

Language, Literacy, and Nationalism:

Taiwan's Orthographic transition from the perspective of Han Sphere

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The Han sphere, including Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Taiwan and China, adopted Han characters and classical Han writing as the official written language before the 20th century. However, great changes came with the advent of the 20th century. After World War II, Han characters in Vietnam and Korea were officially replaced by the romanised *Chu Quoc Ngu* and phonemic Hangul, respectively. In Japan, the number of Han characters in use decreased and the syllabic *Kana* system was promoted to a national status. In Taiwan, although Taiwanese romanisation was developed centuries ago, Han characters remain the dominant orthography in current Taiwanese society. This paper examines Taiwan's orthographic transition from the perspective of Han sphere. Both internal and external factors have contributed to the different outcomes of orthographic reform in these countries. Internal factors include the general public's demand for literacy and anti-feudal hierarchy. External factors include the political relationships between these countries and the origin of Han characters (i.e. China).

Keywords: Hanji, Hanzi, Chu Quoc Ngu, Hangul, Peh-oe-ji, Romanisation

Introduction

The Han sphere, including Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Taiwan and China, adopted *Hanji* (Han characters) and classical Han writing as the official written language before the 20th century. However, the advent of the 20th century brought along great changes. In Vietnam, Han characters and their domestic derivative characters, *Chu Nom*, which had been adopted as writing systems for more than a thousand years, were officially replaced by the romanised *Chu Quoc Ngu* in 1945, the year of the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. Han characters in Korea were finally replaced by phonemic system *Hangul* after World War II. In Japan, the syllabary *Kana* system was gradually developed after Japan's adoption of Han

characters; the number of Han characters used by Japanese decreased from thousands to 1,945 frequently used characters by 1981 (Hannas, 1997).

In Taiwan, although romanised systems such as *Sinkang Bunsu* and *Peh-oe-ji* were developed centuries ago, Han characters remain the dominant orthography today. In China, simplification of Han characters seems the only harvest after China's efforts at reforming characters for over a century.

This paper examines Taiwan's orthographic transition from the perspective of Han Sphere. Both internal and external factors have contributed to the different outcomes of orthographic reform in Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. Internal factors include the general public's demand for literacy and anti-feudal hierarchy; external factors include the political relationships between these countries and the origin of Han characters (i.e. China).

Historical background within the Han sphere

The Chinese attitude towards their neighbors and foreigners can be exactly expressed by an old Chinese philosophy, the Five Clothes System (*Wufuzhi*). The Chinese empire set up a world outlook: the capital is great, civilized, and the central point of the world. Further, the empire used the capital as the center of a circle, to draw five circles per 500 kilometers of radius. The farther barbarians are from the central capital, the more barbaric they are.

Following the thought of the Five Clothes System, the Chinese empire always tried to conquer the "barbarians" and brought them under the domination of China in order to "civilize" them. As a consequence, the "barbarians" were either under China's direct domination or were demanded to pay tributes every certain number of years to recognize the empire's suzerainty (i.e., become a vassal state under China).

In this pattern, Vietnam, Korea and Taiwan had been directly occupied by China for long periods. Although later on they were no longer under direct domination, they

became China's vassal states until modern times. For example, Vietnam was brought under China's direct domination in 111 BC by *Han Wu Di*, the Chinese emperor of *Han* dynasty. Vietnam could not liberate itself from China until AD 939, during the fall of the powerful Chinese *Tang* dynasty (Hodgkin, 1981). Thereafter, although the Vietnamese established their own independent monarchy, they had to recognize the suzerainty of imperial China in exchange for a millennium of freedom until the late 19th century (SarDesai, 1992: 19).

Although Japan was not under China's direct domination, due to China's powerful regimes during the times of Han and Tang dynasties, China was the model of imitation for Japan until the 19th century. For example, Japan's *Taika* Reform in the seventh century "marked the first step in the direction of the formation of a Chinese-style centralized state" (Seeley, 1991: 40).

In general, China's main influences on these countries include: 1) The adoption of Han characters and classical Han writing (*wenyan*) to write Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese, and 2) The importation of Buddhism, Confucianism, the civil service examination and the government official system.

According to the civil service examination system, the books of Confucius and Mencius, which were written in classical Han Chinese, were accorded the status of classics among scholars and mandarins who assisted the emperor or king in governing his people (Taylor & Taylor, 1995: 144-152). Everyone who desired to become a scholar or mandarin had to learn to use Hanji and read these classics and pass the imperial examination, unless he had a close relationship with the emperor. Consequently, as Coulmas (2000: 52) has pointed out that such literacy skills functioned "as a crucial means of social control," and "the Mandarin scholar-bureaucrat embodied this tradition, which perpetuated itself above all through the civil service examination system." Han characters and their classical Han writing

thus became the orthodoxy of written language in the Han sphere for over a thousand years.

From the perspective of literacy, the classics were not only difficult to read (i.e., Hanji), but also hard to understand (i.e., the texts), because the texts were written in classical literary style instead of colloquial style (*baihua*). In other words, because most of the people were farmers who spent their days laboring in the fields, they were not highly interested in learning Hanji and classical writing. As a consequence, a literate noble class and an illiterate peasant class were formed and this class division reinforced the feudal system.

In short, as Chen (1994: 367) has pointed out, since high illiteracy and low efficiency caused by the use of Han characters became impediments to national modernization, the demand for widespread literacy was one of the advising factors pushing orthographic reform in the Han sphere.

Vietnam's Orthographic tradition and transition

In Vietnam, Han characters were employed since 207 BC during the *Nam Viet* period (Nguyen, 1999: 2). Thereafter, Han characters retained their orthodoxy status during the millennium of Chinese occupation. Not until the tenth century when Vietnam achieved liberation could the domestic scripts Chu Nom have been prominently developed (DeFrancis, 1977: 21). Chu Nom, or Nom scripts, means southern writing or southern orthography in contrast to Chu Han, Han writing or Han characters. Chu Nom in the early period was used as an auxiliary tool of classical Han to record personal or geographical names and local specialties (Nguyen, 1999: 2). Literary works in Chu Nom achieved popularity from the 16th to the 18th century, and reached their peak at the end of the 18th century (DeFrancis, 1977: 44). For example, *Truyen Kieu*, a novel in Chu Nom considered the masterpiece of Vietnamese literature, was published at the end of the 18th century.

Although the domestic Nom scripts have been around since the 10th century, they neither reached the same prestige as Han characters, nor replaced the classical Han writing. In contrast, Chu Nom was generally regarded as a vulgar writing, which indicates the low language in digraphia. Moreover, Nom scripts were eventually forced to yield themselves to the *Chu Quoc Ngu*, a romanised writing system originally devised in the early 17th century, which finally became the only official orthography of Vietnam in 1945. The factors that contributed to the fate of Chu Nom are as follows:

First, the Vietnamese were deeply influenced by Chinese values with regard to Han characters. Since Hanji was regarded highly as the only official orthography in China, which was the suzerain of Vietnam, the Vietnamese people had no choice but to follow this traditional value assignment. As a consequence, the Vietnamese rulers in all dynasties, except a few short-lived strongly anti-Chinese rulers, such as *Ho Quy Ly* (1400-1407) and *Quang Trung* (1788-1792), had to recognize Han characters as the institutional writing criteria.

Second, writing in Nom scripts was restricted by the civil service examination. Because the examination system was based exclusively on the contents of Chinese classics written in Hanji, all the literati that wished to pass the exam had to study the classics. Once they passed the exam and became bureaucrats, they had to maintain the examination system to ensure their monopoly of power and knowledge in the Chinese-style feudal hierarchy (DeFrancis, 1977: 47).

Third, the development of Nom scripts was highly restricted by the nature of their orthographic structure. Because Chu Nom comprises one or two Han characters to form a new Nom character, it inherited all the defects of Han characters (DeFrancis, 1977: 25). The much more complicated structure caused Nom scripts even more problems in areas of efficiency, accuracy, and consistency. Normally, one has to learn

Han characters first before s/he could fully master Nom scripts. Consequently, learning to read and write in Nom scripts is more laborious than in Han characters.

In the late 16th and early 17th century, European missionaries from countries including Portugal, Italy, and France gradually came to preach in Vietnam. To get their ideas across to the local people, the missionaries recognized that knowledge of spoken Vietnamese was essential. The romanised writing system was thus devised to assist missionaries to acquire the Vietnamese language (Do, 1972).

The development of romanised writing in Vietnam can be divided into four periods: 1) Church period, from the early 17th century to the first half of the 19th century. During this time, Roman scripts were mainly used in church and among religious followers. 2) French promotion period during the second half of the 19th century after the French invaded Vietnam in 1858 (Vien Van Hoc, 1961: 21-23). In this period, romanised Vietnamese were intentionally promoted by the French aiming to replace the classical Chinese with French ultimately (DeFrancis, 1977: 129-134). 3) Nationalist promotion period during the first half of the 20th century. In this period, Vietnamese romanisation was promoted by anti-colonialism organizations, such as the *Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc* or Dong Kinh Free School and *Hoi Truyen Ba Quoc Ngu* or Association for Promoting Chu Quoc Ngu (Vien Van Hoc, 1961: 24). Because roman scripts were no longer associated with the French colonialists, but were considered as an efficient literacy tool, romanisation thus received much more recognition by the Vietnamese people than in the period of French promotion (DeFrancis, 1977: 159). 4) National status period after 1945, when Ho Chi Minh declared the exclusive use of Chu Quoc Ngu (Ho Chi Minh, 1994: 64-65). The number of people who acquired literacy in Quoc Ngu after the achievement of independence was reported by Le Thanh Khoi (quoted in DeFrancis, 1977: 240) to have risen from 20 percent in the year 1945 to 70 percent in 1953.

How was Vietnam able to successfully replace Han characters and Chu Nom with romanised Chu Quoc Ngu? I would attribute this success to two crucial factors: 1) internal factors of social demand for literacy and anti-feudal hierarchy, and 2) external factors of political interaction between Vietnam and China in the international sphere during the first half of the 20th century. These two crucial points also apply to other cases of language and orthographic reform in the Han sphere.

Internal factors of social demand for literacy and anti-feudal hierarchy are understandable. Recall that China was the only major threat to the traditional feudal society of Vietnam prior to the 19th century. Under such conditions, although the adoption of Han characters could cause the majority of Vietnamese to be illiterate, it could, on the other hand, minimize the potential invasion from China, and more importantly, preserve the vested interests of the Vietnamese bureaucrats in the Chinese-style feudal hierarchy. However, with the advent of the 20th century, Vietnam faced a train of international colonialism. Since Ho Chi Minh claimed that 95 percent of Vietnam's total population was illiterate, it was important to equip the people with primary education, which was considered essential to modernization in order to fight against imperialisms (Ho Chi Minh, 1994: 64-65). Although the domestic-made Nom scripts, to some extent, represented the Vietnamese spirit, their fatal weakness in literacy had withdrawn themselves from the candidates of being a national writing system in the modern time. Thus, the efficient and easily learned romanisation was the best choice for literacy in contrast to the complexity of Han characters and Nom scripts. Since the majority of Vietnamese were illiterates, and only a few elites were skilled in Han writing or French during the promotion of Quoc Ngu, it was clear that romanised Vietnamese would be favored by the majority, and thus win the literacy campaign.

External factors involve the complexity of the international situation in the 1940s.

As Hodgkin (1981: 288) stated, the Vietnamese were “faced with a varying combination of partly competing, partly collaborating imperialisms, French, Japanese, British and American, with *Kuomintang* China.” At that time, Vietnam was considered an important base from which to attack southern China when Japan’s invasion of China became more apparent and aggressive since the 1930s (Hodgkin, 1981: 288). The Japanese military eventually entered Vietnam and shared with the French the control of Vietnam in the early 1940s. From the perspective of China, suppression against Japan’s military activities in Vietnam was desired. However, the French were afraid that China would take over Vietnam again if Chinese troops entered Vietnam under the excuse of suppression of the Japanese forces (Jiang, 1971: 181). For the Vietnamese people, maintaining their national identity and achieving national independence from the imperialisms were considered priority by their leaders such as Ho Chi Minh. Ho’s Chinese strategy was to keep Chinese forces away from Vietnam, and minimize the possibility of a Chinese comeback in Indochina. Politically speaking, Ho opposed Chinese army entering Vietnam (Jiang, 1971: 107) as well as instigated anti-Chinese movement (Jiang, 1971: 228-240); Culturally, romanised Vietnamese was considered a distinctive feature of the cultural boundary between Vietnam and China. These considerations impelled Ho in favor of romanisation rather than Han characters which are used in China.

Korea’s Orthographic tradition and transition

Han characters became institutionalized after Han Wu Di brought northern Korea under direct Chinese domination in 108 BC (Ledyard, 1966: 23). China’s control of northern Korea lasted until the fourth century when the Koreans built their own kingdom.

Once the Koreans adopted Han characters, they encountered difficulties in understanding the classical Han writing. They gradually developed their own remedial

measures to make the writing in Han characters more accessible to the Korean-speaking people. Beginning in the late sixth and early seventh centuries, two major remedies were developed, later known as *Hyangch'al* and *Idu*, which were designed based on Han characters (Ledyard, 1966: 34).

Although the Korean elites had developed *Hyangch'al* and *Idu*, the demand for a more accessible writing system grew stronger as the 15th century progressed (Ledyard, 1966: 70). In the 15th century, the Korean King *Sejong* and his scholars undertook a project of new scripts for writing the Korean vernacular. The project was carried out in 1443, and was officially proclaimed in the title of *Hun Min Jong Um* or Correct Sounds to Instruct People in 1446 (Ledyard, 1966: 91-99). The scripts of the *Hun Min Jong Um* were known in the 20th century as *Hangul*, the Korean alphabets, consisting of 28 letters to write Korean in a phonemic way (Shin et al., 1990).

Although the new system of *Hangul* was very efficient, thus possible as a tool for widespread literacy, it soon faced opposition from the privileged bureaucrat and literate classes. The best-known anti-*Sejong* faction was led by *Malli Choi*, the highest purely academic rank in the College of Assembled Worthies (Ledyard, 1966: 99-114). In 1444, Choi presented *Sejong* with a petition against the new orthographic invention “it is a violation of the principle of maintaining friendly relations with China, to invent and use letters, which do not exist in China...Those who seek position in the government will not seek to learn Chinese characters with patience” (Lee, 1957: 30-31).

The opposition to the new scripts lasted decades even after the death of *Sejong*. Moreover, writing in *Hangul* was banned by the regent *Yonsan'gun* after the literati purge of 1504 (Ledyard, 1966: 322). Consequently, *Hangul* was suppressed and used in very limited circles and domains. For centuries after its creation, *Hangul* was variously called “*onmun*” (vulgar script), “women’s letters,” “monks’ letters,” or

“children’s letters” (Taylor & Taylor, 1995: 212).

The inferior development of Hangul reached a turning point at the beginning of the 20th century. During Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945), Japan’s harsh policy to restrict the use of the Korean language had enhanced the Korean identity of Hangul (Coulmas, 2000: 56). Moreover, the user-friendly characteristic of Hangul made it favorable to the Korean nationalists in the consideration of literacy. In other words, Hangul, similarly to Chu Quoc Ngu in Vietnam, was chosen as the tool to eliminate illiteracy in order to fight against the Japanese imperialism. As Hangul gained more recognition and had become more widespread than ever before, it was further promoted to the status of the official national script when the Korean people began to build their modern nation-state(s) after the World War II.

Japan’s Orthographic tradition and transition

It is estimated that around the fifth century, Han characters were brought over to Japan by Korean scholars (Seeley, 1991: 6). Once the Japanese embraced the classical Han writing, they encountered similar difficulties in reading the Chinese classics as were seen in the cases of Vietnam and Korea. To solve this problem, several syllabic writing systems were gradually developed. Among the various simplified syllabaries, *Katakana* and *Hiragana*, currently in use after modern standardization, were well developed and widely used at least by the 10th century (Habein, 1984: 22-35; Seeley, 1991: 69-75).

The issue of script reform was raised again as the public became highly concerned with the opening of Japan to the West from the later part of the 19th century onwards. After the imperial regime was restored in 1868, Emperor Meiji opened his door to foreign countries, which resulted in enormous changes in daily life. Among the changes was the increase of new words coined for the overwhelming number of unfamiliar concepts and objects from the West. In this situation, the intellectuals

raised the issues of language reform in the consideration of better literacy and education.

After the successful political reform of Emperor Meiji, which was manifested in two victorious wars, i.e. the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95 and the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05, the Japanese stimulated by the victories embarked on the idea that the nation could be mobilized through more effective education, to which script reform was considered important (Gottlieb, 1995: 25). This belief eventually brought language reform into practical trials in the early part of the 20th century. Because using Kana-only or romanisation was considered too radical, the orthographic reform was thus, in fact, centered on restricting the number of commonly used Han characters and the standardization of the Kana usage (Seeley, 1991: 142).

As time went on, Japan's language policy was driven by imperatives from modernization to imperialism in the first half of the 20th century (Gottlieb, 1995: 21). The influence of the military and the ultranationalists became more and more powerful when Japan became more aggressive in preparation for conquering China. The influence was substantial especially after the Manchuria Incident of 1931, in which three northeast provinces of China were under Japan's occupation. From the perspective of the military and ultranationalists, Han characters and historical Kana usage were *kotodama*, the "spirit of the Japanese language," which constitutes the essence of the Japanese national spirit. Therefore, reform proposals, such as abolition of Han characters, romanisation, or new Kana usage, were considered to be attempts at tampering Japan's spirit, culture, and history (Gottlieb, 1995: 75-88; Seeley, 1991: 147-148).

Although many efforts were brought to the script reform, wider adoption of reform proposals could not become reality until the end of World War II, when the Japanese army surrendered to the Allied Forces (Seeley, 1991: 151; Hannas, 1997: 43).

After the defeat of 1945, the military and ultranationalist voices were suppressed. As Eastman (1983: 23) has pointed out, without any social, cultural, or political changes, orthography reform is not likely to succeed. Japan's dramatic changes after the war thus created the atmosphere and conditions necessary to carry out script reform. In 1946, under the supervision of the Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP), Japan's cabinet promulgated *Toyo kanjihyo*, the list of 1850 characters for daily use, and *Gendai kanazukai*, the new modern Kana usage, as the first step of script reform after the war (Unger, 1996: 58; Seeley 1991: 152).

At present, Han characters and Kana syllabary all serve as the official scripts in the hybrid Japanese writing system. This fact makes Japan the only case, among examples analyzed in this paper, where Han characters were not officially abolished after domestic scripts were promoted to national status. Why were Han characters not abolished in Japan? Both internal and external factors have contributed to the outcome. From the perspective of literacy and anti-feudal hierarchy, by the early 20th century, Japan had reached a much higher degree of literacy and modernization in comparison with other Asian countries (Unger, 1996: 35; Okano and Tsuchiya, 1999: 19). This achievement gave the conservatives the impression that Han characters need not be abolished as long as Kana syllabary was in actual use. Furthermore, although Han characters were originally imported from China, they were converted from a pure foreign invention to an indigenized writing system over more than a thousand years of adoption use. In other words, Hanji was regarded by the Japanese as part of their language, which was totally different from the case of the Vietnamese, who considered Han characters as Chinese script and Chu Nom as their own. Why did Japan and Vietnam have reverse perceptions of Han characters? Recall that historically, Japan was never under the direct control of China. On the contrary, Japan's imperialism and militarism became a fateful threat to China in the modern

period. However, battles against China frequently occurred in the history of Vietnam. That is to say, the Japanese did not associate the use of Han characters with the potential invader (i.e., China). As a matter of fact, the use of Han characters was even considered necessary once Japan launched invasion of China. For example, the Interim Committee's proposal, *Toyo kanjihyo* of 1931, was strongly opposed by the military because of the practical need to write a large number of Chinese personal and place names of the newly occupied Chinese territories (Seeley, 1991: 147).

Taiwan's Orthographic tradition and transition

Although Taiwan is currently a Hanji-dominated society, romanisation was once the first and the only writing system used in Taiwan (Chiung, 2001c). *Sinkang Bunsu*, the first system of romanisation was introduced by the Dutch missionaries in the first half of the 17th century. Thereafter, Han characters were imposed in Taiwan by the sinitic *Koxinga* regime in the second half of the 17th century. As the number of Han immigrants from China dramatically increased, Han characters gradually became the dominant writing system in Taiwan. Until 2001, only Han characters and modern standard Chinese (Mandarin) are taught in Taiwan's national education system. Starting fall semester 2001, a 40-minutes mother tongue elective course is added to the curriculum of elementary schools. Teachers may choose to teach romanisation or other scripts for written Taiwanese.

Taiwan is a multilingual and multiethnic island country. Generally speaking, Taiwan's population can be divided into four primary ethnic groups: indigenous (1.7%), Hakka (12%), Holo (73.3%), and Mainlanders (13%) (Huang, 1993: 21). Hakka and Holo are the so-called Han people. In fact, many of them are descendants of intermarriage between sinitic immigrants and local Taiwanese aboriginals during the *Koxinga* and *Qing* periods (Brown, 2004: 149). Mainlanders, who came to Taiwan with the Chiang Kai-shek's KMT regime in the late 1940s, are the latest immigrants

from China. Although Hakka, Holo, and Mainlanders are all immigrants originally from China, they have different national identities. For example, most of the Holo and Hakka people identify themselves as Taiwanese. However, according to Ong's investigation, 54% of the surveyed Mainlanders still identified themselves as Chinese. Only 7.3% identified themselves as Taiwanese, and the rest were neutral (Ong, 1993: 87). A survey conducted in 1997 by Corcuff (2004: 104) revealed that only 10% of the surveyed Mainlanders, who were born in China, identified themselves as Taiwanese. As for the surveyed Mainlanders who were born in Taiwan after 1968, only 43% of them identified themselves as Taiwanese. Mainlanders' divergent identity of Taiwan is also a factor influencing the promotion of Taiwanese language(s).

In addition to being a multiethnic society, Taiwan has been colonized by several foreign regimes since the seventeenth century. Prior to foreign occupation, Taiwan was a collection of many different indigenous tribes, which did not belong to any countries, such as China or Japan. In 1624, the Dutch occupied Taiwan and established the first alien regime in Taiwan. Roman scripts were then introduced to Taiwan by the Dutch. The first romanisation was used to write the indigenous Siraya language, which has since become extinct. In 1661, Koxinga, a remnant force of the former Chinese *Ming* Dynasty, failed to restore the Ming Dynasty against the new Qing Dynasty and subsequently retreated to Taiwan. Koxinga expelled the Dutch and established a sinitic regime in Taiwan as a base for retaking the Mainland. Confucianism and civil service examination were thus imposed in Taiwan during Koxinga's regime and maintained under the Qing Dynasty. The Koxinga regime was later annexed by the Chinese Qing Dynasty in 1683. During the late Qing period (in the second half of the 19th century), *Peh-oe-ji* or Scripts of Vernacular Speech, the second romanisation in Taiwan, was introduced by western missionaries (Tiuⁿ, 2001; Chiung, 2001b). *Peh-oe-ji* is mainly used for Holo Taiwanese, who constitutes the

majority of Taiwan's current population. *Tai-oan-hu-sia*ⁿ *Kau-hoe-po* or Taiwan Prefectural City Church News, the first public newspaper in Taiwan was published in Peh-oe-ji since 1885 until 1970. Two centuries after the Qing's occupation, the sovereignty of Taiwan was transferred from China to Japan as a consequence of the Sino-Japanese war in 1895. At the end of World War II, Japanese forces surrendered to the Allied Forces. *Chiang Kai-shek*, the leader of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT or *Kuomintang*), took over Taiwan and a part of French Indo-China (Nowadays, Vietnam, Lao, and Cambodia) on behalf of the Allied Powers under General Order No.1 of September 2, 1945 (Peng & Ng, 1995: 60-61). Simultaneously, Chiang Kai-shek was fighting against the Chinese Communist Party in Mainland China. In 1949, Chiang's troops were completely defeated and then pursued by the Chinese Communists. At that time, Taiwan's national status was supposed to be dealt with by a peace treaty among the fighting nations. However, because of his defeat in China, Chiang decided to occupy Taiwan as a base from which he would fight to recover the Mainland (Kerr, 1992; Ong, 1993; Peng & Ng, 1995; Su, 1980). Consequently, Chiang's political regime called the Republic of China (R.O.C), which was formerly the official name of the Chinese government (1912-1949) in China, was renewed in Taiwan and has remained there since 1949. Once the R.O.C was renewed in Taiwan, the ruling party KMT claimed that R.O.C has sovereignty over Mainland China and was the only legal government, which represented all of China. This extravagant claim was not changed until 2000, when the opposition party Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the presidential election.

National Language Policy or monolingual policy was adopted both during the Japanese and KMT occupations of Taiwan (Huang, 1993; Tsao, 1999; Png, 1965; Tiuⁿ,1974; Heylen 2005). In the case of KMT's monolingual policy, the Taiwanese people were not allowed to speak their vernaculars in public. Moreover, they were

forced to learn Mandarin Chinese and to identify themselves as Chinese through the national education system (Cheng, 1996; Tiuⁿ, 1996). As Hsiao (1997: 307) has pointed out, “the usage of Mandarin as a national language becomes a testimony of the Chineseness of the KMT state,” in other words, the Chinese KMT regime tried to convert the Taiwanese into “becoming” Chinese through Mandarin monolingualism.

In response to KMT’s National Language Policy, the promoters of Taiwanese have protested against the monolingual policy and have demanded bilingual education in schools. This is the so-called *Taigibun Untong* “Taiwanese language movement” that has substantially grown since the second half of the 1980s (Hsiao, 1997; Erbaugh, 1995; Huang, 1993; Li, 1999; Lim, 1996, Heylen, 2005). There are two core issues for the Taiwanese language movement. First, the movement wishes to promote spoken Taiwanese¹ in order to maintain people’s vernacular speech. Second, the movement aims to promote and standardize written Taiwanese in order to develop Taiwanese (vernacular) literature.² Because written Taiwanese is not well standardized and not taught through the national education system, most Taiwanese speakers have to write in Modern Written Chinese (MWC) instead of Written Taiwanese (WT). Although more than a hundred orthographies have been proposed by different persons enthusiastic for the standardization of written Taiwanese, most of the designs have most likely been accepted and used only by their own designers. Moreover, many of the designs were never applied to practical writing after they were devised. Because of the wide use of the personal computer and electronic networks in Taiwan since the 1990s, most orthographic designs, which require extra technical support other than regular Mandarin software, are unable to survive. Therefore, the majority of recent Taiwanese writing systems are either in Han characters, Roman alphabet or a mixed system combining Roman and Han, as Cheng (1990) and Tiuⁿ (1998) have documented.

The orthographic situation in Taiwan is as complicated as Taiwan's political status and people's national identity. Linguistically, people in Taiwan have to face the issue of whether to use MWC or WT as their written language. Furthermore, people who choose WT have to decide which scripts will be adopted while they are writing in Taiwanese. Politically, Taiwan is currently in an ambiguous political status, i.e., neither nominally an independent Republic of Taiwan nor substantially a province of the People's Republic of China (Peng & Ng 1995). This political ambiguity mirrors people's divergent national identity, which is usually categorized as 1) Taiwanese-only, 2) Chinese-only, and 3) both Taiwanese and Chinese. Consequently, the diversity of the public's national identity has led to different political claims, i.e., independence, unification with China, or maintaining the status quo.³

The contemporary Taiwanese language movement since the 1980s reflects Taiwan's socio-political complexity and its colonial background. In terms of Fishman's (1968) nationalism and nationism, it reveals the controversial relationship among Chinese nationalism-nationism,⁴ Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwanese nationism.

In the dimension of nationalism and nationism, it reveals the political tensions between Chinese and Taiwanese. Chinese nationalism can be inherited internally from Chinese KMT and as well as externally from the People's Republic of China. The strong conflicts between KMT's Chinese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism were overt in the anti-KMT movement during the second half of the 1980s and the entire 1990s. The conflicts between PRC Chinese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism started in the late 1980s and reached the climax in 1999 when the former president Teng-hui Lee claimed that Taiwan and China hold "special state to state" relationship.

In the dimension of Taiwanese, the chart shows the expanding tension between Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwanese nationism. Some Taiwanese politicians and

intellectuals who lead socio-political movement, such as *Hong-Beng Tan*, *Sui-kim Phenn* and *Chhun-Beng Ng*, do not view the Taiwanese language movement as a necessary step even though they identify themselves as Taiwanese rather than Chinese. In their ideology, they disapprove of the KMT's strict national language policy; however, they have come to the stage to accept the results of the national language policy. In other words, they recognize the legitimate status of the colonial language, i.e., Mandarin Chinese as the official language since it has been widespread in Taiwan after more than sixty years of promotion. However, they are criticized by Taiwanese nationalists who claim that they have ignored the threat of Chinese nationalism from China. From the perspective of Taiwanese nationalism, Taiwanese language is not only a medium for communication, but also a part of history and spirit of Taiwan. Moreover, it is considered a national defense against Chinese nationalism of the PRC and the ROC (Chiuⁿ, 1996; Lim, 1996, 1997, 1998; Li, 1999).

The complexity of the socio-political background has prevented Taiwan's domestic scripts from being promoted to a national status. Therefore, in contrast to Vietnam, Korea, and Japan, Taiwan is the unique case where the vernacular writing is still under development. Both internal and external factors, as I proposed, have contributed to the inferior development of Taiwanese orthography.

In terms of internal demands for literacy and anti-feudal hierarchy, written Taiwanese was not effectively promoted at the right time when the public met their literacy demands in the early 20th century during the Japanese occupation.⁵ Nowadays, Taiwan has shifted from a traditional feudal society to a modern one, in which the requirement of a minimum of 9 years of compulsory education has been in place since 1968. It is claimed that Taiwan's current population has reached a literacy rate of 94% based on the statistical data of Taiwan's Minister of Interior. That is, the majority of people in Taiwan have acquired some literacy skills in Han characters and

Modern Written Chinese. This fact has reduced the need to promote a new orthography on the bases of public's literacy.

From the perspective of external factors, because of the complexity and ambiguity of the political relationship between Taiwan and China, Han characters are not substantially regarded as a foreign script by the people in Taiwan. In contrast, roman scripts are generally considered as a foreign invention, even though romanised writing has existed in Taiwan for hundreds years (Chiung, 2001a). As Gelb (1952: 196) has pointed out, "in all cases it was the foreigners who were not afraid to break away from sacred traditions and were thus able to introduce reforms which led to new and revolutionary developments." The weak distinction between Taiwanese and Chinese people in terms national identity has thus undermined the promotion of roman scripts and written Taiwanese.

Conclusion

In addition to linguistic factors, nationalism is another driving force in East Asia's orthographic transition. Although nationalism may or may not consist of a linguistic component as Edwards (1985: 37) noted, it is definitely the case in the Han sphere that language and scripts play a substantial role in nation-building. For more than a millennium, Han characters and classical Han writing have served as the hallmark and tie between China and the sinitic countries in the Han sphere. From the nationalistic viewpoint, abolition of Han characters was thus considered an important step to the construction of a newly independent nation-state. On the contrary, nationalism has prevented China from success in orthographic reform. For example, Latinization, known as *latinhua* in China, was finally aborted in the consideration of China's cultural and political unity (Barnes, 1974; DeFrancis, 1950: 221-236; Norman, 1988: 257-264).

In the case of Taiwan, it is apparent that external factors remain variable and will

play a crucial role in the current development of the Taiwanese language movement. Chiung's survey of 244 college students reveals that Taiwanese identity and assertion of Taiwanese independence are two significant factors that effect students' attitudes towards written Taiwanese (Chiung, 2001a). Although writing in Taiwanese is still far removed from the main-stream Taiwanese society, it is not surprising that as conflicts between Taiwan and China increase, people's enthusiasm about written Taiwanese will be mobilized. For example, the Association of Taiwanese Romanisation (ATR), established in 2001, is the first non-religious organization aiming to promote writing in romanised Taiwanese. The establishment of ATR can be considered Taiwan's reflection of the increased military threat from China in recent years.

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Notes

¹ The broad definition of Taiwanese includes all the indigenous languages, Hakka, and Holoee. Occasionally, Taiwanese refers to Holoee only, which is the language spoken by the Holo people. Holoee is also called Holo Taiwanese, Taigi, Tai-yu, Holoee, Southern Min, or Min-nan.

² Although the issues of written Taiwanese include Hakka and indigenous languages, most literary works are written in the Holo language. This fact makes the Holo language the focus of the written Taiwanese. Therefore, the term “written Taiwanese” in this paper refers only to the written form of the Holo language, if not specified.

³ Their proportion of supporters may vary slightly from poll to poll, but in general, less than 20% of Taiwan's populations in recent years are in favor of unification with China (Huang 2000; Tse 2000).

⁴ At the beginning of Chinese KMT's occupation of Taiwan, Chinese nationalists may have held different opinions from Chinese nationalists. However, later on when the use of Mandarin by people in Taiwan dramatically increased, the objects of Chinese nationalism and Chinese nationism became the same. That is, to keep using Mandarin since it has dominated educational and governmental functions in Taiwan. Therefore, I do not distinguish Chinese nationalism from Chinese nationism here.

⁵ The causes are complicated. On one hand, it was because of the opposition from the Japanese colonialist; on the other hand, the elites' preference for Han characters was caused by their internalized socialization and misunderstanding of the nature and function of Han characters (Chiung 2001a).