

**Eurasia Foundation International Lectures, Fall 2021 Semester**  
**The Construction and Transformation of East Asiaology” Lecture Series (15)**  
**Title: Taiwan: The Focus of the Development of Contemporary Hakka Culture**

For the 15th Eurasia Foundation International Lecture in the 110th academic year of the Chinese Culture University, we invited a distinguished professor from the Department of Hakka Language and Social Sciences at National Central University. Professor Han-Bi Chang (張翰璧) gave a lecture entitled “Taiwan: The Focus of the Development of Contemporary Hakka Culture.” Professor Chang first explained that the concept of “Hakka Studies” in Taiwan was gradually established in 2003 when the College of Hakka Studies at National Central University was established. In the same year, Professor Chang entered this college as faculty member, devoted himself to establishing the academic foundation and knowledge system of Hakka studies, and started research on Hakka studies with the theories of ethnic groups and immigration from the perspective of sociology. Professor Chang has begun with Hakka studies in Southeast Asia and paid attentions to Hakka studies in Hong Kong. Due to the establishment of the College of Hakka Studies, the focus of Hakka studies in recent years has turned to the connection with local communities in various countries from Taiwan. Meanwhile, the export of culture has been well-developed in Taiwan. It can be said that Taiwan has become the focus of the contemporary Hakka culture development.

**The Establishment of the Concept of “Hakka” in Modern Times: Immigration and Western Missionaries**

Professor Chang first explained the establishment of the modern Hakka concept from the historical context. The origin of the concept of “Hakka” is dated back to the 15-16th century and it was used to describe a group of people who moved from the mountains of Fujian, Guangdong, and Jiāngxī to the foot of the mountains and they were called “Hakka” people. Based on the theory of immigration, Hakka was still an “immigrant” phenomenon around 1850, not as an ethnic group. The period around 1850 can be seen as a watershed, when the turbulence in southern China affected the rapid flow of immigrants. The Hakkas migrated to the foot of the mountains and overseas. In this process of immigration, a classification of the population has gradually formed. From the perspective of political economy, these Hakka was called “haak zai (客仔)” not only because immigrants = guests, but also because of their low political and economic status at that time. Another important historical factor was that Western missionaries went to the Hakka region to preach. German missionaries discovered that the language and cultural habits of a group of people were different from those in Guangdong, and then

established a study of the people in the Hakka region. The English word “Hakka” is one of the knowledge foundations established by Western missionaries in the process of preaching. Therefore, it can be said that the earliest knowledge system of Hakka was established by missionaries in the 19th century. This group of people, originally called “haak zai (客仔),” has become “Hakka” people.

### **The birthplace of Hakka Studies: Hong Kong**

Professor Chang pointed out that in the 1890s, the colonial Hong Kong was a very important missionary base. Because of the dense churches in Hong Kong and the close relationship between the governor and the church, it has affected the knowledge construction and network movement of Hakka. The *Guangdong hsiangt'u lishih* (廣東鄉土歷史, History of the Countryside)” published in 1905 mentioned that Hakka and fuklou (福佬) were neither Han nor Vietnamese, which caused a lot of controversy. *Shih chiehti li* (世界地理, World Geography) published in 1920 also mentioned that there were many barbaric tribes in the mountains of Guangdong, such as Hakka. In 1911, Tsi-hsi Lai (賴際熙) and Hsiang-lin Lo (羅香林) entered Hong Kong as Hakka “scholar immigrants.” These two scholars contributed to the positioning of Hong Kong as the focus of Hakka studies. From the 1930s to the 1950s, the Hakka movement moved from the mainland to Hong Kong, and Hsiang-lin Lo’s and others’ argument, “Hakkas are Han Chinese,” was supported by Hong Kong businessmen. Among them, the Tsung Tsin Association of Hong Kong has expanded a considerable network. For example, the Tsung Tsin Association of Japan has closed relations with the Tsung Tsin Association of Hong Kong, while the Tsung Tsin Association of Southeast Asia and the United States is the core of the Old Chinese Hakka community. Until the 1970s, Hong Kong had been the base for Hakka research.

### **The shift in the focus of Hakka studies: From race theory to ethnic group theory, with the construction of Taiwan’s subjectivity as the background**

Beginning in the 1980s, due to Taiwan’s multiculturalism, lifting of the martial law, development of social movements, and the establishment of subjectivity, Taiwan has gradually taken over the energy of Hakka studies in Hong Kong. The Hakka studies in Taiwan and Hong Kong are different. First, Hong Kong continues the discourse of “non-Han” in Mainland China, but in addition to this discourse, Taiwan has different levels of views due to its social subjectivity and the influence of diverse ethnic groups. Second, the development of social

networks is different: Compared with Hong Kong's network of associations with businessmen as the core, Taiwan is based on culture, and there are more cultural exchange associations and academic and cultural groups. Third, from the perspective of the social sciences, the studies of Hakka in Hong Kong before the 1960s were mostly related to the "barbarians" theory. It is a study of Hakka from the perspective of history and race theory, hoping to prove that Hakka has the descent of the Han nationality in Zhongyuan (the Central Plain). However, Hakka studies in Taiwan, flourished in the 1970s, was based on "ethnic group." Professor Chang further explained the process of Taiwan's subjectivity construction. The construction of Taiwan's subjectivity began in 1949. The second wave of economic development in the 1970s and 1980s led to the emergence of the working class, and then social movements such as the labor movement, the peasant movement, and "returning my mother tongue" movement, gradually established the foundation of a multicultural society. At the beginning of the construction of "Hakka Studies" in Taiwan, most studies still focused on history, the study of Hakka people in mainland China and Taiwan. However, after the 1990s, Hakka studies in Taiwan has gradually adopted "Taiwan Hakka" as the main focus of discussion. After 2000, the Hakka studies from the viewpoint of social science were gradually institutionalized. The change of axis of the Hakka studies and the construction of Taiwan's subjectivity actually proceeded in parallel. It is the Hakka studies with Taiwanese social subjectivity and Taiwanese viewpoint. This is the difference from previous Hakka studies.

### **From Taiwan to the world: the development of cross-disciplinary Hakka studies with subjectivity and diversity**

Professor Chang pointed out that subjectivity and diversity in Taiwanese society are the basis for the development of the Hakka studies. Because of its introspective nature and emphasis on multiculturalism, it will not fall into the "Hakka-centered" knowledge assumption. Hakka studies in Taiwan are diverse and cross-disciplinary and involved various disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, public administration, and media. Therefore, with a wider view, it is possible to observe the undeveloped viewpoints that previous Hakka studies overlooked. In addition, the cooperation between the Hakka Affairs Council (客家委員會) and the Hakka Research Institute brought institutional significance to the promotion of Hakka studies, in terms of the training of teachers and the establishment of overall institutions. On this basis, due to its subjectivity, Hakka studies in Taiwan can be used as a method to understand Southeast Asian and global Chinese communities. Additionally, because Hakka has a unique dialect group and ethnic group, it is also possible to observe its social process from the perspective of ethnic group interaction, and find the homogeneity, difference, and localization between Hakka and Chinese communities.

Looking to the future, Professor Chang pointed out that we can start from Hakka studies in Taiwan and then conduct localization studies of Hakka and Chinese in Southeast Asia and

the world; studies on ethnic groups in Southeast Asia and the world, immigration studies, and political, economic and social studies in different countries. At the end of the speech, Professor Chang also mentioned the “World Hakka Expo” will be held in Taiwan in 2023. Through this expo, we can see how Hakka, as an ethnic group, have different faces in Taiwan and in the rest of the world.

(Website link: <https://eurasia.pccu.edu.tw/index.php>)

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