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Linguistic Nationalism: The Case of Southern Min

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LINGUISTIC NATIONALISM: THE CASE OF SOUTHERN MIN[1]

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I. Introduction

Southern Min (閩南話) is a Sinitic language spoken by 38,950,000 speakers, approximately 4% of the 1 billion speakers of Sinitic. It is used in parts of Fujian province, Northeastern Guangdong, and Hainan, as well as in Taiwan and in Southeast Asia, where it is spoken by communities in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines (Chiu 1931; Ramsey 1987:33). In no contemporary Southern Min community is the language a national language or a language of education, but in many Southern Min-speaking communities the language has high social value as a marker of in-group status (Oetomo 1988:103). In recent years in Taiwan, it has acquired in addition a political value, representing the aspirations of the Taiwanese independence movement in the face of fears of reunification with Mainland China.

In this paper, I will explore aspects of the social value of Southern Min. I draw on data collected in three Southern Min-speaking communities in which I have done participant-observation fieldwork: Penang, Malaysia; Tainan, Taiwan, and Xiamen (Amoy), the People's Republic of China, focusing in particular on the political importance of Southern Min in Tainan. I take as one goal that of drawing attention to the importance of regional identities and differences in Chinese society, differences all too often disregarded by those who seek to reify 'Chinese culture' as a monolithic entity.

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[1] The data in this paper is primarily drawn from interviews conducted in Tainan, Taiwan and Xiamen (Amoy), People's Republic of China in summer 1987. The interviews were carried out in conjunction with study of Southern Min, funded by a faculty grant from Bryn Mawr College. I am grateful to Peyton Craighill and Professor Yin Binyong for providing me with introductions to individuals in Tainan and Xiamen. I was aided in Tainan by Minister Ted Ellis of the Theological Seminary of Tainan, the Du family, and Professor Lim Kehiong; and in Xiamen, by Professor Huang Diancheng and Assistant Professor Zeng Shaocong, both of Xiamen University. I have benefitted from the comments of Sharon Carstens, Robert L. Cheng, John DeFrancis, Joseph Errington, Paul Friedrich, Victor Mair, Mei Tsulin, Jerry Norman, and S. Robert Ramsey.

II. Literary and Vernacular Southern Min

Many linguists have observed that calling languages like Southern Min 'dialects' is a misnomer, since the languages of China are in fact as diverse as Romance languages. Northern China is relatively homogeneous linguistically, but in Southern China there are six major 'dialect' groups, which are in fact mutually incomprehensible tongues.[2] These languages have been termed dialects in response to the fact that there is a unified written language for China, and a shared cultural tradition (Ramsey 1987:17-18). The situation is not unlike that of the Arab world, termed by Ferguson 'diglossia,' in which classical Arabic exists side-by-side with dialects of Arabic (1972). The result is a sense of unity despite the fact that the spoken languages of different regions diverge greatly, not only in pronunciation, but also in lexicon, and to some extent syntax. This generation of a sense of cultural unity has been cited as one of the (few) advantages of the difficult Chinese writing system.[3]

Chinese do not consider a linguistic variety like Southern Min to be a 'dialect,' but rather consider it a fangyan (方言), which may be translated as 'regional language' or 'topolect.' Before the language reforms which established guanhua (官話) as the basis for the standardized national language known as 'Mandarin' or 'Putonghua' (普通話), literacy had a different place vis-à-vis the topolects of China.[4] Until Mandarin was

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[2] Recent data suggests that the homogeneity of Northern Chinese has been exaggerated, and Norman observes that "many varieties of Mandarin in Shanxi and the Northwest are totally incomprehensible to a Beijing speaker" (Jerry Norman, personal communication).

[3] John DeFrancis, in The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy, expresses skepticism regarding the 'indispensibility' and 'success' of Chinese characters, offering arguments in favor of 'digraphia,' the use of both characters and romanization (1984a and 1984b).

[4] For an in-depth history of these reforms, see DeFrancis (1972).

adopted widely as the language of education in the mid-twentieth century, literate persons learned to read characters in the 'literary' form of their topolect. Evidence from my fieldwork suggests that Literary Southern Min was a register with social connotations of education and style, and the virtual loss of this register has become a source of concern to some contemporary speakers of Southern Min.

The Southern Min literary register is quite distinct from vernacular language. According to Chiu Bienming, "In Mandarin, the difference between the two readings [literary and vernacular] is quite insignificant; in Hagu [Southern Min] the difference is very marked so that under certain conditions only one of the two readings may be correctly employed" (1931:8). He gives as an analogy the stylistic difference in English between the expressions 'think over' (vernacular) and 'deliberate' (literary), and gives the following examples of divergent terms and pronunciations:

VERNACULAR	LITERARY	ENGLISH
lang (𡳞)	dzin (人)	person
khau (口)	kho	mouth
hi (耳)	nzi	ear
tse (坐)	tso	sit

In the first example, different words are used in the vernacular and literary registers to express the same meaning; in the other three examples, divergent pronunciations are used for what in origin is the same word. The Southern Min reading pronunciation of characters had important social uses which have persisted in contemporary Min-speaking communities, but have been marginalized greatly. I will explore below certain consequences of this marginalization.

In the course of ethnographic fieldwork on Chinese popular religion in Malaysia, I encountered this register of Southern Min in the language of trance performers, who expressed the high status of the gods that possessed them by using an often debased version of the literary register, known in Malaysia as 'deep Hokkien (Southern Min).'

Speakers of 'deep Hokkien,' in this case the gods, were distinguished from more ordinary speakers of the language by their avoidance of loanwords from Malay and English, and by a pronunciation and vocabulary which appeared to owe a great deal to literary Chinese (DeBernardi 1986). In other contexts, however, the language of Chinese literacy and education was Mandarin, and little remained of the literary register of Southern Min.

In Southern Taiwan, too, literary Southern Min has largely been replaced by Mandarin, though it still enjoys high prestige in certain circles. It is used, for example, in a Christian Church and Seminary of Tainan, where literacy in Southern Min (known as 'Taiwanese' 臺灣話) is highly regarded and promoted. This register is used for teaching classes in the seminary, for giving sermons, for reading the Bible, and singing hymns. A number of texts have been published in versions which include both Chinese characters and an alphabetic transcription system first developed in Penang, Malaysia in 1839-42 by missionaries, and now used widely to transcribe Southern Min (DeFrancis 1972:20). For many years, the Guomindang government banned the teaching of romanization and the printing of new romanized texts (Cheng 1979:552), only allowing the publication of romanized texts associated with Christianity such as the Bible and hymns (546).[5]

On the other side of the narrow strait that separates Taiwan from the People's Republic of China, such romanized materials were unavailable, but the literary register had not been wholly marginalized. It was reported in Xiamen for example that the local television station had begun to broadcast news announcements in the literary register of Southern Min, though apparently the news announcer frequently had to consult a senior linguist at the University in order to learn the correct literary Southern Min pronunciation of characters.

[5] In addition to religious texts, the Church-allied bookstore in Tainan offers for sale a romanized dictionary of Southern Min (Embree 1973), and a text and tape which teaches Southern Min speakers to read the alphabetic system (1958).

III. On 'Taiwanese' and Mandarin

In general, however, this register of Southern Min, dependent as it is on literacy, has been replaced as the language of education by Mandarin. Young Taiwanese or Fujianese or Malaysian Chinese do not know the literary register of Southern Min, and older Taiwanese complain bitterly that their mother tongue has been socially degraded in the last generation. The fear is expressed that the younger generation will only speak a very commonplace Southern Min, and they predict that, deprived of the literary register, Southern Min will degenerate into a lower-class language. Their concern draws attention to the fact that loss of the literary register is not simply loss of a reading pronunciation of characters, but also entails loss of the literary vocabulary which once enriched spoken Southern Min.

For many in the older generation in Southern Taiwan, the adoption of Mandarin is subjectively associated not with social progress and unification, but rather with the establishment of Guomindang control in 1949. According to one informant, when the Guomindang arrived, they were welcomed by the Taiwanese as liberators, and Taiwanese rejoiced at the end of Japanese colonial era, and hoped for reunification with Mainland China. However, their hopes were soon disappointed: the Guomindang troops seemed to their eyes more like tattered criminals than liberators, and memories of their looting, and the abduction and rape of Taiwanese girls brought tears to the eyes of those reminiscing. The brutal repression of Taiwanese in 1947 now called the '2-28 Massacre' was remembered and commemorated by the Christian community in Tainan with a memorial service in 1987. This violent repression was described as a 'holocaust' against the old Taiwanese elite, in which many students were captured, accused of being communists, and shot.

One person interviewed had been active in organizing a study group of middle school students to study Taiwanese language and culture during World War II, an activity

which was according to his report illegal under Japanese colonial rule. The group developed a new transcription system for Southern Min using the roman alphabet and succeeded in writing a grammar of Taiwanese, His circle of student friends was decimated in the early years of Guomindang rule and he observed that after the '2-28 event,' "Taiwanese were afraid to be Taiwanese." This man, now a science professor in Tainan, had returned to his studies of Taiwanese in 1987, and had devoted his energy to promoting the transcription system he and his friends had developed.

This professor explained in an interview setting that he had taken up teaching his writing method only after he had been diagnosed as having an inoperable cancer. He felt his decision to teach openly to be a challenge to the government and argued in a newspaper article that Taiwanese must speak Southern Min if they are reunited with the mainland. He reported both skeptically and bitterly that the government response was to publish a brief statement claiming that the use and teaching of Taiwanese was not restricted.

The new freedom to promote use of Southern Min does in fact represent a major change in Taiwan, and a recent news article reports that:

> Taiwanese is rapidly becoming a status language with strong sentimental--and sometimes political--appeal. People have become more concerned over the prospect that their children might go through life with just one dialect, and perhaps even end up more fluent in English than Taiwanese (Chung 1990:6).

However, for many years Mandarin has been encouraged at the expense of Taiwanese, and Taiwanese, though spoken by an estimated 80% of the population (Cheng 1985a:352), has been regarded as a substandard language with no grammar and no written form, "inadequate and unsuitable for cultivated discussion" (Cheng 1979:555).[6]

The Guomindang established Mandarin as the language of education in Taiwan in a program of 'resinification' when they moved to Taiwan in 1945, ending the fifty-year

[6] I am grateful to John DeFrancis for bringing this article (publication of which, in his view, "would have been impossible just a few years ago") to my attention.

Japanese occupation. As DeFrancis points out, an efficient education system "made it easy to shift the medium of instruction from one foreign-imposed language [Japanese] to another form of speech imposed by the dominant group of Mandarin speakers" (1984:218-19). The promotion of Mandarin as a language of education in a program of 'assimilative monolingualism' (Cheng 1979:543) had a political dimension, expressing the Guomindang desire to recover the Mainland and rejoin the larger Chinese polity. Jordan sums up the linguistic politics of the post-war situation thus:

> The use of Mandarin by people who knew it was a sign of Nationalist loyalty. The use of Hokkien by people who knew Mandarin suggested separatist leanings. Both schooling and publishing in Hokkien were out of the question (1985:338).

It was reported that, during this period, school children were punished for speaking Southern Min, known commonly as 'Taiwanese,' or in an emphatically possessive form as 'our Taiwanese language.' According to one seminarian, the young were told that Taiwanese was the language of 'bad people,' and that they themselves were 'bad' if they spoke this language. This led to a disruption in the relations between generations, since the elder generation was by this interpretation of linguistic value also 'bad.' It was widely reported that young people who had adopted Mandarin whole-heartedly, in particular in Northern Taiwan, where Mandarin tends to be the language of choice in public venues, scorned their grandparents, and criticized the older generation as 'old fashioned.'

Many older Southern Min speakers in both Tainan and Xiamen expressed the view that Southern Min was superior to Mandarin, which was viewed as a recently invented language lacking the historical roots of Southern Min. A linguist interviewed in Xiamen observed was in agreement with a Taiwanese newspaper article that I showed him which interpreted the current second-class situation of Southern Min in Taiwan in light of social linguistics theories regarding the stigmatization of social dialects (Xi Kaicheng, July 1987). He observed that the promotion of Mandarin in both Taiwan and

the PRC was a means of promoting the political dominance of Northern China, and speculated that politicians feared the strength of Min people, whom he suggested had been economically successful everywhere they have lived and worked.

At the same time, he described them as a people who had repeatedly suffered colonial domination. Fujian resisted the establishment of the Qing dyasty and Manchu rule unsuccessfully, and the port city Amoy [Xiamen] was taken by the British as a Free Port as a result of the signing of the Nanjing Treaty in 1842. Taiwan too has been repeatedly occupied, though the Fujian admiral Koxinga succeeded in evicting the Dutch from Taiwan when he fled there with his followers after defeat in his battle against the Qing forces. Taiwan was later colonized by the Japanese, and then by the largely northern Chinese Guomindang, while the Southern Min speakers in Southeast Asia have lived as minorities in European colonies. However politically disadvantaged these communities may have been, their members have frequently enjoyed economic success under colonial rule, and in particular in Southeast Asia have flourished as a mercantile class.

The use of Southern Min has persisted in a variety of communities in which national languages--English, Mandarin, Indonesian, Malay--have had greater value as 'linguistic capital' in the society at large. Loyalty to this topolect has its source in a variety of cultural values, and in the next section of the paper I will further explore subjective attitudes towards Southern Min which have contributed towards this persistence.

IV. On the 'Superiority' of a Topolect

The recent promotion of Southern Min by the Taiwan independence movement represents an effort to revalue that language and restore its social prestige. At the same time, 'Taiwanese' is a powerful symbol of Southern Min resistance to the assimilationist policies of the Guomindang. The defense of Southern Min and the desire to attain legal

status for Taiwanese (as well as Hakka) are expressions of language loyalty, but also assert and create a sense of identity and cultural value.

Taiwanese defend Southern Min by stressing the uniqueness (indeed superiority) of their language, and in conversation will extol the historical depth and linguistic conservatism, the unusual linguistic features, and the unique packaging of a world view found in Southern Min. The relative uniqueness of the Min dialects is easily demonstrated. Norman, for example, in his monograph on Chinese, observes that:

> The region is a peripheral area in the classic sense of the term: the absence of major rivers and a wildly mountainous terrain have always made access difficult, and it is not surprising that the dialects spoken here lie outside the mainstream of Chinese linguistic development. On the one hand, we find here numerous archaisms not preserved elsewhere, and, on the other hand, a whole series of local innovations which are peculiarly Min. ...[T]his group is, next to Mandarin, the most distinctive and easily characterized group of Chinese dialects (1988:228).[7]

Several waves of migration to South China shaped the development of Southern Min, which has several distinct lexical strata. The Min topolects have retained significant traces of Han influence, and were also influenced by migrations at the end of the Western Jin dynasty, and by a prestigious Tang dynasty standard set by the language of Changan (Norman 1979:268-270). Norman speculates that the pronunciation system at the foundation of literary Southern Min was introduced during the late Tang dynasty (1979:272).

[7] Ballard observes that Southern Chinese dialects "display very extensive layer phenomena" with distinct layers that are often characterized as 'literary' and 'vernacular.' There is evidence that Min has an Austro-Asiatic or Austronesian substrate as one of its layers, and Ballard concludes that "one can imagine a long-term situation of diglossia, with the low form preserving the non-Chinese indigenous language--purely during the early colonial period, more mixed later, and finally just as a very different kind of Chinese" (1985:66-67; see also Norman and Mei, 1976).

In light of this proud cultural conservatism, it is interesting to note that Fujian Chinese call themselves 'people of the Tang.'[8] According to one educated informant interviewed in Xiamen, Fujian was settled after the fall of the Tang dynasty by immigrants who moved South, and the Southern Chinese were thus linked directly to this cosmopolitan golden age of Chinese commerce, poetry, and art. In the view of this traditionally educated scholar, Southern Min was older and more beautiful than Mandarin: it was the language of ancient China, and had more legitimate claim to be the national language of China than Mandarin.

Ramsey confirms the general outlines of this history, observing that:

> The most important wave of migration...occurred around the turn of the tenth century, when, in the wake of the social upheavals that accompanied the collapse of the Tang government, large numbers of Northern Chinese refugees fled south. Among these immigrants were elite families who were protected by well-organized armies and followed by dispossessed peasants. Such groups formed the social and administrative core of the kingdoms that were subsequently established in the South, and these Sinitic kingdoms in turn provided the base for the complete assimilation of the South into Inner China when China was reunified by the Song a half century or so later [A.D. 960] (1987:33).

Many Southern Min speakers in Taiwan noted that as a result of the preservation of the entering tone and final consonants, Tang dynasty poetry rhymed in the Minnan language (but not in Mandarin). However, of the informants whom I questioned during the two month visit to Taiwan and the PRC, only the linguist was able to sing these poems in literary Southern Min and demonstrate the accuracy of this assertion.

One eloquent spokesperson for the uniqueness of Taiwanese was Lim Kehiong, the American-trained science professor mentioned above. In April 1987, Professor Lim established a 'Taiwanese Language Research Association' in Tainan, and sought to

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[8] In Chiu Bienming's analysis of the Minnan dialect of the Xiamen area (which he terms 'Hagu'), he argues that contemporary 'Hagu' is closest in pronunciation of all Chinese dialects to the Changan dialect recorded in the Qieyun in 600 A.D. (1931). By contrast, Ballard reports that many Chinese historians tend to regard Min not as a variant of Tang speech but rather as "some sort of Han relic" (1985:58).

promote the transcription system for Taiwanese that he and his friends had developed during World War II.

An essay which accompanied the announcement of a lecture that he planned to deliver in the United States describes his goals:

> Owing to the century-long suppression by both the Japanese and the Chinese governments, Taiwanese language could only remain in the lower society of Taiwan and has been neglected by most Taiwanese elites for their sociopolitical security. In the midst of these circumstances, Professor Lim and his friends endeavored consistently to retain the original tones and style of the high-society Taiwanese language. In 1958, he successfully translated many European poems into Taiwanese. Among those are poems by Goethe, Schiller, Luebeck, Mueller, etc. as familiarized through those songs by Schubert and other musicians (Lim 1987).

The essayist (undoubtedly Professor Lim) argued further that characters do not do justice to the 'mother tongue' of the Taiwanese:

> But people live in their own mother language, with which their mental world is primarily constructed. It is not possible to expect a person to grow normally depending on the artificial language of hieroglyphs but the mother tone of his childhood.
>
> Forty years ago, Professor Lim and his friends already recognized the inadequacy of expressing Taiwanese language with Chinese hieroglyphs. It is primarily because this is not the character proper for Taiwanese. To use it in writing, people must always translate their thought and feeling into the form it requires.... For this reason, Taiwanese should be expressed by the sound and accent of words just like European languages (Liim 1987).

I will discuss below Professor Lim's effort to promote his writing system for Southern Min.

Other contemporary non-linguists in Tainan also offered arguments in defense of the special nature of Southern Min. One common observation was that while there were many vocabulary items which were cognate between Mandarin and Southern Min, there were also areas of the vocabulary which were much more fully developed in Southern

Min. In Taiwan, the argument was frequently made that Taiwanese was more expressive than Mandarin, and descriptive intensifiers (which consist of an adjective and a unique reduplicated intensifier) were commonly cited in support of this claim. A partial list of such expressions, which were readily elicited in Tainan, includes:

ang di di	very red
ang gong gong	very red
ng giu giu	very yellow
o seu seu	very black
o lu lu	very black
o ma ma	very black
o sim sim	very black (said of hair)
gim si si	very light
gng nia nia	very light
pang gong gong	very fragrant
ti but but	very sweet
giam dok dok	very salty
sng giu giu	very sour
ko te te	very bitter
tia dieu dieu	very painful
swi dang dang	very beautiful
deu gi gi	very dirty (said of water)

Huang Diancheng has observed that these intensifiers are also to be found in ancient Chinese, and analogues may be found in Han dynasty texts.[9]

Speakers of Southern Min also offered more speculative explanations of the differences between Chinese 'dialects.' Professor Lim argued in an interview that the languages of Northern and Southern China had developed different expressions and elaborated different areas of the vocabulary because of the differing environments and occupations of Northern and Southern Chinese. He proposed that in the North, Chinese rode horses and gave orders to command others. Southerners by contrast were seafarers,

[9] According to Mei Tsulin, these descriptive intensifiers also resemble (and may have their source in) Austroasiatic linguistic forms (personal communication).

and used physical force to subordinate others.[10] As a result, he argued, in Mandarin there is only one verb meaning 'to hit,' da (打), while in Southern Min, there are many terms for different kinds of hitting. Examples of these terms offered by him include:

phaq [phah]	to hit (most commonly used, transcribed with the character (打))
saxm [sam]	strike with the hand to the head □
harm [ham]	hit the top of the head with a fist (𣍐)
loxng [long]	hit with arm/hand (敲)
siexn [sian]	slap cheek (掌)
zefng [cheng]	hit sideways □
koxng [kong]	hit with a rod □[11]

He suggested that when such expressions were written using characters, loan characters which approximated the sound rather than the meaning were used, and that this led to confusion and problems with written communication. On this basis, he promoted the use of a phonetically based writing system for Taiwanese.

The uniqueness of the Southern Min spoken in Taiwan was also given special status by some, and several speakers of Taiwanese claimed that their language had diverged markedly from the Southern Min spoken across the Strait on the Mainland. It is true that a number of Sino-Japanese words were borrowed into Taiwanese during the fifty-year period of Japanese rule (Cheng 1985b:185), and these lend the Tainan topolect a special flavor. Nonetheless, I discovered on arrival in Xiamen that the divergence was much smaller than I had been led to believe. I would speculate that the exaggeration of the difference between the two communities was the result of the political goals of persons making these claims, who placed language central to an act of identity formation for Taiwanese.

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[10] Ramsey cites a Chinese catchword which typifies the contrast between North and South: "Nan chuan bei ma--in the South the boat, in the North the horse" (22).

[11] The terms are given using Professor Tan's transcription system, followed by the equivalent in the missionary transcription system. The speculative character equivalents are taken from Embree's Dictionary of Southern Min.

V. The Taiwanese Cultural Association: An Experimental Movement

The importance of 'Taiwanese' as a potential symbol for Taiwanese nationalists cannot be underestimated, but at the same time the attempt to make Southern Min more prestigious and central to the lives of Taiwanese is not without problems. In the course of my 1987 visit to Tainan, I was invited to a meeting to organize a Taiwanese Cultural Association, and the debates at this small meeting highlight the hopes and difficulties of those who seek to affirm Taiwanese identity.

The meeting was organized by a small group of highly educated, and in some instances highly affluent, Taiwanese, one of whom was politically active in the opposition party in Taipei, though he had been unsuccessful in previous bids for public office. Participants included this politican, who had taught Southern Min for the Taiwan Language Institute for a number of years before the United States recognized Mainland China, primarily to foreign embassy officials who wanted to communicate with non-elite Taiwanese; a wealthy European-trained classical musician and entrepreneur; Professor Lim (the science professor cited above) and his wife; a history professor who had studied Taiwanese literature, a poet, and the publisher of a magazine which promoted Taiwanese culture and opposition politics.

The participants discussed the future of the Southern Min language in Taiwan in light of their perception that it would be necessary to develop a Taiwanese identity which could form the basis for an independent Taiwan. In the opening speeches, the political risks of this move were dramatically acknowledged. One participant declaimed that he had devoted his life to the promotion of Taiwanese culture, and if necessary would give up his life in defense of his culture. My interpreter observed at this point that "when you talk about culture in Taiwan, it always means politics." The fear was expressed that reunion with the mainland would create hardships for Taiwan, and that in this event, the influential Guomindang elite would flee. Thus it was felt that the case for Taiwanese nationhood had to be made.

The use in Taiwan of a national language shared with the People's Republic of China clearly does not support the creation of an independent Taiwan as effectively as the use of a 'Taiwanese' whose distinctiveness is stressed. Participants in the meeting identified a specific problem in the fact that children did not speak Taiwanese (i.e. Southern Min) well, and interpreted the use of Mandarin in school as a threat to the continuation of 'Taiwanese culture.'

Widespread knowledge of Mandarin has also changed Taiwanese.[12] In a different context, another informant noted that young people frequently borrowed idioms from Mandarin, and that the Taiwanese used in television shows was filled with such expressions. As a result, older speakers of Taiwanese needed to read the character subtitles in order to follow the dialog. In response to this reported impoverishment of Southern Min, one speaker observed that language is used to communicate, and that if you can't communicate well in your language, the culture will be lost. The group decided to form a committee to coordinate a range of activities, including a 'Miss Taiwan' contest, and proceeded to discuss priorities.

The group identified loss of the literary register of Southern Min and the resultant impoverishment of vocabulary as a key problem, and suggested ways to reenrich spoken Southern Min. It was proposed that old vocabulary be recovered by collecting terms from storytellers, puppeteers, and singers, and that these stories in turn be disseminated in published versions. An obstacle was recognized in the fact that at present there is no standard way of writing Southern Min.

There are two aspects to this difficulty. First, classical texts were studied and read in the literary register, but there does not appear to be any genuine vernacular literature

[12] The flow of influence is not however one way. Jordan estimates that for many Hakka or Southern Min speakers, their ability in Mandarin exceeds their ability in their native language, but observes that the Mandarin spoken in Taiwan has been considerably influenced by Southern Min phonology (1985). Cheng analyzes a number of respects in which Mandarin syntax has been transformed under the influence of Southern Min to create a 'Taiwan Mandarin' (1985a), and notes that mastery of this form of Mandarin was necessary for the children of Mainlanders as a prerequisite for their acceptance by their Taiwanese peers in school (1979).

written in Southern Min, aside from recent experiments in Taiwan which I will discuss below. Characters appeared to be associated too strongly with Mandarin to be widely useful, and it was noted that many Southern Min vocabulary items have no written form. Cheng estimates that 70% of the lexical items of Taiwanese are shared with Mandarin (1985a:353), and could thus presumably be written with the same characters; this leaves 30% non-shared lexical items for which characters would have to be coined. In the past, special characters were created to transcribe Southern Min words, but it was reported that many of these characters were abolished when the written language was standardized by the Guomindang.

One alternative to the use of characters is, of course, an alphabetic transcription system. The science professor proposed that romanization be used, and asked for support to train children to read a romanization system which he and his college friends had developed prior to the Japanese occupation [Figure 1]. He had already published a series of textbooks using this romanization system, which he was teaching primarily to adults in an evening class at a church in Tainan. In those classes, he invited participants to compose and read stories and anecdotes in Taiwanese, and to write down old songs, which were performed at class and greatly enjoyed.

Use of the missionary romanization system [Figure 2] was also suggested, and mention was also made of the publications of a Taiwanese linguist teaching in the United States who wrote Biblical commentary using a combination of characters and the missionary transcription system [Figure 3]. However, a second problem arises here. The goals of the participants in this planning meeting involved the creation of a written language which both preserved the literary register, and could be used to record and share the words of ordinary people. The participants raised the question of the limitations of a writing system based on the close transcription of speech, recognizing that doing so would involve chosing a spoken standard: Southern Min has three regional

variants in Taiwan, and the participants feared that as soon as one was chosen as a standard, the others would by definition become substandard.

VI. Conclusion

In Taiwan, Southern Min has acquired social and political value as a symbol of the desires of Taiwanese--in particular Southern Taiwanese--for political independence. This is true despite the fact that Mandarin is firmly established as the national language of Taiwan, a situation which is unlikely to change even in the event that an independent Taiwan is established. Subjective attitudes towards Southern Min, expressed in a preference for use of that topolect in Southern Taiwan, and the desire to create a written form of the language, can be interpreted as acts of resistance to the political dominance of the North over the South, a dominance concretely symbolized during this last century by the adoption of a Northern Chinese language as the national language for both the Peoples Republic of China and Taiwan.

In Malaysia, by contrast, speakers of Southern Min esteem Mandarin education highly, and do not share the negative political associations which inform the Taiwanese experience with that language (Borthwick 1988; Tan 1988). For Malaysian Chinese, Mandarin has a pragmatic value in providing a shared language for communities in which many Chinese topolects (including Southern Min) are spoken. It is the national language of Malaysia, Malay, which is viewed as a language of political dominance, and whose adoption is resisted. Southern Min is spoken widely, and is used on occasion as a language of social exclusivity, but it has no particular value as a symbol of political unity. Chinese in Malaysia, rather, rally around political symbols which identify them as Chinese (Carstens 1983), and have expended a great deal of energy in the defense of Mandarin-medium education.

Social linguists have argued that there are no significant objective differences between stigmatized linguistic forms and those which carry connotations of prestige

(Hudson 1980, Chapter 2; Labov 1972). The Southern Taiwanese desire to recover the literary register of Southern Min suggests to the contrary that linguistic prestige may have an objective base. The literary register is not merely an index of political power or social class identity, though it has links with both. Rather, the literary register makes it possible to discuss in Southern Min the spectrum of topics that would interest an educated person. In contemporary Southern Min communities, speakers must now switch to (or borrow from) their language of education and literacy for the 'deep' vocabulary needed to discuss these topics. In Taiwan and the PRC this language is Mandarin; in Malaysia it was once Mandarin or English, but is now increasingly Malay. The Taiwanese desire to promote Southern Min and to give it a written form represents a wish to restore linguistic fullness to that language; the Malaysian Chinese desire to protect Mandarin education draws from a similar source.

At the same time, it is also clear that subjective attitudes towards linguistic varieties are colored by the historical experiences of speakers of those varieties, as well as by contemporary social and political goals. In particular, the experience of social discrimination, towards a dialect group in the Taiwanese case, or towards an ethnic group in the Malaysian case, would appear to be the catalyst for group self-awareness. The choice of symbolic system and level of identification differs: however the response in each case has been to make language a key symbol of identity for the invention of community.

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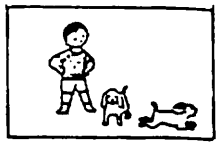
[Liexnsip]

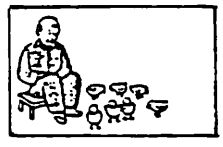
Siɑfmoe khvoarkvix cidee
toaxee phɑepaw.

Siɑfti khvoarkvix nngxciaq
sɑeaciaq kawar.



A'Goat Cie khvoarkvix
lagciaq sɑeaciaq niauar.

Akofng khvoarkvix chitciaq
sɑeaciaq ke'afkviar.



Goar khvoarkvix pɑehciaq
ciawar.

Y khvoarkvix kawbɑea
sɑeabɑea hï'ar.

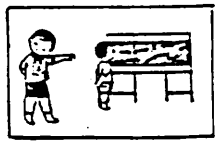


Figure 1

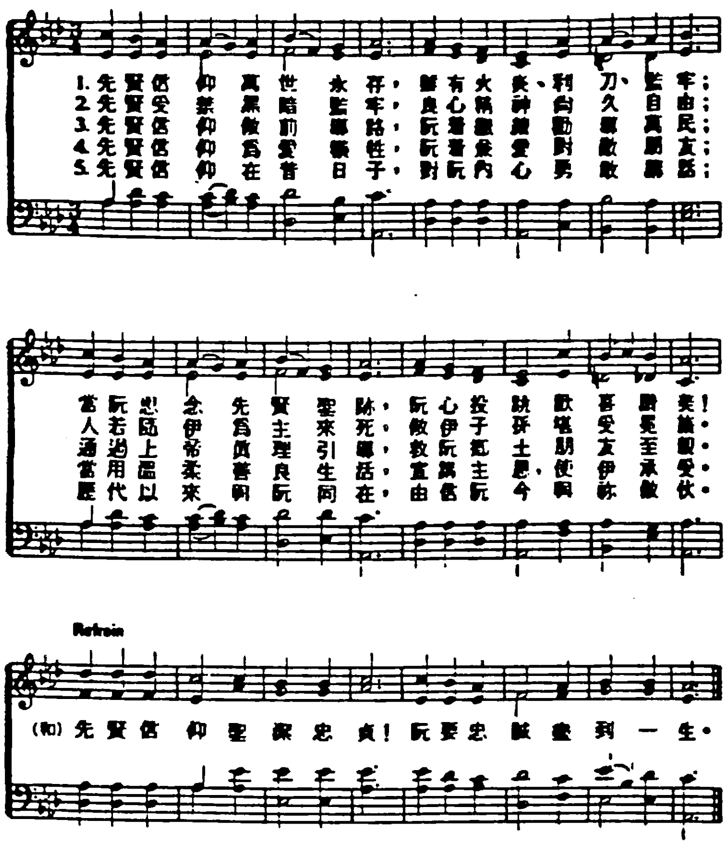
A lesson from Professor Lim's text of 'Taiwanese,' Taioaan-Oe, published in Tainan, Taiwan (Liim, 1987).

45 先賢信仰萬世永存

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

ST. CATHERINE
L. M. and Refrain

Henri F. Hemy, 1818-1888
Adapted by James G. Walton, 1821-1905



1. Sian-hiân sìn-gióng bān-sè êng chûn,
Sui ū hé-liām, lāi-to, ka^{n}-lô;
Tn̄g goán siàu-liām sian-hiân sèng-jīah,
Goán sim tiô-thiàu hoa^{n}-hí o-ló!

(Hô) Sian-hiân sìn-gióng sèng-kiat tiong-cheng!
Goán beh tiong-sêng chīn kàu it-seng.

2. Sian-hiân siū-kìm o͘-àm ka^{n}-lô,
Liông-sim cheng-sìn iáu-kú chū-iû;
Lâng nā tè in ū Chú lâi sí,
Chòe in Kiá^{n}-sun kham siū bián-liû.

3. Sian-hiân sìn-gióng chòe-chêng chhōa lō͘,
Goán tio̍h kè-sio̍k khoàn-tō bān-bîn;
Thong-kè Sîōng-tè chin-lí ín-chhōa,
Kiù goán hiong-thó͘ pêng-iú chìi-chhin.

4. Sian-hiân sìn-gióng ūi thiā^{n} hi-seng,
Goán tio̍h kiam ài tùi-te̍k pêng-iú;
Tio̍h ēng un-jiû siān-liông seng-oa̍h,
Soan-káng Chú un, hō͘ in sêng-siū.

5. Sian-hiân sìn-gióng chāi-chá ji̍t-chí,
Tùi goán lāi-sim ióng-kám kóng-ōe;
Le̍k-tāi í-lâi kap goán tông-chāi,
Tùi sìn goán tī^{n} kap Lí chò-hóe.

Figure 2

"Faith of Our Fathers" in Southern Min, written both in characters and in missionary romanization.

我聽見伊這號事，這是什麼人？」就chhē機會愛看見伊。

Hō五千人食到飽

10. 使徒tò來，將個所行的排列hō耶穌聽。耶穌就chhoā個退開到一個城，名伯賽大。
11. 若是衆人知就tè伊。伊接納個，對個講論上佮的國；凡若欠用醫病，就 kā(　)醫。 (i)
12. 日beh落，十二個學生來kā伊講：「請四散衆人，hō個去四圍的鄉社及山場歇冥設法食；因爲咱 chia 是曠野的所在。」 投歇〔hioh mî〕
13. 耶穌對個講：「恁hō個食。」個講：「阮若無去替chiah ê 衆人買食，就不過有五塊餅，兩尾魚 nā-tiāⁿ。」 ê〔tè〕
14. 因爲 hiah ê 人約略有五千人。耶穌對學生講：「Hō衆人坐歸列，每列五十個。」 lâng
15. 學生照按呢行，hō衆人攏坐。
16. 耶穌 thèh 五塊餅兩尾魚，向天祝謝來擘(　)，hō學生排在衆人的面前。 ê〔ìng〕〔peh〕伊
17. 攏食到飽；khioh所剩的屑仔十二kheng。 〔sut〕〔框〕

彼得對耶穌的認識

18. 耶穌家己teh祈禱，學生及伊 tī hia；伊就問個講：「衆人講我是啥人？」 chī-chūi

Figure 3

Transcription system of Southern Min developed by Robert L. Cheng [Zheng Liangwei], as used in Saint Luke in a Mixed Script: A Study of Written Taiwanese (1987).

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