

As the navy's indigenous submarine program gathers pace, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) on Tuesday attended a naming ceremony for the *Ta Chiang* (太江), an upgraded production version of the navy's Tuo Chiang-class missile corvette, at Lung Teh Shipbuilding's shipyard in Yilan County's Suao Township (蘇澳). The name *Ta Chiang* is rich in local symbolism and is a fitting designation to represent Taiwan's spirit of national defense.

The first character of the ship's name is taken from the Tawa River (太麻里河) in Taitung County, which runs through the ancestral hunting grounds of the Paiwan people, who are renowned for their tenacity in the face of adversity, as well as their bravery and skillfulness in battle. The connection to the Paiwan will be a source of inspiration for the vessel's crew.

The character *ta* (太) also means "tower" in Mandarin Chinese, which evokes an image of a towering fortress riding through the waves, whose comrades-in-arms are willing to lay down their lives to safeguard the Republic of China's democracy and tenaciously defend the nation's sovereignty.

When naming vessels in the past, the navy stuck to the convention of combining the name of an ancient Chinese general with a geographical location.

While there is nothing wrong with this method, since the territory that the navy is tasked with defending is limited to Taiwan proper, Penghu, Matsu, Kinmen and affiliated outlying islands, if all new vessels could be named after aspects of Taiwan's unique Aboriginal culture or geographical features, not only would they be more representative of Taiwan, but they would also arouse in the hearts of sailors, from admirals to noncommissioned officers, an ironclad will to guard their homes and defend their country.

A good example of the synthesis of local culture and the military are the F-16 fighter jets stationed at Chiashan Air Base in Hualien County. The F-16's tails are decorated with a sun motif to represent the Amis people's god of war and the sun, Malataw.

Names should represent Taiwan

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Monday, 21 December 2020 07:45

Adopting the solar deity helps to narrow the divide between the military and local residents, while fostering a feeling of mutual appreciation between service personnel and civilians.

If new military equipment can continue to use names and emblems reflective of local Taiwanese culture, this might also have a positive effect on recruitment by making the military feel more familiar to civilians.

The US armed forces frequently adopt indigenous nomenclature for their equipment. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the Boeing AH-64 Apache helicopter, also operated by Taiwan's military and which was named after the Native American Apache people.

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Translated by Edward Jones

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2020/12/21](#)