka): <www.wufi.org.tw/forum.htm>, <<http://twforum.com/forums/forumdisplay.php?f=19>>, and in English <TaiwanFocus@yahoogroups.com>, <www.asiawind.com/pub/forum/fhakka> and <www.chinahistoryforum.com>.

The discursive content analysis has been employed to examine the various websites in order to shed light on the construction of the various ethnicities from the specific perspectives of nationalism, identity and

“Chineseness”, “Taiwaneseness” and other ethnic identities. In more detail, terms and expressions have been analysed which referred to a definition of an ethnic group in racial or cultural terms where the history of one ethnic group is linked with historical events taking place either in China or Taiwan, and where specific statements have been made which mention newer developments in Taiwan such as the multiculturalist policy and programmes related to cultural diversity after 1987.

The Various Ethnic Groups within Taiwanese Cyberspace

Hakka

One of the most interesting and probably most successful multiculturalist policies in Taiwan concerns the group of the Hakka, not only in the context of state-sponsored multiculturalism, but also in connection with the Hakka’s own contributions to multiculturalism and ethnic entrepreneurship.

The Hakka people, who number more than 4 million in Taiwan, form the island’s second-largest ethnic group after the Hoklo, but for many decades their identity was downplayed and they were often grouped together with the Hoklo as *benshengren* (本省人, native Taiwanese) (Yang 1993). As a result of the pluralization and democratization of society, however, a Hakka movement which promotes cultural differences has emerged in Taiwan, and Hakka is now officially recognized as the third language in Taiwan. The question of which ethnic and cultural identity is dominant in the cyberspace under research is of particular interest here: The Taiwanese consciousness that developed during the 1980s was dominated and defined by the Hoklo who, despite the fact that their ancestors also came from southern China, had already largely abandoned their China nostalgia to become “Taiwanese” (Wang Li-jung 2007: 879-880). This situation led to the Hakka being criticized for “not identifying with Taiwan”, and for continuing to emphasize their ancestral links to the Chinese nobility (Luo 2009: 111; Yang 1993).

With the introduction of a specific multicultural policy, the government started to offer the Hakka significant support, and all political parties were forced to adopt “Hakka policies” in order to win Hakka votes during elections. The main components of the official Hakka multicultural policies entailed, first of all, participation in cultural life and also

included Hakka culture promotion, language development and media policy, often with a focus on the localization of Hakka identities (Wang Li-jung 2007: 887, 881). One of the measures that was introduced required increased participation in the mass media, such as TV and radio, which became important channels through which people could be reached and could participate in cultural life by sharing and experiencing many different arts and cultures. The newly introduced TV stations deserve particular mention because these were able to reach a much wider audience via Web 2.0 applications such as YouTube; a Taiwan-wide Hakka radio service was also established in 1993, when restrictions were lifted on the use of Mandarin in broadcasting, and in 2003, the world's first-ever Hakka TV channel was founded.

The newly established Hakka councils at various administrative levels (central, city, county) all established comprehensive websites to offer information about their activities, and Hakka study centres, including graduate institutes at national and private universities, also provided information about the Hakka in culture, politics and society. In addition, the Hakka cultural centres and museums, some of which have impressive interactive websites with the newest Internet applications, also created a particular image of this ethnic group.

In addition to the state-sponsored and state-led multiculturalist policy, the Hakka movement that has recently emerged has started to use the Internet extensively to promote cultural diversity. One specific problem is related to the language: Since only Mandarin has been taught in its written standard form for decades, neither the Hakka nor the Hoklo have a widespread and generally used written form of their language, despite the fact that Hakka is now officially recognized as the third language in Taiwan. Attempts have been made to overcome the problems related to the lack of a standard form of a written language by using either Chinese characters combined with the Latin alphabet or, to a much lesser extent, by using some romanized forms of the language. Until the lifting of martial law in 1987, however, it was almost impossible to promote any language in Taiwan other than the "national language" Mandarin (Sandel 2003: 528-530), and these restrictions remained in force until 1993. The Internet, through its audio-only and audio-video platforms, may now offer wider opportunities to promote at least the spoken form of the language (Chang 1998).

A closer look at the Taiwanese-Hakka, diaspora-Hakka and Chinese-Hakka cyberspace today reveals that both the quantity and the vari-

ety of the content offered has increased dramatically. With regard to the Taiwanese-Hakka cyberspace, there is a growing number of “offline” museums and administrative units dealing with Hakka issues that have a comprehensive online presence and also offer a more “top-down” approach by presenting much more Hakka-related material, such as information in the form of texts, films, music, pictures of artefacts, etc. Some interactive features can be observed in BBSs and Internet forums, and also in blogs, where many users collaborate and create a Hakka cyberspace from below.

Many administrative units in Taiwan at various levels (national, county, and city) have opened up online sites for Hakka affairs, the most important probably being the website of the Council for Hakka Affairs Executive Yuan, Republic of China (Taiwan) <www.hakka.gov.tw>; this website is also linked with <www.ihakka.com.tw> and emphasizes the fact that it is “the only one [sic] central-level competent authority worldwide specifically responsible for Hakka affairs” and that their “mission is to revive Hakka language and culture” (Council for Hakka Affairs 2010a), and it stresses the importance of the new media:

Meanwhile, in order to improve ethnic harmony and exchanges, promote the features of diversified cultures, make more people understand the contents of Hakka culture, and increase the recognition toward Hakka, we have shaped new Hakka images through substantial advertisements by various digital, printed, Internet and even international media, to display the innovative energy in the transformation of the Hakka (Council for Hakka Affairs 2010a).

This statement also shows that the Hakka council regards itself as part of the multicultural project (“diversified cultures”) and is not inclined to a traditional and essentialist view but emphasizes the “new Hakka images”, such as “the plans for cultivating Hakka video talents” and holding “the contest for Hakka music MTV creations” (Council for Hakka Affairs 2010a). The website itself offers information on political and non-political issues, such as cuisine, language, specific Hakka products, history and historical sites (thus linking the Hakka specifically with Taiwan), music, theatre, public performances and art. In both the Chinese and English languages, the website also provides a rich variety of links to other public and private websites, on topics such as songs and theatres, TV and video, cuisine, language, music, links to Hakka groups abroad, national Hakka groups, pages for learning, and, of course, links and information related to political issues. On a sub-level of the website, there

is also a specific section on music (Council of Hakka Affairs 2010b). While it still remains an official website offering a top-down approach with only a few interactive features, it does not present a traditional and essentialist view of Hakka culture, but focuses on modern and hybrid forms as well as localized forms of Hakka cultures by presenting both traditional and modern forms of Hakka music. It also offers some forms of interactive features such as a forum on Hakka language and Hakka culture, and a free forum (Council of Hakka Affairs 2010c). The website of the Hakka Council of Pingdong starts with the history of the migration of the Hakka 300 years ago from China to Taiwan, stressing the localization aspect of the movement.

Other top-down Hakka websites are related to “offline” museums, cultural parks, etc., and the website of the Taoyuan Hakka Cultural Center aims to become the world’s unique location for the preservation of Hakka music and literature (Hakka Cultural Center 2010). Web 2.0 applications should also be included, for example, when people take pictures and record films of the artefacts in the museums and of their offline visits to museums and put them online, such as the movie about the Dongshe Hakka Culture Museum, which links up Web 2.0 and the more “traditional” forms of cyberspace (Hakka Cultural Center 2010).

Other important websites which provide information about Hakka culture and politics and can also be seen as part of the state-led system are the comprehensive websites of the newly established colleges and graduate courses in Hakka studies. All Hakka centre websites which were examined mentioned multiculturalism and usually referred to “Taiwanese subjectivity”. By way of example, the introduction of Hakka Studies at the National Central University starts with a reference to the so-called “return our mother tongue movement” (還我母語, *huan wo myu*) and the improvement of relations between the ethnic groups in Taiwan: “promotion of equal rights groups to understand the subjectivity of ethnic groups within Taiwan being a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual society” (National Central University no date). At the same university, the executive Master’s programme mentions terms such as “enrooted in Taiwan”, in conjunction with the aim of opening up to the international Hakka community and establishing a civil society in Taiwan. The National Chiao Tung University also emphasizes the multicultural society of Taiwan and regards the establishment of the Hakka College as part of the new policy, while simultaneously mentioning the aim of preserving the cultural Hakka heritage <<http://hakka.nctu.edu.tw/Hakka-A-web>

page/hakka_B_001.htm>; only the website of the Graduate Institute of Hakka Culture Studies, National Kaohsiung Normal University, is more strongly oriented toward the preservation of the culture and language <www.nknu.edu.tw/~hakka/english.html>.

In addition to a state-sponsored multiculturalist policy which employs a top-down approach to focus on setting up museums and Hakka councils at various levels, the recent Hakka movement has started to use the Internet extensively to promote cultural differences. A number of websites dealing with the Hakka were identified where the Hakka themselves often produce and construct new and hybrid forms of identity that go beyond any essentialist meaning and challenge traditional representations; these sites are less historically oriented and more embedded in globalized structures and environments. A specific Taiwan consciousness is also created, for example, on a website on Taiwanese Hakka literature <<http://cls.hs.yzu.edu.tw:88/hakka/default.htm>> which introduces Hakka authors and their work: This work is strongly related to topographical places in Taiwan, and a map of Taiwan is provided which shows the connections of the various authors with the particular locations on the island.

Forums where Hakka issues are widely discussed are of particular importance. The best-known global Hakka forum, <Asiawind.com>, stresses the long history of the Hakka people and their relations with a mythical place of origin:

They are thought to be among the earliest “Han” settlers in China. One theory has it that many of the early Hakka were affiliated with the “royal bloods” (Asiawind 2004).

The site also regards the Hakka as being firmly bound to traditions:

Of all the Chinese people, the Hakka are among the most conservative in keeping the traditions. The Hakka people, paradoxically conservative and endeavouring, hard-working and enduring, reflect the spirit of Chinese culture.

When the search is restricted to Taiwan’s forums and blogs, it becomes obvious that the search for customs and cuisine in a new environment (such as the blogs 小猴子, “*Xiao houzi*, Hakka” at <<http://hakka0707.pixnet.net/Blog/post/33136531>>) or blogs delivering information for tourists, both in Chinese and English, such as <<http://wandering-taiwan.blogspot.com/2010/11/nanpu-stone-lord-festival.html>>, play a much greater role. Other blogs deal with the search for the roots and

specific Taiwanese identity of the Hakka, such as the Hakka forum at <http://tw.myBlog.yahoo.com/jw!RdnmYTaUGQS2tX5rdKucAamy0eskBgZ_LlOI/article?mid=7127>. Discussions starting with YouTube videos of Taiwan's public TV programmes on the question of various Chinese and Hakka identities, as well as copies of the American-produced short film *Guojia, minzu, women shi shei* (國家, 民族, 我們是誰?, *Nation, Ethnicity, Who Are We?*) are linked to various blogs and websites, and these discussions highlight the new interest in questions of identity in a globalized world (e.g. <http://meme0820.Blogspot.com/2010/12/Blog-post_305.html>).

To summarize, the Hakka have employed the new technologies in both top-down and bottom-up approaches to reshape the collective and cultural memory. This has also had a strong influence on the worldwide Hakka community and has given the Hakka a new and more modern image.

The Aborigines and Cyberspace

The Aborigines, today known as *yuanzhu* (原住民) in Taiwan, are the descendants of the Austronesian peoples who arrived in Taiwan probably 6,000 to 8,000 years ago, and in the official statistics, their number is estimated at 2 per cent of the population. These Austronesian peoples are divided into various groups with different languages, social systems and life styles. The umbrella term "Aborigines" is used to refer to the Atayal, Bunun, Tsou, Rukai, Paiwan, Yami, Saisiyat, Amis, Puyuma and Thao, and "lowland" tribes, such as the Kavalan, Sakizaya and Ketagalan, among others. Recently, there have been discussions about the status of the descendants of the Pingpu – that is, the Aborigines who originally resided on the plains of Southern Taiwan, in this group. In 1954, the Ministry of the Interior abolished the Pingpu's status as an ethnic subcategory under the Aboriginal umbrella, and in the 1960s and 1970s, only a few Pingpu laid claim to their ethnic identity as Aborigines. Since the turn of the century, however, people have been starting to develop an interest in searching for their ethnic roots, and Lin Sheng-yi, the president of the Alliance of Taiwan Indigenous Cultures, has estimated that 1.5 million people in Taiwan could claim Pingpu origin (Ma 2009). The Pingpu as a category were removed from the Kuomintang census in 1956, when many of the Pingpu began to register as Taiwanese (Hoklo), and it was not until 2006 that a local government, the Tainan

County Government, (once again) recognized the Pingpu as Aborigines; a county-level Siraya Aboriginal Affairs Committee was also created at this time (Loa 2009a, 2009b; Rudolph 2006).

With regard to Taiwan's multiculturalist policies, the Aborigines play a decisive role: After Lee Teng-hui became president, Taiwan's Aborigines came to be celebrated as one aspect of a colourful Taiwanese multiculturalism and in many respects as evidence of Taiwan's being "different" from China – although the conditions set by the United Nations on the rights of Indigenous People have, even now, only partly been fulfilled. It should, however, be kept in mind that the Aboriginal identity itself was a new creation in the 1980s. Before the Aboriginal movement appeared, the tribal identity was more important and, as a matter of fact, one current weakness of the political Aboriginal movement is the great diversity of languages, lifestyles and cultural expression among the various Aboriginal groups. With regard to the group of the Aborigines, the most obvious and visible changes occurred during the rule of Chen Shui-bian after the year 2000. In the discourse on multiculturalism, the Aborigines play a decisive role for two main reasons: First of all, they are the only non-Han minority in Taiwan and second, they have been settled in Taiwan for at least 6,500 years, which "proves" that Taiwan is different from China. As Lin Chiang-yi, the director of the planning department at the Council for Indigenous Peoples, said:

The Gezaixi (歌仔戲, an opera performed in Hoklo) of the Fulo [Hoklo] or the Ping-Opera of the mainlanders, both came from mainland China. When Taiwan's cultural groups perform in other countries, people will feel that Taiwan is similar to mainland China. Taiwanese culture is similar to Chinese culture. Only Taiwan's Aboriginal culture can present Taiwanese culture as different to Chinese culture (quoted in Wang Li-jung 2003: 167).

Today, the Aborigines number approximately 460,000 in total.

A look at the role of the new media with regard to the identity of the Aborigines shows that there is some similarity with the case of the Hakka: a strong prevalence of state and state-supported organizations online, with most of the information offered in Mandarin. A search with <google.tw> results in the website of the Council of Indigenous People, Executive Yuan (<www.apc.gov.tw/main>, see also the multilingual website of Tainan Pepo Siraya Culture Association at <www.tatalag.org.tw>), in Mandarin and English scoring a prominent hit. The Mandarin section is divided into different parts, one of which provides top-down

information on laws and administrative issues, another which offers a “people” site with a variety of information on the life, culture and history of the various groups (including the Pingpu tribes), and another which offers some multimedia applications, such as movies. The website for children provides information in Mandarin Chinese with Bopomofo, the transcription system used in Taiwanese school to teach Mandarin – which again illustrates the difficulties of dealing with the indigenous culture in Taiwan. Similar problems are found on the website for indigenous children at <WAWA.net>, a website hosted by Taiwan’s public TV (<<http://wawa.pts.org.tw/news.php>> accessed 16 June 2010).

With regard to the state-sponsored representation of the Aborigines, we find as the second-most prominent hit the “Digital Museum Project”, which demonstrates the high level of sophistication of Taiwan’s Web 1.0. The website referring to the Aboriginal peoples (Digital Museum of Taiwan Indigenous People 2008) offers a wide range of encyclopaedic information but does not offer any interactive features. This website uses various languages, such as traditional Chinese, English, simplified English and Japanese, but none of the Aboriginal languages is employed. Other similar websites belong to museums, such as the Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines <www.museum.org.tw> and the Taiwan Indigenous Peoples Culture Park <www.tacp.gov.tw/home01.aspx?ID=1>. An online encyclopaedia is offered by the Academia Sinica <www.aborigines.sinica.edu.tw>.

The Taiwan Broadcasting System offers information about the programme for various ethnic groups in Taiwan <www.tbs.org.tw>. Other top listings are local government information sites, such as those from Hualien <<http://ab.hl.gov.tw>> and from Gaoxiong <www.coia.gov.tw/web_tw/index.php>. The Chiayi University offers an “Indigenous Enterprise Expansion” at <www.masalu.org.tw>.

A blog search using the keywords *yuanzhumin* or “Aboriginals” also reveals many blogs on and not by Aboriginal people, such as the blog by the Community University in Hsinchu <<http://qfxnews.Blogspot.com/2009/04/54-58.html>>, where local community centres offer an “Aboriginal week”, and the “Taiban Blog” <www.wretch.cc/Blog/taiban>, which is an Aboriginal research centre blog provided by Tajen University in Pingdong in Southern Taiwan. Interactive blogs with many postings also exist, and these are often based in Eastern Taiwan, the region with the highest number of Aboriginal peoples: One example is <<http://blog.xuite.net/rn038334126/8>>, where lively discussions (in Chinese) on

topics such as Aboriginal culture and modernization take place. Other examples are online radios, such as <<http://miyamay.idv.tw/miyamayradio>>, which also provide other related audio material.

For the Aborigines, more than for all the other groups, the question of a digital divide – which also reflects an economic and educational divide – plays a significant role. Websites are offered by government organizations, universities and museums, but the Aborigines themselves and their related websites are not found among the top listings of the search machines. The various languages of the Aborigines have been neglected for decades; most websites employ Mandarin Chinese, and very few audio and video files use the Aboriginal languages. The numbers of blogs and BBSs offering discussions on Aboriginal issues is also very low: <www.uforadio.com.tw/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?post_id=125596>, for example, discusses the relations between the DPP, the Aborigines and the Han Chinese, while <www.pcdvd.com.tw/printthread.php?t=293000> discusses new forms of Aboriginal music in Taiwan, emphasizing the fact that culture can be revitalized by new forms and meaning, instead of insisting that only the old forms are authentic.

Perhaps because only a small number of Aboriginals actively use the written form of their languages, the Aboriginal cyberspace more often appears to be a cyberspace about the Aboriginals than a cyberspace created by them. Only a few “elite” websites offer a critical representation or discussion of the Aboriginal identity in the twenty-first century.

Hoklo

The Hoklo (*fulao*) are the largest ethnic group in Taiwan, and their language (known under a variety of names, such as Hokkien, Taiwanese, Holo, Holo’oe, Taigi, Taigu, Taioan’oe, and Banlam’oe) is a sub-group of Southern Min. Since early 2000, this language has, by law, been treated as having equal status with other languages on the island, which has entailed a shift away from the use of Mandarin. While the Hoklo did not develop any specific identity until the Japanese period, the political discrimination they suffered from 1895 until 1945 led to their becoming aware that they were different to the Japanese (Brown 2010; Chou 2006). This was reinforced after 1945, in particular after the 228 Incident, where more than 10,000 Taiwanese were killed by mainlander soldiers, and also by the deliberate policy of Sinicization, which again treated the island’s population as a marginalized group. Only with the political liberalization

that started in the 1970s and gained force after the lifting of martial law in 1987 were the Hoklo able to articulate their own interests. As Wang Fuzhang, however, said “The Holo do not have a strong ethnic identity since they always define themselves and their language as “Taiwanese”” (Wang Fuzhang 2003: 3).

A search employing Yahoo or Google presents some difficulties as there is no common term for Hoklo. Various Chinese characters are employed: Hoklo is sometimes rendered as Holo; with regard to language, Taiwanese, Hokkien or Minnanhua is used. Thus, a search with *fulao* as the most frequently used term obtained the following results: <www.ihakka.net/fulao2004/index.htm>, which is a sub-website of the Council for Hakka Affairs, Executive Yuan, and ROC. Other top listings included songs and song texts on Hoklo by a national university, <www.ntch.edu.tw/Study/twsong/>, Wikipedia entries such as <<http://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-hant/%E7%A6%8F%E4%BD%AC>>, educational resources, <<http://library.taiwanschoolnet.org/cyberfair2004/Holoka/menu1.htm>>, and also private blogs, <<http://tw.myBlog.yahoo.com/jw!UwZoPk6eGR.GTpAtQ1ZiKGs-/article?mid=832>>.

Nevertheless, the preservation of the language and, in particular, the question of using the Roman alphabet and/ or Chinese characters for the written form (such as A 2007) is a dominant topic within the online discussion on the Hoklo. Some of these websites are partly owned and run by the government – for example, by the Ministry of Education – and some are private websites which combine political activism and information about the Hoklo language. In 2008, it was even reported that

according to the syllabus, a third-grader will be able to write e-mail(s) with the new spelling method. Fifth-graders have to be able to converse via MSN (Microsoft Network). Junior high students should acquire the ability to blog by romanizing Holo words.

That is to say, Internet literacy became embedded in government attempts to introduce the Hoklo language and make it a more regular subject in school, although many of these attempts have been halted since the mainlander Ma Ying-jeou (*1950) came to power in 2008. (*China Post* 2008; <<http://taiwan-id.blogspot.com>>).

“Life’s TAIWANderful” <www.taiwanderful.net/guides/learning-taiwanese> provides extensive links showing where and how to learn Hoklo online and offline, while other websites are more focused on online sources and dictionaries: <<http://taiwantaffy.wordpress.com/2006/08/18/online-resources-for-taiwanese-learning>> and <<http://tai>>

wanesevocabulary.wordpress.com>; A Gu's blog discusses the political situation and language policy in Taiwan (A 2007). This group differs from the Hakka and the Aborigines: There are no specific political councils, and no museums. It is therefore much more difficult to find a specific official state and state-led discourse. On the other hand, many websites provide information about language and culture: The Taiwanese website <<http://203.64.42.21/taigu.asp>> offers a wide variety of blogs, tools for language-learning and writing, audio and video files, research, teaching and blogs, and also provides links to "Taiwan"-related websites and blogs which all belong to the "green" camp – that is, Taiwanese independence groups and media, such as the *Liberty Times*, known for its affiliation with the DPP. Another example is the website of the Center for Thoat-Han Studies ("Center for De-Sinification Studies", <www.dehan.org>), which is dedicated to the study of language, orthographic reform and national identity in the Han sphere, currently including Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan and China. Regarding the many blogs and other websites primarily interested in Hoklo, some outstanding examples are the comprehensive blog at <www.wretch.cc/Blog/kongoe>, which provides a wide variety of news related to ethnicities and language policy from historical and comparative perspectives; the blog "Taiwanese Identity" <<http://taiwan-id.blogspot.com/2009/11/over-seas-taiwanese-not-overseas-chinese.html>>, which presents discussions on Taiwanese identity in English and is primarily aimed at Chinese and Taiwanese US residents; the Holo language forum offered by the World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI) <www.wufi.org.tw/forum.htm>, which, perhaps not surprisingly, is very much oriented toward the basic aims of this organization – one of the oldest Taiwanese independence organizations in existence – whose forum is one of the few interactive features on the website which is generally top-down oriented.

Some churches, in particular the Presbyterian Church (長老會, *Zhang-laohui*), also offer websites which employ a romanized form of Hoklo as their main language, and in addition to the Christian aspects, there is a strong focus on a specific Taiwanese consciousness including the statement that "Taiwan and China are different nations" <www.taiwanchurch.org/taibun/eng-tai.html>. The Presbyterian Church has been employing its own style of romanization, Peh-oe-ji, for years, but with video links on YouTube it is possible to reach an even wider audience (such as

<<http://taigiol.fhl.net/vcd/rotaiugbk.php?user=taigi&bid=1&proc=read&mmsgno=69>>).

A great deal of discussion on identity, language and ethnicity also takes place in the various Wikipedias, and other wikis such as Wapedia: In the entry “Taiwanese Hokkien”, for example, the four ethnic groups of Taiwan (討論: 台灣四大族群, *Taolun: Taiwan si da zuqun*) are discussed at length, including the various names and problems regarding differentiation and classification <<http://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-tw/Talk:%E5%8F%B0%E7%81%A3%E5%9B%9B%E5%A4%A7%E6%97%8F%E7%BE%A>>.

Although, historically, the groups of the Hoklo have been suppressed by the groups of the mainlanders, there is much less fear of their becoming invisible and absorbed than in the cases of the Hakka and Aboriginal people; the lack of a state-sponsored “Hoklo identity movement” has led to a much larger number of private and NGO websites than government websites.

One of the longest ongoing discussions about Taiwanese identity, related to the question of Taiwanese language, takes place at <<http://my.paper.pchome.com.tw/kuan0416/post/1281895814>>: This was started with a lengthy blog entry called “The hegemonic national language of Taiwan and the tragedy of the dialects” (台灣的霸權國語與悲情方言, *Taiwan de baquan guoyu yu beiqing fangyan*).

The Hoklo-specific website showed that, except in the case of language-related issues, the Web has not been too successful in reshaping the Hoklo identity, and even where the language is concerned, more attention is devoted to discussing the language than to employing it creatively online.

The Mainlanders

The mainlanders (外省人, *waishengren*) are a relatively new group that only came into existence after 1945-1949, when the new migrants from China who arrived with the KMT formed a distinct group, shaped by the use of Mandarin as their primary language and also by a different collective memory with regard to the Japanese (Wang Fuzhang 2003: 8).

Whether the mainlanders should be regarded as an ethnic group is also a topic of discussion. Formerly, a distinction was made with regard to the place of origin: The term “mainlander” was then used to refer to people born in mainland China (different from Taiwanese islanders,

benshengren), but in the 1990s discourse on the four ethnic groups, the mainlanders were usually included as a specific ethnic group, despite the findings of empirical research which concluded that many assumed mainlanders rejected being labelled as such (Corcuff 2002; 2004; 2011 forthcoming). Thus, with regard to multiculturalist policies today, the mainlanders do not play a significant role and are, in a way, the least visible group in Taiwan despite the fact that, for many years, they enjoyed special privileges. Unlike the other ethnic groups, a search on the Internet for “mainlander” multicultural websites and discussions on the cultural diversity of that group does not offer many results; instead, we find political statements coming from two directions. One of these follows the line that the mainlanders in contemporary Taiwan are “outcasts”, despite the fact that the mainlanders retain their over-proportional representation in the government and in the administration. The website “The Last Generation of Neidi Ren [neidi ren]” (<http://thelastndr.org>), which is listed within the first ten search results for Yahoo Taiwan, for example, refers to the group of mainlanders (here called 內地人, *Neidi ren* – a term which according to the blog at <http://blog.yam.com/dalawasao/article/13775000>) stresses the “inseparability” of China and is therefore used only by ardent supporters of the unification of Taiwan and China) as those Chinese born between 1937 and 1950 on the mainland or in Hong Kong, who were then raised in Taiwan. This group is described as being

caught between Eastern and Western cultures, juggling ideas that are imported as well as homespun, and facing the transition from the old to the new world order, we have held on to our Chinese heritage, the bad along with the good, while eagerly embracing Western civilization. [...] [I]n Taiwan, first we were called Nei Di Ren [*neidi ren*]; later, we were addressed as Wai Sheng Ren [*waishengren*] (people from other provinces) to differentiate us from the provincial Taiwanese. [...] We love Taiwan more than we love China, but we are not the “New Taiwanese” who deny their Chinese heritage (Xin no date).

The second argument derives from politically inclined “anti-*waishengren*” websites, who accuse the mainlanders of being a “foreign” group in Taiwan and of demonstrating more loyalty toward China than Taiwan. Some of the more recent examples are those websites which dealt with the case of Guo Guanying, a Toronto-based official with a mainlander background in the Taipei Representative Office who used the Internet to write – for a long time, anonymously – against the Taiwanese, making

such remarks such as “We are high-class Mainlanders!” and “Martial law was an example of benevolent administration by the government of that time”: <www.shadowgov.tw/?p=news,detail,19769&target=act&act=116> and <www.wretch.cc/Blog/hg350909/11112249>. Other mainlanders' blogs (such as <www.wretch.cc/Blog/harrypopo/11124053>) that try to emphasize the fact that the mainlanders and the Taiwanese all live together on the island are heavily criticized for ignoring the fact that the “new” mainlanders and the second and third generations of settlers are willing to betray Taiwan in their talks with the PRC; the emphasis is on Taiwan being an independent entity. The Mainlanders for Independence website (“Gao-Seng-Lang Association for Taiwanese Independence”) and the related blog <<http://anchi.tumblr.com/post/97753917/goa-seng-lang-association-for-Taiwan>> are less concerned with offering affirmation of the mainlanders' ethnicity than with levelling criticism at the dominant position of the mainlanders in Taiwan.

A closer look at the top results for *waishengren* obtained by a search on Yahoo Taiwan confirms the above-mentioned classification: The first hit together with the question and answer section by Yahoo are more or less encyclopaedic entries: <<http://zh.wikipedia.org/zh/%E5%A4%96%E7%9C%81%E4%BA%BA>>, <<http://tw.knowledge.yahoo.com/question/question?qid=1106091308960>> and <<http://tw.knowledge.yahoo.com/question/question?qid=1009110810062&q=1509111200019&p=%E5%A4%96%E7%9C%81%E4%BA%BA>>. The neutrality of the Wikipedia entry, however, is marked “under discussion” and the lengthy ongoing discussion shows the still existing animosity between the mainlanders and other groups in Taiwan, which is further complicated by the participation of PRC Chinese in the Wikipedia entry. People from mainland China have also taken part in the discussion, and this has revealed differences between the use of the term *waishengren* in Taiwan and China. One of the main points raised is that, in mainland China, the term *waishengren* has usually been employed to refer to people with a low social status from the poorer provinces (for example, migrants), while in Taiwan, the *waishengren*, at least for a long period, were considered privileged because of the benefits they were granted by the KMT <<http://zh.wikipedia.org/zh/%E5%A4%96%E7%9C%81%E4%BA%BA>>.

More than for any other group, the results obtained from Yahoo or Google for *waishengren* and BBSs showed the continuation of ethnic cleavages which, somewhat ironically, were discussed online: The partly serious answer to “why pretty Taiwanese celebrities are all mainland

descendants” contained references to celebrities of Aboriginal origin and also to the former policy of the KMT of ridiculing Hoklo-speaking people on Taiwan’s TV <www.asiafinest.com/forum/lofiversion/index.php/t121258.html>. Mainlanders are quite clearly treated as a separate ethnic group in the lengthy discussions about the different wedding customs of the mainlanders at <verywed.com/forum/expexch/1580478-1.html>.

More serious political discussions related to whether, after 55 years, any distinction between the mainlanders and the Taiwanese should be upheld can be found on the discussion forums of the big newspapers, such as <http://city.udn.com/2331/235334?tpno=23&cate_no=0> entitled “The unification of Taiwanese and Mainlanders” (台灣人與外省人統一了, *Taiwanren yu waishengren tongyi le*) and “How to define Mainlanders” (外省人如何定義, *Waishengren rube dingyi*) <http://city.udn.com/3028/311326?tpno=29&cate_no=0>. The mainlander websites deal mostly with the recurring issue of the relation between Chinese culture and Taiwanese identity. The mainlanders’ unresolved question of “belonging” is often highlighted – for example, see: <<http://tw.myBlog.yahoo.com/jw!0ECeB5KcERxPRFIvQiRa12IFjSrB/article?mid=6905>>. The mainlander identity is based, to a great extent, on feelings of nostalgia, but a new mainlander/ Taiwanese identity has not yet been created.

Conclusion

Various Web applications and websites related to the four “officially” recognized ethnicities in Taiwan have been examined with the aim of identifying the links between ICTs, ethnicities and issues concerned with Taiwanization. The results are then, where possible, compared with the findings and conclusions drawn from research carried out by the author during the last decade (Damm 2001). With regard to the key question, it can be concluded that for various ethnic groups in Taiwan, the Internet has become an important tool in the search for cultural and historical “roots”, and thus also for the establishment and reconfiguration of a collective memory. State-led ethnic identity discourses are very much reflected in the Web. The state and related organizations play a significant role in the discussion and configuration of this historical memory and identity. The case studies within the new media have revealed that Taiwan’s specific form of multiculturalist policy has, to a certain degree, been extended online and that the Hakka and the Aboriginal people,

once strictly marginalized, now have a strong presence on Web 1.0. The Digital Museum and the websites of various Hakka councils and museums are proof of this. The newer Web 2.0, in particular blogs, play an important role in reshaping the way we deal with and construct collective/ cultural/ historical memory and (collective) identity. The four ethnicities constructed by the state are reflected in many blogs, particularly in those of the Hoklo and the Hakka. Nevertheless, identities are being challenged: Although most Hoklo blogs stress the essentialist understanding of what it means to be a Hoklo (compared with the other groups), the mainlander blogs try to sidestep, often for political reasons, any “fixed group” understanding by employing terms such as the “new Taiwanese”, which was coined by the former president, Lee Teng-hui; but the use of this term is avoided in Taiwan. At least on the blog scene, Taiwanese Hoklo blogs are the most self-affirmative. The state-led discourses online are usually accepted and only partially rejected and contested. One of the reasons for this could be that unlike the solely state-led Sinicization discourse that prevailed from the 1950s until the 1980s, the discourse since Lee Teng-hui has involved various actors and, in particular, also members of the civil society. The state-led discourse, therefore, can be described as merely reflecting a common understanding rather than constructing an alien discourse.

The question remains as to how far the interactive media environments, such as blogs and forums, have been able to change the subjectivities of the various ethnicities. With regard to language, the Internet and even the more interactive Web 2.0 applications that are easily connectable with multimedia have not led to the revival of any languages other than Mandarin, which still maintains a strong presence on the Internet. The nearly 50 years of mandatory Mandarin education, the low numbers of speakers of the Aboriginal languages, and the non-standardized romanization of Hoklo have clearly played a decisive role here. Nevertheless, Taiwanization is strong on the Internet, and Taiwan is seen as a distinct place possessing all the features of a *de jure* state, with issues related to a specific history, culture and society.

The new communication media influence the meaning-making routines of the ethnic groups themselves. As the case of the Pingpu has shown, the Internet helps to connect people to each other and to form new groups, which are then able to challenge traditional perspectives. Indigenous peoples, such as the *yuanzhuamin*, were able to compare their own position in society with that of indigenous peoples in Australia and

Canada, who have achieved greater autonomy and a much higher status. Taiwan has certainly travelled some distance along the road toward becoming a multicultural society; there is general acceptance of a wide variety of cultures, and although the Chinese influence remains strong, particularly with regard to a standardized language, a new emphasis on cultural diversity has emerged.

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