The making of China: The construction of Chineseness during the Beijing Olympics

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Chapter Four
The Pendulum of Chinese Identity:
Chineseness, Geopolitics, and the Live Broadcasts of the
Opening Ceremony in Hong Kong and Taiwan

As I have analyzed in the previous chapters, although the Opening Ceremony constructed and claimed a univocal and mainland-China-centric version of Chineseness, the responses from NBC, BBC, and other Western media have turned the Opening Ceremony into a multi-themed mega-event, and turned the constructed “new” Chineseness into a, at least partially, contested project. In this chapter, I will analyze how Hong Kong and Taiwan television channels responded to, as well as contested, the Opening Ceremony and the new Chineseness. Hong Kong and Taiwan, on the one hand, share cultural approximation with and have strong cultural ties to mainland China; yet on the other hand, both of them are politically, at least partially, distant (for Hong Kong) and detached (for Taiwan) from mainland China. This background makes Hong Kong and Taiwan vital places for the study of the media responses to the Opening Ceremony as a global media event and the new Chineseness embedded in it. It also gives rise to interesting questions like: How would Hong Kong and Taiwan television channels respond to the new Chineseness? Would the cultural ties between mainland China, and Hong Kong and Taiwan have any influence on the responses? If yes, then what else, besides the cultural ties, might also have affected the responses? What political and cultural implications can we see in these responses?

In this chapter, I will describe how Hong Kong and Taiwan television channels have played very different identity politics in the broadcasting of the
Opening Ceremony. TVB (Television Broadcasting Limited) in Hong Kong has tried to fully support the Opening Ceremony by following the mediation discourse of the mainland China authorities. As a result, the local identity (or Hong Kong identity) that Hong Kong has been eagerly seeking since 1984 (especially from 1984 to the late 1990s) seemed to have disappeared. The CTV (China Television) in Taiwan, on the other hand, has deliberately kept a distance, or articulated estrangement from mainland China, by explicitly demarcating Taiwan from mainland China.

However, while trying to keep in alignment with the discourses of the mainland authorities, the live broadcast on TVB reveals a conflict between practices of the Hong Kong media culture and the mediation discourse of mainland authorities, as well as between advocating the authorities and articulating local identity politics. Taiwan television channels, on the other hand, imply a subtle identity of Chinese while deliberately trying to keep a distance from mainland China. Ackbar Abbas, through the examination of Hong Kong popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s, proposes a theory of “disappearance.” He argues that the deliberate disappearance (or, to some extent, obliteration) of colonial existence in Hong Kong implies the appearance of the colonial experience, for “appearance is posited on the imminence of its disappearance” (Abbas 1997: 7), and vice versa. Paraphrasing Abbas, I argue that the evasion (disappearance) of local identity in Hong Kong and the articulation (appearance) of it in Taiwan in the live broadcasts of the Opening Ceremony imply exactly the opposite of their performativity; and so does their deliberate alignment with or estrangement from mainland China. These paradoxes that lie in the live broadcasts in Hong Kong and Taiwan well reflect the geopolitics among the three regions, which consequently have an impact on the perception and reaction to the new Chineseness. Through this examination, I argue that neither the influential concept “cultural China” (Tu 1991) nor the new Chineseness can meet the demands of the complex geopolitics among Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China, despite the fact that Chinese traditional culture does serve as a key resource to connect the three regions. Through this analysis, I try to illustrate how the geopolitics shapes the
cultural and political identity of Hong Kong and Taiwan, and how this shaping turns the Chinese identity into a pendulum in these regions.

**Geopolitics and Identity**

When we come to issues related to Chineseness in Hong Kong and Taiwan, Tu Weiming’s concept of “cultural China” is a good starting point. In 1991, Tu published an influential paper “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center,” in which he proposes that the periphery, namely, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the overseas Chinese (Chinese diasporas), is becoming the new “center” of cultural China (contrasting the “geographical China”), due to the relative continuity of Chinese culture in these places and their fast economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s.

Meanwhile, mainland China suffered cultural discontinuity — because of the Cultural Revolution and other radical revolutionary movements (including the Wholesale Westernization discourse, \(^{81}\) which pervaded the intellectual circle in the 1980s) — and relative slow economic growth. Tu therefore asserts that, given that mainland China has failed to be a “modern” society like the periphery and has “lost” the cultural tradition, it is losing its “center” position of Chineseness, while the periphery is becoming the new center, in the form of cultural China.

Cultural China was a timely reflection of the geopolitics between mainland China, and Taiwan and Hong Kong (as well as Singapore) before 1990. From the separation in 1949 to the first “democratic” election in 1996, under the authoritarian governance of the Nationalist Party (KMT, Kuomintang), Taiwan or the Republic of China (ROC), had expressed a strong appeal for “unification” with the mainland. Although both the PRC and the ROC have maintained a diplomatic “one-China”

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\(^{81}\) The Wholesale Westernization discourse in the 1980s proposed to abandon the Chinese culture and to westernize the cultural, economic, political, and social systems to facilitate a fast development in China, in order not to be “exiled from the earth [开除球籍].” For more detailed discussion, please refer to Jing Wang (1996); and Xiaomei Chen (1992, 2002).
policy, they respectively claim China and Chineseness to refer to PRC or ROC, and try to subordinate the other (Copper 2008). In Hong Kong, during colonial times, the Hong Kong Chinese saw British colonialism not only as an oppressive but also a liberating force. “Eager to escape the economic depravity and political turmoil of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century China, most Chinese came to Hong Kong because of its economic opportunities and political stability” (Carroll 2005: 12). Before the handover in 1997, the people in Hong Kong had developed an identity of seeing “themselves as Chinese but not part of China” (Padua 2007). Thus, Tu’s notion of a cultural China has reclaimed the voice of Chinese societies outside mainland China. It has tried to find a way to reconcile the cultural cracks within these societies and to construct a cultural center of a Chinese identity that may help to decenter mainland China.

However, since the geopolitical context and the identity issue have quickly changed both in Taiwan and Hong Kong, is the cultural China’s conceptual base still valid? In Tu’s analysis (1991), the “Chinese” identity of both people in the geological “center” (mainland) or “periphery” (Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the diaspora communities) is a prescribed and unquestioned issue. He uses “huaren (people of Chinese origin) rather than ‘zhongguoren’ (people of China, the state) to designate people of a variety of nationalities who are ethnically and culturally Chinese” (1991: 22; italics added). Yet, Chinese identity may not be as taken-for-granted as thought in many places, as I have discussed in chapter one. In Taiwan, since Chiang Ching Kuo’s [蒋经国] political reform in 1987, society has split into three parts: the Blue camp, led by the KMT, which has an inclination of unification; the Green camp, led by the Democratic Progressive Party, which upholds a strong appeal to claim independence; and the Moderate camp, which is believed to be the majority of society. The Green camp promotes a non-Chinese identity, namely, a Taiwanese identity, through the reconstruction of cultural and political history that depicts

82 Among the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and other countries, the Chinese identity and their relationship with China have also significantly changed since the 1990s. However, in order to be focused, I will mainly discuss the changes in Hong Kong and Taiwan in this chapter.
Taiwan as having no definite cultural and ethnic links with China. Although the non-Chinese construction of a “Taiwanese identity” is highly problematic, according to some academic researchers (Copper 2008; Brown 2004), it has successfully changed the identity of some Taiwanese people. For example, according to the annual survey summary compiled by the Mainland Affairs Council of the ROC, there were on average 69 percent of people in 1996 (above age 20; the same below) who claimed to be Chinese, or both Chinese and Taiwanese, 34 percent held the solitary identity of Taiwanese. In 2008, the percentage claiming Taiwanese identity increased to about 65 percent, those claiming the identity of Chinese, or both Chinese and Taiwanese shrank to 24 percent.

After 1984, facing the handover to mainland China in 1997 and being on the verge of “disappearance,” Hong Kong started to claim eagerly its alleged unique identity (Abbas 1997). The handover brought about political, economic, and cultural repercussions in Hong Kong, and the identity issue was the crown. As a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, Hong Kong virtually has an autonomous political (and to some extent, cultural) system. However, the Central Government in Beijing is keen to reconstruct a Chinese identity — with an attachment to the PRC — in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong local government also sees the economic advantages that such a reconstruction could bring along. Nonetheless, the long-formed identity of non-mainland-China Chinese still prevails in Hong Kong. Thus, although there is a hybridization of identity after the handover (Fung 2004), the identity in Hong Kong is by no means clear and unified (Ma and Fung 2007).

84 These statistics are drawn from “Appendix Table 12: Public Views on Self-Identity (in Synthesized Analysis on Domestic Public Polls about Strait Relationship, 2008) [表十二: 民众对自我认同的看法].” http://www.mac.gov.tw/public/Attachment/973944270.pdf (accessed 15 Jun 2012). The table contains seven different poll results, but only four of which are relatively comparable (1, 2, 4, 5) and from these four surveys I have compiled the statistics. However, even though the survey results may vary, it is a consensus that the local identity has been growing since the 1990s and the Chinese identity has been diminishing in a fluctuant downward curve.
Dramatic changes also happen in mainland China after the 1990s. By 2008, mainland China had experienced thirty years of rapid economic growth. The hosting of the Beijing Olympics was an evidence of its economic and political power. Both Hong Kong and Taiwan are economically integrated with mainland China. Thousands of Taiwanese have migrated to mainland China, running businesses or working in companies and factories. The Taiwanese industries, especially the manufacturing industry, have outsourced to or even moved to mainland China, resulting in complaints of “hollowing out Taiwan” in Taiwan’s media and causing complex attitudes toward mainland China’s rapid economic growth. Hong Kong’s economy has also been increasingly dependent on mainland China (Yeung, Lee, and Kee 2008; Pannell 2008), although it has been constantly claiming a certain degree of cosmopolitanism and globalism since the 1970s. Following a tradition of cooperation with the governing authorities (Wesley-Smith 1998; Carroll 2005), the Hong Kong government and the upper classes tend to stay aligned with the central government, despite the fragmentary identities in Hong Kong society.

Meanwhile, contrary to Tu’s assertion about mainland China’s radical and total abandonment of tradition and culture, a massive campaign to restore tradition and culture (which has been partly integrated into the official discourse and campaign of “the Great Rejuvenation of China and Chinese People”) has reappeared in China. History and culture, which is one of the key discourses of the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, is partly an outcome of this campaign, as analyzed in chapter two. Thus, the cultural China conception is again challenged by a revival of both Chinese traditional culture and economy in mainland China.

These changes indicate that the “factual” base on which Tu coins the concept of cultural China has somehow eroded. On the one hand, mainland China is becoming a “modern society” (as how Tu describes Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and other diaspora Chinese communities in developed societies) with a strong economy like the periphery. Meanwhile, it is also re-articulating the connection with the Chinese tradition that Tu accuses it has lost. On the other hand, both in Taiwan and in Hong
Kong, Chinese identity itself is under challenge, an aspect that is much neglected in Tu’s original conception of the cultural China.

The live broadcasts of the Opening Ceremony in Hong Kong and Taiwan are embedded in this geopolitical context. As I will elucidate in the following sections, Hong Kong’s live broadcasts deliberately evade the Hong Kong identity so as to stay aligned with the central government, while Taiwan’s television channels specifically attempt to estrange itself from mainland China. At the same time, the Hong Kong live broadcasts ironically present strong differences from the mainland media culture, and moreover, exhibit a local identity; while the live broadcasts in Taiwan nevertheless show a strong recognition of Chinese traditional culture, and a certain identity of Chinese.

Ackbar Abbas proposes a theory of “disappearance” through the examination of the attempts of Hong Kong popular culture (from 1984 to the 1990s) to transcend its colonial conditions into a Hong Kong identity of cosmopolitanism and globalization. The disappearance here refers not to absence or non-existence, but to a misrecognition or misrepresentation of the presence from colonial to local and cosmopolitan. He writes:

For a long time, Hong Kong did not develop the kind of cosmopolitan culture that Shanghai exhibited in the 1920s and 1930s . . . The one moment when it began to rival the cultural vibrancy of Shanghai in the 1930s was during the 1980s and 1990s, after the Joint Declaration announcing the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 . . . This was the period when more and more people discovered, invented, and rallied behind what they called “Hong Kong culture.” This Hong Kong culture was a hothouse plant that appeared at the moment when something was disappearing: a case of love at last sight, a culture of disappearance. (2000: 777–78)
Abbas argues that the deliberate disappearance (or, to some extent, obliteration) of colonial existence exactly implies the appearance of it, for “appearance is posited on the imminence of its disappearance” (1997: 7). It appears as soon as one tries to sublimate it. The change of the names of the colonial buildings into more cosmopolitan ones, trying to make the colonial history disappear and make “globalism” more manifest, exactly reflects the “appearance” or existence of colonial history. Similarly, the articulation of identity is exactly because of the lack/loss of it. Abbas’s theory of disappearance can shed light on the paradoxes present in the live broadcasts in Hong Kong and Taiwan: the disappearance, namely, the evasion of local identity in Hong Kong’s live broadcasts and the estrangement from mainland China on Taiwan’s television channels, nevertheless implies the appearance of Hong Kong locality and the existence of Taiwan’s close ties to mainland China.

**Hong Kong’s Full Alignment with the Mainland:**

**Deliberate but Failed**

“Proud of Being a Chinese”

In Hong Kong, both TVB (Television Broadcast Limited) and ATV (Asia Television Limited) have acquired the broadcasting rights of the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics. Given that TVB enjoys a significantly bigger audience share than ATV, I have chosen TVB as the case for my analysis. TVB simultaneously broadcast live on its main channel Jade, and on Jade HD, Pearl, and other channels. I have mainly taken the live broadcast on TVB Jade as the body for the case analysis. Like BBC, TVB adopted the standard BOB signal of the Opening Ceremony, with only a few shots made by self-equipped cameras and a few shots from CCTV.

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However, similar to NBC, TVB invested a large amount of money on the live broadcast: in Hong Kong, TVB mobilized one studio, two outdoor live performance sites (one in the Hong Kong Disneyland, the other in the Cultural Square), and at least one mobile-shot camera; in Beijing, TVB organized a broadcasting team of more than one hundred and fifty employees, occupying one main studio, one on-site broadcast studio in the Bird’s Nest, (at least) one outdoor interviewing team outside the Bird’s Nest, and one mobile camera setting in the metro station connecting to the Olympic Green. It is estimated that TVB has invested eighty million Hong Kong dollars in the single live broadcast.86

With these various settings, TVB was able to provide manifold warm-ups before the Opening Ceremony, turning the pre-Opening broadcast into an entertainment program. The broadcast shifts shots from studio to studio and from site to site, providing in-studio reviewing and interpreting, outdoor live artistic performances, outdoor interviews (with athletes, audience, volunteers, and participants), and on-site shots in the Bird’s Nest. The in-studio talk shows are about background knowledge and relevant information of the Games and the Opening Ceremony, such as the first day cover (with post stamps), the singers of the theme song of the Opening Ceremony, and so forth. The outdoor performances and the interviews are more joyous and festive, creating a festival-like atmosphere and mobilizing support to the Games. The on-site talk show shot in the Bird’s Nest talks about the gift package for the audience, the weather, and some settings of the Opening Ceremony. With a constant count-down to the Opening, TVB also creates a strong sense of “liveness” and has instigated an anxious expectation to the Opening Ceremony.

The live broadcast on TVB, starting from the warm-ups, attempts to set a tune of “supporting the Beijing Olympics.” One typical example is that each of the four different outdoor interviews outside of the Bird’s Nest ends with a cheer in unison.

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“Come on, China! [中国加油]” and with a close shot on all of the cheerful figures who are gesturing in joy and cheer. The anchorpersons of the outdoor performances in Hong Kong also call upon the audience to show support for the Games. For example, during the second appearance of the outdoor performances in the Cultural Square in Hong Kong, the anchorman claims: “Not only Beijing people support [the Olympics], our Hong Kong citizens also support it. And every present audience also supports [the Olympics].”

This support goes further to claim the pride of “being a Chinese.” As mentioned above, since the handover in 1997, Chinese identity has been a crucial social and political issue in Hong Kong. Although after the handover, the Central Government and the local government of Hong Kong SAR have been working collaboratively to reconstruct an identity of China and Chinese in Hong Kong, in which TVB plays an active role, research based on a survey from 1996 to 2006 has indicated that in 2006 there were still about forty percent of the respondents who were reluctant to take on the Chinese identity (Ma and Fung 2007). During the live broadcast, TVB does not touch on this issue but actively promotes a Chinese identity. Besides, TVB repeats the claim “proud of being a Chinese.” For example, when China’s Athlete Team is entering the stadium, there is a short shot, one of the few clips shot by TVB’s self-equipped camera, showing the three on-site anchorpersons cheerfully displaying the national flag of China. A few moments later, during the parade of China’s Athlete Team, one of the anchormen in the Beijing main studio reviews, as voice-over, the “centennial dream of the Olympics [百年奥运梦想],” the “three enquiries about the Olympics [奥运三问]” in 1908, and the disasters China suffered in 2008. He then concludes with the following comments: “This Olympic Games has 204 countries and regions attending . . . which is by far the most massively

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87 The “centennial dream of the Olympics” and the “three enquiries about the Olympics” are all related to an article published in a magazine Tianjin Youth [天津青年] in 1908. In this article, the contributor asked (a) when China could send athletes to participate in the Olympics; (b) when Chinese athletes could win a gold medal in the Olympic; and (c) when China could host the Olympics. 2008 happened to be one hundred years since the questions were asked. This is the origin of the “centennial dream of the Olympics.”
attended Olympics. This most massively attended Olympics is exactly the Beijing Olympics, of which we should be proud.” Then he asks his fellow commentators how they think about the Olympics. They reply respectively as follows:

Up to now, we finally see the great aspects of the Olympics.

After watching the Opening Ceremony, I genuinely feel that I’m proud of being a Chinese.

This is an advance of the “new China.”

I had never expected that I could be in Beijing to experience such a full blast.

These expressions of sentimental attachment to the Beijing Olympics and, more broadly, to China are pervasive in the whole live broadcast. In fact, TVB’s live broadcast is the only non-mainland-China version that does not present any manifest criticism to the Games and to China. It even tries to adopt CCTV’s commentary scripts for the art performance of the Opening Ceremony, reading word by word the commentary scripts in Cantonese during the live broadcast (which will be analyzed in detail later in this chapter). The overall tone of the live broadcast is obviously to stay aligned with the official position of the Beijing Olympics.

Failed Full Alignment

By articulating proactive claims of supporting the Olympics, declaring the pride of being Chinese, and adopting interpretation scripts of the CCTV, TVB’s live broadcast of the Opening Ceremony attempts to stay aligned with the official mediation of

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mainland China on the Olympics. However, as a former colony of the United Kingdom, Hong Kong has its own political and cultural context, and particular media culture, both of which have become entangled with the live broadcast and have subsequently undermined TVB’s effort of political collaboration with the authorities.

One of the most notable examples in this regard is that TVB is involving several pop stars in its Olympic broadcasting to attract more audience. These celebrities — including Carol Cheng [郑裕玲], Natalis Chan Pak-Cheung [陈百祥], Lee Hac Ken [李克勤], Alex Fong Lik Sun [方力申], Shirley Yeung Sze Ki [杨思琦], Kayi Cheung [张嘉儿], Heidi Chu [朱凯婷], Sharon Luk Sze Wan [陆诗韵], Winnie Young Yuen Yee [杨婉仪], Anna Yau Hoi Man [丘凯敏], and Dexter Young Tin-King [杨天经] — are put on the screen to anchor the Olympics-related programs, to comment on the games, and to interview athletes. The intensive involvement of celebrities in the Olympic Games broadcast may be regarded as very unusual and inappropriate by many influential television channels in the world, for it may shed negative impact on their “professionalism” on sports. For example, CCTV, BBC, or CNN may sometimes involve pop stars in Olympics-related entertainment programs, for example, talk shows, but would rarely use them as anchorpersons or commentators for the games and matches, let alone for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. Yet, this practice is not surprising in Hong Kong, a place with thriving popular culture and an entertainment-oriented media culture. TVB and ATV have been employing this market-driven strategy in the live broadcast of top sports events for over twenty years, even though it has always led to controversies: on the one hand, this strategy attracts a bigger audience; on the other, it arouses hefty criticisms of the pop stars’ lack of sports knowledge and anchoring experience.

The commentators of the live broadcast of the Opening Ceremony are two pop stars Carol Cheng [郑裕玲] and Lee Hac Ken [李克勤], and a sports journalist Wendy Wong [黄毓霞]. Right at the beginning of the Opening Ceremony, when Mr. Hu Jintao (President of the PRC) and Mr. Jacques Rogge (President of the
International Olympic Committee) are stepping onto the VIP platform, the commentators introduce them in a peculiar way:

**Wendy Wong:** Now, the one we see is . . .

**Carol Cheng:** Hu Jintao

**Wendy Wong:** Chinese President . . . President . . . Chinese President Hu Jintao, and the President of the International Olympic Committee, Rogge.

This unusual introduction reveals the difference between TVB and CCTV, or more precisely, the difference between Hong Kong media culture and mainland China media culture. According to the mainland media culture, directly calling the names of high-level government officials on the mainstream media is regarded as extremely inappropriate. However, with the relatively open political atmosphere and more entertainment-oriented media culture, addressing top leaders directly by their names on the media is not unusual in Hong Kong. Therefore, the pop star, Carol Cheng, spontaneously interrupts and addresses “Hu Jintao” directly when Wendy Wong has a very short break during her commentary. However, Wendy Wong, as a sports reporter, immediately adds “Chinese President . . . President . . . Chinese President Hu Jintao” to amend Cheng’s appellation. This small accident shows that, although TVB has attempted to stay aligned with the official media of mainland China, it nevertheless embodies the characteristics of local media culture.

The differences in addressing political leaders are not coincidences. Another notable phenomenon is that TVB uses Cantonese as the interpreting language. For historical reasons, the Cantonese-speaking areas, including Hong Kong SAR and part

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90 In the mainland, the usual way to address high-level officials (as well as other people with higher social status) on the official media is to address them with their titles or honorifics. For example, Hu Jintao is usually addressed as President Hu, or President Hu Jintao. On official occasions, he may also be called Comrade Hu Jintao. There are still other ways of addressing, but none of them would call out their names directly.
of the Guangdong province, are the only areas, apart from some autonomous minority areas, where television channels and radio stations can use the local “dialect” for broadcasting. As the mandatory promotion of Mandarin as the official “standard Chinese” is “as much an index to the organization of ethnicity inherent to nation building as more overt bureaucratic measures,” which “must be seen as symptomatic of a postcolonial global modernity marked, as always, by massive ethnic inequalities” (Chow 1998: 19), the practice of speaking and broadcasting in Cantonese has been subtly regarded as a resistance to the authoritarian governmentality from Beijing and a symbol of local identity of Hong Kong (Davison and Lai 2007). The Cantonese used in the interpretation is an indicator signifying inherent conflicts within TVB’s efforts of staying aligned with the mainland authorities.

As mentioned above, during the live broadcast of the art performance, the commentators try to read the commentary scripts compiled by CCTV in Cantonese, word by word. This unusual adoption is obviously not because the TVB commentary team is unable to compile its own commentary script. The intention of this adoption is just to ensure a politically risk-free interpretation. However, the CCTV scripts are prepared for Chinese Mandarin voice-over, in a typical bureaucratic tone of the official media in mainland China. The script sounds extremely awkward when it is related in Cantonese. The script is relatively sparse compared to the length of the artistic performance, which does not match TVB’s general conversational and casual commentary style presented in the warm-ups and other programs.

The on-site commentators soon discover this mismatch and they try to provide impromptu interpretations, which lead to frequent misinterpretations and

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91 Hong Kong and the Guangdong province have a long history of broadcasting in Cantonese. In Hong Kong, Cantonese was broadcast to lower social classes in the colonial times. In the Guangdong province, in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the revival of media began, the television and radio broadcast chose Cantonese for two main reasons: (a) at that time many people could not understand Mandarin, especially those people of middle age and above, and living in small towns and the countryside; and (b) following Hong Kong as an example. In the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a wave in many provinces in mainland China to set up local-dialect-speaking programs on television and radio channels, but most of these programs ceased with the injunction from SARFT (the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television). In 2010, people in the Guangdong province took to the streets to protest when there were rumors that SARFT and other authorities were trying to ban Cantonese broadcasting.
desynchronizations with the camera shots. Sometimes they have to make amendments and connections a few moments later, seemingly having been reminded by offstage workers. For example, shortly after the beginning of the *fou* drum performance, Carol Cheng interprets that “all performers are volunteers.” A few moments later, she amends: “The performers include professional performers, amateur performers, and volunteers.” The audience can even hear some clues of the offstage discussions about how to deal with this situation. After the Footprint firework, the voice-over interpretations are given in an unusual way: a combination of the interpretation from on-site commentators and commentators in the Beijing studio. Attentive audience can even differentiate the nuances of different voice tracks resulting from acoustic dis-synchronization of the two studios and of the two commentator groups. During the Movable Type-printing performance, Carol Cheng even openly reminds her colleagues in the Beijing studio by saying: “Actually, you friends sitting beside the TV set, you are from the TV station, and you know better about what is going on there than we do. We have limited knowledge of this and are just trying to get by.”

This unusual situation reveals the tension between the market-driven business interests and political collaboration. On the one hand, TVB wants to perform more active collaborations with mainland authorities. On the other, its intensive involvement of the pop stars practically undermines the intended purpose. As a commercial television corporation, TVB has to maintain the profitability of its programs, especially when it has heavily invested in the live broadcast of the Opening Ceremony and the overall Beijing Olympics. Involving pop stars is a market-proof

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92 Besides the mentioned example of “all performers are volunteers,” some noteworthy misinterpretations and desynchronizations in the first twenty minutes include: explaining that the firework of twenty-nine footprints began at Juyong Guan [居庸关] when the footprints actually began from the center of Beijing; calling the fifty-six youths in ethnic costumes surrounding the flag altar (where Lin Miaoke lip-synched *An Ode to My Homeland*) “children” when the fifty-six children actually had already appeared a few moments earlier and would appear a few moments later; commenting on the *guqin*, which was to appear almost one minute later, when the camera shots were focusing on the dancers who were drawing with their bodies; claiming that there were two big LED screens on the ground of the Bird’s Nest but there was only one super large LED screen on the ground; and some other examples.

93 I think this was an accident. Carol Cheng should be trying to communicate with her colleagues in the Beijing studio, but she forgot to mute the public voice track and unexpectedly had this conversation made public.
method that can generate high audience rating. Even though the heavy involvement of the pop stars might undermine the effect of political collaboration, TVB still has to employ it. This tension also unveils the conflict between the media culture in Hong Kong and in mainland China: the former entertainmentalizes the Beijing Olympics, but the latter takes it as a joyous yet serious event.

**Cultural Sensibility and Partly Recognized Chineseness**

As I have analyzed in the previous chapters, the Opening Ceremony has constructed a “new” version of Chineseness surrounding harmony, history and culture, and modernity. Although TVB’s live broadcast tries to articulate an alignment with the mainland authorities, it is only sensitive to some parts of the new Chineseness.

As mentioned above, after finding out the awkwardness of adopting the CCTV’s commentary script, both the on-site commentators and those in the Beijing studio have to provide impromptu comments to fill up the long intervals between the commentaries and to counteract the bureaucratic tone of those scripts. Not foreseeing this situation and after a few misinterpretations, they become very cautious and try to limit their impromptu comments to the areas they are most familiar with. For example, Lee Hac Ken provides very few impromptu interpretations (besides echoing other people’s comments and adding some acclamations), one of which is to comment on the difficulties of forming perfect circles during the *taijiquan* performance in the Nature section. As a famous singer, he can fully understand the synchronization difficulties in massive group performances. Under this circumstance, the impromptu interpretations reflect their actual and spontaneous perception and recognition of the implications and connotations of the Opening Ceremony and the new Chineseness.

The most frequently added impromptu interpretations are about culture and history. These interpretations amount to eight incidents and are all made by the anchorman from the Beijing studio (see table 4.1). These interpretations cover six out of the eight sections of the artistic performance, including all five sections in the first
(historical) part of the art performance, and one of the three sections in the second (modern) part. Three of the eight interpretations last for more than two minutes, causing disturbance to the audience’s viewing of the performance. These spontaneous and impromptu interpretations imply the commentators’ deep identification with Chinese traditional culture, sharply contrasting to the commentators’ neglect of many other aspects of the new Chineseness.

Table 4.1: The contents of impromptu interpretations on culture and history during the Opening Ceremony

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence</th>
<th>Performance Section</th>
<th>Description of impromptu interpretations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Painting Scroll</td>
<td>The cultural implications of the music of an ancient Chinese instrument <em>guqin</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Painting Scroll</td>
<td>Introduction to <em>A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountain</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>The origin and importance of the idea <em>he</em> (和, harmony) in Chinese culture and philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Beijing Opera</td>
<td>The difference between local operas in Northern and Southern China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Silk Route</td>
<td>The historical process of the cultural communication between China and the West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>The cultural meaning of <em>taiji</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>The ideology behind <em>taijiquan</em> can facilitate “the communication between tradition and modernity, the harmonious coexistence between human and nature”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>The idea of “harmony between human and nature” [天人合一] and its social and environmental implications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, compared to the enthusiastic interpretation of the cultural meanings and historical origins of the art performance, the commentators, except relating the CCTV scripts, pay little attention to the crucial discourses of modernity, social harmony, and ethnic harmony narrated in the performance. There are relatively more, but still few, comments on the employment of high technology, and the harmonious international relationship in history and in the contemporary era. In addition, in order to reduce the awkwardness, Carol Cheng, who is responsible for relating the CCTV...
scripts, abridges some parts of the scripts to shorten the time of relating and to make them more sensible in Cantonese, which again reduces the content of interpretation. Thus, TVB’s live broadcast acknowledges only a fraction of the new Chineseness, namely, the rich culture and long history. The rest is either casually spoken of, or totally neglected. To sum up, some of the most notable phenomena are the overall alignment with the mainland authorities, the passion of patriotism, and the alleged support of the Olympics. This situative centering of the new Chineseness and the Opening Ceremony forms a sharp contrast with the CTV live broadcast in Taiwan, as I will show in the next section.

**Taiwan: An Unresolved Alienation from the Mainland**

As discussed earlier, Taiwan society is politically divided into three camps — Blue, Green, and Moderate, which has a direct impact on the media. The media in Taiwan mostly have their clear political position. For example, the China Times [中国时报], United Daily [联合报], and CTV [中视, China Television Company] belong to the Blue Camp, and the Liberty Times [自由时报] and FTV [民视, Formosa Television] are tied to the Green Camp. Relatively fewer media organizations are regarded as moderate or neutral, among which are Public TV [公视, Public Television Service] and CTS [华视, Chinese Television System]. In 2008, four television channels obtained the broadcasting rights of the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics: CTV, TTV (Taiwan TV), CTS, and FTV. CTV is typically blue. TTV is less stable, but in 2008 it was regarded as light blue. Meanwhile, CTS is regarded relatively neutral and FTV is green. In the following, I will take CTV’s live broadcast as an example to analyze how media in Taiwan present the Opening Ceremony and respond to, as well as contest, the new Chineseness. Choosing CTV is based on two reasons: Firstly, CTV’s live broadcast has a relative larger audience,
ranking as one of the top two among the four live broadcasts. Secondly, CTV can provide examples to illustrate the implications of the cultural ties and political split between mainland China and Taiwan: although CTV is regarded as one of the “bluest” media in Taiwan, it also expresses quite strong estrangement from the mainland China.

CTV did not send out a crew to Beijing for the live broadcast of the Opening Ceremony (nor did the other three channels), so it adopted the standard BOB signal. Except for a short trailer, it did not fabricate warm-ups for the Ceremony. The live broadcast involved two groups of commentators. The first group included an anchorman from CTV Li Gang [李岗], a notable film-maker in Taiwan; and Chen Shengfu 陈胜福, the chief director of Ming Hua Yuan Arts & Culture Group 明华园戏剧总团. The second group consisted of Tong Zhiwei, Wu Yingda, and Chen Yan 陈怡安. The first group was responsible for the commentary of the art performance of the Opening Ceremony; the second group interpreted other sections. With these specifics, I will focus in the following on the commentaries, as well as a few blackouts during the broadcast, to analyze how CTV responds to and contests the Opening Ceremony and the new Chineseness.

“**You Are Not Me**”

Although CTV is labeled as a “blue” medium, which means that it politically advocates the (final) unification with mainland China, its live broadcast clearly reflects the political division between mainland China and Taiwan. One of the typical examples is CTV’s blackout of the China’s Anthem section during the broadcast. When the national flag of the People’s Republic of China is entering the stadium,

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95 Ming Hua Yuan is a leading organization of gezaixi (Taiwanese opera), the only performing art form that allegedly originated in Taiwan. Detailed information about Ming Hua Yuan can be found at its official website:  http://www.twopera.com/.
CTV’s anchorman does not even acknowledge that the flag is a “national flag” of China, calling it the “the Olympic flag of the host country”: Even though the subtitles on the screen indicate that it is “China’s national flag entering,” the anchorman interprets in this way: “Right now, the Olympic flag of the host country is entering the stadium.” The live broadcast is immediately cut off and replaced by a lengthy advertisement of a pharmaceutical company. What makes this practice more unusual is that when the broadcast resumes, the commentators find out that the China’s Anthem ritual is still going on, they have to cut off the broadcasting and replace it with that commercial again.

This practice resonates with the debate a few months earlier about the Chinese translation of the name of the Chinese Taipei Athlete’s Team. After the PRC resumed membership of the IOC in 1979, the ROC athlete team had to change its name to Chinese Taipei Athlete’s Team in the Olympic system. At the same time, the ROC Olympic membership changed its name to Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee. The PRC Olympic Committee is titled Chinese Olympic Committee (Brownell 2008: chapter five). Before the Beijing Olympics, both the China Athlete’s Team and the Chinese Taipei Athlete’s Team were all presented in foreign languages, such as English or French, the Chinese translation of the names had not led to disputes. However, in the spring of 2008, when the BOCOG proposed to translate Chinese Taipei to 中国台北 (zhongguo taibei, literally China Taipei), the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee refused to accept it, pointing out that this name indicated that ROC or Taiwan was subordinate to PRC, for usually PRC was abbreviated as 中国 (zhongguo, China) and ROC was abbreviated as 中华民国 (Republic of China) or 中华 (zhonghua, with no literal counterpart in English). Alternatively, the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee proposed 台湾 (Taiwan) as its name. However, fearing that the use of “Taiwan” might lead to a domino effect of recognizing Taiwan as a diplomatic term, BOCOG refused to accept this proposal. The debate soon flared up into a “diplomatic” issue, involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROC and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council of the PRC (the mainland China’s
official institute dealing with ROC-related issues). During the negotiation, the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee threatened to quit the Beijing Olympics. Finally, with the mediation from the IOC, BOCOG, and the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee, they reached an agreement to translate Chinese Taipei into 中华台北 (zhonghua taibei, literally Chinese Taipei, the official translation made by ROC).

The trouble of names abounds in the live broadcast. The first group of CTV commentators employs a series of names to address mainland China: they [他们], mainland [大陆], the local [本地], the host [地主或东道主], the inland [内地], and China [中国]. Although the meaning of “China [中国]” they use is slippery (which will be analyzed later), most of the remaining appellations are more or less meant to demarcate “they” and “we,” or self and other. For example, when they are talking about the Chinese landscape painting during the Painting Scroll section, Chen Shengfu comments:

This kind of scroll-formed landscape painting, performed in a dance form, well matches the distinguishing features of they Chinese Han ethnicity [sic].

With “they Chinese Han,” Chen obviously demarcates himself (or more broadly, the people in Taiwan) from the “majority” of Chinese Han in mainland China. This also echoes the ethnic identity-building movement from the 1980s onward in Taiwan, which attempts to articulate a local ethnic identity and to separate the Taiwan people from the mainland Chinese.96

Similarly, in the Writing section, when there is a close shot of the movable printing blocks, Li Gang comments that “these [characters on the blocks] look like local characters [本地字].” The term “local characters,” referring to the simplified Chinese characters coined and promoted by the mainland China authorities in the 1960s and thereafter, resembles a contemptuous remark rarely used in formal occasions: Taiwan and Hong Kong are still using the traditional Chinese characters, a

96 For more detailed analysis on the ethnic identity-building movement in Taiwan, see Brown (2004).
fact of which some people in Taiwan and Hong Kong are proud. Yet, debates about whether or not to adopt the simplified Chinese characters have never ceased in both areas. One of the typical reactions to the simplified Chinese characters is that they are vulgar and have eliminated the elegance and cultural meanings of the traditional characters. This is why, after hearing Li’s comments, the other two commentators burst into laughter in amusement. Therefore, they do not even notice that the characters on the movable blocks are actually traditional Chinese characters. The comments and laughter again demarcates WE who use the authentic and aesthetic traditional Chinese characters from THEY who use the “local characters.”

During the artistic performance commentary, there are several occasions of laughter. In all the examined live broadcasts or rebroadcasts, CTV is the only media that mixes in a strong playful-cynical tone in the commentaries. The first commentator group laughs more than twenty times during the roughly seventy minutes of commentary. They make fun of the involvement of PLA soldiers as performers, the chief director Zhang Yimou’s aesthetic preference (of volume and scale, of the golden and silver color, and so on), some narratives presented in the performance (for example, the “appeal for friends,” which I will analyze later), and other issues. One of the typical instances of laughter happens at the very beginning of the live broadcast when the anchorman briefs an introduction:

There were a lot of media reports about this event. For example, [reports] suspected that many art performers from PLA were involved in the performance. (Group laughter)

This case showcases one very important aspect of the playful-cynical commentaries: they serve to demarcate “you” and “me.” The laughter is largely triggered by (a) an unease caused by the military confrontation between the mainland and Taiwan; and (b) a “superiority complex” that mixed with a cold-war mindset and the Cross-Strait politics: you are still under the communist authoritarian governance, but we are now
in a “superior” democracy. The latter probably carries more weight than the former. One of the main reasons for the political division of the Taiwan Strait was the success of the communist movement in mainland China that resulted in the retreat of the Nationalist government to Taiwan in 1949. Since the 1980s, the democratization process has led Taiwan to be the first democratized society of the Greater China. Politicians, media, and academia in Taiwan often reveal a sense of political “superiority” over communist mainland China. A typical example is that President Ma Ying-jeou of ROC repeatedly claims that the premise of the political reunification with mainland China is the democratization in the mainland. A few moments later, Chen Shengfu’s comment reinforces this complex:

If it were in a democratic country, the massive mobilization of soldiers and students would definitely trigger protests and attacks . . . Only a communist country can manage to accomplish such a formidable task. (Laughter)

This scornful comment reflects the commentators’ contempt of the communist governmentality in the mainland. Similar political “superiority” complex can be seen in each of the nine times of the PLA-soldier-related laughter. Sometimes the laughter even exceeds the “superiority” complex. For example, shortly after the beginning of the live broadcast, when introducing the cultural implication of the timing of the Opening Ceremony, the anchorman briefs:

At eight o’clock in the evening, 8 August 2008, the Opening Ceremony will officially begin. The four eights ［八, ba］ connote ‘fortunate’ ［发, fa］, for they are homophones . . .

Then Li Gang retorts:

But this year the mainland did have suffered a lot of things, blizzard, earthquake, etc. (Laughter)

The irony between the fortunate implication of the four “eights” and the disasters that happened during the first half of 2008 does create a sense of amusement, but laughing at disasters still has gone far beyond the ethical propriety and the general humanitarianism that the mainstream worldwide media uphold. This laughter immediately alienates the object — the people in mainland China — from the subject — the commentators — creating an alienation of “you” and “me.”

The second group of the CTV’s commentaries also shows the political division. The second group cheers when the athlete teams of the countries that maintain diplomatic relations with ROC (e.g., Republic of Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Paraguay) are entering the stadium. In their commentaries, “China” refers more clearly to mainland China, which in turn demarcates more clearly mainland China and Taiwan than the first group of CTV’s commentaries. Thus, although the theme song of the Opening Ceremony advocates a proposition of “you and me, we are family,” the live broadcast on CTV, the alleged bluest media in Taiwan, presents a manifest alienation from mainland China, indicating a claim of “you are not me.”

**Slippery “Chinese” and Ambiguous “We”**

Despite a demarcation of “you” and “me,” CTV’s live broadcast still articulates an identity of Chinese and Chinese Culture. For example, in the first half of the live broadcast, although the commentators express a strong division of “we” and “they,” their attitude subtly changes as the artistic performance moves to the historical and
cultural sections. During the Silk Route section, the anchorman for the first time clearly uses “we” to include themselves and the mainlanders:

Zhang Qian was sent to the Western Regions on a diplomatic mission, which opened a time of splendid civilization . . . China’s cultural history was not merely limited in the Central Plains, but it was also [related to] the interaction with OUR neighboring countries, which was one of the very important interactions in OUR history. (emphasis added)

This inclusion continues throughout the whole Silk Route section. They keep talking about the interactions, as well as the implications of the interactions, between China and the countries on the Inland and Marine Silk Routes, by using “we” and “our.” They take pride in the glory of the Silk Route and indicate an inclusion of themselves as “Chinese.” For example, Li Gang comments on the suspension of the Marine Silk Route in late Ming dynasty:

The most pitiful is that, when Zheng He was back, the government . . . banned the marine navigation. If the navigation had continued, China would not have fallen into a decline, and would not be like what it is today. He was earlier than Columbus and Magellan . . . What a pity.

A few moments later, he adds:

But this [creating of the Silk Routes] for China is the westward and eastward huge merges with our neighbors [sic] . . . transmitting OUR civilization [to Europe, Southeast Asia, and other regions]. ” (emphasis added)

The strong pride in Chinese culture and history is not limited to the Silk Route section. At the very beginning of the commentary, Li expresses that he is more
interested in culture-related performances than those of high technology or “green Olympics,” namely, the “modernity-related” performances. During the commentaries, all the anchormen and the two commentators show solid knowledge of Chinese high culture. They recognize the “four inventions” immediately, and exclaim at some rarely seen cultural elements as the performance goes on. For example, in the Painting Scroll section, there is one short camera shot of a painting presented on the huge LED screen, which is *A Thousand Li of Landscape* painted by Wang Ximeng 王希孟 around 1113 AD. Later, during the session of the Writing performance, Li Gang suddenly recalls it: “Wasn’t it Wang Ximeng’s painting?” The anchorman agrees: “Yes. It was Wang Ximeng’s mountain and water painting.” And they go on commenting as follows:

**Li:** [It was painted] in North Song Dynasty . . . [and is] one of the Top Ten Chinese Paintings. 98

**The anchorman:** Wang Ximeng was a legendary figure! He made this painting at eighteen . . .

**Li** (interrupted): Only this painting!

**The anchorman:** Then he died in his twenties.

These comments show their solid knowledge of Chinese historical high culture: although Wang was a prominent painting master in Chinese history, neither CCTV nor TVB (nor NBC or BBC) mentioned anything about his solitude masterpiece, let alone Wang’s life episodes. Besides, CTVs commentators’ knowledge of Chinese culture is also demonstrated by their familiarity with Confucius’s *Analects*. They can spontaneously tell from exactly which chapters of the *Analects* the Confucius’s sayings in the welcoming Fou Formation and the Writing sections were recited. For example, during the Fou Formation section, there is a Confucius’ saying “friends

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98 There are a few different versions of Top Ten Chinese Paintings but all the versions include Wang Ximeng’s *A Thousand Li of Landscape*.
come from afar, how happy we are!” [有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎!] The anchorman immediately points out that this is a saying from the “xueer chapter” [学而篇, chapter one] of the Analects.

These commentators’ solid background knowledge is remarkable considering the fact that in mainland China, specific knowledge of Chinese culture was largely lost due to the discontinuity of traditional cultural education from the 1950s to 1970s. In Taiwan, traditional cultural education was resumed after 1945 when the Nationalist Party took back Taiwan from Japanese occupation and has continued ever since. This is part of the reason why Taiwan (as well as Hong Kong, Singapore, and the countries where overseas Chinese congregate) is regarded by Tu Weiming (1991) as a “new center” of the Chinese culture and mainland China as the “periphery.”

Thus, despite their manifest demarcation and alienation from mainland China, CTV’s commentators have subtly embodied a cultural identity of China and Chineseness. This identity and recognition partly resonate with the principle of consensus reached by both the PRC and the ROC in 1992, “maintaining one China but left each side free to express their interpretation [九二共識、一中各表],” which is one of agreements that the Green Camp has been trying to annul since the late 1990s.

Selective Recognition of the New Chineseness

Despite the attempt to alienate themselves from the PRC, CTV’s commentators present a strong acknowledgement of Chinese traditional culture and a subtle identification of being Chinese. This geo-identity politics also has a subtle impact on the commentators’ perception and response to the new Chineseness. The most notable impact is related to traditional culture. CTV’s commentators complain about the way the Opening Ceremony presents Chinese tradition and culture. For example, at the end of the art performance, Li Gang expresses that he would have preferred to see more cultural presentations other than the Four Great Inventions:
Actually, what I want to see is not what Chinese had invented, [but high culture] such as the dramas, the *Story of a Journey to the West* [西游记], or the *Tale of White Serpent* [白蛇传]. Since they have been handed down [for hundreds of years], there must be some reasons [for their sustainability]. They would be less heavy [than the massive performances of the Four Great Inventions] to the audience.\(^9\)

With this preference for traditional culture, Li and his colleagues have neglected many other aspects that Zhang Yimou and his colleagues want to emphasize in the performance. For example, the commentators almost totally neglect the environmentalistic concerns embedded in the performance in the Nature section, probably because Li is so eager to see how Zhang would interpret the Chinese philosophy “harmony between human and nature [天人合一]” (which is the philosophical foundation of *taijiquan*). Li accuses the *taijiquan* performance for being too forceful in the movement, presenting a Western-like philosophy of “man by his efforts can conquer nature [人定胜天]” rather than “tolerance and harmony [包容, 和谐]” of “harmony between human and nature.” According to the commentators, the Opening Ceremony is too heavy and pressuring: the scenes are too grandiose, the group performances too pressuring, and the colors excessively florid. Li infers that the pressure, which is intrinsic in the presentations, would undermine China’s “appeal for friends” through the Opening Ceremony and the overall Games. For example, during the Painting section with the *guqin* performance, Li comments that China is eager to make friends:

> In John Woo’s *Red Cliff* [赤壁] . . . there are scenes in which Kongming [孔明] and Zhou Yu [周瑜] are playing the *guqin*. There are two lines that are

\(^9\) Both the *Story of a Journey to the West* and the *Tale of White Serpent* are among the most famous novels and tales in Chinese culture. The former was first published in 1592; the latter was believed to be first drafted in the Ming dynasty and finalized in the late Qing dynasty.
very pertinent. After the “war” of performance, Zhou comments on Kongming’s play and says: “From your play I can figure out that you need friends!” This is because Kongming needs friends to launch the war against the Wei Kingdom . . . I think it is very pertinent here, because China is trying to make friends. And [China] treats the Olympics like a war.100

To “make friends,” according to Li and his colleagues, is the main purpose of the Opening Ceremony, as well as the overall Beijing Olympics. By saying “[China] treats the Olympics like a war,” Li does not mean that China is actually declaring war on the world, but infers that China takes the Olympics extremely seriously and invests abundant resources to secure its success. These two themes, be it the appeal for friends or the treating of the Olympics like a war, are pervasive in their commentaries.

However, the way CTV interprets the “appeal for friends” or how China wants to “wave hands to the world” is different from the “peace-loving” image of China constructed during the Olympic Games. Instead of intentionally selecting historical symbols to demonstrate that China is always in peaceful and “harmonious” relationship with neighboring countries, CTV tends to associate this construction with wars and military-related issues, for example, mentioning the historical wartime film Red Cliff as illustration, constantly mentioning the performers’ PLA background, and so forth. These interpretations probably result from the ongoing political and military antagonism across the Taiwan Strait. Not long ago, in 1995–96, there was a so-called Third-Taiwan-Strait Crisis, in which mainland China conducted a series of missile tests in the sea around the Taiwan Island. During 2000–2008 when the Green party (the Democratic Progressive Party) was governing Taiwan, the military tension did not disappear but sometimes re-emerged. It was on 5 December 2008 that the mainland and Taiwan finally reassumed direct air and sea transportation, and postal

100 John Woo’s film Red Cliff [赤壁] was adapted from one of the famous classic novel The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, which tells the tales of the Three Kingdoms roughly from 185 AD to 285 AD. Kongming was the prime minister of the Shu Kingdom. Zhou Yu was commander-in-chief of the Wu Kingdom. The cited story here is about Kongming going to Zhou Yu to make an alliance against the Wei Kingdom, which was attacking his prince’s army.
services (also known as “三通,” the Three Direct Links). The political and military antagonism then had direct impact on the perception and attitude of Taiwanese media toward mainland China, leading to CTV’s military-related rejoinders to the constructed “harmony” rhetoric in the Opening Ceremony.

Furthermore, partly because Taiwan has been economically better off than mainland China since the 1970s, CTV (and the other three live broadcasts in Taiwan) is very sensitive, though still with a mixture of acknowledgement and vigilance, to the construction of a “new” China image based on a prosperous and “high-tech” China. For example, the CTV anchorman comments during the Starlight section:

I think, what is constantly expressed [through the performances] is the glorious sensation. Zhang Yimou wants to, through this glory, this splendor, to illuminate that this is a shining country, a shining Olympics, hoping you will notice it.

The commentators go further to discuss the technology underpinning the Opening Ceremony as a whole. They have a keen interest in the technology employed in the performance. For example, in the Dream section, they have a dialogue as follows:

**The anchorman:** This is, up to now, the most modern, most technologically advanced performance. Astronauts!

**Chen Shengfu:** It seems that this Olympics has employed TOO MUCH technology. (emphasis added)

**Li Gang:** But China’s space technology and missiles — of course we DON’T LIKE THE MISSILES — are indeed great achievements. They worked hard and developed [these technologies] by themselves. Not easy, indeed. (emphasis added)

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101 Before the implementation of this policy, the transportation and postal service across the Taiwan Strait had to, at least symbolically, stay over somewhere (most likely, in Hong Kong).
As a filmmaker whose job involves complicated on-site collaboration and coordination, Li is obviously overwhelmed by the grandiosity of the spectacle. Triggered by the precise movements of the performers and the immense involvement of the PLA soldiers during the Opera section, Li is amazed at the difficulties of organizing so many performers in such a complex performance, and begins to discuss the difficulties of managing hundreds of thousands of soldiers during the wars in the ancient times. He comments:

I’m always wondering . . . in the time of Qin Shihuang [the First Emperor] . . . hundreds of thousands of people, marching, catering, communication [sic], how did they manage it?

The anchorman rejoins:

I suspect [the coordination of] the three thousand people on the stage are already a big problem to solve, let alone hundreds of thousands of people.

Finally, during the final section of the artistic performance, Dream, they are shocked by the huge globe — which is with a diameter of eighteen meters — rising from beneath the stage; and they again switch the topic to the management: how to rebuild the stage for the track and field matches, given that the games are to be held soon? Finally, Li comments with an exclamation:

So many people, such short time! How could they be gathered and be evacuated?

These comments indicate an unusual recognition of the new Chineseness: the commentators’ keen attention paid to the organization is the only one, in all the
examined broadcasts, that has emphasized the technological and management achievements embedded in the Opening Ceremony that are meant to showcase China’s modernity or “modernness” to the world. Meanwhile, when they constantly link the performance involving “high technology” and efficient management to wars and military issues, it reflects the unease of the commentators that results from the political and military confrontations across the Taiwan Strait: for them, the advancement in technology and management in mainland China may mean improvement in its military power, and may subsequently threaten Taiwan’s security. These worries, to some extent, may also be viewed as a unique version of the “China threat” theory.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can see that in the live broadcasts of the Opening Ceremony in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the issue of Chinese identity has become a pendulum: TVB tries to evade the local-identity issue in the broadcast, which exactly reaffirms the existence of it; CTV attempts to estrange Taiwan from mainland China, but it finally acknowledges the cultural connection and a shared identity of “we Chinese.” This specific evasion of local identity (TVB) and alienation from the mainland China (CTV) imply a deliberate “disappearance” of what is undesired: the local identity in Hong Kong and the Chinese identity in Taiwan. However, paraphrasing Abbas’s research on the disappearance of colonialist existence in Hong Kong, the “disappearances” in Hong Kong’s and Taiwan’s live broadcasts immediately imply the appearance of the opposite: a failed full alignment with the central government and an unfinished re-building of Chinese identity in Hong Kong, as well as the subtle identity of Chinese and a blurred yet persistent link with mainland China in Taiwan. The pendulum between evasion and claiming identity on Hong Kong and Taiwan television channels reflects the complex geopolitics between mainland China, and Taiwan and Hong Kong.
This pendulum implies that neither the new Chineseness nor the concept of cultural China can serve as an ideal resource for Hong Kong and Taiwan, let alone for all the “Chinese” across the world. As I discuss in chapter two, the new Chineseness constructed in the Opening Ceremony is rather monolithic and sino-centric, which allows little space to include elements from the ethnic minorities, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, as well as the diaspora communities. Although Chinese traditional culture has, to some extent, served as a cultural bond to unite mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the culture alone is not sufficient to obliterate the geopolitical concerns among these regions, as we can see in the pendulum of Chinese identity in the live broadcasts of Hong Kong and Taiwan media.

On the other hand, the concept of cultural China, which emphasizes anti-communism and holds a presumption of an economically static and culturally anti-traditionalist mainland China, is largely challenged when mainland China reclaims the traditional culture and shows its bewildering economic growth. In spite of strong anti-communism, Tu (1991) does not seriously question the semi-authoritarian governance in Singapore and Taiwan, nor does he challenge the colonial governance in Hong Kong in the 1970s and 1980s, when these regions were undergoing dramatic (economic) modernization. On the contrary, Tu sees the modernization in these regions as a valuable extension of Chinese culture, with which “they [can] assume an effective role in creatively constructing a new vision of Chineseness that is more in tune with Chinese history and in sympathetic resonance with Chinese culture” (1991: 28). In this vein, the bewildering modernization happening in mainland China, which has recently been generalized as the “China model” (Lin 2006) or “Beijing consensus” (Ramo 2004), is logically comparable to those peripheries, and thus should be at least as significant as the peripheries. Both TVB’s and CTV’s responses, although they, to some extent, cover the identity heterogeneity in Hong Kong and Taiwan (together with the reengagement of Chineseness in Southeast Asia after the 1990s as I have discussed in chapter one), show how mainland China has reclaimed
the “center,” a claim partly advocated by some parts and some groups of the “periphery.”

With the above analysis, I propose that the increasing diversity of the global “Chinese community” calls for more updated and inclusive “new” Chineseness (or other forms of articulations), which can better match the pervasive hybridity in the Chinese communities across mainland China and the world, as the basis for a “global Chinese identity,” at least for those who are willing to engage or reengage in some sort of Chinese identity.