

“THE POLITICS OF VISIBILITY: HAKKA-RELATED BOOKS IN TAIWAN”

Abstract

This paper first traces the history of Hakka-related writings in Taiwan, and then examines the implications of their publication and readership. Based on both currently available library materials and field data obtained from a recently completed ethnographic study in Taiwan, the paper looks into the role played by Hakka-related books on the market, particularly the language textbooks and literary works in which the Hakka dialectal script is used alongside Standard Modern Chinese. The author argues that traditional publishing remains a crucial part of Taiwanese Hakka cultural revitalization campaigns in the Internet Age, especially in bureaucratic and mainstream school settings. This paper further explores the cultural politics behind such emergence and development of Hakka-related publications. As cultural diversity and ethnic consciousness have become increasingly a concern of the general public after years of rule under the Martial Law, book publishing makes a historically respected and socially impactful means of information circulation and reception to prepare the marginalized ethnic group for political advocacy. Moreover, though the ethnic category and identity “Hakka” have long been adopted as a unitary concept, intra-group variables such as regional location, sub-dialectal variety, ancestral origin and political inclination all contribute to a covert competition for visibility with print media as the major frontline.