

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) presidential hopeful Hung Hsiu-chu (胡錦光) keeps talking about “one China, same interpretation.” By now, everyone is wondering what it is that is being interpreted in the same way. A livid Hung has hit back at people who do not understand, saying that “this is a matter of erudition.” Erudition indeed: Perhaps Confucius would have understood it, but the person in the street sure does not.

Pro-unification academics want nothing more than to come up with an acceptable unification solution. They think that “equal footing” is the minimum requirement for acceptability among the Taiwanese and so they have come to the conclusion that while the modern Western concept of national sovereignty did not exist in ancient China, identification with China is all that is needed: China has its own flavor of sovereignty and that is sufficient to resolve any dispute.

An article titled “Using Chinese culture to resolve the cross-strait dispute over sovereignty” that appeared in the June 2012 issue of the Chinese-language China Review News is the prescription offered by National Taiwan University political science professor Chang Ya-chung (張亞中), who is also chairman of the pro-unification Chinese Integration Association (CIA) and the progenitor of the “same interpretation” concept.

Chang thinks that the states under the Zhou (周) emperor during China’s Spring and Autumn Period were mere “governments” that only had “the right to rule.” According to traditional Chinese thinking, sovereignty rests with heaven and the “son of heaven” — the emperor — exercised the right to rule on behalf of heaven. Although the Qin (秦) emperor introduced the view that the country is the emperor’s private property, the “heaven” concept remained and the ruler continued to be seen as heading a dynasty or a government that ruled in the name of heaven. This is very different from the Western concept of “nation.”

Chang says that the Chinese Civil War created “the separation of rule between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait,” but that the two sides remain part of tianxia (天下) — “all under heaven” or “China” — and that they share the concept that sovereignty rests with heaven.

## Unite under heaven: The 'one China' conundrum

Written by Christian Fan Jiang 方江

Saturday, 11 July 2015 07:00

---

This is a set of empty ideas, but in order to make the concept of tianxia more concrete, Chang is proposing a solution for cross-strait integration based on “one China, three constitutions,” in effect suggesting that  $1+1=3$ .

In other words, by saying that “one China” corresponds to “all under heaven” and treating this idea as a new, higher kind of constitution, he wants to institutionalize “one China” as “all under heaven,” thus treating the new constitution he just created as a third constitution that supersedes the constitutions of both China and the Republic of China (ROC).

For pro-unificationists and Taiwan-related discourse in China, a peace agreement takes the place as a third constitution. Pro-unificationists stress the importance of a peace agreement, saying it would guarantee that Taiwan will not become separate from China. The key issue here is that all this reasoning is built on one precondition: Taiwanese identify with China.

That is why, two years ago, the Cabinet announced that “Japanese-ruled” must be replaced by “Japanese-occupied” in all official documents, thus setting the stage for the “minor adjustments” to the high-school curriculum. Chang praised that decision as being “a first step toward sorting out the chaos and setting things right” and a “strategic reversal.”

All this goes directly back to Chang’s “Spring and Autumn Period” view and it is indeed a sign of erudition. How could we expect Hung to explain it all?

*Christian Fan Jiang is deputy convener of the Northern Taiwan Society’s legal and political group.*

Translated by Perry Svensson

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2015/07/11](#)