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Sinitic Language and Script in East Asia: Past and Present

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SINITIC LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT IN EAST ASIA

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Preface

Victor H. Mair, Editor

The ten papers in this volume were originally written as part of the requirements for my course on “Language, Script, and Society in China” during the fall semester of 2015. They range from a detailed study of a seventeenth-century artist's peculiar, esoteric signature-logo to a consideration of the history of the Chinese script through three-plus millennia and its relationship to evolving media and different modes of production. In between are a variety of other studies on diverse aspects of language development in China, from the inception of the writing system to the startling transformations of information technologies at the present day.

Computers and cell phones heavily impact language usage in ways that would have been difficult to foresee a generation ago. Perhaps no change has been more fundamental than the phenomenon of “character amnesia” that results from reliance on phonetic inputting of characters in electronic devices. Two of the papers in this collection examine this conspicuous trend from diverse angles.

The intersection of politics and language is another area of concern for several authors. The question of language reform has been a key element in the rise of nationalism during the past century and more. Coming up to the current moment, one of the most pressing issues for all writers who use the Internet in China is how to confront (and circumvent) the heavy hand of Internet censorship.

Internationally, we have the very interesting problem of how China presents itself to the world through translations of its documents and literary works into other languages. For the Chinese authorities, this is not a simple matter of striving for utmost accuracy and felicity in preparing translations for external consumption, but of providing renditions that are acceptable and accessible to foreign readers. Part of this mission is to create a malleable

“China English” that can be used to communicate with citizens of other countries, yet will remain true to the values and modes of thought of the Chinese people.

More specialized topics include the fate of the languages of non-Sinitic peoples in China and, going back more than a thousand years, the role of Sinographs in the earliest collection of Japanese poetry.

Finally, nothing could be more crucial for the continued health and indeed the very existence of Chinese language and script than the way in which they are taught, both to students at home and those abroad. New language pedagogy — especially regarding how to deal with the demanding, complicated writing system — is making life easier for learners, but it is also changing the very nature of the acquisition of proficiency.

All of these topics are covered in the thought-provoking papers gathered in this special issue of *Sino-Platonic Papers*, which I am delighted to present to all those who are interested in Chinese language and writing.

SINITIC LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT IN EAST ASIA

The Power of Ambiguity: Bada Shanren's Personal Marks

Leqi Yu

Bada Shanren 八大山人 (1626–1705), a prince of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and a literati painter after the Manchu conquest, elevated Chinese art to a high mode of self-expression.¹ While his flower and bird paintings may be thought of as abstract and simple images, his accompanying language — including poems, signatures, personal marks and seals on paintings — is full of obscure references and linguistic puzzles. Thus, Bada's art is famous for its uncertainty of meaning. Deciphering his difficult language has been a task of modern scholarly inquiry for decades.

¹ There are several different versions of Bada's biographies, as follows. “八大山人有仙才，隱於書畫……山人江西人。或曰，姓朱氏，名耑，字雪個。故石城府王孫也。” See Zhang Geng 張庚, *Guochao huazheng lu* 國朝畫徵錄 (A Record of the Paintings This Dynasty), the version of the eighth year of the Tongzhi Reign, 1. More details about Bada's life could be found in Gu Wenbin 顧文彬, *Guoyun lou shuhua ji* 過雲樓書畫記 (Records of Paintings and Calligraphy Collected in the Flying Clouds House), volume 5, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, ed. Xuxiu siku quanshu bianzuan weiyuanhui 《續修四庫全書》編纂委員會 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995–1999), 21–22; Chen Ding 陳鼎, “Bada Shanren Zhuan” 八大山人傳 (Bada Shanren's Biography), in *Yuchu xinzhishi* 虞初新志 (The New Records of Yu Chu), volume 11, ed. Zhang Chao 張潮 (Japan: 1823), 3–7; Shao Changheng 邵長蘅, “Bada Shanren Zhuan” 八大山人傳 (Bada Shanren's Biography), in *Qingmen lüdao* 青門旅藁 (Green Gate Travelling Drafts), Volume 5 (Piling: Wang Yuanxuan deng ke, Kangxi gui you yi you, 1693–1705), 27–28.

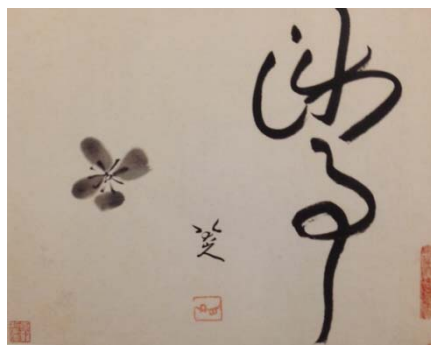


Figure 1. Bada Shanren, the frontispiece of *Falling Flower, Buddha's Hand Citron, Hibiscus, and Lotus Pod*, 1692. Four album leaves, ink on paper, 21.9 × 28.8 cm. Wang Fangyu and Sum Wai Collection.

A reader's interpretation of Bada's language is influenced by his unique calligraphic style and his life activities, as well as the literary meaning presented by texts and the intersections between words and images. For example, in the frontispiece of the 1692 *Falling Flower* album (Fig. 1), Bada writes two large characters *she shi* (涉事, involved in affairs) in an archaizing cursive style, next to a painted blossom. The characters resonate with the image: *she* seems to consist of floral petals, and *shi* is shaped like the round stalk of a flower. The absolute simplicity of the image, the vague meaning of the two characters, and the subtle connection between words and images contribute to the potential multiplicity of interpretations. However, for a long time, most scholars agreed that the character *shi* means "the affair of the Ming restoration movement." This suggests that Bada's identity as a member of the deposed Ming imperial family strongly influenced these scholars' interpretation of the entire work.² In the 1980s, Wen Fong was the first to propose that *she shi* should be understood as "concerning oneself with the affairs of painting."³ This interpretation is supported by Bada's inscription on his 1693 painting *Bird and Fish* (Fig. 2):

² Lee Hui-shu, "Bada Shanren's Bird-and-Fish Painting and the Art of Transformation," *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol.44 (1991): 8.

³ Wen C. Fong, "Stages in the Life and Art of Chu Ta (a.d. 1626–1705)," *Archives of Asia Art*, Vol. 40 (1987): 15–16.

[One must] repeatedly climb [the mountains] to be free from fear, struggling for competence. In writing, too, [one] must be free from fear in order to be competent; the same holds true for painting. Therefore, when it comes to painting, I respectfully call it *she shi*.

必頻登而後可以無懼，是鬥勝也。文字亦以無懼為勝，矧畫事！故予畫亦曰“涉事”。⁴



Figure 2. Bada Shanren, *Fish and Birds*, 1693. Handscroll, ink on paper.
25.2 × 105.8 cm. Shanghai Museum.

Knowledge of this inscription completely changes the scholarly interpretation of the *Fallen Flower* album, and it proves that the artist has the controlling presence in relation to his works of art. However, there are further questions: If we do not have the artist’s answer, how could we read his works of art? Could Bada’s calligraphic writing correctly convey his hidden ideas? To what degree could the knowledge of an artist’s biography inform a viewer’s interpretation of a work of art? In turn, how does the artwork act upon one’s reading?

In order to explore these questions, this essay focuses on Bada’s use of rare characters in his works of art, personal marks in particular, and it shifts the concern from the artist’s creative process to the scholars’ reading process. This essay examines the effectiveness of the

⁴ See Fig. 2; Trans., Joseph Chang, *In Pursuit of Heavenly Harmony: Paintings and Calligraphy by Bada Shanren from the Estate of Wang Fangyu and Sum Wai* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 2003), 6.

underlying codes of those personal marks and discusses how scholars integrate and balance the calligraphy, texts, and images, and the artist's biography in their elucidation.



SAN YUE SHI JIU: THE STEREOTYPE OF REMNANT PEOPLE

As a royal descendant of the fallen Ming dynasty, Bada Shanren spent years, for his own security, in a Buddhist monastery, and he abandoned the monastic life in his mid-fifties. After that, he returned to his hometown, Nanchang in Jiangxi Province, and lived as a poet-painter.⁵

In his lifetime, he adopted around twenty pseudonyms, including the well-known Bada Shanren.⁶ The literal meaning of these four individual characters is “Eight, Eminence, Mountain, Man;” their combination does not make sense. Nevertheless, readers have no problem in filling gaps between these unrelated characters to form a reasonable explanation for the whole. Their readings are not based on a language's own code of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, but rather, they associate the circumstances of the artist's life with this elusive name. For example, Chen Ding 陳鼎 writes: “Bada are the four chief and the four secondary points of the compass. In all I am great, and none is greater than me.”⁷ Here, Chen emphasizes Bada's noble identity as a prince. Another explanation pays more attention to Bada's experience as a Buddhist priest. Both the *Nanchang xianzhi* 南昌縣志 (Annals of Nanchang)

⁵ See Bada Shanren's biographies such as Zhang Geng 張庚, *Guochao huazheng lu* 國朝畫徵錄 (A Record of the Paintings this Dynasty), 1; Gu Wenbin 顧文彬, *Guoyun lou shuhua ji* 過雲樓書畫記 (Records of Paintings and Calligraphy Collected in the Flying Clouds House), volume 5, 21–22; Chen Ding 陳鼎, “Bada Shanren Zhuan” 八大山人傳 (Bada Shanren's Biography), 3–7; Shao Changheng 邵長蘅, “Bada Shanren Zhuan” 八大山人傳 (Bada Shanren's Biography), 27–28.

⁶ A complete list of Bada's signatures of pseudonyms could be found in Wang Zhaowen 王朝聞, ed, *Bada Shanren quanji* 八大山人全集 (Complete Collections of Bada Shanren), Volume 4 (Nanchang: Jiangxi meishu chubanshe, 2000), 917–929.

⁷ “號八大山人，其言曰：八大者，四方四隅，皆我為大，而無大於我也。” See Chen Ding 陳鼎, “Bada Shanren Zhuan” 八大山人傳 (Bada Shanren's Biography), 3–4. Trans., Wang Fangyu, *Master of the Lotus Garden: The Life and Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery and Yale University Press, 1990), 32.

and Zhang Geng’s 張庚 biography of Bada mention that Bada read the *Badarenjue jing* 八大人覺經 (Sutra of the Eight Great Human Realizations) and named himself after the sutra.⁸ The most popular interpretation, however, is strongly influenced by Bada’s writing style in the signature (Fig. 3).

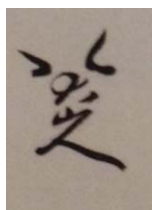


Figure 3. Bada Shanren’s signature, from the frontispiece of *Falling Flower, Buddha’s Hand Citron, Hibiscus, and Lotus Pod*, 1692. Four album leaves, ink on paper, 21.9 × 28.8 cm. Wang Fangyu and Sum Wai Collection.

The biographer Zhang Geng points out that Bada Shanren preferred to write the individual characters *ba da* (八大) as one, and *shan ren* (山人) as one, which makes the signature appear like two characters: *kuzhi* (哭之, cry for it) or *xiaozhi* (笑之, laugh at it).⁹ This interpretation has become a well-established understanding of Bada’s signature because it perfectly reflects his possible attitudes toward his complex life experiences during the Ming–Qing cataclysm. It is recorded that Bada was mad for a time — he would suddenly laugh or cry.¹⁰ This interpretation also suggests that the average reader inclines towards Bada’s identity as a model remnant of the past dynasty (*yimin*, 遺民).

⁸ “按山人隱進賢燈社，有故家子示以趙子昂所書《八大人圓覺經》，遂自號曰八大山人。” See Gu Zhi 顧志, *Nanchang Xianzhi* 南昌縣志 (Annals of Nanchang); “或曰，山人固高僧，嘗持《八大人覺經》，因以為號。” See Zhang Geng 張庚, *Guochao huazheng lu* 國朝畫徵錄 (A Record of the Paintings this Dynasty), 1.

⁹ “余每見山人書畫，款題八大二字，必聯綴其畫，山人二字亦然，類哭之笑之字，意蓋有在也。” See Zhang Geng 張庚, *Guochao huazheng lu* 國朝畫徵錄 (A Record of the Paintings this Dynasty), 1.

¹⁰ “遂發狂疾，忽大笑，忽痛哭。” See Shao Changheng 邵長蘅, “Bada Shanren Zhuan” 八大山人傳 (Bada Shanren’s Biography), 27.

Both Bada's contemporaries and subsequent scholars hold such an opinion of Bada. For instance, Shao Changheng 邵長蘅 (1637–1704) writes in his *Qingmen lügao* 青門旅稿 (Qingmen Travelling Diary):

Many people know of Bada Shanren, but actually no one really knows him. In his innermost being he is at once ebullient and melancholy, and because he is unable to release these tensions, he is like a bubbling spring blocked by a large rock, or a fire smothered by a wet blanket.... If Shanren could meet with such men as Fang Feng (1240–1321), Xie Ao (1249–1295), and Wu Siqi (1238–1301), they would throw their arms around him and weep together in anguish until their voices were gone.

世人多知山人，然竟無知山人者。山人胸次汨渤鬱結，別有不能自解之故，如巨石窒泉，如濕絮之遏火，無可如何...假令山人遇方鳳，謝翱，吳思齊輩，又當相扶攜慟哭至失聲。¹¹

Shao points out that Bada's expressions are difficult and not directly accessible, just like “a spring blocked by a rock” or a “fire smothered by a blanket.” Besides, Bada is juxtaposed with Fang, Xie and Wu, all loyalists after the fall of the Song to the Yuan, and thus was regarded as a similar model of a remnant of the lost dynasty.

It is because of this belief in Bada's loyalty and his intentional creation of ambiguities that one so often reads the stereotype of “remnant” into Bada's language and art. Bada loved to imitate rare variants of ancient characters and to create new forms of characters in his poems, seals and personal marks. Bada's personal marks are inscribed alone or together with colophons and other inscriptions on works of art. These marks occupy less space on a painting than an inscription, but they are no less important. Bada's most frequently-used personal mark appears in six different variants in his works of calligraphy and painting (Fig. 4). This

¹¹ Ibid., 28. Trans., Wang Fangyu, *Master of the Lotus Garden: The Life and Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)*, 19.

mark is difficult to read. It is a kind of pictorial writing, and it consists of obscure forms of Han characters.



Figure 4. Bada Shanren's personal mark.

Although contested today, the Qing scholar Gu Wenbin's 顧文彬 (1811–1889) explanation was widely accepted for a long time.¹² In this interpretation, the mark is regarded as Bada's own creation, which is the combination of four individual characters *San yue shi jiu* (三月十九), meaning the date "nineteenth day of the third month." The knowledge of Bada's life and political context helps scholars' understanding of the organization of the mark. After all, Bada first inscribed this mark in 1694, exactly fifty years after the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1644, and the "nineteenth day of the third month" is precisely the date that the last Ming emperor hanged himself. Thus, this mark was believed to conceal Bada's lamentation and loyalty for the former Ming.

This interpretation seems to be supported by Bada's works of art. In one of his 1697 landscape album leaves, Bada draws this mark after his poem on painting (Fig. 5):

Master Guo's modeling strokes are like small clouds,
 Old Dong's hemp-fiber is mostly on his trees.
 Try to imagine how people nowadays should understand the meaning of
 painting:
 Like Yifeng, who still painted the mountains and rivers of the Song.

¹² "諦視之, 上是'三月(十)九日', 乃思陵殉國諱日。" See Gu Wenbin 顧文彬, *Guoyun lou shuhua ji* 過雲樓書畫記 (*Records of Paintings and Calligraphy Collected in the Flying Clouds House*), volume 5, 21–22.

郭家皴法雲頭小，董老麻皮樹上多。想見時人解圖畫，一峰還寫宋山河。¹³

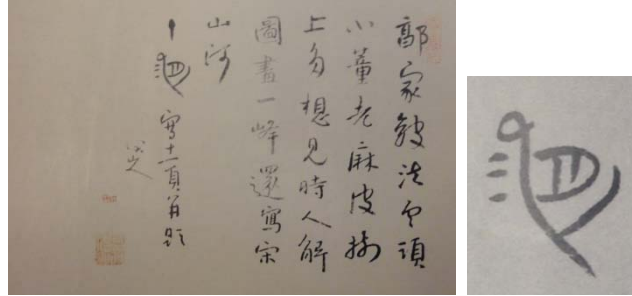


Figure 5. Bada Shanren, final leaf with inscription from *landscapae*, 1697.

Twelve album leaves, ink on paper, 23.5 × 34.1 cm. Chih-lo Lou Collection.

The Yifeng mentioned in the last line is the literary name of the Yuan painter Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269–1354), who lived under Mongol rule but still yearned for the former Song dynasty. According to Bada's poem, Huang's landscape depicts the "mountains and rivers of the Song" rather than that of the Yuan. Similarly, Bada's landscape is a representation of the former Ming dynasty. In this case, the presence of the personal mark *San yue shi jiu* resonates with and extends this hidden expression.

Such a reading of this tiny personal mark takes a prominent part in the reception of some mysterious art works by Bada. For example, Bada only paints an ink flower in a leaf of the 1694 *Anwan* album (Fig. 6) and draws a branch of bamboo in a leaf of the 1705 album (Fig. 7). These flower and bird paintings have simple forms of images and masterful arrangements of empty space, reflecting Bada's unique style, but they lack any textual cues to his expressions. Thus, the personal mark *San yue shi jiu* on those paintings plays a central role in evoking viewers' associations of the remnant theme.

¹³ See Fig. 5; Trans., Richard M. Barnhart, *Master of the Lotus Garden: The Life and Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)*, 141.



Figure 6. Bada Shanren, a leaf of *Flower* from the *Alwan* album, 1694. Twenty-two album leaves, ink on paper, 31.8 × 27.9 cm. The Sumitomo Collection, Japan.



Figure 7. Bada Shanren, a leaf of *New Bamboo* from the *Flower and Bird* album, 1705. Ten album leaves, ink on silk, 23.cm high. Shanghai Museum.

Even when Bada left his expressive poem on a painting, the appearance of the mark *San yue shi jiu* still has an effect on viewers' understanding of the artist's own words, and it can even complete dominate interpretation of the work. In a 1694 hanging scroll (Fig. 8), Bada paints two tiny and isolated birds against an empty background, and he inscribes a cryptic poem together with the aforementioned mark. Richard M. Barnhart translates the first four lines of the poem as follows:

Spring in Xizhou, slightly drunk,
At Nannei the flowers are already late.

Somewhere near me is the sound of a lone zither.

I wonder who is composing an elegy.

西洲春薄醉，南內花已晚。傍着獨琴聲，誰為挽歌版。¹⁴

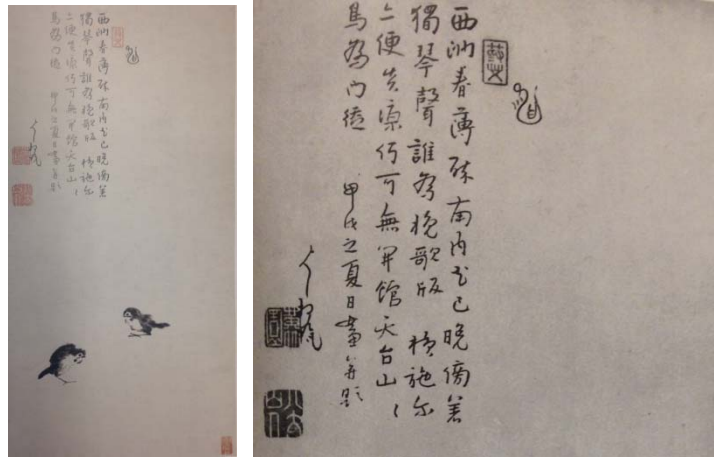


Figure 8. Bada Shanren, *Two Birds*, 1694. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 75.3 × 37.8 cm. Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou.

Barnhart translates the phrase *wan ge ban* (挽歌版) as an elegy. It suggests that the zither sound is mournful and the elegy is composed for the lost dynasty. In his essay, Barnhart continues to discuss the mark *san yue shi jiu* immediately after his explanation of this poem.¹⁵ There is no doubt that the personal mark and poem are fused as a coherent process through Barnhart's reading, shaping Bada's fixed image as a remnant of the Ming.

Zhu Liangzhi rebuts such an interpretation as Barnhart's by stating that *wan ge ban* cannot be treated as a term for an elegy; *wan* (挽) means "hold" and *ge ban* (歌版) is a kind of

¹⁴ The complete poem and inscription are as follows: "西洲春薄醉，南內花已晚。傍着獨琴聲，誰為挽歌版。橫施爾亦便，炎涼何可無。開館天台山，山鳥為門徒。甲戌之夏日畫並題。" See Fig. 8. First four lines translated by Richard M. Barnhart, *Master of the Lotus Garden: The Life and Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)*, 153.

¹⁵ Ibid., 153.

accompanying musical instrument.¹⁶ If so, the fourth line could be translated in this way: "who could hold the supplementary instrument to accompany my zither?"¹⁷ According to this reexamination, the poem focuses more on the feeling of solitude than on loyalty to the Ming dynasty. Significantly, Barnhart actually neglects the next four lines of this poem, which cannot effectively uphold the stereotypic reception of a remnant figure he proposes. In Zhu Liangzhi's opinion, terms like *shi* (施) in these four lines could find their roots in Buddhist texts.¹⁸ This poem actually describes Bada's understanding of Chan Buddhist teachings, including its emphasis on solitude and on the freedom of the mind when one is disengaged from the world.¹⁹ In contrast to Barnhart's interpretation, Zhu's moves away from the remnant image and establishes the interrelations between Bada's ideas and art in another way. It is worth noting that Zhu's reading of Buddhist disengagement in Bada's poem is not perfectly reconciled with the accompanying mark *San yue shi jiu*, whose canonical reception is nostalgia for the lost dynasty.

Wang Fangyu has noticed that in fact the proportion of Bada's poems clearly expressing his lamentation for the Ming dynasty, such as the aforementioned poem about the Yuan loyalist Huang Gongwang's landscape, is very small.²⁰ The other poems are either difficult to decipher, or they convey different ideas. Hence, Bada's actual image shaped by his texts and paintings should be much richer. This does not mean that the canonical reception of Bada's Ming remnant identity is wrong; after all, Bada's obscure expressions do encourage readers to associate his works with his most famous role as a Ming prince. In order to fully

¹⁶ See Zhu Liangzhi 朱良志, *Bada Shanren yanjiu* 八大山人研究 (Research on Bada Shanren) (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2010), 37–40.

¹⁷ I translate this line based on Zhu Liangzhi's interpretation.

¹⁸ See Zhu Liangzhi 朱良志, *Bada Shanren yanjiu* 八大山人研究 (Research on Bada Shanren), 38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37–40.

²⁰ See Wang Fangyu 王方宇, "Bada Shanren de shengping" 八大山人的生平 (Bada Shanren's Life), in *Bada Shanren quanji* 八大山人全集 (Complete Collections of Bada Shanren), volume 5, ed. Wang Zhaowen 王朝闻, 1031.

understand Bada's works, the following questions are important to consider: To what extent could one read Bada's life experience into his works? How closely are Bada's visual and textual clues associated with his remnant image?

Unfortunately, in many cases, Bada's abstract artistic strategies and fixed image as a remnant easily lead to oversimplified interpretations of his works. This section has analyzed the widely accepted reading of his mark *San yue shi jiu*. The next part will discuss the challenges this personal mark faced in the 1990s.



SHI YOU SAN YUE: PURSUIT OF ANTIQUITY AND LANGUAGE GAMES

The aforementioned prevailing reading of the personal mark *San yue shi jiu* emphasizes its correspondence to the date of the last Ming emperor's death. This coincidence is so powerful and persuasive, thus inevitably excluding other possible interpretations of links between the mark and Bada's works of art.

Wang Fangyu was the first to realize a concealed link: Bada did not draw this mark randomly on his works. Wang argues that Bada's artworks with this mark were "executed in the four years 1694, 1697, 1699, and 1705" and "each of these years contains an intercalary month."²¹ Nevertheless, Wang could not figure out the relation between the mark showing the date of the Ming dynasty's collapse and the years having an intercalary month. In his 1994 paper, Bai Qianshen finally solved the problem put forth by Wang.²² Bai does not limit his exploration to the restriction of the mark *San yue shi jiu* to those specific years mentioned

²¹ Wang Fangyu, "The Life and Art of Bada Shanren," in *Master of the Lotus Garden: The Life and Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)*, 34.

²² Bai Qianshen 白謙慎, "Bada Shanren huaya 'Shiyou san yue' kaoshi; fu Bada Shanren 'Yunchuang' yin xiaoji" 八大山人花押"十有三月"考釋: 附八大山人"芸窗"印小記 (Studies on Bada Shanren's Personal Mark "the Thirteenth Month"; Together with a Record on Bada Shanren's "Cloud Window" Seal), *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊, Vol. 12, No. 1 (April 1994): 120–131.

above. Rather, he steps back to question the validity of the dominant explanation of the mark and to examine the visual dimensions of the mark instead of the artist’s expression.

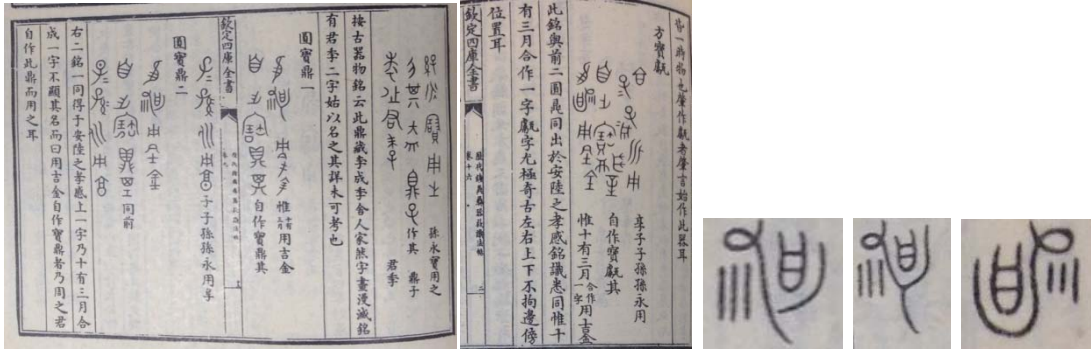


Figure 9. Xue Shanggong, *Lidai zhongding yiqi kuanzhi fatie*, in *Siku quanshu*, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), volume 9,15; volume 16, 2.

Bai Qianshen believes that this obscure mark was not Bada’s original creation but actually borrowed from existing ancient texts — in this case, the mark should have nothing to do with the last Ming emperor’s death and could not convey Bada’s nostalgia for the lost dynasty. Furthermore, Bai has been able to find the exact model of Bada’s personal mark from ancient marks (Fig. 9) that were inscribed in Zhou dynasty (c. 1046 B.C.E.–256 B.C.E.) bronze vessels and recorded in the Southern Song (1127–1279) scholar Xue Shanggong’s 薛尚功 book *Lidai zhongding yiqi kuanzhi fatie* 歷代鐘鼎彝器款識法帖 (Inscriptions on Bronzes and Master Calligraphy Works of Successive Dynasties). Xue’s book was re-published by the late Ming scholar Zhu Mouyin 朱謀壘 (1581–1628) during the reign of the Ming Emperor Chongzhen, and thus likely to be accessible to Bada.²³ In Xue’s book, the inscribed mark is understood as a combination of four characters *Shi you san yue* (十有三月). Here, this ancient mark has three different forms (Fig. 9). Their lines are flexibly bent, and the locations of *san* and *yue* are freely reversed.²⁴ Based on the basic Zhou dynasty mark, Bada’s personal mark (Fig.

²³ Ibid., 123.

²⁴ Xue Shanggong 薛尚功, *Lidai zhongding yiqi kuanzhi fatie* 歷代鐘鼎彝器款識法帖 (Inscriptions on Bronzes

4) is developed into six variants, all keeping the underlying principle of its composition. Bai Qianshen claims that *Shi you san yue* is a symbol of the intercalary month in Bada's artworks. After all, in the Shang and Zhou calendars, the intercalary month was arranged after the other twelve months — it was exactly the thirteenth month, namely *Shi you san yue*. Although from the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) on, the intercalary month was no longer put at the end of a year, Bada still used *Shi you san yue* as a substitute name for the intercalary month.²⁵ For example, in his 1694 *Anwan* album, Bada inscribes this mark as well as the characters *wu yue* (五月, the fifth month) — the fifth month was exactly the intercalary month of 1694. In his 1699 calligraphic work *Linhe ji xu* 臨河集序 (The Preface of the Linhe Collection) (Fig. 10.1), Bada also includes this mark and the date *qi yue* (七月, the seventh month), which was the intercalary month of 1699. Therefore, it is very likely that Bada's personal mark should be read as *Shi you san yue*, simply a straightforward and ancient form of dating characters. If so, the adoption of this mark would contribute an archaic flavor, rather than an expression of loyalty, to Bada's work of art.

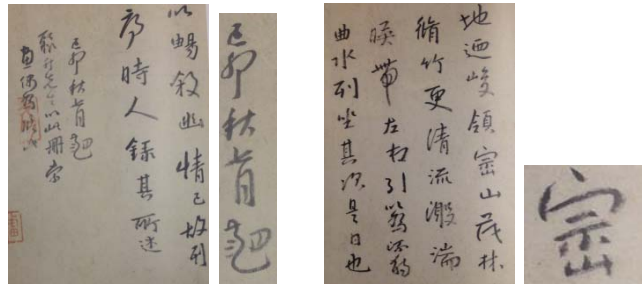


Figure 10.1, 10.2. Bada Shanren, leaves of *Linhe ji xu* from *Painting and Calligraphy* album, 1699. Sixteen album leaves, ink on paper, 25 cm high. Shanghai Museum.

and Master Calligraphy Works of Successive Dynasties), in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), volume 9, 15; volume 16, 2.

25 Bai Qianshen 白謙慎, “Bada Shanren huaya ‘Shiyou san yue’ kaoshi; fu Bada Shanren ‘Yunchuang’ yin xiaoji” 八大山人花押“十有三月”考釋：附八大山人“芸窗”印小記 (Studies on Bada Shanren's Personal Mark “the Thirteenth Month”; Together with a Record on Bada Shanren's “Cloud Window” Seal), *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊, Vol. 12, No. 1 (April 1994): 124.

Bada had a vast knowledge of classical literature and developed strong interests in ancient epigraphy. In 1694 — exactly at the time Bada first used the mark *Shi you san yue* — he created a group of calligraphic works (Fig. 11.1, 11.2), copying inscriptions on ancient stone drums and steles from the Eastern Zhou Period (771–221 B.C.E.). This rare example of Bada’s extant seal-script calligraphy keeps the pictorial features of that early script type and testifies to Bada’s pursuit of antiquity. In this case, it is understandable that this artist chose the ancient form of characters *Shi you san yue* as his personal dating mark in the same year.

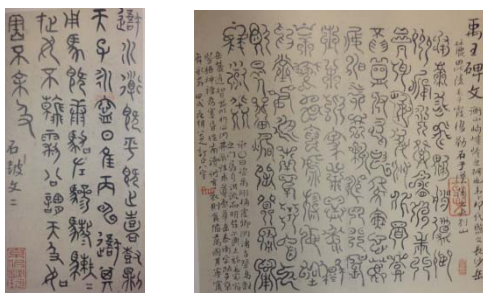


Figure 11.1, 11.2. Bada Shanren, two leaves from *Stone drum script and seal script* album, 1694. Fourteen album leaves, ink on paper, 17 × 8.3 cm. Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu.

Bada not only incorporated rare characters from epigraphy into his works, he also learned to play with scripts, such as re-arranging the compositions of characters. For instance, in his several calligraphy works titled *Linhe ji xu* (such as Fig. 10.2), Bada reverses the upper and lower parts of the character *chong* (崇); the method of this reversal is similar to that of the flexible exchanges between *san* (三) and *yue* (月) in the aforementioned personal mark traced to Zhou bronzes. In his cursive writing, Bada also skillfully used this strategy. Here is an example (Fig. 12):

Ascending the tower in the bamboo forest, I cannot be seen.

The birds are the first to know that I am looking for the path among the flowers.

竹裡登樓人不見，花間覓路鳥先知。²⁶

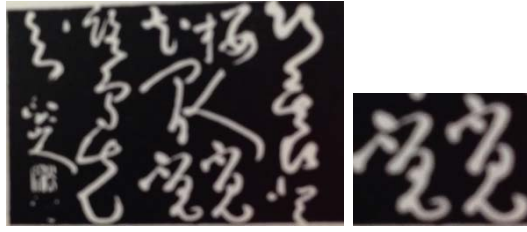


Figure 12. A rubbing of Bada's copy of a poem by the eighth-century poet Zhang Wei. See Wang Fangyu, "The Life and Art of Bada Shanren," in *Master of the Lotus Garden: The Life and Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)*, 36.

In these lines, Bada intentionally writes the two characters *bu jian* (不見) as if they are one, namely *mi* (覓), and puts it next to the single character *mi* (覓), which appears the same in the second line. Such juxtaposition shows Bada's fascination with playing intellectual games with his viewers.

Bada's friends also loved to play language games. When Bada was forty-nine years old, his friend Huang Anping 黃安平 painted a portrait of him, and another friend, Cai Shou 蔡受, left an inscription near Bada's image (Fig. 13). The first character of this inscription looks like the seal script, but it is unrecognizable for viewers. It consists of five individual characters, namely those for the five phases *mu* (木, wood), *huo* (火, fire), *tu* (土, earth), *jin* (金, metal), and *shui* (水, water). Then, Cai wrote:

Alas! *Ge* [namely Geshan, another of Bada's pseudonyms] has *Ge*,

But he stands among one, two, three, four, and five.

Ge doesn't have *Ge*, but transcends beyond five, four, three, two and one....

²⁶ This is a rubbing of Bada's copy of the eighth-century poet Zhang Wei's 張渭 poem "Chunyuan jiayan" 春園家宴 (Family Gathering in the Spring Garden). Discussed and translated by Wang Fangyu, "The Life and Art of Bada Shanren," in *Master of the Lotus Garden: The Life and Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)*, 36.

咦！个有个，而立于二三四五之間也。个無个，而超于五四三二一之外也...



Figure 13. Huang Anping (act. late seventeenth century), *Portrait of Geshan*, 1674. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 97 × 60.5 cm. Bada Shanren Memorial Museum, Nanchang.

This sentence is extremely difficult to understand. The modern scholar Xie Zhiliu claims that the first name of a member from the Ming imperial family would typically include a word with a radical from each of the five phases.²⁷ Hence, Cai Shou implied Bada’s identity as a Ming prince by putting the eccentric character of five phases in the beginning of his inscription.

The use of rare characters and the practice of language games were not unusual among the seventeenth-century literati. The Ming calligrapher Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636), who was highly esteemed in the early Qing period, said: “When ancient masters practiced calligraphy, they would not stick to the formal style, but emphasize the bizarreness.”²⁸ In addition, during the late Ming period, numerous publications on seal

²⁷ See Xie Zhiliu 謝稚柳, “Bada Shanren quming de hanyi he ta de shixi” 八大山人取名的含義和他的世系 (The Meaning of Bada’s Names and His Lineage), in *Bada Shanren quanji* 八大山人全集 (Complete Collections of Bada Shanren), volume 5, ed. Wang Zhaowen 王朝聞, 1038.

²⁸ “古人作書，必不作正局，蓋以奇為正。” See Dong Qichang 董其昌, *Huachanshi suibi* 畫禪室隨筆

characters and cursive scripts emerged, amplifying literati interest in ancient epigraphy. In this case, the pursuits of antiquity and bizarreness in works of art became a fashion and a manifestation of the immense erudition of the literati. For example, around 1652, the calligrapher Fu Shan 傅山 (1606–1684) produced a calligraphy handscroll that included a great number of rare variants of ancient characters in different calligraphic styles. Fu selected these characters from various ancient sources, such as *Guang yun* 廣韻 (Broad Rimes) and *Han Jian* 汗簡 (Paleographic Compilation).²⁹ For artists like Fu Shan, the use of rare ancient characters had a performative feature, designed for a very select audience — namely the learned literati.

Bada's work also follows this trend of pursuing antiquity, and it invites commentary within a specific audience. It is acknowledged that, in his later years, Bada sometimes painted for money, in order to make a living.³⁰ Huang Yanlü 黃研旅, a customer, wrote on Bada's landscape albums to point out the fact that Bada always painted in a merely perfunctory manner to satisfy the requests of salt merchants in the Xijiang area.³¹ But it was completely

(Jottings Created in the Huachan Room), in *Zhongguo shuhua quanji* 中國書畫全集 (Complete Collection of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting), volume 3, ed. Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖, Cui Erping 崔爾平 and Jiang Hong 江宏 (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1992), 1000.

²⁹ Bai Qianshen 白謙慎, “Xinxin wuyi yuchu yuqi—shi qi shiji shufajia shuxie yitizi fengqi de yanjiu” 新新無已 愈出愈奇十七世紀書法家書寫異體字風氣的研究 (Studies on the Seventeenth Century Calligraphers' Writing of Character Variants), *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2004): 113.

³⁰ Bada's contemporary scholar Wang Yuan (1648–1701) wrote that Bada was “a true master. His art go far beyond those of his peers. But he is poor and has to make a living by selling his calligraphy and painting.” See Hu Zhe 胡哲 and Jin Ping 錦平, “Mei Geng nianpu” 梅庚年譜 (Mei Geng's Biography Chart), *Duoyun* 朵雲, No. 53 (December 2000): 294–320. Trans., Joseph Chang, “The Life and Painting of Bada Shanren,” in *In Pursuit of Heavenly Harmony: Paintings and Calligraphy by Bada Shanren from the Estate of Wang Fangyu and Sum Wai*, 8.

³¹ Huang Yanlü 黃研旅: “因念跋齋文人，書既誠懇，八公因不以草草之作付我，如應西江鹽賈者矣。” See Cai Xingyi 蔡星儀, “‘Heshui yidan zhi sanwen’—tan tan Bada Shanren maihua de wenti” “河水一担直三文”——谈谈八大山人卖画的问题 (Two Buckets of River Water Are Worth Three Coins—Talking about the Issue of Bada Shanren Selling His Paintings), in *Bada Shanren quanji* 八大山人全集 (Complete Collections of Bada Shanren), volume 5, ed. Wang Zhaowen 王朝聞, 1093.

different when Bada's paintings were produced for his friends. In a colophon on his calligraphic work *Linhe ji xu*, Bada commented that "two buckets of river water are worth three coins," alluding to the cheapness of his works.³² Here, when Bada wrote to the recipient Xingzhai 省齋, he used a very casual tone and even mocked himself — it could only happen between close friends. Moreover, in the attached letter, Bada answered Xingzhai's question about whether he quoted some Chan literature in his aforementioned colophon, and then, he asked Xingzhai "not to let Abbot Shi Tao see it (namely his comment on the colophon)."³³ This suggests that Bada's works were always displayed and appreciated by their common friends, such as the Buddhist painter Shi Tao 石濤 (1642–1707). All these painters and viewers formed a like-minded community. As should be noted, in the letter mentioned above, Bada did not explain the reading of his personal mark *Shi you san yue*, which also appears in the colophon of that calligraphic work. This suggests that Xingzhai did not ask Bada about the mark, and Bada did not think Xingzhai would have questions about it. Therefore, although Bada's language games created a bewildering sense of ambiguity and incomprehension in subsequent readers, they were unlikely to puzzle Bada's intended audience, who had similar knowledge and interests.

Bada's love of language games and ancient characters complicates his image as the stereotypic if brilliant Ming remnant. For one thing, we see that he had richer and more diverse life — for instance, he also played jokes and shared academic interests with his friends. It is dangerous for viewers to establish an ossified pre-conceived idea of Bada, which can mislead them as to the nature and meaning of Bada's language and art.

³² "河水一担直三文" Trans., Wang Fangyu and Richard M. Barnhart, *Master of the Lotus Garden: The Life and Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)*, 283.

³³ "禪家方語未載，切勿與石尊者見之。" Trans., Wang Fangyu and Richard M. Barnhart, *Master of the Lotus Garden: The Life and Art of Bada Shanren (1626–1705)*, 283. Apparently Xingzhai had written to Bada to ask him about the origin of that saying "two buckets of river water are worth three coins."



GE XIANG RU CHI: MUTENESS OR NOT?

After clarifying the meaning of the personal mark *Shi you san yue*, this section re-examines one of Bada's paintings that displays it. I hope thereby to avoid the common bias of seeing only the artist's loyalty to the Ming and, instead, react appropriately to the nuances of Bada's expression.

In the 1694 hanging scroll (Fig. 8), Bada depicts two isolated birds without settings, and writes a poem above them. As mentioned, Zhu Liangzhi has persuasively argued that this poem reflects Bada's Chan Buddhist thoughts, emphasizing the notion of *Kong* (空, Emptiness) and solitude in the world.³⁴ The comparison between the small birds and the large empty space extends this expression. Along with the dating mark *Shi you san yue*, Bada inscribes another personal mark formed by four cursive characters *Ge Xiangru chi* (个相如吃) — some strokes are linked to ones nearby, and thus these combined as a single, unified form. This mark means “*Ge* (namely Geshan 个山, another pseudonym of Bada) and Xiangru stutter.” Xiangru might be a reference to the famous Han writer Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (c. 179–117 B.C.E.) who is said to have stuttered. According to his biographer Chen Ding, Bada and his father also suffered from stuttering or muteness; but Chen also suggests that Bada actually feigned muteness in order to avoid unwanted social interactions — “Bada writes a large character *Ya* (啞, mute) on a fan, and when he does not want to speak to someone, he will hold this fan up.”³⁵ Thus, the mark *Ge Xiangru chi* on this hanging scroll might convey Bada's unwillingness to speak, which perfectly echoes the expressions of the solitary existence and the Buddhist disengagement in the accompanying poem.

However, Bada's creation of this hanging scroll is itself proof of his efforts to express

³⁴ See Zhu Liangzhi 朱良志, *Bada Shanren yanjiu* 八大山人研究 (Research on Bada Shanren), 36–40.

³⁵ “父某，亦工書畫，名噪江右，然啞啞不能言。甲申國亡，父隨卒。人屋承父志，亦啞啞。”“又聞其于便面上，大書一啞字。或其人不可與語，則舉啞字示之。” See Chen Ding 陳鼎, “Bada Shanren Zhuan” 八大山人傳 (Bada Shanren's Biography), in *Yuchu xinzhì* 虞初新志 (New Records of Yu Chu), volume 11, ed. Zhang Chao 張潮 (Japan: 1823), 3, 5. Another version of this anecdote: “一日，忽大書啞字，署其門，自是對人不交一言。” See Shao Changheng 邵長蘅, “Bada Shanren Zhuan” 八大山人傳 (Bada Shanren's Biography), 27.

himself and also a call for sympathetic viewers to respond. In other words, there exists a tension between Bada’s intention to keep silent and his actual action to express himself. Bada’s ambivalence toward his art practice might explain the puzzlement and uncertainty of his meaning — just like raising the fan with the word “muteness,” Bada set obstacles into his language and art. He created his art to be understood only by a very select group of elite literati.

Paradoxically, this does not mean that the average reader and viewer could not appreciate Bada’s art. Actually, the ambiguities of Bada’s language and art make them more intriguing to a larger audience. For example, in a leaf (Fig. 6) from Bada’s 1694 *Anwan* album, the artist leaves the center of this painting void, enfolded by a branch of ink flower; on the right, Bada puts together the personal mark *Shi you san yue*, the signature Bada Shanren, and the seal form of the mark *Ge Xiangru chi*. The arrangement of the abstract image and the mysterious characters gives viewers enough space for imagination to establish the interrelations between the artist’s past and the present of the work. It relies on the power of ambiguity, which greatly enlarges the potential for expression in Bada’s works.

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The Effect of Technology on Chinese Character Amnesia and Evolution

Conor Pyle

ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the nature and learning of Chinese characters and whether and how they might be affected by technology, in particular Short Message Service (SMS) or texting. The character-based system has clear differences with alphabetic writing systems. Because it is an open-ended system, the characters number in the thousands; rote learning and practice are needed to learn the most common. The written language has changed over the years with the coining of new characters and simplification as well as the introduction of Pinyin. With technology there are now new forms of communication and means of inputting characters, and this is seen to be both a source of neologisms and of concern to some that certain characters may be forgotten.

INTRODUCTION

The introductory sections will set the scene for the discussion, with a look at the development of Chinese characters and how they are composed. If they are ideographs, as some hold, then in principle they should be readily readable, if not writable. Alternatively, an understanding of their construction will allow us to see how they might be learnt and recalled. Looking at the history and influence of characters allows us an appreciation of their significance and an

understanding of the widespread concern if they were to lose currency. As the oldest writing system still in use, with a large literature, characters have been described as being core to Chinese culture.¹ The fact that characters have continuously changed over their history may allow us to see modern developments as part of the same process.

Chinese characters have a long history and are considered to be strongly bound with culture; they can act generally as a universal means of communication. While the characters have changed, they represent a continuity not found elsewhere. The writing system has also excited the imaginations of western thinkers, with characters having been thought to directly represent ideas in the mind, bypassing language. They have inspired psychoanalysts, poets, and cinematographers.

In the later sections we will look at technology, in particular SMS, and the development of “text speak.” This will allow us to consider in what directions the written language may travel. The phenomenon of character amnesia will then be looked at to see if it is a real issue.

HISTORY OF CHINESE CHARACTERS

McKenzie² relates the legend of Cangjie, who lived under the Yellow Emperor five thousand years ago and who got the idea of characters from seeing the traces of a bird’s feet in the sand. Historically, the system originated in the Shang dynasty, 1300 BCE. It is one of the three earliest writing systems, the other two being Mesopotamian writing from 3200 BCE and that of Meso-America from 650 BCE.³ It is thought the characters started as pictographs, from there developed into symbols in the Zhou dynasty, and were standardised after that.⁴ In the three

¹ Tenner, 2011.

² McKenzie, 1970: 9.

³ Schmandt-Besserat and Erard, 2008.

⁴ DeFrancis, 1984: 240.

millennia up to the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911 there were changes in the characters, but not in the system itself.

Lindqvist⁵ shows how a lot of our knowledge of the earliest characters started in 1899, when old characters were found on bone. Bone or tortoise shell had writing carved on it with a knife by an oracle for divination purposes, and was then heated till it cracked. This magico-religious origin differs from the mercantile origin of Sumerian script.⁶

As well as being ancient, the Chinese script is widely used. The same text can be read by speakers of Chinese "dialects" that differ as much as English does from German.⁷ Intelligibility extends beyond its borders to countries that imported the characters: Liu⁸ uses the term "brush talk," in the context of the portability of the material sign; Chinese people communicating with Japanese and Koreans. However DeFrancis⁹ cautions against too literal a notion of universality.

DEBATE OVER THE IDEOGRAPHIC NATURE OF CHARACTERS

A recurrent debate on Chinese characters has been about whether they represent ideographs. In the strongly pro-ideograph version of this argument, they are seen to bypass language and transmit meaning straight to the mind. This idea is dated by DeFrancis¹⁰ to Catholic missionaries in the sixteenth century and later. There is a tradition of Western interest in Chinese characters amongst other facets of Chinese culture; what MacDonald¹¹ terms the appropriation of China in the West. He mentions Ezra Pound viewing Chinese as both

⁵ Lindqvist, 1989: 16–17.

⁶ McGilchrist, 2009: 279.

⁷ McNaughton and Li, 1999: 21–22.

⁸ Liu, 2004: 205.

⁹ DeFrancis, 1984: 151–153.

¹⁰ DeFrancis, 1984: 133–134.

¹¹ MacDonald, 2007.

modern and ancient; with aspects of facticity and universal signifiers. He claims Pound is looking at the *xiangxing*, or pictographic category, with the idea of throwing the visual image onto the mind, or “phanopoiea.” Russell¹² also avers that characters represent ideas.

Fenollosa¹³ states that the Chinese written language in comparison to alphabetic scripts has “absorbed the poetic substance of nature ... the phonetic word does not bear its metaphor on its face.” Ezra Pound’s foreword to the same volume¹⁴ describes how “the running legs and the gripping hand of the Chinese pictures will give considerable vividness to the meanings and their relation.” Fenollosa¹⁵ concedes that the pictorial clue of many Chinese ideographs cannot now be traced. Nevertheless a pictorial method, whether exemplified by Chinese or not, would be the ideal world language.

The Soviet cinematographer Eisenstein¹⁶ drew inspiration from Chinese characters, claiming that they originated as portraits. Then with two characters undergoing a copulative (*huei-i*) or combinative process, the result is not the sum but the product; two depictables represent the undepictable. Eisenstein related this to montage, which he regarded as primary to cinematography: shots that are depictive are placed into intellectual contexts and series. In other words, Eisenstein¹⁷ shows how a material form, the character or ideogram, can produce an abstract conceptual result transcending the form. However, MacDonald¹⁸ makes the point that Eisenstein made similar claims for Western portmanteau words.

Tom Sun¹⁹ takes a psychoanalytic approach to characters, suggesting that characters moved from pictograms to ideograms to phonograms. The study of ideograms in his view

¹² Russell, 1922: 34–35.

¹³ Fenollosa, 1936: 28–29.

¹⁴ Ibid : 6.

¹⁵ Ibid.: 34–35.

¹⁶ Eisenstein, 1957a.

¹⁷ Eisenstein, 1957b.

¹⁸ MacDonald, 2007.

¹⁹ Tom Sun, 1923.

gives a wealth of psychological information, and gives an insight into unconscious thought over five thousand years ago. Jung,²⁰ though, says that the Rorschach inkblot or Cyrillic script (in someone who did not know Russian) can trigger free associations. Knowledge of character construction may therefore be needed in order to understand them, rather than relying on them as universal signs.

Associations are varied and can depend on the perceiver. It has been argued that divine knowledge appears in the etymology of characters: for example, *lái* 来 to come, or *wǔ* 午 noon, include the Christian cross.²¹ Gu²² compares Western and Eastern traditions, quoting De Saussure as saying Chinese writing is ideographic.

In opposition to this view, Liu²³ states that Chinese characters are not ideographical and that this is a European idea of a universal language, transcribing abstract thought without speech or sounds. Kennedy²⁴ also refutes the ideograph as does DeFrancis,²⁵ who debunks what he calls the ideographic myth. On a numerical basis, ideographs are only a minority of the characters, while the majority of characters include a phonetic part. Characters themselves are words, not ideas. DeFrancis adds that, not only are characters phonetic rather than ideographic, but there cannot be an ideographic system.

Both points of view have been looked at elsewhere. Hiraga²⁶ adds some support to the logographic view in the context of Japanese kanji. Japan has kept kanji characters, having borrowed them from China,²⁷ but also has developed kana syllabaries.²⁸ Hansen²⁹ gives support to the notion of ideographs.

²⁰ Jung, 1964: 10–11.

²¹ Porter, 2001: 67.

²² Gu, 2000.

²³ Liu, 2011: 70.

²⁴ Kennedy, 1958.

²⁵ DeFrancis, 1984: 133ff.

²⁶ Hiraga, 2006.

²⁷ DeFrancis, 1984: 65–66.

There may be some small mental link; Xiao & Treiman³⁰ look at the iconicity of characters. U.S. adults with no knowledge of Chinese were given an English word or phrase and two Chinese characters to choose from. The accuracy rate was 53.6 percent, slightly but significantly higher than expected by chance.

COMPOSITION OF CHARACTERS

There are 214 basic components or radicals: these are used to organise characters in dictionaries. McNaughton and Li³¹ write that characters are of six types, and thus form a logical system; these are as follows, with examples:

1. pictures: 月 *yuè* 'moon'.
2. symbols: 下 *xià* 'below'.
3. sound-loans: 萬 *wàn*; originally 'scorpion', came to mean 'ten thousand,' as it sounded similar.
4. sound-meaning compounds: 包 *bāo* 'to wrap' + 魚 *yú* 'fish' = 鮑 *bào* 'salted fish'. The sound may have changed in the intervening time so it is not always a reliable guide.
5. meaning-meaning compounds: 女 *nǚ* 'woman' + 子 *zǐ* 'child' = 好 *hǎo* 'good'.
6. reclarified compounds: 廷 *tíng* 'courtyard' added the 广 *yǎn* 'lean-to' radical to give 庭 *tíng* 'king's courtyard'.

The first, second, and fifth types seem ideographic in nature. Over 80 percent of characters, however, correspond to type 4, sound-meaning.³² In principle, these could act as useful mnemonics for someone who speaks the language.

²⁸ Ibid.: 158.

²⁹ Hansen: 1993.

³⁰ Xiao and Treiman, 2012.

³¹ McNaughton & Li (1999: 12–14)

³² Marta (2012)

READING AND WRITING CHARACTERS

As the characters are not purely ideographic in nature, whatever their origin, they need to be learned by rote. This takes constant practice and years of learning, making it especially hard for foreign learners.³³ Some characters may be used daily but rare ones almost never, so there will always be a need for recourse to a dictionary. Demick³⁴ cites a figure of 4–5 hours a day for 9 years in school needed to learn 3000 characters. The upshot is that Chinese children take two years longer to learn the writing system than learners of alphabetic scripts. Writing systems are always under selective pressure to have symbols that are easy to recognize and to write.³⁵

Studies using fMRI show brain activity differs when reading Chinese characters compared to alphabetic scripts.³⁶ Chinese readers use both brain hemispheres, whereas alphabetic readers use the left one.³⁷ There may be benefits to learning Chinese characters: a study of Chinese logographs showed that practice in visuo-spatial processing and memory caused greater cognitive fluidity.³⁸ Wang and Thomas³⁹ state that there is no evidence that imagery-based mnemonics confer an advantage beyond the immediate test of recall. In fact, greater forgetting was found under conditions of mnemonic learning compared to rote learning. Comparing Japanese and U.S. subjects, a study found that the Japanese subjects of all ages performed significantly better on visual recall.⁴⁰ This is in the context of Japanese

³³ Moser (1991)

³⁴ Demick (2010)

³⁵ Changizi and Shimojo, 2005.d

³⁶ Deng et al., 2008.

³⁷ Marta, 2012.

³⁸ Kazi et al., 2012.

³⁹ Wang and Thomas, 1992.

⁴⁰ Sugishita & Omura (2001)

students needing to learn around 2000 Chinese characters. Chung⁴¹ recommends presenting characters before Pinyin in teaching second-language learners of Chinese; he posits this is due to limitations of the working memory.

SCRIPT REFORM

Script reform was mentioned by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century, and in the nineteenth century in China proposals for script reform were made.⁴² Lu Xun, in the twentieth century, is quoted as advocating reform as well: 漢字不滅, 中國必亡 *Hànzì bù miè, Zhōngguó bì wáng!* ("If the sinographs are not destroyed, China will certainly perish!"). Two types of reform have been debated, simplification of characters and Romanisation. Mao is described as accepting that characters would have to be replaced, but they were simplified instead.⁴³

The simplification removed variant characters, reduced the number of strokes, and incorporated some cursive informal forms that were already in use.⁴⁴ This process started in the 1950s.⁴⁵ Principles of sound loans were followed, using simpler phonetic elements. Simplification took place only in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Traditional characters are still used in Hong Kong and Taiwan⁴⁶. *People's Daily Online*⁴⁷ suggests that simplified characters may have been used much earlier than has been thought: for example, the simplified 万 *wàn* for 萬 has been dated from around 1600. The Chinese word *líng* 'zero' has the original character 零, but there is an established alternative 〇⁴⁸.

⁴¹ Chung, 2007.

⁴² Mair, 2002.

⁴³ DeFrancis, 1984: 247–248, 257.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 260–261.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 75.

⁴⁶ McNaughton and Li, 1999: 18–19.

⁴⁷ *People's Daily Online*, 2004.

⁴⁸ McNaughton and Li, 1999: 88, 301.

Different types of Romanization were developed over the years⁴⁹ before the acceptance of Pinyin.⁵⁰ Pinyin is now the official Romanization in the PRC.⁵¹ One motivation to switch was to increase literacy. For example, Vietnam shifted from characters to the alphabetic system, allowing more people to read classical literature⁵².

TECHNOLOGY FOR CHINESE CHARACTER INPUT

Despite mid-twentieth century discussion on character abolition and full Romanization, technology for character input developed apace. Lin Yutang invented the electric Chinese typewriter in the 1940s.⁵³ Predictive text was developed as early as 1956 on typewriters⁵⁴: characters were reorganized into natural language clusters, rather than dictionary order. This dramatically speeded up input. There was a demand for an increase in output with the rise of political campaigns: a two-to-four-fold increase was achieved to produce over four thousand characters an hour. With the development of PCs, new methods of input using a keyboard were developed. Bruggeman⁵⁵ gives a summary of the pronunciation, structure, combination, and direct code input methods. Research is underway to develop faster methods than the currently popular Pinyin-based inputs.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ DeFrancis, 1984: 242–247.

⁵⁰ Ibid.: 263.

⁵¹ McNaughton and Li, 1999: 7.

⁵² DeFrancis, 1984: 201–202.

⁵³ Williams, 2010.

⁵⁴ Mullaney, 2012.

⁵⁵ Bruggeman, 2013.

⁵⁶ Sun et al., 2013.

SMS IN CHINESE

There are various methods of entering text in Chinese on a mobile phone. Text can be input as Pinyin: a list of characters comes up matching the Pinyin, ignoring tones, and the inputter chooses the correct character and enters it. Another method is a pad on which the character is drawn with the finger or a stylus. With the pressure to increase speed and to accommodate space constraints, new idioms may appear.

Some examples of text-speak in Chinese will allow us to see how the language might be changed, or might lead to some characters dropping in frequency of use or being replaced. These points are based on information provided by two Chinese consultants, one from Beijing, the other from Nanjing. Both are native Mandarin speakers. Table 1 shows characters being substituted for similar sounding words. A contraction is exemplified by 不要 *bú yào* 'no need' becoming 表 *biǎo* literally 'to show.'

Table 1: Puns and contractions in common use.

Text Speak	Mainstream	English Translation
偶 <i>ǒu</i>	我 <i>wǒ</i>	I or me
美眉 <i>měi méi</i>	妹妹 <i>mèi mei</i>	younger sister
妹纸 <i>mèi zhǐ</i>	妹子 <i>mèi zi</i>	younger sister
稀饭 <i>xī fàn</i>	喜欢 <i>xǐhuān</i>	like
这是肿么回事?	这是怎么回事?	what's up?
<i>zhè shì zhǒng me huí shì</i>	<i>zhè shì zěn me huí shì</i>	
我木有 <i>wǒ mù yǒu</i>	我没有 <i>wǒ méi yǒu</i>	I don't have
酱紫 <i>jiàng zǐ</i>	这样子 <i>zhè yàng zǐ</i>	like that
表 <i>biǎo</i>	别 <i>bié</i> , 不要 <i>bú yào</i>	don't; no need
表跟着我	不要跟着我	don't follow me
<i>biǎo gēn zhe wǒ</i>	<i>bú yào gēn zhe wǒ</i>	

Table 2: Roman letters used in place of characters, from the initials of the Pinyin.

Text Speak	Characters	Pinyin	English translation
DD	弟弟	<i>dìdì</i>	younger brother
GG	哥哥	<i>gēge</i>	older brother/boyfriend
JMS ¹	姐妹	<i>jiěmèi</i>	sisters
MM	妹妹	<i>mèimei</i>	younger sister
XDJM	兄弟姐妹	<i>xiōngdì jiěmèi</i>	brothers and sisters

¹ JM from Pinyin, and 'S' as in the English plural

Table 3: Numbers used as abbreviations.

Text Speak	Characters	Pinyin	Number Pinyin	English translation
520	我爱你	<i>wǒ ài nǐ</i>	<i>wǔ èr líng</i>	I love you
1314	一生一世	<i>yī shēng yī shì</i>	<i>yī sān yī sì</i>	all the life, forever
55	呜呜	<i>wū wū</i>	<i>wǔ wǔ</i>	boo hoo
886	拜拜了	<i>bài bài le</i>	<i>bā bā liú</i>	bye

One master's degree student in Beijing, in her early twenties, who is studying Chinese political science, said that text has an impact on the manner of communication, making people feel more familiar to each other, and that it can be easier to say things via text. Text communication uses emoticons extensively, such as O(^-^)^O, meaning "very happy." Emoticons can also be used to express complex meanings, and often other intentions.

There are interjections such as the following, known as 语气字 *yǔ qì zì* 'tone/mood/manner of speaking.'

- Humor: 呵呵 *hēhē*; 嘻嘻 *xīxī*; 嘿嘿 *hēi hēi*
- Surprise: 哇 *wā*
- Song: 唱 *chàng*

Texts are a rich source of riddles and metaphor, partly as a result of a seventy-character limit. Metaphors may be used in everyday life in text to express or describe topics,

for example, from telecoms, 欠费 *qiàn fèi* 'short of money, out of credit' is used in relationships, along with metaphorical extensions borrowed from IT such as viruses, formatting, trash, and recharging⁵⁷. Phonetically 挨劈 *āi pī* is used for 'IP phone card.'⁵⁸ Similarly, Xing⁵⁹ states that new words get different meanings through homonym transfer, making the language more vivid. This is widely used and popular. SMS enriches everyday language, and that is of interest to scholars and lay people alike.⁶⁰ Mu⁶¹ discusses the idea that SMS and its seventy-character limit are leading to concision and punctuation omission. SMS is considered here as a hybrid of written and spoken language. A semiotic perspective can analyse how words are built up by letters, numbers, and punctuation.

WESTERN ALPHANUMERIC CHARACTERS

It should be pointed out that alphanumeric characters are also used outside of SMS. Where there are alphabetic initials that cannot be converted to Chinese characters, they are freely mixed in. Kuo⁶² has an example of a mix of characters, Arabic numerals, and Latin script:

我 2000 年毕业，在 ADC 公司工作了五年

'I graduated from university in 2000, and worked at ADC for five years before I came to this company.'

⁵⁷ Zeng, 2009.

⁵⁸ Pan, 2012.

⁵⁹ Xing, 2012.

⁶⁰ Xia, 2009.

⁶¹ Mu, 2006.

⁶² Kuo, 2009: 42.

Wu,⁶³ discussing Chinese as it is used today, has these borrowings from English:

- Combination of acronym and character⁶⁴:
Soho 族 (*soho zú*) 'worker from home' from Small Office Home Office
- Rare example of word borrowed in its entirety⁶⁵:
PARTY 'party'
- Acronym⁶⁶:
DIY – used for music, art etc.
- Borrowing sound, but using a character⁶⁷:
酷 *kù* originally 'ruthless' or 'strong (of wine)' now by sound analogy, 'cool'

Other Roman initials include *CU* 'see you'; and *OIC* 'oh I see' as well as blends like *3ks* from 'sān (+ks)' = 'thanks.'⁶⁸

CHARACTER AMNESIA

Character amnesia has been widely reported online in blogs and news articles. Lee⁶⁹ reported that it was already an issue for people who had gone online five years before. Mair⁷⁰ refers to this paper in the context of its being a long-time issue with people forgetting characters and having to check their mobile phones constantly to look up characters. However, even before computers, some characters were forgotten, such as 噴嚏 *pēntì* 'sneeze'; few people could

63 H. Wu, 2003.

64 Ibid.: 65.

65 Ibid.: 79.

66 Ibid.: 42.

67 Ibid.: 114.

68 Pan, 2012.

69 Lee, 2001.

70 Mair, 2010.

remember both characters. Rarer characters take time to look up, but learning them by rote in the first place takes time too.⁷¹

Xu⁷² cites a survey of 2072 people, 83 percent of whom say they occasionally forget characters. In 2008 the Education Ministry found teachers complaining about declining writing ability and is now implementing programs to get students writing more. The phenomenon of amnesia has a phrase: 提笔忘字 *tí bǐ wàng zì* ‘take up pen, forget character.’⁷³

Mair⁷⁴ refers to the government program *dújīng yùndòng* 读经 运动 ‘Movement for reading Classics’ where pupils spend time reading and writing old texts in the traditional way. The success of this solution is as yet unknown as the old texts are difficult. The likely options are to accept the new technology, or have a mix of characters and Pinyin; the example of Japan as a country using a mixed script (with kana) is cited.

BBC News⁷⁵ reported on calligraphy classes being organized for students to get them in the practice of writing again. This is known as the “Get Close to the Mother Tongue” campaign.⁷⁶ Calligraphy is historically prized and is the foundation of Chinese art.⁷⁷ Tenner⁷⁸ cites an interview with calligrapher Ma Tiankuo, who traces the change to the 1980s, when calligraphy was still practiced at school. With the advent of computer classes then, less time was spent on practicing calligraphy, so amnesia became more of a problem. He holds that Chinese characters embody the spirit and essence of the Chinese people, and that their forgetting is part of a global issue with declining handwriting.

The links between technology and character learning also have been studied. Tan et

⁷¹ Custer, 2010.

⁷² Xu, 2010.

⁷³ Moxley, 2010.

⁷⁴ Mair, 2012.

⁷⁵ BBC News, 2011.

⁷⁶ J. Wu and Liao, 2012.

⁷⁷ Zhu, 2011.

⁷⁸ Tenner, 2011

al.⁷⁹ suggests that Pinyin on e-devices hinders reading, while Lee et al.,⁸⁰ discussing multimedia, state that passive learning is not as good as actively writing. Marta⁸¹ finds that the brain is being rewired towards alphabetic or syllabary processing.

The consultant from Beijing said, apropos character amnesia, that she has not seen evidence that amnesia is causing simpler characters to be used instead of rarer or more complex ones, and that amnesia was a problem before the electronic era. Street signs, for example, are seen occasionally with wrong characters.

DISCUSSION

Chinese characters have developed and changed throughout the centuries from pictures to words. These characters can convey both phonetic and semantic information, though in both cases this may now be obscure. It could be argued that recent developments with phonetic shortcuts are following this tradition of having a sound mnemonic. New characters enter the written language as required: 他 *tā*, the generic third person singular pronoun, had a new character 她 *tā* 'she' invented in the late 1910s in response to movements of gender equality and women's liberation; by the 1920s 它 *tā* 'it' had been added.⁸²

Literacy has been a concern, leading to simplification and Romanisation. The system of using both characters and Pinyin became known as 'walking on two legs.'⁸³ There was some resistance to Pinyin,⁸⁴ but pupils learning Pinyin in 1962 are described as increasing the number of characters in their texts.⁸⁵ This suggests that an end result could be the

⁷⁹ Tan et al., 2013.

⁸⁰ C. Lee et al., 2008.

⁸¹ Marta, 2012.

⁸² Gang, 2012.

⁸³ DeFrancis, 1984: 268.

⁸⁴ Ibid.: 273.

⁸⁵ Ibid.: 283.

co-existence of the two systems. If, as Demick⁸⁶ says, characters are the “soul of every Chinese person,” this may be the best solution. Calligraphers are still studying and practicing them.⁸⁷

An alternative is that they may change via attrition, with simplified characters and Pinyin encroaching. The examples of text-speak above suggest some ways this might occur, with informality leading to new constructions. Neologisms under influence from the west are not new to China. Liu⁸⁸ describes modern Chinese as having undergone major changes over the past century through the translations of European texts.

Text-speak shows the primacy of the spoken language, using puns and homonyms. With Pinyin initials and borrowed English expressions there is a possibility of expressing more within the constraints of the medium. DeFrancis’s assertion⁸⁹ that characters themselves are phonetic rather than ideographic seems to agree with this. There are established homophones in the language such as 巴士 *bā shì* ‘bus’ as opposed to the traditional 公共汽车 *gōng gòng qì chē* ‘bus.’

Up to fifty thousand characters are quoted by some as an upper limit in Chinese dictionaries,⁹⁰ although only around two thousand have been published by the PRC government for purposes of adult education.⁹¹ So many of the rarer ones may not have been widely learnt and need to be looked up in a dictionary. As they are not purely ideographic, they cannot be understood without special instruction and practice.

Mass literacy was one of the original aims of script reform. DeFrancis⁹² mentions the view that only the privileged mastered characters enough to be able to read old literature. In

86 Demick, 2010.

87 Mair, 2002.

88 Liu, 2004: 125.

89 DeFrancis, 1984: 133.

90 Lindqvist, 1989: 8.

91 McNaughton and Li, 1999.

92 DeFrancis, 1984: 201–203.

attacking the idea of characters as indispensable, he suggests that characters can exist alongside Pinyin so that people could study the translated classics and have broader literacy.

Despite ideographic theories, characters do not appear to be direct transmissions of meaning bypassing the language. This is where the scope for amnesia creeps in: practice and muscle memory are needed to be able to perform. The system itself has logic, and a thorough understanding of the radical, phonetic, and semantic elements reinforce their ability to act as mnemonics. Lee et al.⁹³ state that hands-on practice of writing characters is needed, rather than passive learning.

There are parallel concerns in English concerning text-speak, but Crystal⁹⁴ alleviates the worries and calls it a natural change. Crystal⁹⁵ says texting is unlikely to change the language; it is just an adaptation to the constraints in the form. Abbreviations and omitting vowels are peculiar to this need. It is worth remembering that this is a relatively recent phenomenon: Faulkner & Culwin,⁹⁶ in a text messaging study, say that by 2005 texting was used by many people as a preferred means of communication. Bennett et al.,⁹⁷ describing the debate on digital natives who have grown up with this new technology, caution against "moral panic."

The subjects of character amnesia and text speak can be regarded as separate though related issues. Rare characters may drop out of use, and a person may no longer be able to write a character if he or she does not have an electronic device to hand. The new text-speak lexicon is optimized for speed of input and reflects current fashions. Any of these could have implications for the survival of rare or difficult characters. It might also be the case that it is the most common characters anyway that become initialized and converted to numbers, and these are the ones least likely to be forgotten. At the same time, the rare characters are

⁹³ C. Lee et al., 2008.

⁹⁴ Crystal, 2008a.

⁹⁵ Crystal, 2008b.

⁹⁶ Faulkner and Culwin, 2005.

⁹⁷ Bennett et al., 2008.

available in the electronic databases as required, so in that sense would be less likely to disappear.

Character amnesia is not new, but may be more prevalent now if people are not writing the characters in the traditional way. The return of writing classes in school may address this. The coexistence and comingling of characters and Pinyin seems likely. It could be thought that this represents the best of possible worlds, with script reform for daily use happening of its own accord. At the same time, characters will remain in place for more formal situations. Text messaging can draw on this fund of characters for neologisms, word play, and concise communication.

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Character Amnesia:

An Overview

Christina Hilburger

INTRODUCTION

The number of smartphone users will reach a staggering 2.29 billion worldwide by 2017.¹ While these and other technologies help us accomplish innumerable tasks, they also generate unintended consequences. For example, when it was suggested that students use spell-check to aid in writing, people started asking whether or not this tool hindered their learning how to spell.² Issues are even more complex when talking about East Asian scripts. China, for example, has the oldest continuously used writing system in the world.³ The inherent features of the Chinese script have made the integration of modern technology especially tricky. However, languages and scripts, including Chinese, are not fixed but constantly evolving over time.⁴

It is estimated that the number of smartphone users in China will reach 599.3 million by 2017 and will increase to 687.7 million by the year 2019.⁵ One relatively new unintended

¹ Statista (2015). *Smartphone users worldwide 2014–2019*, accessed Dec. 12, 2015, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/330695/number-of-smartphone-users-worldwide/>

² Nancy Patterson, “Spelling: Blame It on Technology” *Voices From the Middle* Vol. 9, No. 3 (2002), p. 40.

³ John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1986), p. 40.

⁴ Zhou Youguang, *The Historical Evolution of Chinese Languages and Script* (Ohio: The Ohio State University, Foreign Language Publications and Services, 2003).

⁵ Statista (2015). *Smartphone users in China 2013–2019*, accessed Dec. 15, 2015, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/330695/number-of-smartphone-users-worldwide/>

consequence of using technology in East Asia is the apparent increase in the difficulty individuals experience in writing characters by hand. This phenomenon has been dubbed “character amnesia.” This overview seeks to provide helpful context for understanding the problem, examining the factors that led up to the increase of character amnesia, the phenomenon itself, and its implications.

PHONETICIZATION

By the time of the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 a number of indigenous phoneticization systems had been developed.⁶ These systems were necessary for representing the sounds of spoken Chinese. An early system created in 1913, called the National Phonetic Alphabet, aimed to promote literacy.⁷ Rather than utilizing the letters of a Western alphabet, this system employed simple phonetic characters to represent sounds. The shapes of these symbols were derived from Chinese characters.⁸ This system, also known as Bopomofo or Zhùyīn Zīmǔ (注音字母), is still used in Taiwan today. Phonetic systems have helped to solve a variety of problems that cannot easily be addressed with traditional Chinese writing, including the ordering of indexes and dictionaries. With regard to literacy, phonetic systems do not require the memorization of individual characters for writing. That is, by learning the sounds of such symbols, people are able to become literate more quickly.

A second form of the National Phonetic Alphabet eventually was developed, and this did use Roman letters.⁹ The Wade-Giles system was another form of Romanization, developed by Herbert Giles in the mid-nineteenth century. Wade-Giles continued to be the system of choice for transcription in the English-speaking world for most of the twentieth century. However, in 1958, this system was replaced by Hanyu Pinyin (汉语拼音). Pinyin helped to

⁶ Wm. C. Hannas, *Asia's Orthographic Dilemma* (Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), p. 24.

⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

reduce some of the ambiguity that results from homophony in the Chinese language.¹⁰ That is, Chinese has many characters that are distinguishable from each other when written, but that have identical pronunciations.¹¹ The Wade-Giles system separates individual syllables, usually represented by one Chinese character, with a space. Pinyin, on the other hand, uses a space to separate words rather than syllables from each other, the majority of Chinese words being composed of two or more characters. Some issues still arise with regard to word segmentation and Pinyin, but it is nevertheless very useful. Today, in regions where Chinese is spoken, the learning of Pinyin starts in primary school.

DIGRAPHIA

Chinese characters and Romanized Pinyin each serve a distinct purpose. To understand why this is so, it is important to note the difference between language and script. Language is the stream of sounds we use to convey meaning; fundamentally this is a "mental phenomenon."¹² Scripts are used to record language, and it is possible for a single language to be represented by more than one script. Two distinct scripts for one given language is a phenomenon known as "digraphia." The increasing use of Pinyin alongside characters has been seen as evidence for an emerging digraphia in the "Sinosphere."¹³ For example, on a Language Log post written by Prof. Victor H. Mair of the University of Pennsylvania, a photograph of a child's essay that was

¹⁰ Jie Huang, "Retrieval of Chinese Language Titles in Pinyin: A Comparative Study," *Information Technology and Libraries* Vol. 23, No. 3. (2004), p. 95.

¹¹ For more on information retrieval in China in the early 1980s, see Yu Jinfeng and Xiao Zhongyi, "Chinese in the Computer: Efficiency in Input and the Role of Nested Element Analysis," *Information Processing & Management* Vol. 19, No. 5 (1983).

¹² Wm. C. Hannas, *Asia's Orthographic Dilemma* (Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 238.

¹³ Victor H. Mair, September 25, 2013, "Character amnesia and the emergence of digraphia," *Language Log*, accessed Dec. 13, 2015, <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=7142>

being shared on social media is discussed.¹⁴ In this essay the child uses Pinyin when he/she is unable to produce the needed character (see Fig. 1).

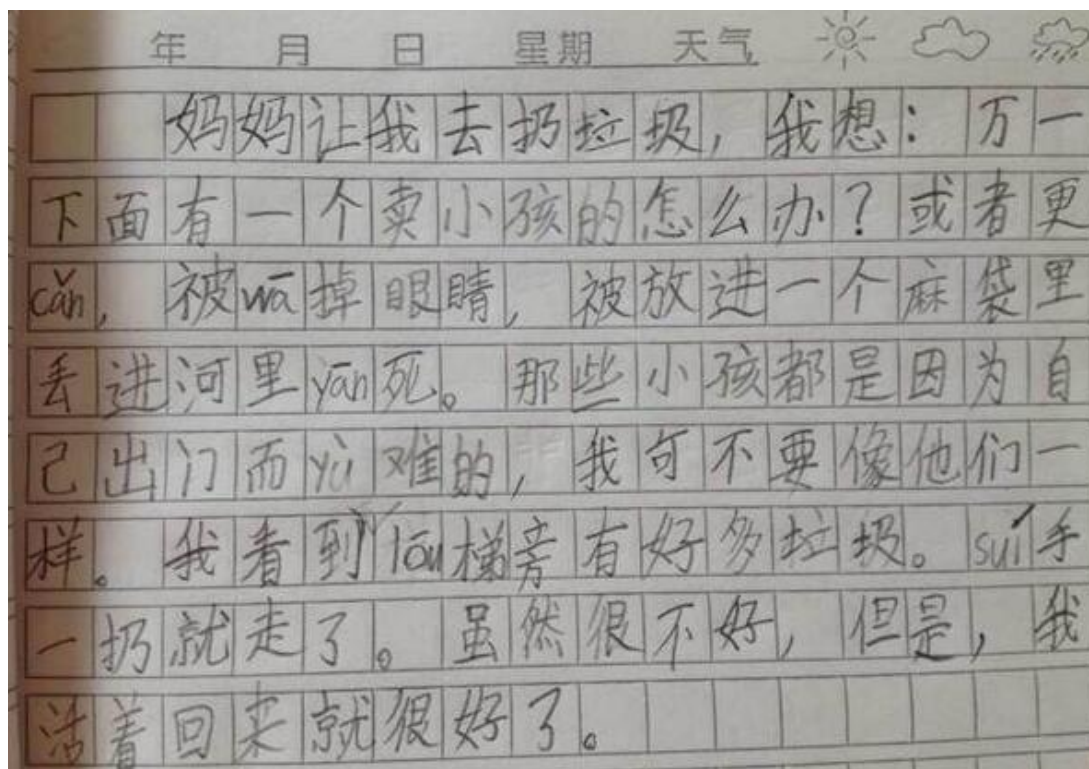


Figure 1

While some doubted the authenticity of this example, it is not an isolated incident. Prof. Mair wrote another Language Log post, which includes a photograph of an elementary school student's diary entry that was being shared in the Chinese media.¹⁵ This essay shows that when the child did not know how to write the character she used Pinyin (see Fig. 2). In this example the identity of the student is included, which Prof. Mair suggests makes it less likely that the entry was fabricated.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Victor H. Mair, November 9, 2014, "A child's substitution of Pinyin (Romanization) for characters," *Language Log*, accessed Dec. 14, 2015, <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=15644>

¹⁶ Ibid.

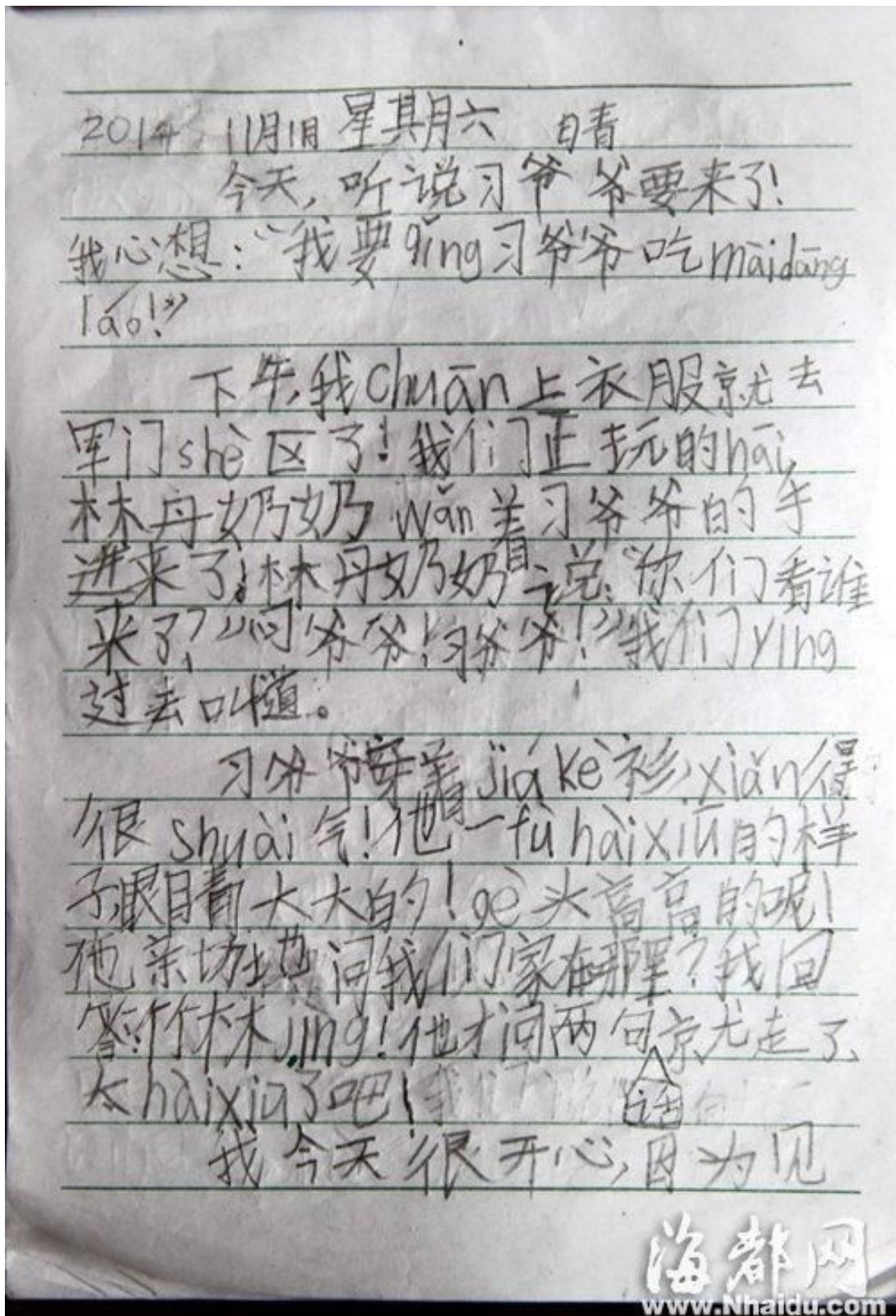


Figure 2

Not only is Pinyin used in the place of forgotten characters, it also serves as an additional prompt when one cannot remember the pronunciation of a given character in texts. This can be especially helpful for learners of Chinese as a second language. For example, in Li Kunwu's graphic-novel autobiography, *A Chinese Life*,¹⁷ characters that appear in a panel are translated into English, but the Pinyin is there to remind one how to pronounce the characters. This is useful whether a person is completely unable to read characters, or whether they merely have trouble recognizing one or two of them. That is, it is a useful tool for new learners, and also for native Chinese speakers who have forgotten characters.

¹⁷ At one time Li Kunwu specialized in propaganda comics. *A Chinese Life* is supposed to give Western readers insight into China's evolution through his illustrations. Many of the pages include the translations, Pinyin, and characters. Li Kunwu, *A Chinese Life* (London: SelfMadeHero, 2012).



Figure 3. 坚决粉碎我校的资反路线

Jianjue fensui wo xiao de zifan luxian:

"Cut our school's capitalist rebels to pieces!"

COMPUTERIZATION OF CHINESE CHARACTERS

The coding of Chinese characters has been going on for well over a century now, starting with the telegraphic numeral code in 1880.¹⁸ This code used four digits to represent one character, and employed ten thousand different coded characters (0000–9999) for use in telegrams.¹⁹ Hanyu Pinyin became the international standard in 1982. The People's Republic of China based this phonetic system on Mandarin, the most commonly spoken Chinese dialect.²⁰ It has been essential in establishing what has been called a “cyber highway,” which brings Chinese culture, including language and script, to the international arena.²¹ In the early nineties, however, East Asian information processing continued to lag behind other areas of the world. This was the case even after decades of research and debate on the topic. The lag was largely due to the complexity of dealing with characters in computers. The four-digit codes that had been used for serial ordering in dictionaries were too difficult to memorize for inputting characters into computers. To address this lag, many inputting methods were developed. Some of these inputting methods were based on the coding of individual radicals, though, because of the intrinsic features of the Chinese language,²² the efficiency of these systems was questioned.²³

This was a pivotal moment for East Asian information processing. Some were even

¹⁸ Zhou Youguang, *The Historical Evolution of Chinese Languages and Script* (Ohio: The Ohio State University, Foreign Language Publications and Services, 2003), p. 91

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Harry Tong and Linda Jin, “Recombinant Chinese Pinyin system for efficient processing of information in Chinese” *Computer Standards & Interfaces* Vol. 20 (1998), p. 25.

²¹ Zhou Youguang, *The Historical Evolution of Chinese Languages and Script* (Ohio: The Ohio State University, Foreign Language Publications and Services, 2003), p. 11.

²² Zhou Youguang, “Intrinsic Features of Chinese Language as Applied in Word Processing on Computers,” in *Characters and Computers*, ed. Victor Mair and Yongquan Liu (Burke, VA: IOS Press, 1991).

²³ Ibid.

calling this period the "Warring States Period" (Zhànguó shíqí 战国时期) of codification.²⁴ While some of these systems were relatively efficient for inputting characters, they were still difficult to learn and use, especially for the nonspecialist.²⁵ Experts suggested that many of the issues that existed with inputting characters could be solved through the use of Pinyin.²⁶ Yongquan Liu believed that, because of this, digraphia would first be achieved in the field of Chinese Information Processing.²⁷ This was, ultimately, an accurate prediction. While some methods use root shapes for inputting, people often choose to use Pinyin-to-character conversion methods for typing.

NETIZENS

After the Internet officially was launched in the United States and its services became more widely available, the world became increasingly globalized, thanks in part to the widespread use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies. In mainland China, Internet services have been continuously developing since 1994. By the end of 2014 China had 649 million Internet users, with an increase of 31.17 million in that year alone.²⁸ Mobile Internet users in China reached 557 million by the end of 2014, for an annual increase of 56.72 million.²⁹

²⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁵ Harry Tong and Linda Jin, "Recombinant Chinese Pinyin System for Efficient Processing of Information in Chinese" *Computer Standards & Interfaces* Vol. 20 (1998).

²⁶ For more on the early history of characters in computers, see Victor H. Mair and Yongquan Liu, eds., *Characters and Computers* (Amsterdam, Oxford, Washington, Tokyo: IOS Press, 1991), a volume based on the International Symposium on East Asian Information Processing conference held at the University of Pennsylvania in 1990.

²⁷ Yongquan Liu, "Difficulties in Chinese Information Processing and Ways to Their Solution," in *Characters and Computers*, ed. Victor Mair and Yongquan Liu (Amsterdam, Oxford, Washington, Tokyo: IOS Press, 1991), 9.

²⁸ China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) (2015). *Statistical Report on Internet Development in China*, accessed Dec. 15, 2015, <http://www1.cnnic.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/201507/P020150720486421654597.pdf>

²⁹ Ibid.

These mobile Internet users accounted for 85.8 percent of the netizen population, an increase of 4.8 percent from 2013.³⁰ With the increase of mobile Internet users, the number of instant messaging users has grown, with 588 million instant messaging users in China, growing by 55.61 million in a single year.³¹ The impact of the Internet, for China in particular, has been significant. Not only has it had a major impact on language usage,³² but the emergence of netizens in China has also given rise to questions about their political influence.³³

In December 2014, an overwhelming majority of the netizens in mainland China (78.2%) were between the ages of 10 and 39, with a good portion of them between in the age range 20–29 (31.5%).³⁴ This netizenship is, for the most part, made up of young people, though this has changed slightly as the population ages and devices become more user-friendly.³⁵ These users shop, chat, play games, send emails, read, listen to and download music, watch and download movies, etc., all online. The duration of time spent online has also been steadily increasing.³⁶ The online duration of China's Internet users per capita per week was 26.1 hours in 2014, which was an increase of 1.1 hours over the previous year.³⁷

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 56.

³² See Liwei Gao, "Synchoronic Variation of Diachronic Change," in *Chinese Under Globalization Emerging Trends in Language use in China*, ed. Jin Liu and Hongyin Tao (Singapore, Hackensack, NJ, London: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2012), p. 9.

³³ This study examines a nationwide representative survey data set, finding that Chinese netizens, as opposed to other types of media and non-media users, are more politically opinionated and more likely to be supportive of the norms of democracy and critical about the party-state and political conditions in China. See Ya-Wen Lei, "The Political Consequences of the Rise of the Internet: Political Beliefs and Practices of Chinese Netizens," *Political Communication* Vol. 28 (2011).

³⁴ China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) (2015). *Statistical Report on Internet Development in China*, accessed Dec. 15, 2013, <http://www1.cnnic.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/201507/P020150720486421654597.pdf>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

CHARACTER AMNESIA

Character amnesia, known as "Tíbǐwàngzì" (提笔忘字), which can be translated as "forgetting characters upon lifting the pen," was first brought to the attention of a wider audience in 2001 by Jennifer 8. Lee in her *New York Times* article, "Where the PC is mightier than the pen."³⁸ She interviewed a twenty-three-year-old named Li You, who said that there were some characters he could no longer write with a pen, but would have no problem typing out on a computer.³⁹ According to Lee, more than 97 percent of the computer users in China input characters using Pinyin. Lee believes that this and other mounting anecdotal evidence suggest that the use of computers for word processing is contributing to the increasing difficulty of writing characters by hand for Chinese speakers.⁴⁰

Today Chinese inputting methods utilize a standard ASCII⁴¹ keyboard. It does not require special training to use Pinyin, but typing speed is affected because the user has to choose the correct character from a list of characters that are phonetically similar. For example, if one were to type "shi" or "ma" on a keyboard, the top six most commonly used characters that correspond with "shi" or "ma" would show up, (see Fig. 4). The user only has to select the appropriate number for the desired character to be input for the context. This aspect of inputting is important because it requires users to recognize characters rather than produce their individual parts, which is likely the reason more people are experiencing character amnesia.

³⁸ Jennifer Lee, February 1, 2001, "Where the PC Is Mightier Than the Pen," *New York Times*, accessed Dec. 16, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/02/01/technology/where-the-pc-is-mightier-than-the-pen.html>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ascitable, accessed Dec. 11, 2015, <http://www.ascitable.com>.

shi

1 是	2 使	3 十	4 10	5 试	6 时
事	市	食	式	石	世
湿	屎	𩸭	师	史	诗
实	失	士	视	室	施
识	氏	饰	尸	势	适
示	埘	獅	始	呻	什
Frequency Radical Stroke Emoji Structure					

ma

1 吗	2 妈	3 嘛	4 马	5 𠮩	6 骂
码	麻	玛	嬷	唛	蚂
嫫	孖	抹	摩	犸	杓
蟆	麼	嗎	馬	碼	罵
媽	瑪	媽	驀	痲	馮
嫫	麻	唛	𠮩	𠮩	碼
Frequency Radical Stroke Emoji Structure					

Figure 4

Learning to write Chinese characters is notoriously difficult.⁴² It requires practice, and lots of it. The processes taking place in the brain while writing Chinese characters are complex. Recognition is one aspect of remembering characters, but muscle memory is an important part of it, too. When a majority of writing is done using computers or mobile devices, the brain is essentially re-wired. Writing on the computer using Pinyin inputting methods, especially for individuals learning Chinese as a second language, becomes an endless series of multiple choice questions and educated guesses based on component recognition. The two different methods — learning to write Chinese characters and writing using Pinyin — activate two

⁴² David Moser, "Why Chinese Is So Damn' Hard," *Pinyin.info*, accessed Dec. 13, 2015, <http://pinyin.info/readings/texts/moser.html>

different parts of the brain. One study has even found that learning to write Chinese characters influences the brain’s network for reading.⁴³

Whether typing on a computer or texting on a mobile device, oftentimes users do not even have to type out the entire word before being given the likely character combination (see Fig. 5). For example, when typing “老师” (laoshi), one only needs to type in “lao s” or when typing “图书馆” (tushuguan), one only needs to type in “tu shu g” before the appropriate characters appear. The implications of this should be evident. The ability to recognize rather than remember and reproduce characters could fundamentally change one’s relationship to the written language.

⁴³ This study had students from a college Chinese class learn 30 characters in a character-writing condition and 30 characters in a Pinyin-writing condition. After the students learned the characters, images of the brain were collected that showed different networks being used during the reading situation. They also found specific effects of character writing in greater activation (relative to writing with Pinyin), suggesting that character writing establishes a higher quality representation of visual-spatial structure of the character and its orthography. They also found evidence that suggested that learning by doing (character-writing) invokes greater interaction with sensorimotor information during character recognition. See Fan Cao, Marianne Vu, Derek Ho Lung Chan, Jason M. Lawrence, Lindsay N. Harris, Qun Guan, Yi Xu, and Charles A. Perfetti, “Writing Affects the Brain Network of Reading in Chinese: A Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging Study,” in *Human Brain Mapping*, vol. 34 (2013).

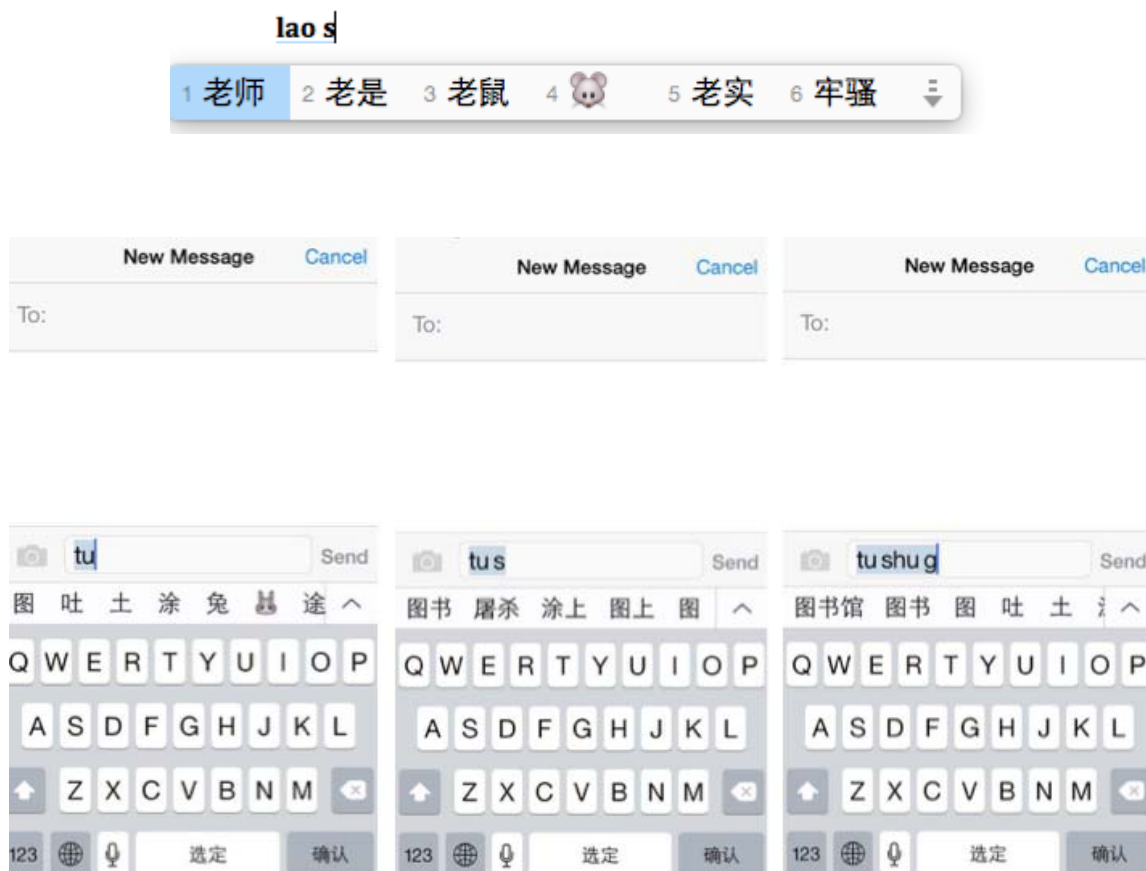


Figure 5

The term “Character Amnesia” was first mentioned in another blog post written by Prof. Victor Mair in 2010.⁴⁴ A decade earlier, technology had already affected people’s ability to write Chinese characters. Professor Mair wondered if this was further affected by the popularization of texting.⁴⁵ Some suggested that the stroke-based Wubi Input Method (Wubi zixing shuru fa 五笔字型输入法) might be a cure for character amnesia, but the shortcomings of this method have already been pointed out.⁴⁶

44 Victor H. Mair, July 22, 2010, “Character Amnesia,” *Language Log*, accessed Dec. 14, 2015, <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=2473>.

45 Ibid.

46 See Rebecca Shuang Fu, “Character Amnesia: The Unavoidable Trend toward the Romanization of Traditional Chinese Handwriting,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* Vol. 224 (2012).

Soon thereafter, an article discussing contestants' difficulties in writing the word "Toad" at the Chinese Character Dictation Conference was published.⁴⁷ However, as Prof. Mair points out in another Language Log post, the author does not mention the influence of technology at all. Rather, he attributes the problem to the simplification of characters.⁴⁸ An image of a shopping list for dumpling (jiaozi 饺子) ingredients, originally from an article written by John DeFrancis,⁴⁹ discussed on Language Log,⁵⁰ is even more suggestive. What was worth noting about this example is that this was not a young child using Pinyin, but a Chinese Academy of Social Sciences researcher. When they were unable to remember how to write the character they scribbled out the failed attempt and replaced it with Pinyin (see Fig. 6).

⁴⁷ Dan Kedmey, August 15, 2013, "What the Word 'Toad' Can Tell You About China's Modernization," *Time Magazine*, accessed Dec. 12, 2015, <http://world.time.com/2013/08/15/what-the-word-toad-can-tell-you-about-chinas-modernization/>

⁴⁸ Victor H. Mair, August 16, 2013, "Of toads, modernization, and simplified characters," *Language Log*, accessed Dec. 10, 2015, <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=5838>

⁴⁹ John DeFrancis, "The Prospects for Chinese Writing Reform," *Pinyin.info*, accessed Dec. 11, 2015, http://www.pinyin.info/readings/defrancis/chinese_writing_reform.html

⁵⁰ Victor H. Mair, October 18, 2014, "Dumpling ingredients and character amnesia," *Language Log*, accessed Dec. 10, 2015, <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=15217>

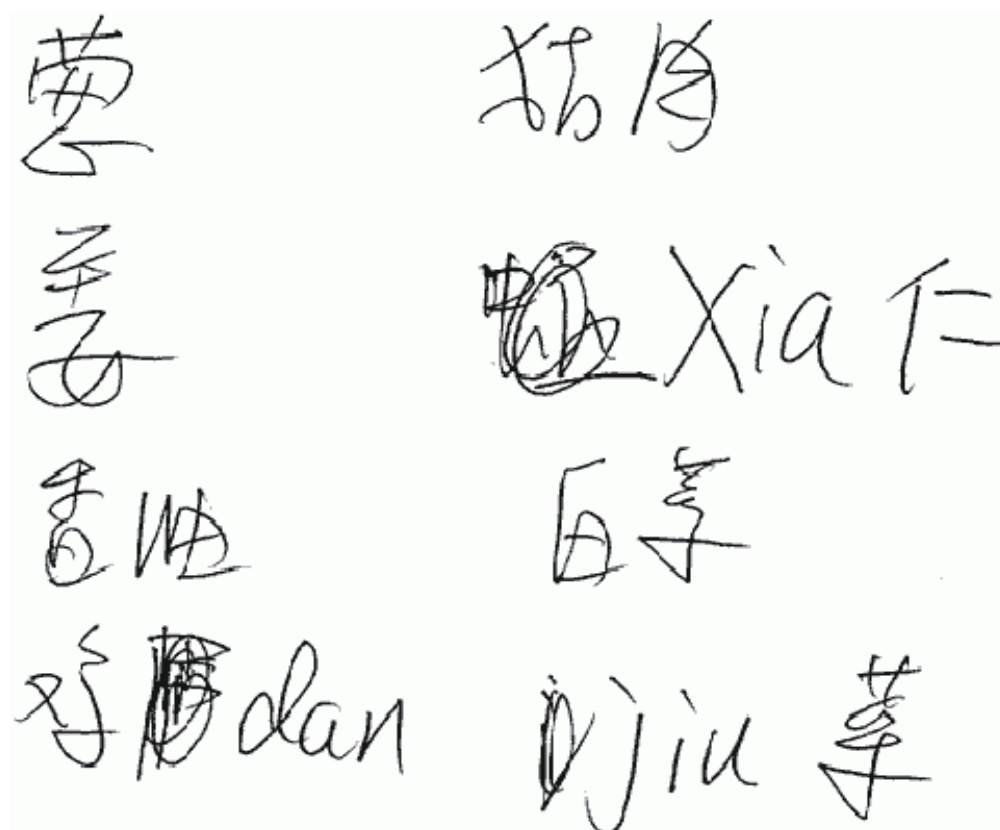


Figure 6

葱 cōng 'scallion'

猪肉 zhūròu 'pork'

姜 jiāng 'ginger'

虾仁 xiārén 'shrimp meat'

香油 xiāngyóu 'sesame oil'

白菜 báicài 'Chinese cabbage'

鸡蛋 jīdàn 'egg'

韭菜 jiǔcài 'chives'

This is not an example of a child using Pinyin to substitute for tricky or unknown characters, but an educated adult who has forgotten how to write standard ingredients for a basic recipe.

CONCLUSION

Forgetting how to write characters is not a new phenomenon. While empirical research on character amnesia is limited, it is reasonable to think that as people spend more of their time online, and depend more heavily on romanization for inputting, the difficulty of writing characters by hand would be exacerbated. Because of the strong cultural identity ties to the Chinese script, Pinyin is sometimes seen as a threat to Chinese culture as a whole. As against this sentiment, computer-mediated communication technology is not going away any time soon. Pinyin provides a user-friendly way to input Chinese characters. While it may be contributing to character amnesia, it provides people with a way to successfully communicate. If the goal is to give people the power to convey meaning through script, both Pinyin and characters are effective.

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Language Reform and Nation Building in Twentieth-Century China

Yixue Yang

ABSTRACT

This paper studies the relationship between language reform and nation building in twentieth-century China. In addition to treating language reform as one of the movements answering the demands for socio-political progress, this paper argues that language reform has always been in the forefront of the political contentions. By surveying and comparing major influential schemes alongside the historical process of Chinese language reform, it also tries to explore the political implications entangled with urges toward linguistic reform. This research offers new thinking about Chinese language reform in the twentieth century as an indispensable part of the nation-building project, and finds that these individual schemes shared a common ideological motivation — the desire to construct a modern nation on the Chinese territory, even though they took on different appearances and even appeared mutually exclusive.

Keywords: language reform, nation building, Chinese language, Latinization.

1. THE PROBLEMATIZATION OF THE CHINESE LANGUAGE

For most of its long history, the Chinese language enjoyed an unshakable orthodoxy not only in China, but also in the CJKV language circle. Deeply embedded in the heritage of historical evolution, Chinese characters symbolized knowledge and advanced civilization, spreading outward from China and taking new forms as Hanja in the Korean peninsula, Kanji in Japan, and Chữ nôm in Vietnam. The Chinese character became the equivalent of Latin script in East Asia when China was at its peak of state power and cultural influence. However, ebbing with Chinese pan-Asian impact, it was gradually localized (in the *kana* system in Japan), replaced outside China with the awareness of national consciousness (King Sejong the Great created the Korean Hangul), and the entry of Western colonizers (French colonizers promoted the Latin-based Vietnamese alphabet). The Chinese character nevertheless still retained its legitimate and absolute authority in the Chinese education system and imperial examination.

Though there were a few mild proposals for language improvement in the imperial past, the Chinese language experienced a sudden descent from being the once-glorious product of civilization to being the scapegoat for underdevelopment in the late Qing dynasty. The Opium War (1839–1842) opened the treaty ports, triggering the century-long sense of crisis of “the Sleeping Giant.” Viewing their country as utterly humiliated by Western gunpowder and warships, a group of Chinese intellectuals started to trace the poverty and feebleness of the Celestial Empire to the inaccessibility of education. And they found that the Chinese language stood in the way of spreading knowledge.

Their attacks were mainly concentrated on two aspects of the logographic writing system: its inability to correspond to sound, and its extreme complexity. In the book *Shuowen Jiezi* 《說文解字》, the Eastern Han scholar Xu Shen 許慎 characterizes the formation of Chinese writing under six principles 六書: the pictographic principle 象形, the simple indicative principle 指事, the compound indicative principle 會意, the phone-semantic principle 形聲, the phonetic loan principle 假借, the derivative principle 轉注. These six principles concern either the composition of the characters or their use.¹ But when it comes to

¹ John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 79.

pronunciation, one is dumbfounded, because these principles fail to suggest a direct link between speech and writing. Compared to foreign languages equipped with sophisticated alphabetic systems, the only way to bridge the gap between Chinese character and speech is through years of rote learning, which easily falls into oblivion. The same memorizing difficulty lies in writing the Chinese characters: the complex orthography and numerous strokes tend to frustrate beginners easily, and they unavoidably require considerable devotion of time and energy.

Therefore, the Chinese character, since its birth, remained a privilege of the elites, and illiteracy was commonplace. It served as the tool of political manipulation through the imperial examination system and a way of exerting power for those who could interpret political discourse. However, notably, it was exactly this small circle of scholar-officials who first gave the alarm in a moment of unprecedented national crisis, reminding later generations of Chinese people that language reform was a means to remedy, if not reconstruct, their nation.

2. FIXING THE CRUMBLING EMPIRE: EARLY ENCOUNTERS WITH ROMANIZATION

As mentioned above, the Chinese language underwent serious examination in the shadow of its foreign counterparts. The liberal intellectuals of the late Qing naturally looked at the foreign language systems that appeared to be successful for possible solutions. While a small number of pioneers were offering all sorts of plans for language reform, they were stalled between a hesitant ruling class and the faceless masses. Owing to this lack of support, their desire to achieve the return of the majestic Chinese empire by reforming its difficult language writing system was doomed to fail.

Two schemes are most representative of these efforts, centered in the 1890s: the *qieyin* letters 切音字 proposed by Lu Zhuangzhang 盧懋章, and the Mandarin letters 官話合聲字母 offered by Wang Zhao 王照. Both reformers were inspired by their experiences in foreign countries, where the advantages of an alphabet in linking writing with speech were obvious.

So when they returned to China with their reform schemes, they pleaded with the emperor to kindly approve their plans — like thousands of their Confucian predecessors throughout the imperial history of China, risking their lives in admonishing the rulers to do the right thing.

Lu Zhuangzhang was born in Tongan, Fujian Province, in the reign of the Xianfeng Emperor (1852). He received a systematic education in the Confucian classics beginning at the age of nine, but failed the imperial examination when he was eighteen. Following the emigration wave to Southeast Asia, he traveled to Singapore, where he was exposed to Western civilization and acquired the English language. He returned to Xiamen three years later, working for an English priest to create a Chinese-English dictionary. He also served as the intermediary between the Chinese and English merchants on the prosperous Southern coast. Lu's bilingual experience prompted him to recognize the innate "problems" of his mother tongue. He notes that, "the Chinese writing is perhaps the most difficult among all in the world today.... The erudite old scholars would find it hard to memorize, not to mention farmers, craftsmen, merchants, women, and children!" 中國字或者是當今普天之下之字之至難者...雖博學老先生尚且難盡記，況農工商賈夫人小子也哉！² The wide and successful application of Latin alphabets abroad led him to think about the possibility of applying the *qieyin* alphabet to reform the Chinese language. He reasoned that,

Even men and women above the age of ten in the most remote rural areas of civilized countries like Britain and the United States are all literate. Why so? It is because they use alphabetic letters, which not only link writing with speech, but are also simple to write.

² Ni Haishu 倪海曙, *Qingmo Hanyu Pinyin Yundong Biannianshi* 《清末漢語拼音運動編年史》 (*The Chronicle of the Chinese Romanization Movements in Late Qing*) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Press 上海人民出版社, 1959), 28.

故英美文明之國，雖窮鄉僻壤之男女，十歲以上，無不讀書…何為其然也？以其切音為字，字話一律，字畫簡易故也。³

As a result, he concluded that China should not differentiate itself from other countries, and that only by promoting the *qieyin* letters could China be rich and powerful again.

In 1892, Lu Gangzhang published the *Yimu Liaoran Chujie* (一目了然初階 (中國切音新字廈腔)), *Zhongguo Qieyin Alphabets Based on the Xiamen Dialect*, where he systematized the *qieyin* alphabetic system. Combining the Chinese traditional *fanqie fa* 反切法 and the Church Romanization developed by early Christian priests in the Southern Min region, he selected a total of fifty-five Latin scripts, including capitalized, lowercase, invented, and Greek letters, to represent the dialects of Xiamen, Zhangzhou, and Quanzhou, using the *shuangpin fa* 雙拼法⁴. He also advocated making the Nanjing dialect into the standard national language to re-unite the divided empire, both linguistically and territorially.

In 1898, Lu's *qieyin* system was brought to the imperial court as a response to the young Emperor Guangxu's call for reform. However, Lu's scheme was delayed and shuffled between several central bureaucracies because the nascent political reform was facing strong opposition. At the demise of the Hundred Days' Reform, the *qieyin* system was rejected a year later by the Ministry of Education, which criticized its creator as a person "confined to the present, and forgetting about the past and losing sight of the future" 然以泥今忘古，狃進昧遠，遂生種種之缺點⁵. Politics aside, the Ministry of Education did provide some technical insights into Lu's scheme: "the weaknesses can be summarized as follows, 1. The initials are incomplete, 2. the finals lack the checked tone, 3. the writing is bizarre" (要其疏漏，

³ Ibid., 21.

⁴ 雙拼法 might be translated as "the double-spelling method," since it combines the initials 聲母 and finals 韻母 in the Chinese language.

⁵ Fang Shiduo 方師鐸, *Wushinianlai Zhongguo Guoyu Yundongshi* 《五十年來中國國語運動史》 (*The History of the Chinese National Language Movement over Fifty Years*) (Taipei: Mandarin Paper News Press 國語日報出版社, 1969), 9.

約有 1.聲母不完全，2.韻母無入聲，3.寫法乖謬...三端).⁶ Lu was deeply disappointed about the failure of the Hundred Day's Reform, and his zeal for a restored Great Qing Empire was also shattered with the official denial of his *qieyin* letters. He later returned to Xiamen, and there he tried to popularize his scheme among common people.

Also frustrated was Wang Zhao, a member of the reformers who took refuge in Japan after the Hundred Days' Reform. In Japan, Wang was impressed by the profound ability of the Japanese *kana* alphabet to promote literacy. He contemplated this and attributed the failure of the Hundred Days' Reform to "the ignorance of the common people" 心中不見細民⁷. He further argued that "the richness and power of a nation lies in the expansion of and proficiency in each occupation ... not in a minority of elites" 余今奉告當道者，富強治理，在各精其業、各擴其職...不在少數之英俊⁸. Thus he envisioned the future of China, on the basis of the Japanese pattern by which language reform had led to the "civilizing" process of the whole population. To him, the salvation of the Chinese nation rested no longer in the hands of a few pursuing a radical evolution, but in a long-term reform of the language across the whole of society, from the bottom up.

Wang secretly returned to China in 1900 and published the book *Guanhua Hesheng Zimu* 官話合聲字母 in Tianjin. He raised objections to Lu Zhuangzhang's *qieyin* letters, considering the Latinized letters to be too simplistic and prone to blunders of pen. By contrast, Wang thought highly of the Japanese *kana*, pointing out that "the system is not only easy to remember, but also can prevent problems of confusion when written in a cursive form" 茲間用二筆三筆以至四筆，務求易記，且熟時化為行草亦不至渾殽⁹. Wang Zhao's "Mandarin" letters were conceived directly under the influence of the Japanese *kana*, taking

⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁷ Ni Haishu 倪海曙, *Qingmo Hanyu Pinyin Yundong Biannianshi* 《清末漢語拼音運動編年史》 (*The Chronicle of the Chinese Romanization Movements in late Qing*) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Press 上海人民出版社, 1959), 77.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 81.

some parts from Chinese characters as the syllables to indicate the initials and finals. In terms of spelling, Wang accepted Lu's application of *shuangpin fa*. But unlike the southern-based Lu's favoring of the Nanjing dialect, Wang regarded the Beijing dialect as the standard, and urged the unification of the national language as integral to the unification of the China.

Unlike Lu Zhuangzhang, whose appeal was limited to a small circle, Wang's Mandarin letters enjoyed comparatively wider reception and even later comparable regional impact, in large part due to his strategy of bottom-up popularization. As a political criminal, Wang had to stay incognito, and he was granted shelter in the house of Yan Xiu 嚴修, an official at the Hanlin Academy. In 1903, Wang Zhao risked establishing "the School for Mandarin alphabet" 官話字母義塾 in Beijing and reprinted his *Guanhua Hesheng Zimu* as its textbook. He also published *The Newspaper for the Mandarin Alphabet* 《拼音官話報》. Both the school and the newspaper achieved a certain level of popularity, and this helped promoted his Mandarin alphabet at the common level.

Not only did Lu's Mandarin letter system prove popular among the common people, but it also was recognized later at a higher level. When Wu Rulun 吳汝綸, the Chief Commander of Imperial University of Peking 京師大學堂總教習, was commissioned to investigate the Japanese education system in 1902, he came to notice the relationship between "national language education" and "national unity" when he was in correspondence with his Japanese colleagues. The Japanese educator Isawa Shūji stated to Wu that "the unification of language is the key to fostering the sense of patriotism of the people ... and the most urgent project of China today is the unification of language" 欲養成國民愛國心，必須有以統一之。統一維何？語言是也...察貴國今日之時勢，統一語言尤為急急者¹⁰. As soon as Wu Rulun returned to China, he was determined to adopt Wang Zhao's Mandarin letters. But he advocated this reform more on the basis of uniting the national language than because of the linguistic dimension of bringing speech into correspondence with writing. Aided by the joint efforts of bottom-level popularization and top-level support, Mandarin letters were put

¹⁰ Ibid., 91.

on the agenda of Ministry of Education. It was the first time the need for language reform had been officially recognized and incorporated into the national project.

Looking back on language reform efforts in the late Qing, we can see that it remained a concern for a small circle of liberal intellectuals in their early encounters with the foreign world. However, their role within the imperial framework was as the traditional scholar officials who unilaterally waited for the appreciation of the emperor. As the crisis of the Qing Empire exacerbated, the subject of the Chinese language reform underwent a transition from pure linguistic debate to a political battlefield with increasing significance in relation to the project of nation building. In the empire, the ability to act lay in the hands of a few members of the ruling elite, who long neglected or refuted the abjurations of the reform-minded intellectuals. Consciousness of the need for reform came far too late to the Qing rulers. The feeble empire crumbled completely a few years later in 1911 when a republic was declared to be founded on the same territory. Language reform as a fundamental pillar of national reconstruction continued, nonetheless.

3. IMAGINING A REPUBLIC: CONTENTIONS OVER A NATIONAL LANGUAGE

The 1911 Revolution took place overnight. The flags changed, and the territory once called an Empire was now a Republic. The humiliations and scars were all to be left behind, intertwined with the Imperial past, abominated, and ripe for radical reformation. The question now was how to modernize China as a “nation.” The food, the clothing, the housing, and the transportation styles were all under close scrutiny. Among many important concerns, Chinese language reform came back into the limelight, intended to represent the progressiveness of the new leaders. Newness was the fashion of time, but the problem was the ambiguity of “newness.” There were various reformation schemes sprouting up in different stages, all envisioning the creation of a national language unifying a new China.

Unlike the hesitant Qing government, the new administration wasted no time in making every effort to promote language reform. The Chinese language was no longer on the

wait list of reform, but was pushed to the forefront immediately, because the Chinese language as it was had been labeled "the past." In the founding year of the Republic, the Ministry of Education convened a meeting in Peking and approved the implementation of the Mandarin letters system nationwide. The Committee of Unifying the Pronunciation 讀音統一會 was established the same year. In 1928, after Chiang Kai-shek nominally united the North and South and established the Nanking government, the new Ministry of Education adopted G.R., 國語羅馬字, short for Guoyeu Romatzyh ("National Language Romanization"), as the Mandarin Phonetic Alphabets II (國音字母第二式)¹¹. In 1930, the Executive Yuan 行政院 changed the name "Mandarin Phonetic Alphabets" into "Mandarin Phonetic Symbols," to stress its adjunct function in annotating the Chinese characters, the irreplaceable cornerstone of the Chinese civilization.

Successive stormy activities released strong political signals and revealed the ideological orientation of Chiang's administration toward constructing a Republic based on the Chinese cultural heritage. He manipulated the language reform movement to consolidate his newly established authority, which was still under potential threat within the Kuomintang and across the Chinese territory. However, the political regime of Chiang was not established as smoothly as he wished, and language reform in the Republic became a target for ideological criticism. In fact, the linguistic contests of Chinese language reform were always entangled with political intentions.

The first struggle concerned central versus regional: whether the national pronunciation should follow the Beijing dialect or "the National Pronunciation" approved by the Committee of Unifying the Pronunciation in 1912. Initially, at the founding of the Republic, representatives from various provinces throughout China gathered at the Committee and devised a new pronunciation based on various topolects (spoken in the regions) to show the government's respect for diversity and the equality of the various provinces. However, incorporating the checked tone in the South, the retroflex consonant in the North, and some

¹¹ The previously endorsed Mandarin alphabet was regarded as the Mandarin Phonetic Alphabets I 國音字母第一式.

rare sounds from the languages of minority groups, the new pronunciation system was such a hodgepodge that it defied articulation for anyone and for application in language classes. Thus the “National Pronunciation” turned out to be a political ideal but a linguistic impossibility. On the other hand, some advocated the Beijing dialect as a substitute for “the National Pronunciation” in light of its linguistic clarity and simplicity. But this ran counter to the “national” agenda of the Republic because the Beijing dialect was often associated with the Manchu aristocracy and could hardly meet the political goal of appealing to all regions, especially the South.

The second dimension of the struggle was related to the issue of bourgeois elitism versus proletariat commonality, which characterized the competition between G.R. and Latinxua. The early twentieth century also witnessed the burgeoning of Communism in China, with the opposition of the Communists against the Nationalists extending beyond politics to the field of language. In 1926, G.R. was invented by a group of linguists led by Y. R. Chao as an alphabetic system to represent the national language based on the refined Beijing dialect. In an improvement over the previous *qieyin* and Mandarin systems, G.R. was able to indicate the four tones of the Chinese language via variations of spelling.¹² Although it was officially regarded as “Mandarin Phonetic Symbols II” in 1928, it did not enjoy wide usage and popularity, owing exactly to this complex “tonal spelling.” It was attacked by the Communist side as “the toys of the educated” 知識份子玩玩的玩藝兒¹³, and “the Western style concubine of the block-like Chinese characters” 方塊字底洋式派姨太太¹⁴, while the Mandarin Letters were seen as “the traditional-style wife” 國粹派大夫人¹⁵. The Communists

¹² John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 245.

¹³ Junshi Zheng 鄭君實, “Guoyu Luomazi de Quedian 國語羅馬字的缺點 (The Weaknesses of Gwoyeu Romatzyh),” in *Zhongguo Yuwen de Xinsheng* 《中國語文的新生》 (*The Rebirth of the Chinese Language*) (Shanghai: Shidai Press 時代出版社, 1949), 180.

¹⁴ Yupu Gao, 高毓溥, “Guoyu Luomazi he Ladinghua zhi Heliu 國語羅馬字和拉丁化之合流 (The Convergence of Gwoyeu Romatzyh with Latinxua),” in *Zhongguo Yuwen de Xinsheng* 《中國語文的新生》 (*The Rebirth of the Chinese Language*) (Shanghai: Shidai Press 時代出版社, 1949), 187.

¹⁵ Ibid.

took the tactic of labeling G.R. as the residue of the past, standing opposed to the looked-for reimagining of a modern nation.

In contrast to the "oppressive" G.R., the early Chinese Communists created a new alphabetic system based on the Romanization movement in Soviet Union. (To eliminate illiteracy among Chinese emigrant workers in the Far East, the Soviet government devised a Romanization script for them.) The new system, Latinxua, or Latinized New Writing, was first proposed in 1931 at the Meeting for Chinese New Writing held in Haishenwei. Its newness rested in its negation of the KMT's language reform and of Chinese writing itself. In the first place, the Communists regarded the KMT's language reform as mere bourgeois tricks, unrepresentative of the massive proletariat class. Secondly, they also found the Chinese writing system problematic: "it is a product of the feudal past, a tool of the ruling class to oppress the miserable people, and a barrier to widespread literacy, not suitable for the present society" 中國漢字是古代與封建社會的產物，已變成了統治階級壓迫勞苦大眾的工具之一，實為廣大人民識字的障礙，已不適合於現在的時代¹⁶. Their purpose was to replace the Chinese character with the Soviet-style Latin script, "only through which could China develop a international, and Communist culture for the workers and laborers, in a national manner" 也只有這樣才能發展形式是民族的，而內容是國際的，社會主義的，中國工人及勞動者的文化¹⁷. Linguistically different in design from G.R., Latinxua appeared much simpler because it does not represent the four tones, and it was flexible enough to apply to regional dialects (though it was originally based on the Shandong dialect). Under the strong support of top-level Communist leaders, Latinxua had a considerably greater impact in the CCP-controlled north. Latinxua carried the imagination of a Communist China, standing completely opposite to the imperial past and the capitalist Republic.

The twentieth century was an era both of negation and imagination. In the first half of the century, as soon as China got rid of the old Qing Empire, it was plunged into an extensive

¹⁶ See "Zhongguo Xinwenzi de Shisan Yuanze 中國新文字的十三原則 (The Thirteen Principles of the New Chinese Written Language)," in *Zhongguo Yuwen de Xinsheng* 《中國語文的新生》 (*The Rebirth of the Chinese Language*) ed. Ni Haishu 倪海曙, 177–180. (Shanghai: Shidai Press 時代出版社, 1949), 54.

¹⁷ Ibid.

and multi-layered debate over what a modern Republic should be like. Notably, the topic of Chinese language reform departed from being a pure linguistic issue and grew increasingly mingled with political ideologies, involving contentions between the past and the present, the regional and the central, as well as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In times of constant internal and external turmoil, different groups of Chinese were all devoted to mapping an ideal nation. However, just as the China national language went through repetitive alternations and internal struggles, the root of the Republic seemed hardly to have taken hold in the Chinese soil.

4. CONSTRUCTING SOCIALISM IN CHINA: LANGUAGE AND POWER

The Communist People's Republic was established with the victory of the CCP in the Civil War (1946–1949). Like its predecessor, the new regime was conscious of making changes to the language in a way that would be to its advantage, but it appeared to prefer a “revolution” rather than a “reform” on this matter. Following their promotion of Latinxua in the 1930s, the Communist leaders raised the Chinese language reform to an unprecedented level of attention. Soon after the founding of the “New China,” every trace of the old society was seen as a fallen object to be cleared away to meet the needs of modernization and the construction of Socialism.

In the case of the Chinese language, social and administrative forces were mobilized with great vigor to facilitate the process of reform. In October 1949, the Committee for Chinese Writing Reform was founded in Beijing. In 1951, Mao Zedong gave a famous talk, throwing his great personal charisma behind the movement: “the written language must be reformed, following the universal direction of spelling as do all the other written languages” 文字必須改革，要走世界文字共同的拼音方向¹⁸. Answering his call, a large-scale investigation into Chinese written language reform was carried out with the support of the

¹⁸ This was Mao Zedong's opening remark when he was addressing at the inaugural conference of the Research Committee of Chinese Written Language Reform.

Communist Party. In 1954, the Committee for the Chinese Written Language Reform officially came into being, directly affiliated with the State Council and headed by Wu Yuzhang 吳玉章. Two years later, the State Council issued "the Plan for Simplifying Characters" and elicited public suggestions. In 1958, "the Plan" was revised and approved at the Fifth Session of the First National People's Congress as the Hanyu Pinyin Plan. Pinyin was announced as the official alphabetic system to annotate the Chinese language.

Implementation extending from central to regional government followed immediately after the birth of the theoretical framework, representing the determination and highly centralized power of the Communist government. Addressing the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 1958, Premier Zhou Enlai explicated the gradual but continuous plan for Chinese language reform in New China,

The current task of language reform is the simplification of characters, popularization of Putonghua (the common speech), and devising and applying the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet.

當前文字改革的任務就是：簡化漢字，推廣普通話，製定和推行漢語拼音方案。¹⁹

Although Mao indicated a plan for a radical elimination of Chinese characters in his 1951 speech, and at earlier activities in the 1930s, Zhou took an ambivalent attitude towards the future, by directing that the focus of the present work should be considered the first step of the overall gradual process. Top-level demands were put into practice in no time. All kinds of pamphlets and government documents were printed and released to local governments. In 1956, the Ministry of Education initiated research classes for Putonghua to train teachers and

¹⁹ Enlai Zhou, 周恩來, "Dangqian Wenzhi Gaige de Renwu 當前文字改革的任務 (Tasks for the Current Written Language Reform)," in *Hanyu Pinyin Fang'an de Zhiding he Yingyong* 《漢語拼音方案的製定和應用》 (The Planning and Application of the Hanyu Pinyin Scheme) (Beijing: Wenzhi Gaige Press 文字改革出版社, 1983), 6.

experts, who were assigned to a local region upon graduation. Also, the CCP stressed the function of media: exhibitions, newspapers, journals, and treatises concerning language reform in the New China sprang up and developed at a high speed. It is estimated that there were more than five hundred books about the language reform published during the ten years from 1956 to 1966.²⁰ The rapid and efficient popularization of the language reform scheme was both a test and a manifestation of CCP's power construct all across China.

Though the "Socialist" language reform was carried out in a sweeping manner, it was confronted with linguistic objections. Concerns were mainly directed to the Scheme for Simplifying the Characters. By 1964, more than two thousand characters had been simplified, over one thousand variant Chinese characters had been abolished, and over thirty rare geographic names had been replaced.²¹ Many linguists raised questions over the legibility of the new terms, but these questions were either ignored, or politicized as "a pretext to attack the Party and government."²² Proficient at exerting the modern state apparatus, and at political discourse, the CCP used the process of language reform to consolidate its authority and create the look of a strong "Socialist China."

However, Socialist language reform experienced ups and downs when the political climate of the People's Republic changed radically after the 1960s. During the Cultural Revolution, language reform fell into chaos when the Red Guards presented extremely simplified scripts of all sorts, and reform was later officially banned when the ten-year turbulence ended. In recent decades, there have been waves of appeal for a further reform, and also longing for a restoration of traditional characters. The relationship between language and politics has become increasingly inseparable in the People's Republic, such that the CCP

²⁰ Fu'ang Cao, 曹夫昂, *Wenzi Gaige Gongzuo Wenda* 《文字改革工作問答》 (*Q&As for the Written Language Reform Work*) (Shanghai: Shanghai Education Press 上海教育出版社, 1980), 18.

²¹ Ibid., 25.

²² John DeFrancis, "Language and Script Reform," in *Advances in the Sociology of Language* (The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1972), 459.

has regarded language as an integral part of nation construction and as an ideological battlefield that cannot be lost.

5. CONCLUSION

The history of the Chinese language is long, but the proposition of a national language is a modern one with a history of only a hundred years or so. It entered the sight of the Chinese people against the backdrop of internal crisis and external tension. Before the Opium War, the idea of "nation" was absent in the Chinese imagination. Instead, the Son of Heaven ruling the Tianxia 天下 comprised the Chinese worldview, and the Chinese language was undoubtedly the carrier of high civility and cultural superiority. But then, starting in the late 1890s, the undoubted was doubted, and the unchangeable was changed.

Examining the historical process of the language reform, we note two features of development. First, the Chinese language has been constantly examined and reexamined for self-improvement in comparison to its foreign counterparts (the Western alphabets and the Japanese *kana*). From the late Qing, the Republic, and the current Communist regime, Chinese linguists have been learning from the successful cases of foreign alphabetic systems to bridge the gap between the pictographic characters and pronunciation. Romanization of the written language greatly helped the popularization of education, by enabling ordinary people to much more quickly and easily memorize a writing system.

Second, the Chinese language has been increasingly interwoven with the political whirlpool of the twentieth century, so that the boundary between language and politics has grown blurry. The Qing emperors turned a blind eye to the potential power in language, until it was too late to save the dying empire by reforming its language. The need for a language reform was well understood by the Nationalist Government. Although it endeavored to construct a modern Republican nation, different from the imperial past, its efforts seemed powerless and were diluted during the intervals of wars and alternative schemes. Unlike their predecessors, the Communists took a strong position in the matter of language reform. The

radical revolution imposed on the Chinese language exhibited their political power in the form of coercion.

After all, “empire”, “republic”, and “the people’s republic” are only terms to describe a certain territory. What seems more important are how, and with what vision, change is introduced in the language reform project. In modern China, politics has become a topic sensitive to talk about, but, interestingly, each time we speak the language, everything we utter is a manifestation of political power, because language and power are doppelgänger, whether people are aware of it or not.

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Explaining China to the World: Huang Youyi and the Role of the Translator in Chinese Foreign Policy

Lauren Avery

1. INTRODUCTION

In foreign policy, the role of language as a whole is often underestimated or ignored altogether; for the most part, the glory goes to those who speak — the leaders, diplomats, and policymakers. Yet, interpreters have played a critical role in diplomacy for millennia, and their role in the underlying processes of foreign relations should not be discounted. Writing about interpreters who facilitated contact between dignitaries from Chōson Korea and Ming China in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, where the written word was still valued over speech, Sixiang Wang writes that “while the social obscurity of interpreters belied their political indispensability ... interpretation was both the mechanism of overcoming linguistic difference and the very marker that exposed it.”¹ Even now, interpreters hold an immense amount of power in foreign relations, as they can either bridge a linguistic gap between two peoples or underscore their differences. An interpreter has the ability to manipulate tone, language, and nuance to either reflect or distort a leader’s words, yet his or her role is often overlooked.

In this paper, I examine the role of the interpreter in affecting and altering Chinese-American relations. Few national relationships are as important as the Sino-American relationship, yet few languages are more distant from one another than Mandarin Chinese and English. Phrases and idioms that may carry a great deal of weight in China may sound

¹ Sixiang Wang, “The Sounds of Our Country: Interpreters, Linguistic Knowledge, and the Politics of Language in Early Choson Korea,” in *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000–1919*, ed. Benjamin A. Elman (Boston: Brill, 2014), 58.

trivial in the United States, and connotations that are easily understood by any American may be missed by a Chinese speaker. These two countries share a long history of cooperation and confrontation, and the status of their relationship is ever-changing. Their mutual understanding of policy statements could not be more important. The interpreters tasked with bridging the gap in language between the United States and China receive little, if any, attention, yet they are constantly working behind the scenes of every major development in foreign policy.

This paper will address several questions about the importance of interpreters. What, precisely, is their role? How are they chosen and trained? How do they carry out their translations, and how are the translated documents distributed? How do their translations impact the Sino–American relationship? Do their translations have a different effect on the audience than the original text? Do they alter their translations to produce a different effect, and why? Do the leaders have particular messages they want to send to a foreign audience, and how does the translator help them to achieve this goal?

To answer these questions, I will take Huang Youyi (Huáng Yǒuyì, 黄友义) as a case study. He is the official translator for Chinese President Xi Jinping, and he has also translated for previous leaders. I will examine his role in the Sino-American relationship and look at how his translations have impacted the way foreign audiences perceive President Xi's statements.

I will begin by outlining Huang's background and experience as a translator, including his education and training. I will then closely analyze his methods of translation, and discuss the specific words and phrases he changes in Xi Jinping's speeches when translating them into English. Most of my sources are news interviews with Huang himself, in addition to some of his written work. I also use excerpts from the original Chinese text of Xi Jinping, cross-referencing them with Huang's translations. In this section, I also examine the way in which Huang's changes could affect Xi's image and message abroad, and I discuss the problems that Huang has in translating Xi's Chinese.

Finally, I apply the results of my case study to the larger discussion by assessing the importance of translators in the conduct of foreign affairs generally. I will also discuss the implications for this research and its role in the larger political discourse. Overall, as

exemplified by Huang Youyi, interpreters play a crucial role in foreign policy due to their unique ability to construct a leader's image in a foreign environment.

The role of the translator in foreign affairs is worth studying because of its implications for the conduct of foreign policy. Interpreters have been used for thousands of years to connect societies that spoke different languages, and most of modern diplomacy would be impossible without interpretation and translation. Even as technology evolves to make communication faster, allowing people who speak two different languages to communicate continues to be crucial. Nearly all countries utilize interpreters, yet their presence is understudied within the fields of political science, international relations, linguistics, and history. With this paper, I hope to help fill this gap in the scholarship by looking at the Sino-American relationship as an example, and in particular examining the ways in which Huang Youyi has influenced Xi Jinping's image in the United States.

2. HUANG YOUYI AS A TRANSLATOR

Huang Youyi is one of very few "high-profile" translators in China: he has been called upon to interpret and translate documents for current President Xi Jinping, as well as previous presidents Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin.² Outside of his official duties, he remains a prominent figure in the field of translation, serving as Standing Vice President and Secretary-General of the Translators Association of China and Vice Chairman of the International Federation of Translators.³ Yet, his exact role with respect to the Chinese government is frequently presented with a degree of uncertainty; reporters have variously have called him a "government translator,"⁴ a "political advisor,"⁵ and "a senior editor in a state-run publishing house."⁶

² "The Translator's Role in the Rise of China: With Special Reference to Translations of President Xi's Addresses' – by Mr. Huang Youyi," *The University of Macau Department of English*, (24 September 2015).

³ "Mr. Huang Youyi," *Beijing Chinese-Foreign Translation and Information Service*, <http://en.ctis-cn.com/translator.php?content_id=8>.

⁴ "Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping's English Translator," *The Wall Street Journal China RealTime Blog* (16 April

However, despite his extraordinary number of titles and responsibilities, his upbringing was not unlike the lives of many Chinese children growing up in the shadow of the Cultural Revolution. He was born on June 1, 1953, before the Cultural Revolution transformed the social and academic landscape of China.⁷ When the government began closing universities in the mid-1960s, Huang was a middle school student.⁸ Several years later, in 1968, Mao Zedong established the “Up to the Mountains and Down to the Countryside Movement” (Shàng shān xià xiāng yùndòng, 上山下乡运动), which sent 17 million young Chinese from their homes in the bustling cities to the countryside. These relocated Chinese teenagers became known as the “rusticated urban youths” (Zhīshì qīngnián, 知识青年, also frequently translated as “sent-down youth” and “educated youth”), and as Jonathan Unger has shown, they frequently had great difficulty reentering urban society upon their return to the cities.⁹

Huang was sent to Heilongjiang Province near the Russian border to work on a farm months after a border conflict between Russian and Chinese soldiers.¹⁰ This reality was not lost on Huang, who said that he was “prepared to die on the battlefield.”¹¹ Yet, despite the struggles faced by the “educated youth” of his time, Huang later noted the similarities between his experience and the experience of President Xi Jinping, who was sent to work in Yanchuan County in Shaanxi Province as a “sent-down youth.”¹² In discussing his attitude towards Xi, this

2015).

5 Zhang Rui, “Huang Youyi: Timely Translations Can Reveal China,” *Beijing Review* (4 March 2014).

6 Jaime A. FlorCruz, “Xi Jinping: China’s New Boss a Man with a Dream,” *CNN* (16 March 2013).

7 “Mr. Huang Youyi,” Beijing Chinese-Foreign Translation and Information Service.

8 “Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping’s English Translator,” *The Wall Street Journal*.

9 Jonathan Unger, “China’s Troubled Down-to-the-Countryside Campaign,” *Contemporary China*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 1979), pp. 79–92.

10 “Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping’s English Translator,” *The Wall Street Journal*.

11 Ibid.

12 “Xi Jinping 习近平: One of China’s Top Future Leaders to Watch,” *Brookings Institution*, <http://www.brookings.edu/about/centers/china/top-future-leaders/xi_jinping>.

remained a major point of connection between himself and the President during his time as translator, and it served to humanize Xi in Huang's eyes. "Xi is of my age, he also spent years in the countryside as an educated youth, just like me," Huang said to a reporter in 2013. "At least he knows the real situation then and now."¹³

Two years after Huang's relocation, many universities around China reopened, and with the encouragement of his team leader, he enrolled in the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute (Běijīng wàiguóyǔ xuéyuàn, 北京外国语学院), which is now the Beijing Foreign Studies University (Běijīng wàiguóyǔ dàxué, 北京外国语大学).¹⁴ Students were not allowed to choose their course of study, and, upon arrival, Huang was "assigned" to the English department, where he remained until graduating in 1975. Much of his training consisted of translating outdated documents from the United Nations that had not yet been translated into Mandarin. In his last year, he discovered that his talent for translation had been recognized as exceptional when his teacher chose his paper as the exemplar for the class.¹⁵ After graduation, he began his career as a translator.

As he refined his craft, Huang specialized in publishing, especially "foreign communications" and publishing internationally.¹⁶ In his career, he has translated many classic American novels into Chinese, and several informative Chinese books about China's economy, culture, and society into English. He held a number of leadership positions at several major publishing firms in China, and he focused primarily on translating Chinese documents into English in order to educate a Western audience about Chinese culture and civilization.¹⁷ Currently, in addition to the titles listed previously, Huang serves as a member of the eleventh and twelfth National Committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the Director of the English Expert Committee of the China

¹³ FlorCruz, "Xi Jinping: China's New Boss a Man with a Dream."

¹⁴ "Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping's English Translator," *The Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *Mr. Huang Youyi*, Beijing Chinese–Foreign Translation and Information Service.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters (CATTI).¹⁸ In 2015, he served as the senior English translator for a new English-language compilation of Xi Jinping's key speeches and interviews, entitled *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*.¹⁹

During the course of Huang's career, the nature of his translation work has changed dramatically. When he began working as a translator, he and his contemporaries were responsible for translating "everything" from economic documents to technology records from foreign languages into Mandarin. However, later in his career, Huang claims that at least 54 percent of the translation occurring in China was from Chinese to English, and his associates claim that this percentage was even higher.²⁰ Which raises the question: why did English become the primary language that interpreters encountered? According to Huang, the rise of China's economy in the last ten to fifteen years has caused Chinese companies to devote more of their business to exports, specifically exports to the United States.²¹ However, this phenomenon should not be viewed simply as a matter of economic growth. The increased political, cultural, and military interaction between China and the United States is also responsible for the growing importance of English for Chinese translators. When asked if foreigners should study Chinese, Huang Youyi replied, "If you really want to understand Chinese philosophy, the way Chinese people think, the best way is still to learn the language. Having said that, if there's only one language in the world left it's not Chinese. It's English."²²

This is a critically important change in the field of translation. There is a distinctive trend in official translation and at publishing firms: foreign language documents used to be translated into Mandarin, but now most of the work is translating Chinese documents into English. This is indicative of a larger trend within Chinese politics. As Huang's figures show, English is quickly growing in importance, and Chinese business and politicians are no doubt

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping's English Translator," *The Wall Street Journal*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

taking notice. Leaders such as President Xi Jinping are likely to be especially concerned about their official English translators because of the growing importance of English in China. The impact of this trend is twofold: for translators like Huang, it means that they must become extremely familiar with the mentalities and cultures of English-speaking audiences, so that they can tailor their translations to address the reading habits of these cohorts and to take into consideration their preexisting impressions of China. From a diplomatic standpoint, this means that translators have experienced a dramatic gain in power in the political sphere due to their mastery of English.

With Huang's background given as context, it is now possible to examine what his job as translator for Xi Jinping has entailed. Clearly, Huang was not only a naturally talented translator, but he also had to undergo rigorous training before serving as an official interpreter. From this, we can conclude that Xi Jinping chose him due to his expertise. Thus, he is representative of official translators in other countries besides China. Also, his experience with the rise of English translation in the Chinese publishing community is not only a result of economic interaction between China and English-speaking nations, but it reflects a larger trend in official correspondence. Xi Jinping, like other global leaders, seems to be increasingly concerned about his image and his administration's reception overseas. Translating his speeches into English has become a priority, and, as a result, the translator has gained remarkable power to influence Xi's image abroad, and, accordingly, increased responsibility. As American relations with China and other nations develop still further, translation into English will grow in importance, in tandem with the importance of American public opinion of foreign nations. I will next assess Huang's translations of Xi Jinping's speeches and statements and determine the effect his translations have had on an English-speaking audience.

3. HUANG'S TRANSLATIONS OF XI JINPING'S STATEMENTS

Huang's background and his mastery of English enabled him to secure a top position as translator for presidents Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping, but it is his work for Xi Jinping that will be given special attention here. Huang's methodology for translating Xi's official

documents into English will be examined. In particular, I will look at how Huang addresses a very specific problem: assessing the tone, nuances, and references to history and culture that are ubiquitous in a state leader's speech, and conveying them to a foreign audience. Certainly, the stakes are high, when there is a constant risk of mistranslation that could result in misunderstandings in areas of intense international sensitivity.

Yet Huang employs a very particular methodology when translating Xi's documents, which consists of three "steps." Each of these steps is intended to solve a major problem that Huang believes can prevent Xi's Chinese from being translated accurately into English. Since the goal is to make Xi's speeches understandable to an English-speaking audience, these three problems are the biggest hindrances that Huang faces during translation.

Much of the information used to describe each step comes from a *Wall Street Journal* interview of Huang published in April 2015, in which Huang divulged the most common changes he has to make when translating Xi Jinping's texts. We will look at this issue in three parts: one for each "step" or "problem" addressed by Huang's method. Many of Huang's solutions to these problems involve simplification of the word or phrase until it is understandable to English speakers. After introducing each step, I will cross-reference Huang's translation with Xi's original Chinese text. Then, I will analyze the different effects that the original and the translated texts would have on a reader. It is worth noting that the translation that Huang does is done very closely, and often does not differ noticeably from the Chinese. I will instead be looking at the instances in which Huang believes that literal translation is impossible or disadvantageous. These are examples in which he deliberately changes something in Xi's speech in order to have a specific effect on a Western audience, or to communicate a certain nuance that would have otherwise been lost.

A. PROBLEM 1: XI'S USAGE OF TRADITIONAL IDIOMS

The first problem that Huang faces in translating Xi Jinping's Chinese into English and making it understandable to an English-speaking audience is his frequent use of traditional idioms. In his public addresses, Xi will often make use of Chinese idioms, and he usually uses *chengyu* (chéngyǔ 成语), which are idiomatic expressions that are frequently four characters long,

although he occasionally selects longer idioms and metaphors. For Xi, the literary nature of the idioms and their traditional place in Chinese speech can enhance his addresses by making him appear intelligent and sophisticated to a Chinese-speaking audience. To a Chinese audience, the hidden meanings and stories within these idioms and metaphors are usually very clear, but they lack the same effect when translated into English because most foreign English-speakers do not have the cultural and historical background to comprehend them. Indeed, according to "A Study of Idiom Translation Strategies between English and Chinese" by Lanchun Wang and Shuo Wang, idioms are "not only the gems of languages, but also the crystallization of human wit and wisdom," and "they best mirror the national characteristic embodied in a language" so they are "always rich in culture connotation and national flavor."²³ However, this "culture connotation and national flavor" can be exceedingly difficult to translate into another language, and by extension another culture.

As a result, the idiomatic expressions that are frequently present in Xi's speeches pose a major problem for translators. This problem becomes especially serious when the metaphors' meanings have a different connotation in English and can be therefore be easily misconstrued. As an incident in November 2014 showed, failure to properly convey the nuances of Chinese idioms can often have unintended consequences.

During President Xi's visit to Washington last fall, he attended a press conference with US President Barack Obama, where a reporter from *The New York Times* asked him if he would resume issuing visas to foreign journalists. Xi responded brusquely with a Chinese phrase, "解铃还须系铃人" (jiě líng hái xū xì líng rén).²⁴ According to Victor Mair, this is a "fixed saying" in Chinese that can be traced back to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644).²⁵ *The New York Times* translated it roughly as "Let he who tied the bell on the tiger take it off."²⁶ Mair translates it

²³Lanchun Wang and Shuo Wang, "A Study of Idiom Translation Strategies between English and Chinese," in *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 3.9 (Sept. 2013): 1692.

²⁴"解铃还须系铃人" ("Let he who tied the bell on the tiger take it off"), *Wiktionary*, accessed 10 Dec. 2015.

²⁵Victor Mair, "Xi Jinping: 'when a car breaks down...'" *Language Log* (13 Nov. 2014).

²⁶Patrick J. Lyons, "In the Words of Xi Jinping: Unraveling an Ancient Saying," *The New York Times* (12 Nov. 2014).

literally to mean “the person who removes the bell (from the tiger’s) neck must be the person who fastened the bell (around the tiger’s neck).”²⁷ Yet, as *The New York Times* reported, many English-speaking listeners confused Xi’s metaphor with one of Aesop’s fables, which also involved a bell around the neck of a cat. “Belling the cat” is an English phrase which derives from a fable about some mice who tie a bell around a cat’s neck so that they know when he is approaching, but they cannot decide who will tie the bell on the cat in the first place. Thus, the phrase has come to mean something that is appealing, but ultimately unachievable.²⁸ However, the Chinese phrase has come to mean that the creator of the problem should be responsible for its solution.²⁹ In Xi’s case, this seems to suggest that foreign correspondents are responsible for fulfilling Beijing’s demands, and not the other way around.³⁰ However, when confused with Aesop’s fable, the powerful, staunch message that Xi is sending is entirely lost. This is a risk with translating any of Xi’s idioms and metaphors into English.

Xi’s frequent usage of idioms and *chengyu* means that translating them into English, without losing their meaning or literary aspect, is a top priority. How does Huang Youyi tackle this problem? His solution is to make the idiom as simple and easy to remember in English as it is in Chinese, and to simultaneously preserve its meaning. His method was put to the test in 2012 when Xi Jinping gave his first speech after ascending to the presidency. Before he stepped onstage, he explicitly asked Huang to pay particular attention to one line and ensure that English speakers would understand it clearly. The line in question was a metaphor: “打铁还需自身硬,” which can be literally translated as “to be forged with iron, the metal itself must be strong,” and it was part of Xi’s call for the Party to work together and maintain a strong core of leadership.³¹

²⁷ Mair, “Xi Jinping: ‘when a car breaks down...’”

²⁸ Lyons, “In the Words of Xi Jinping: Unraveling an Ancient Saying.”

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ “习近平在与中外记者见面会上讲话” (Xi Jinping meets with Chinese and foreign reporters), *Sina Blogs* (16 Nov. 2012).

The translation of this phrase, incidentally, caused an uproar in the Chinese media, as many felt that the literal translation of this phrase into English conveys the correct meaning only if it is taken in context, and otherwise is too ambiguous to have a clear meaning.³² Huang, also dissatisfied with the literal translation for being too clunky and lacking the original nuance, translated it as "if you want to work with iron, you must be tough yourself."³³ Huang's translation has a different effect from that of a literal translation of Xi's original phrase, by driving home the toughness of the subject. In Huang's translation, changing "the metal" into "you" makes the entire idiom much more self-confident. Instead of "the metal" being tough, which could mean Xi, the Party, or the entire People's Republic of China, Huang's singular subject clearly suggests that Xi is tough. Huang's translation made Xi's confidence and presence felt to English-language readers, and this would have been impossible if the idiom were translated literally. Thus, Huang Youyi was able to simplify the metaphor, make it memorable, and preserve its impact in English, all the while making Xi appear confident and resolute.

B. PROBLEM 2: XI'S MANNER OF ADDRESSING HIS AUDIENCE

The second problem that Huang faces when translating Xi Jinping's documents into English is his manner of addressing his audience. When a leader is delivering a speech, a great deal of information can be gleaned from how he/she refers to the audience. The address that the leader uses can indicate their perceived standings in the status hierarchy, as well as the general quality of the relationship between speaker and audience. According to Huang, Xi Jinping has a tendency to refer to his audience as "comrades" (tóngzhì, 同志). Among contemporary Chinese translators, he says, it is a convention to keep this word in the translation, although he hopes to use the power of translation to alter the way Chinese people address each other.³⁴ In fact, the word "comrade" has come to possess a certain stigma in some

³² "中国领导人的白话魅力" (The beautiful vernacular of Chinese leaders), *半月谈* (*Bàn Yuè Tán*) (3 Nov. 2014).

³³ "Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping's English Translator," *The Wall Street Journal*.

³⁴ "Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping's English Translator," *The Wall Street Journal*.

parts of the world. In the United States, it is now associated with socialism and communism, and it is especially associated with the Soviet Union. In China, too, the word has changed its connotation; recently, and despite the vehement protests of the older generation, the word “同志” has become a slang term among modern Chinese youth, and it has taken on a surprising new meaning: homosexual.³⁵ Still, the word is very popular among Chinese leaders because of its historical importance and its emphasis on camaraderie — in his speech after being appointed president, Xi Jinping uses the phrase no fewer than eleven times.³⁶

To Huang, this is a word that must be changed in his translations from Chinese into English. Although he admits that the use of “同志” is on the decline, it still carries a great deal of historical weight and societal connotation in China. As senior translator of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, Huang changed the word “comrade” to the word “friends.”³⁷ In other documents, he goes even further with his transformations of the word “comrade.” He is currently trying to overturn the convention of keeping the word “comrade,” and instead he hopes that more translators will follow his lead and change it to reflect better the relationship between Xi and his audience. For example, if Xi is addressing Party members of government officials, Huang believes that he should call them “dear colleagues.” Interestingly, if he is talking to rural countrymen and farmers, Huang argues that “comrade” should be translated as “fellow countrymen,” to reflect the status disparity between him and his audience.³⁸ Still, Huang says that these translations have not yet caught on in the field.

In this case, the differences between “comrade” and “friend,” “dear colleague,” and “fellow countrymen” carry is clear, and the variants would have a noticeable effect on an English-speaking audience. As stated previously, the word “comrade” carries a stigma within the United States, and few Americans respond favorably to it. Furthermore, “comrade” is an unfamiliar word in the United States political milieu, and American leaders would never refer

³⁵ Molly Gray, “Chinese dictionary refuses to turn ‘comrades’ gay,” *CNN* (24 July 2012).

³⁶ “习近平在与中外记者见面会上讲话” (Xi Jinping meets Chinese and foreign reporters), *Sina Blogs*.

³⁷ “Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping’s English Translator,” *The Wall Street Journal*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

to their audience as their "comrades." Accordingly, the word "comrade" underscores the historical differences and the cultural distance between China and the United States. To many English speakers, the use of this word, strongly associated with communism, and therefore foreign in its nature, is jarring, and the gap between the reader and the Xi administration would grow. But by using such words as "dear colleague," "friend," and "fellow countrymen," Huang is able to familiarize and humanize Xi to English-speakers. These words are not politically charged like "comrade," and, in English, they emphasize brotherhood and close cooperation. By presenting Xi as addressing his "friends" or "colleagues," Xi appears to be much more similar to an American political leader, and to many Americans, seems to close the cultural gap between China and the United States. In the United States, where only 38 percent of the population views China favorably, humanizing Xi and emphasizing the similarities between China and the United States is a very useful tool in maintaining stable foreign relations.³⁹

C. PROBLEM 3: XI'S HEAVY USE OF ADVERBS

The final challenge that Huang must meet to make Xi Jinping's statements understandable to an English-speaking audience is Xi's heavy use of adverbs and adverbial phrases. According to Huang, it is common for Chinese speakers to string along many adverbs in a sentence, while a similar sentence in English would not make sense or would be very difficult to read.⁴⁰ In their interview with Huang, *The Wall Street Journal* provided links to three of their own articles in which they faced this problem. For example, their reporter faced difficulty with the word "comprehensively" (quánmiàn, 全面) which was used by Xi to establish his "Four Comprehensives" campaign (sì ge quánmiàn zhànlüè bùjú, 四个全面战略布局) in February 2015.⁴¹ The "four comprehensives" are the needs to:

³⁹ Global Indicators Database, "Opinion of China," *Pew Research Center*, Spring 2015.

⁴⁰ "Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping's English Translator," *The Wall Street Journal*.

⁴¹ "Xi Jinping Hopes to Count in Chinese Political History with 'Four Comprehensives,'" *The Wall Street Journal*, 25 Feb. 2015.

1. “Comprehensively build a moderately prosperous society” (quánmiàn jiànchéng xiǎokāng shèhuì, 全面建成小康社会)
2. “Comprehensively deepen reform” (quánmiàn shēnhuà gǎigé, 全面深化改革)
3. “Comprehensively govern the nation according to law” (quánmiàn yīfǎ zhìguó, 全面依法治国)
4. “Comprehensively be strict in governing the party”⁴² (quánmiàn cóng yán zhì dǎng, 全面从严治党)⁴³

While these “comprehensives” are understandable by an English speaker, the repeated use of the adverb “comprehensively” makes the sentences awkward to read. *The Wall Street Journal* article includes links to other articles that faced similar problems, using repetitiously the words “unswervingly” and the “three represents.”⁴⁴

According to Huang, this is a frequent problem he faces when translating Xi’s speeches. When translating, he notes that “in English it sounds better if you take out all the adverbs,” yet if the adverbs were removed in the original Chinese text, “the Chinese is not Chinese anymore.”⁴⁵ He says this is merely a cultural difference between China and English-speaking countries, but it still proves to be an obstacle when translating official documents. In cases where the repeated use of multiple adverbs makes the sentence difficult to read in English, and where the adverbs are not essential to the meaning or necessary to show a theme (as in the “four comprehensives” example above), Huang solves the problem by simply removing the adverbs. This succinctly clarifies the sentence, and when the adverbs are not essential to the intelligibility of the sentence in English, it does not alter the meaning whatsoever. Unlike Huang’s solutions to translating Chinese idioms and use of the word

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “学习习近平‘四个全面’战略思想” (Studying Xi Jinping’s “Four Comprehensives”), 人民网 *People.cn*. <<http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/8198/394083/>>

⁴⁴ “Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping’s English Translator,” *The Wall Street Journal*.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

"comrade," which do have a noticeable effect on the reader's perception of Xi, the elimination of adverbs does not seem to have a dramatic effect on the reader, as long as the adverbs are not necessary for understanding the meaning.

As Xi Jinping's translator, Huang faced a difficult task: make his words not only palatable, but also powerful to an English-speaking audience. The three primary problems he faced in translating Xi's Chinese into English were his frequent use of traditional idioms, his manner of addressing his audience, and his heavy use of adverbs. All of these made Xi's speeches in Chinese sound intelligent and confident, but when they were translated literally into English, they either lacked their intended nuance or would have sounded extremely foreign to English speakers. As a solution, Huang mostly simplified the translations of Xi's Chinese statements so that they were still pithy yet meaningful. Table A summarizes the problems and solutions analyzed in this chapter. However, as shown previously, it seems that Huang's deliberate translations do have a slightly different effect on the English-speaking audience when compared with the original Chinese texts. Although the overall effects of his changes seem small, when all of Huang's solutions are used concurrently in Xi's speeches, these translations may alter English-speakers' perception of the President. By and large, though, Huang remains very true to Xi's original words, and effectively communicates his meaning to a foreign audience. Still, these deliberate changes in the translation of Xi's language from Chinese to English are testament to the power that translators hold in foreign affairs.

TABLE A. Goal: To make Xi Jinping's speeches more understandable to an English-speaking audience.

Problems with Xi Jinping's Chinese for English Speakers	Huang Youyi's Solution
Xi's usage of many traditional idioms	Keep it equally simple and easy to remember in English
Xi's manner of addressing his audience	Make it more familiar to English speakers

Problems with Xi Jinping's Chinese for English Speakers	Huang Youyi's Solution
Xi's heavy use of adverbs	Eliminate the adverbs (when it doesn't affect the meaning)

4. CONCLUSION: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM HUANG YOUYI, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSLATORS IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

When Huang Youyi, translator for President Xi Jinping, is taken as a case study, it becomes clear that translators play a critical role in foreign policy, due to their unique ability to influence a foreign audience's perception of a leader and his/her policies. Examination of Huang's background makes evident the level of training and skill that is required of these translators. In addition, translation into English reflects a growing trend in foreign relations — world leaders and policymakers are increasingly interested in targeting their rhetoric to a foreign audience. Thus, the translator's role is of great importance. Huang's three problems with translating Xi's Chinese into English — and his solutions — illustrate the effect that the translator can have on the text's overall impact on the reader. When Huang translated the idioms to be clearer to an English-speaking audience, and when he transformed the word "comrade" into "friends" or "colleagues," he made a definitive impact on the English-speaking audience's perception of China. However, the removal of the adverbs when translating from Chinese to English did not seem to have as great an effect on the audience. Overall, however, Huang Youyi illustrates the importance of the translator in foreign relations.

This result has wide implications in many fields. Leaders and policymakers around the world, even outside of China and the United States, should be aware that their official translators have the power to enhance or detract from their overall messages. The implications are even greater for scholars and government officials involved in the Sino-American relationship. By sensitively translating Xi's messages and nuances, Huang directly affects how Western political leaders, policymakers, scholars, and the general public view Xi

and his administration, yet he gets very little international attention. Even when they are not in the spotlight, though, the impact of professional translators is felt. It is important to understand where one's information comes from, and the transformation it undergoes, particularly in foreign languages. Leaders and scholars who study languages, foreign relations, government, political science, and history must be constantly aware of the behind-the-scenes role that translators play.

From Huang's case study, we can glean a great deal of information about the role of interpreters and translators in global affairs, not just Sino-American relations. Huang and other official government translators directly affect foreign perception of their leaders and their country. By communicating in the audience's native language, they have the power to help or hurt public opinion of an administration or of an entire nation. They can make leaders seem more relatable, less foreign, and more human by using language to emphasize the cultural similarities between the two nations. Conversely, they can also use linguistic differences and mistranslation to emphasize the cultural and historical gap between two countries, and make the leaders feel very distant. Translation truly goes beyond the literal meaning of the leader's words. Words, phrases, and idioms carry different weight in different languages, and many have historical, literary, or societal connotations attached to them. By manipulating and transforming language, translators can convey culture, nuance, deep-set beliefs, intentions, as well as a country's own self-perception and its perception of other countries. The relative status of the two nations, or their perceived positions in the world order, can all be communicated and decoded through translation. The power to clarify misconceptions and diffuse conflict, or spread hostility and divide two nations, is immensely important, and its impact should not be underestimated when studying foreign relations.

To Huang Youyi, though, China is not merely an exporter or an economic powerhouse. It is also a monumentally important player in global affairs, and its official statements — through translation — need to reflect that status in every language. He has long argued for the importance of conveying Chinese intentions and culture, and believes that language can serve to educate English-speaking nations about Chinese politics. He also believes that translation is important because it can communicate the role of history in a way that is digestible to a

foreign audience that has not directly experienced that history or that culture. By translating, he can provide foreign nations with a Chinese perspective for acting a certain way or remembering a particular moment in history. Indeed, words are powerful, and translators play a key role in using that power to influence the course of global affairs. Huang encapsulated the importance of translators in influencing Chinese image abroad and building foreign policy with a useful sentence: “In the 1970s, there was practically nothing about China in foreign newspapers. But now, you see several articles on the front page of *The New York Times* every day. Our task is to explain China to the world.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ “Working with Iron: Meet Xi Jinping’s English Translator,” *The Wall Street Journal*.

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Bypassing Censorship on Sina Weibo

Derick Olson

This paper is a study on the censorship of “Grass Mud Horse Lexicon” terms on China’s largest microblog, Sina Weibo. The paper surveys methods used by studies of Chinese internet censorship and frames its question in terms of “morphs,” or alternate representations of controversial terms and ideas.

BACKGROUND

Sina Weibo is the primary microblogging service in China, with 500 million registered users and over 46 million daily active users.¹ In the last decade, microblogging services such as Twitter have risen in prominence in the realm of social media, as well as in those of politics, news, and finance. In the United States, companies such as Dataminr and Datasift “mine” Twitter for live-streaming data about events around the world.² Short messages and additional contextual information associated with a post, or “tweet,” have made microblogs like Twitter into an important corpus of structured text in academic research.³ As a similar service, Sina Weibo is another useful resource for such applications. However, unlike these, Sina’s cooperation with China’s government censorship policies also makes the Weibo corpus a uniquely positioned proxy for understanding the censorship policies of China.

As with all websites and public platforms in China, social media platforms are subject to

¹ How many people really use Sina Weibo? <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2013/03/12/how-many-people-really-use-sina-weibo/>

² Twitter Is Selling Access to Your Tweets for Millions <http://business.time.com/2013/10/08/twitter-is-selling-access-to-your-tweets-for-millions/>

³ Twitter Data Analytics. <http://tweettracker.fulton.asu.edu/tda/>

government censorship. The Chinese government sometimes involves itself in pursuing particular posters, such as in the recent case of the trial of Pu Zhiqiang for his posts on Weibo,⁴ and the controversial imprisonment of Ai Wei Wei in 2011.⁵ In the case of Weibo, censorship consists of entire posts being removed from the timeline of searchable posts. Post and account blocking are handled by Sina, prior to government intervention. Estimates of censored Weibo posts range from under one percent to sixteen percent of all posts.

The motivations for censorship can be grouped into two primary categories: (1) to suppress criticism of the state, and (2) to reduce the probability of collective action. According to an empirical study by King et al.,⁶ China's censorship policies are almost entirely focussed on suppressing the latter case of collective action potential, rather than of criticism of the state.

There are multiple methods of internet censorship in China. These can be grouped into three categories: site-wide censorship (the Great Firewall), automatic blocking (based on topics and keywords), and manual blocking (human censors). Examples of the first case are the ban on sites like Google, Facebook, and Twitter from the Chinese internet due to the refusal of these companies to comply with China's censorship policies. The latter two cases, on the other hand, exist in most companies that do comply with China's censorship policies. For example, Sina has blacklisted terms, which are blocked automatically. The advantages of such an approach is speed and scalability, because this form of censorship can be performed by computers. Manual blocking, on the other hand, requires a human to read and respond to a particular post, or to add a term to an automatically-blocked blacklist. Jason Ng's post on Citizenlab.org goes into further detail on the actual flow of

4 Chinese rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang stands trial for Weibo posts criticizing government. http://mashable.com/2015/12/14/pu-zhiqiang-trial/?utm_campaign=Mash-Prod-RSS-Feedburner-All-Partial&utm_cid=Mash-Prod-RSS-Feedburner-All-Partial#F7CZK27wyEqV

5 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ai_Weiwei

6 King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret Roberts. "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," *American Political Science Review*. 2013. Source: <http://gking.harvard.edu/files/gking/files/censored.pdf?m=1448321711>.

human-computer post filtering.⁷ Keyword-based censorship has led to the introduction of alternative words and phrases known as *morphs*, which have entered the Chinese internet language.⁸

A *morph*, defined as an alternative form of a preexisting, original word or phrase, can be categorized as one of the following: homophone, homograph, acronym, pun, and Pinyin. Homophonic *morphs* include 河蟹 (*he xie*) "river crab," a *morph* for the sarcastic use of 和谐, the word "harmony," in reference to the campaign for China as a "harmonious society." A homographic *morph* is 目田 (*mu tian*), which looks like 自由 (*zi you*), meaning "freedom." Acronyms generally use the Pinyin Romanization to represent a Chinese phrase, such as TMD for "ta ma de," meaning "fuck your mother." An example of pun or metaphor is 西朝鲜 (*xi chao xian*), which means "West Korea," an alternative way of saying China.⁹ Finally, the Pinyin representation of a Chinese word acts as an easily-accessible *morph*, as the use or absence of accent tones change the underlying representation, allowing such terms to bypass automated censorship methods.¹⁰

METHODOLOGY

This study addresses Pinyin as a *morph* that can be used to bypass censorship. It uses the China Digital Times' "Grass Mud Horse Lexicon"¹¹ as a source of potentially sensitive terms and phrases, and predicts the term's censorship status.

There have been several approaches to researching censorship on the Chinese internet. Chen's research on Pinyin acronyms used a questionnaire-based approach to determine which

⁷Tracing the Path of a Censored Weibo Post <https://citizenlab.org/2014/11/tracing-path-censored-weibo-post-compiling-keywords-trigger-automatic-review/>

⁸ Chen, Le, Chi Zhang, and Christo Wilson. "Tweeting under Pressure: Analyzing Trending Topics and Evolving Word Choice on Sina Weibo," *Proceedings of the First ACM Conference on Online Social Networks*. 2013. Source: <http://www.ccs.neu.edu/home/cbw/pdf/weibo-cosn13.pdf>.

⁹ Victor Mair, "Ways to Say 'China' That Can Circumvent the Censors." *Language Log*. 2015. Source: <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=22520>.

¹⁰ Victor Mair, "Pinyin Spam Text Message." *Language Log*. 2015. Source: <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=21744>.

¹¹ http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/The_Grass-Mud_Horse_Lexicon

acronyms were most popular among a sample population of mainland China Mandarin speakers. This approach yields high quality data in small amounts, and it is particularly useful for seeding terms that are as yet unknown. Since I am using an existing corpus of terms for my study, I do not take this approach.

A second approach to Chinese internet censorship studies is long-term monitoring of websites to detect when certain terms are censored. For example, in the King et al. study on the effects of censorship on collective expression, researchers crawled the Chinese internet to find a myriad of blogs and websites, sampling for terms at varying levels of controversy over time. In the Chen et al. study on censorship on Weibo, researchers determined a set of the most influential posters on Weibo, and followed the lifecycle of their posts and comments over time. Both of these approaches are very effective for determining when terms are censored, and they have shown the dynamic nature of Chinese keyword-based censorship. Due to time constraints, I elected not to take this approach, as these studies were conducted over many months.

Lastly, we come to Jason Ng's query-based approach, used to select terms for his book *Blocked on Weibo*. His particular approach was to crawl Wikipedia for Chinese article titles, and test whether or not they were blocked on Weibo. This approach is targeted in that it pre-selects queries, rather than tries to ingest the live fire hose of data that is Weibo. Its primary advantage is that it does not require many months of monitoring in order to return interesting results. Its primary disadvantage is that queries can become "stale," or no longer relevant, and this approach does not account for changes due to current events.

I chose a similar query-based approach, as it balances the advantage of computer-aided research to ingest large amounts of data, but stays within the resources and timeline available to my study. One disadvantage of this approach is that it is limited to pre-selected terms. However, my particular study focuses on known *morphs*, and the extent to which their Pinyin representations are censored.

There were three main stages to my implementation: (1) collection, (2) querying, (3) response-handling.

In the collection stage, I parsed the entire "Grass Mud Horse Lexicon" (found at http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Grass-Mud_Horse_Lexicon:_Browse_by_Pinyin). For each entry, I

stored the script-based term and Pinyin representation (along with the English meaning for reference). After filtering for certain duplicates of undocumented terms, I was left with 336 (script, Pinyin) pairs. Each entry is tagged with its *morph*-type:

- Chinese script: ‘og’
- Pinyin script: ‘py’

Now that we have a pairing, I can state my hypothesis:

Given a blocked Chinese character/word, the Pinyin representation will sometimes be used as a morph in order to bypass keyword-based censorship methods.

The reasoning behind this hypothesis is that in the case that the automated censors have discovered a new *morph* (the script term) for some controversial idea, the netizen will have continued using the same conceptual *morph*, but represented in an alternative way such as Pinyin.

In the querying stage, I used a Selenium¹² browser driver, along with my own scripts to query Sina Weibo’s search engine (found at <http://s.weibo.com/weibo>) for each term of each pair.

In the response-handling stage, I parsed the html responses to my queries to determine which response type was assigned to each *morph*. This study designates four response types:

- BLOCKED: message stating query was censored
- NO_RESULTS: message stating query returned no results
- FEW_RESULTS: less than 5 results
- MANY_RESULTS: more than 5 results

In addition, there is a fifth ERROR state in which timeouts and other web-crawling-related issues prevented the script from determining the appropriate response. After response-handling, I saved the results to a .CSV file (see appendix).

¹² <http://docs.seleniumhq.org/>

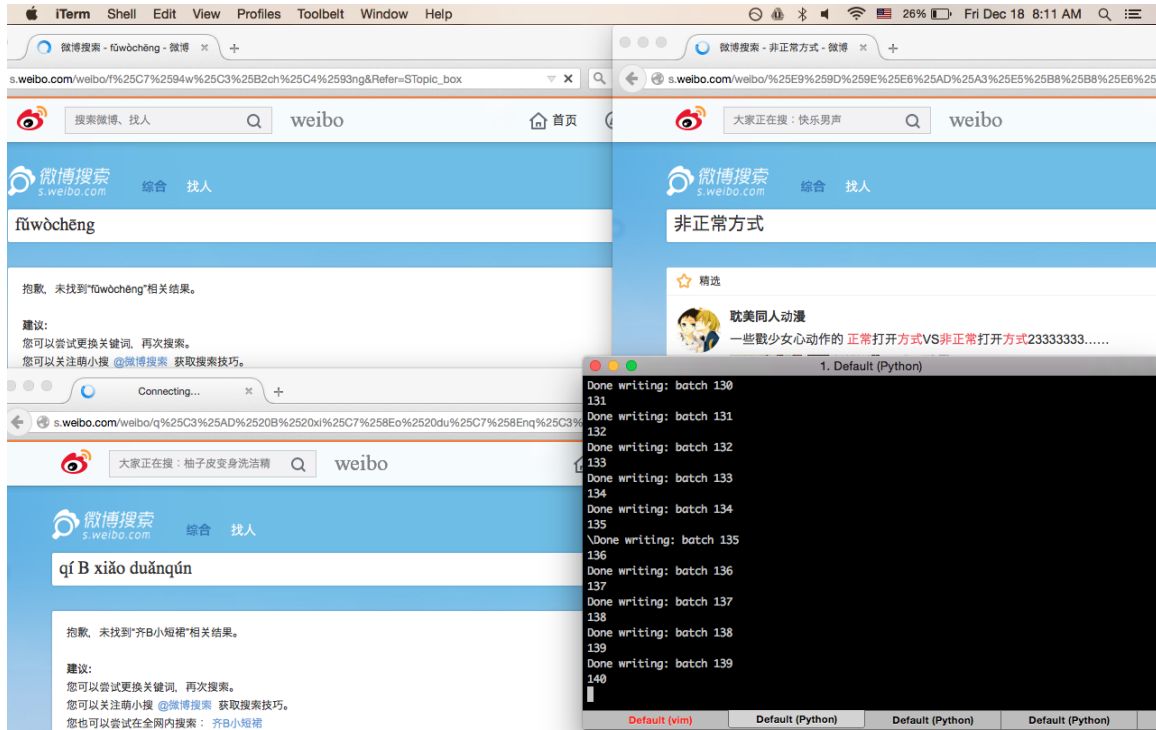


Figure 1. Screen shot of graphical interfaces for automated browser querying

ANALYSIS

My hypothesis that certain blocked terms would be presented with Pinyin was not supported by the data. In fact, only one term containing Pinyin was blocked across the entire dataset: *GFW zh fū*, which refers to the “Father of the Great Fire Wall,” or China’s nationwide internet censorship policy. It is possible that some of the errors could have resolved in terms that were either blocked or unblocked in such a way that Pinyin *morph* was used in place of a blocked character term, but this is not particularly likely.¹³ Below is a sample of the overall results (see the link in appendix for full results).

¹³ There were about 100 errors in total, but 0 pairings of blocked-unblocked *morphs* in the remaining 550+ entries

Base Term	Meaning	Morph	Type	Result
不差钱	no shortage of money	不差钱	og	MANY_RESULTS
不差钱	no shortage of money	bù chā qián	py	NO_RESULTS
不折腾	free from turmoil	不折腾	og	MANY_RESULTS
不折腾	free from turmoil	bù zhēténg	py	NO_RESULTS
不明真相	don't understand the actual situation	不明真相	og	MANY_RESULTS
不明真相	don't understand the actual situation	bù míng zhēnxiàng	py	NO_RESULTS
不要乱说话	do not make irresponsible remarks	bú yào luàn shuōhuà	py	ERROR
不要乱说话	do not make irresponsible remarks	不要乱说话	og	MANY_RESULTS
专业孙子	professional grandchild	专业孙子	og	ERROR
专业孙子	professional grandchild	zhuānyè sūnzi	py	NO_RESULTS
中国人是需要管的	Chinese people need to be controlled	中国人是需要管的	og	MANY_RESULTS
中国人是需要管的	Chinese people need to be controlled	Zhōngguó rén shì xūyào guǎn de	py	NO_RESULTS
中国人民的老朋友	old friends of the Chinese people	中国人民的老朋友	og	MANY_RESULTS

Base Term	Meaning	Morph	Type	Result
中国人民的老朋友	old friends of the Chinese people	Zhōngguó rénmin de lǎo péngyǒu	py	NO_RESULTS
中国感恩节	Chinese Thanksgiving	中国感恩节	og	MANY_RESULTS
中国感恩节	Chinese Thanksgiving	Zhōngguó Gǎn'ēnjié	py	NO_RESULTS
中国的互联网是开放的	China's Internet is open	中国的互联网是开放的	og	MANY_RESULTS
中国的互联网是开放的	China's Internet is open	Zhōngguó de hùliánwǎng shì kāifàng de	py	NO_RESULTS

Figure 2. Typical Sample of Dataset. Observe that Pinyin generally does not return any results, and Chinese script generally passes through censors.

An interesting result is that the Pinyin terms with accents were very rarely used on Weibo. The vast majority of Pinyin *morphs* yielded no results, even when the base term *morph* yielded many. There are likely two reasons for this. The first is that computer-based entry systems are generally geared toward displaying characters, even though the user may be typing in Pinyin. In the case of stroke-based entry, the Pinyin is completely bypassed. The second reason for the lack of Pinyin results is that the computer-based entry for Pinyin with tones is particularly cumbersome, often requiring the user to hold down a key in order to select the accented version. Particularly with idiomatic terms such as these, it is likely that any Pinyin input would have been entered without tone marks. I discuss the addition of toneless Pinyin as an additional *morph*, along with other further steps, in the conclusion section.

Below we find all of the blocked-status *morphs* from the dataset. It is of interest that only fifteen of over three hundred terms (over six hundred morph-pairs) are currently blocked by censors.

On the one hand, this could indicate that the internet slang found in the Grass Mud Horse Lexicon is new enough to pass undetected by censors.

Table. All blocked entries from Grass Mud Horse lexicon

Base Term	Meaning	Morph	Type	Status	Topic	Connotation
GFW	Great Firewall	GFW	og	BLOCKED	censorship	pejorative
GFW 之父	father of the Great Firewall	GFW 之父	og	BLOCKED	censorship	pejorative
GFW 之父	father of the Great Firewall	GFW zhī fù	py	BLOCKED	censorship	pejorative
习包子	Steamed Bun Xi	习包子	og	BLOCKED	political	endearing
五月三十五日	Thirty-Fifth of May (June 4, 1989 - Tiananmen)	五月三十五日	og	BLOCKED	collective action	neutral
土共	TG	土共	og	BLOCKED	political	neutral
带鱼包子	cutlassfish bun	带鱼包子	og	BLOCKED	political	pejorative
当今皇上	reigning emperor	当今皇上	og	BLOCKED	political	pejorative
捅鸡局	Bureau of Dicking Around	捅鸡局	og	BLOCKED	political	pejorative

Base Term	Meaning	Morph	Type	Status	Topic	Connotation
日人民报	Screwing People Post	日人民报	og	BLOCKED	political	pejorative
正腐	govern-rot	正腐	og	BLOCKED	political	pejorative
淋巴县长	Mayor Lymph	淋巴县长	og	BLOCKED	collective action	neutral
电婊	power whore	电婊	og	BLOCKED	political	pejorative
糊煮席	muddled boiled banquet	糊煮席	og	BLOCKED	political	pejorative
翻墙	scale the wall	翻墙	og	BLOCKED	collective action	neutral

Yet, if these sorts of terms are widely available on the internet, it would seem that it would be very simple for censors to simply add the list to their own blacklist of terms. Rather, it seems that the majority of the lexicon's terms are not intended to be blocked. This is in line with the King et al. hypothesis that criticism is not necessarily something that the government aims to suppress, as long as it is not backed by collective action.

Of the blocked terms below, I have classified three as referring to collective-action events: 35th May, Mayor Lymph, Scale the wall. The 35th of May refers to June 4, 1989, the date of the Tiananmen Square crackdown.¹⁴ Given the controversy surrounding the topic, it is not surprising to see a reference to Tiananmen censored. Of particular note is “Mayor Lymph,” which refers to a manifesto for reform and democratization in China signed by 350 scholars and activists in 2008.¹⁵ “Scale the wall”

¹⁴ http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Thirty-Fifth_of_May

¹⁵ http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Mayor_Lymph

refers to methods of bypassing China's firewall via VPN,¹⁶ which also has collective action connotations.

The remaining terms have to do with censorship or political criticism. It is interesting that only these particular terms were blocked, as they do not seem particularly distinguishable from the majority of unblocked terms. One of particular note is "习包子", or "Steamed Bun Xi," which is an endearing reference to Xi Jinping's dining at a common peoples' steamed bun restaurant. This act was generally popular among netizens for its representation of the average citizen, although some criticized it as a "political show."¹⁷ Regardless, it appears that it is the potential for viral conversation around politics, neither decisively positive or negative, that has landed this term on the blocked list.

CONCLUSION

It would be worth revisiting the crawling stage in order to re-evaluate the ERROR-results. The primary limitations in this regard were not having access to the Weibo API for search queries (which would essentially give a clean backdoor to search, where no web crawling would be necessary), and having to monitor queries due to CAPTCHAs. The API issues would require getting Weibo developer application approval, which might turn out to be unfeasible for academic purposes. The CAPTCHA issue may be solvable by using proxies.

One interesting direction to take with this study is comparing the result types with term classification. For example, tagging sensitive topics such as: government policies, criticism, pornography, profanity, news, would be useful for supporting or refuting the collective action potential hypothesis (set forth by King et al.) in the microblogging space.

The code for this project was designed to allow for more *morphs*. To begin with, two additional *morphs* can be derived programmatically from each entry: no tones (Pinyin Pinyin), and acronym (Pinyin PY). There are many more Romanizations (Wade-Giles, dialect-based), syllabary-based such as *bopomofo*, homophones-lookup up via rhyming dictionary, and potentially even homographs from a graphically organized Chinese dictionary. All of these methods are certainly

¹⁶ http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Scale_the_wall

¹⁷ http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Steamed_Bun_Xi

doable by hand, but it would be interesting to explore programmatic techniques to accurately predict the possible “up and coming” *morphs* by finding all potential morphs, and checking to see if any are being used to represent the initial term.

With this in mind, a programmatic approach to exploring potential word *morphs* applies to more than patterns of internet censorship. The homophonic and multi-topolectical nature of Sinitic languages in China may be particularly suitable to a programmatic approach to the problem of *morph* generation, because of the ease of generating novel ways of presenting ideas based on similar sounds. An exploration of *morph* usage and proliferation could offer insight into the development of internet language in China and lend itself to similar studies in other languages.

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APPENDIX

Complete project code can be found here: <https://github.com/dericko/ealc223-proj>

China English: A Developing, Functional, and Legitimate World English Variety

Kaitlyn Ugoretz

INTRODUCTION

As globalization continues to reach past the upper echelons of international relations to transform our everyday lives and encourage communication between even the most distant of places, the phenomenon is affecting English in exciting and unprecedented ways. English has grown from being just one of the many languages of Europe to sharing the position of international language of choice with French and to what many sociolinguists now consider a “family” of “World Englishes” (Kachru 1965).¹ As Bhatt notes in his comprehensive review of the study of World English (WE), English has grown to encompass many “different English languages, studied within the conceptual framework of world Englishes, [which] represent diverse linguistic, cultural, and ideological voices” (Kachru 1965, 527). And although there is the prescriptive faction within the linguistic community that still rallies around preserving the integrity and ubiquity of Standard English (SE)², the legitimacy of certain WE varieties — such as Indian English, Pakistani English, and Ghanaian English — is widely accepted. These varieties have been studied for more than forty years; their distinctive features have been negotiated and catalogued, and they are now received as “developed,” “established” WE varieties. Yet

¹ The linguistic community owes much to Kachru’s groundbreaking research on WEs and his founding of the *World Englishes* journal, which has been instrumental in the legitimization of WEs and discourse on the subject.

² Although I use the term “Standard English” to describe the core English variety and features that have historically been afforded dominant status, it should be understood that there is a plurality of Standard Englishes, just as there is a plurality of WE varieties. The two English varieties most commonly characterized as “Standard” are British English and American English.

despite the general recognition accorded to the existence and continued development of WEs, the linguistic and English Language Teaching (ELT) communities continue to act as gatekeepers for which new English varieties “qualify” as WEs, intensely skeptical as if worried that allowing “unsophisticated,” unvetted varieties into the fold would tarnish the good name of English. Such is the case with China English (CE).

There has been immense pushback to the acceptance of China English as a WE on several fronts, but the scholarship to date overwhelmingly agrees that CE is a “developing” but valid native variety of English. In light of all this, why has there been so much resistance to recognizing CE and encouraging its use? The opposition, sometimes surprisingly aggressive, stems from the lack of general understanding about how CE has developed, what it is and is not, and why its acceptance and adoption is beneficial — if not necessary — for the growing Chinese English-speaking population. The goal of this paper is to increase awareness of CE and support its ongoing study, legitimization, and implementation. I will first provide background on the development of WEs in general and CE in particular, then distinguish CE from other obfuscatory English “varieties” in China, compile and examine CE’s distinct linguistic features, and finally consider commentary both advocating and discouraging the validation and adoption of CE as China’s own standard English variety. Although it is not yet a fully mature WE variety, the consensus of decades of research promotes China English as a legitimate and functional World English variety that has the potential to improve communications with and in China.

1. BACKGROUND

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORLD ENGLISHES

Globalization and its implications for international relations and communications are a hot topic for many humanities discourses in the twenty-first century; however, one must look back to much earlier instances of prolonged language contact to understand the origins of World Englishes. As one might expect, here we see again the impact of the far-reaching influence of Western European colonialism. Braj Kachru, the father of the study of World Englishes, created a model of three concentric circles (1997) to illustrate the historical spread of English around the globe (Fig. 1). The Inner Circle — the

smallest, oldest, and innermost ring — represents the First Wave of the spread of English: the transplanting of English as a native language by the massive British³ migrations to North America, Australia, and New Zealand beginning in the seventeenth century (Bhatt 2015; Schneider 2014). This first diaspora led to English “becoming one of the major languages of the world ... though it was still not, as it is now, a global language, numerically or functionally” (Bhatt 2015, 529). At this point in the English diaspora, people who spoke English as a native language (ENL) largely lived in community with each other or otherwise imposed their own language on the indigenous population in such a way that the coexistence and intermingling of languages did not occur as is necessary to create a nativized English variety. Those currently within the Inner Circle are estimated to be 320 million – 380 million native speakers.

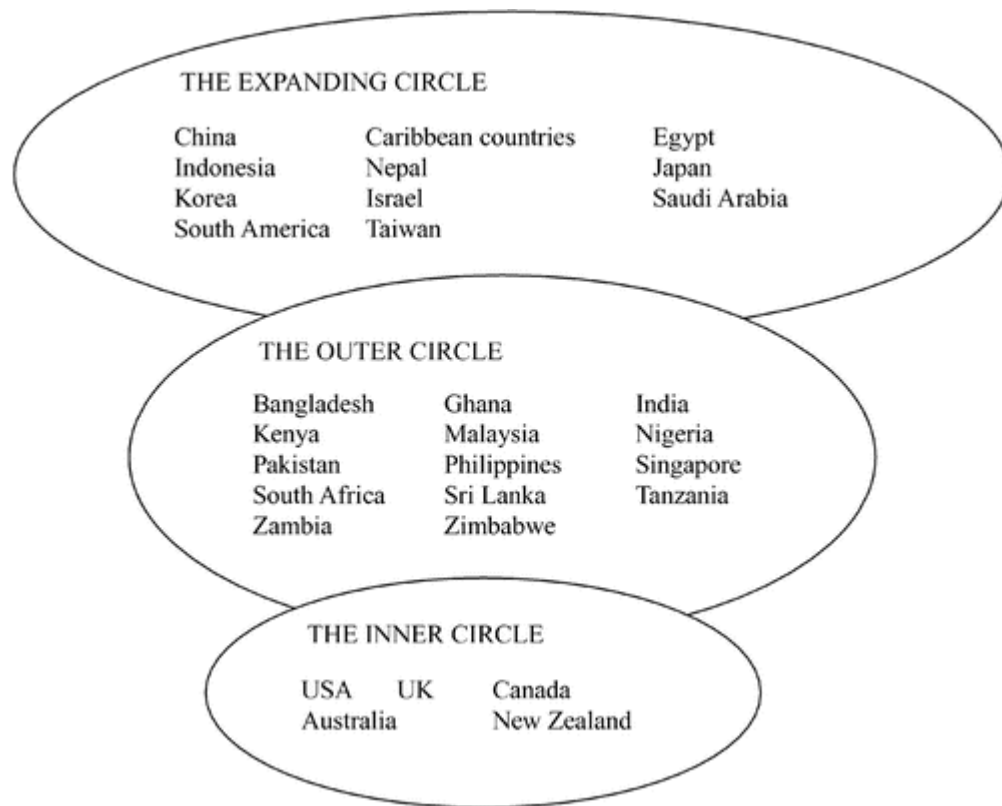


Figure 1. Kachru's Three-Circle model
(Bhatt 530 [Adapted from Kachru (1997)])

³ Here I use “British” instead of “English” to denote the colonial nature of the first English diaspora.

The second tier of Kachru's model, the Expanding Circle, encompasses the countries where English has been institutionalized alongside native languages as an official language. This includes countless countries impacted by Western European colonialism (e.g. India and South Africa), but also goes beyond to include regions that were induced to adopt English in order to participate in trade. Bhatt points out that perspectives explaining the Second Wave of the English diaspora are divided between the theories of English linguistic imperialism and linguistic pragmatism (Bhatt 2015, 532).

The former theory argues that English has been imposed by linguistically coercive bodies like the British Council and TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) to create a power dynamic in which SE is viewed as superior to native languages; thus, Bhatt critiques, "linguistic imperialism results in the emergence, on the one hand, of an asymmetric relationship between producers and consumers that is internalized as natural, normative, and essential and, on the other hand, of a heteroglossic (hierarchical) arrangement of languages, pervaded by hegemonic value judgments, material and symbolic investments, and ideologies that represent interests only of those in power" (Bhatt 2015, 532). This theory applies most strongly to the spread of English to British colonies. Colonists were indoctrinated into a market in which the "quality" of one's English was a type of capital; but no matter how much time and effort one spent learning SE, they would always be denied total fluency and thus continue to occupy a position beneath native speakers (i.e. colonizers) in terms of linguistic status. When the colonizers withdrew, the influence of the market they had created remained; however, their "departure did create a new ecology for the teaching of English in terms of (nonnative) linguistic input, local (Indian, Nigerian, etc.) norms, multiple identities, communicative competencies and methodologies that respect language variation" (Bhatt 2015, 533). This new ecology created a space for the former colonists to make English their own and develop WE varieties.

On the other hand, the theory of linguistic pragmatism — or the "econocultural model" — explains the spread of English as a second language (ESL) as being due to the economic and cultural capital of English as a *lingua franca*, first in terms of commerce and later as the language of international institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank that sprang up after World War II. Thus it was possible for countries like Ghana, which had no colonial ties to Europe, to take English as an official language alongside native languages in order to participate in both the linguistic and commercial markets that British imperialism had created. I see no reason why the two should be

mutually exclusive; rather, it more likely the case that the phenomena of linguistic imperialism and linguistic pragmatism reinforced one another. In any case, it became apparent to the countries within the Anglosphere’s scope of influence that adopting English was in their best interest and caused English to come in contact with genetically and culturally unrelated languages. It is the creation of this Outer Circle of English speakers that granted English its status as a global language and would eventually catalyze the spread of English to the third and newest tier in Kachru’s model, the Expanding Circle.

The Expanding Circle refers to the communities in which English is taught and spoken as a foreign language (EFL). In 1997, David Crystal estimated that the Expanding Circle included 100–1000 million EFL speakers. However, keeping in mind the fact that estimations of the number of Chinese English-speakers alone vary from 200 million to upwards of 400 million (Gil 2011), more recent calculations of the Expanding Circle containing 750–1000 million speakers seem more likely (McArthur 2001). Nations within the Expanding Circle often stress the teaching of English as a foreign language in order to participate in the English-dominated markets discussed above, despite the fact that English holds no official status there. The desire to educate as many people as possible to be as fluent in English as possible has led to the growth of the burgeoning ELT industry over the past thirty years (Crystal 1999). Hundreds of thousands of native speakers — many with little to no training in language instruction — are sent all over the world to meet demand. The number of ELT programs and products available, let alone the revenue they generate, is simply staggering. And this whole business is built upon the status and exclusivity of SE and nations’ conclusions that investing in EFL teaching and gaining competency in a global language is profitable in the long run. But while the influence of the English market on linguistic norms cannot be overstated, it is important to remember that speakers of English in the Expanding Circle now outnumber those in the Inner and Outer Circles combined, and they too now have the power to change what “English” really means.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA ENGLISH

Now that we have an understanding of how China and other members of the Expanding Circle fit into the context of the rise of English as a global language, we may turn our attention completely to the development of a native variety of English in China — China English. Compared to the extensive

history of Outer Circle World English varieties like Indian English, China English is still in its infancy. China did not truly open itself up to prolonged contact with the English-speaking community — as was true with many things — until Deng Xiaoping’s famous economic reforms beginning in 1978. But what English’s place in China may lack in history, it makes up for in fervor. Many scholars point to China’s increased engagement in the international sphere — specifically its joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 and hosting the Olympics in 2008 (Hu 2004; Yang and Dai 2011; Schneider 2014) — as the beginning of the so-called “English Boom” (Eaves 2011). Although English is not an official language of China, it is obvious from the number of state English programs and English media outlets, and the growth in Chinese English learners that English is afforded eminent status. Megan Eaves remarks that “roughly 90,000 taxi drivers in Beijing learned English in preparation for the Summer Olympic Games ... of some 600,000 total residents ... that have jumped on the English bandwagon” (Eaves 2011, 64). Furthermore, as Edgar Schneider notes, “since 2001, English is a compulsory subject from grade 3 in primary school ... [and a] national College English Test, administered at various levels, is compulsory for graduation at most colleges” (Schneider 2014, 18). Thus, achieving English competency has now become a requirement for Chinese students’ academic — and increasingly, professional — success.⁴

With the number of Chinese learning English now outnumbering native English-speakers learning Chinese (Gil 2011), many have questioned why the Chinese must learn a SE that communicates ideas that do not correspond with their own unique historical and cultural background. This is exactly the sort of question that has led to the development of World Englishes — varieties that more aptly convey the national identity of the speaker than SE. Chinua Achebe, a staunch advocator for native varieties of English, communicates the desire for an English in tune with one’s own culture well: “I feel the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its

⁴ I myself have been caught in the sights of Chinese ELT programs and college application paper mills that promise their clients a competitive edge in the business and education sectors. The market for SE fluency that prescriptivists have created is so lucrative that American and English college students are shipped to China during the summer in droves. Native fluency in English is the only real requirement to teach for these ELT programs, though some programs pride themselves on only hiring the “best” (e.g. Ivy League students).

new African surroundings" (qtd. in Bhatt 2015, 537). It is this same desire for a culturally-specific English that sparked the genesis of China English (Li 2012). Ge Chuangui, the first linguist to refer to the existence of China English, in 1980, echoes a sentiment similar to that of Achebe: "When we want to express ourselves in both spoken or written English, we all have something ... unique about China to express. These expressions do not belong to those native [English] speakers and they should be called China English" (qtd. in Hui 2013, 119). The various unique features of China English will be examined below, but first it is important to disambiguate what linguists take the term "China English" to mean.

CHINGLISH, CHINESE ENGLISH, OR CHINA ENGLISH?

Although the development of China English has been studied by linguists for almost thirty-five years, there is little understanding of this WE variety outside of academia. This is due in part to the prominence and popularity of the linguistic phenomenon known commonly known as "Chinglish" which exploded in the public consciousness after the Beijing Olympics. Countless books and blogs are dedicated to documenting the comical butchering of English on Chinese signage that so amuses tourists. Moreover, the term "Chinglish" lacks a clear definition commonly accepted by the public and is also often used to describe the code-switching that bilingual speakers of Chinese and English and foreign language students often employ. "Chinese English" is also a phrase thrown about when describing the English spoken by native Chinese speakers that seems to "miss the mark" according to SE sensibilities. It is therefore necessary to define and distinguish "Chinglish," "Chinese English," and "China English" before we can begin to analyze China English in depth.

Some scholars argue that Chinglish, Chinese English, and China English stand on a continuum of authenticity and legitimacy that the Chinese English-speaking demographic is progressing along (Fang 2011; Hu 2004).⁵ According to this mindset, the terrible English that has become characteristic of Chinglish has been a stepping stone to an accepted variety of WE that can be recognized as uniquely Chinese, a variety now officially titled "China English." However, in this paper I reject the ideas that

⁵ Many scholars who argue that there is a line on which Chinglish and China English are situated at opposite ends describe Chinglish as what I would call "Chinese English." I do agree that Chinese English and China English are related; thus, this disagreement is mostly over semantics. This further proves the need for scholars to reach a consensus on terminology.

Chinglish and China English are linguistically related and that the latter has developed out of the former. Additionally, I reject the idea that Chinglish is an interlanguage or form of Pidgin English (Gao 2010; Li 2012; Wei and Fei 2003); I reserve this definition for “Chinese English,” which I will expand upon in a moment. Rather, I subscribe to Eaves’ definition of Chinglish as “a nonsensical form of language, identifiable as an attempt at English, but usually produced by deficient translation devices or speakers/writers with a low skill level” (Eaves 2011, 65). Examples of Chinglish can most easily be identified by the obvious and indiscriminate “plugging in” of English lexical items — often outdated or simply incorrectly translated items — into Chinese syntactic structures. Eaves argues that such examples are less indicative of the partially-informed interference between speakers’ native language (L1) and second language (L2), and more likely due to poor machine translations. As such, Chinglish cannot be considered a Pidgin English or a true stage in the development of a national variety of WE.

Further adding to the confusion over the qualifications of China English as a WE variety is the historical conflation of CE with “Chinese English.” Wei and Fei and Hu both note that the term “Chinese English” is simply a title for China English that is associated with contempt rather than the relative acceptance or prestige held by the latter. In light of her understanding of Chinglish, however, Eaves distinguishes Chinese English from CE as an interlanguage spoken by Chinese learners of English (Yang and Zhang 2015). Thus, it is Chinese English and not Chinglish which is “the product of errors made by learners as they advance in fluency level,” errors including “borrowing patterns from the mother tongue, extending patterns from the target language, [and] expressing meanings using the words and grammar which are already known” (Richards qtd. in Eaves 2011, 66). Such errors set Chinese English apart from Chinglish, as instances of Chinese English still follow many of the rules of SE syntax and use lexical items that are close enough to be intelligible to native speakers of English. Still, Chinese English cannot be accepted as a legitimate national variety of WE in the ways used to define China English as such below.

Having defined Chinglish and Chinese English and thus also defined China English by what it is not, we can safely proceed to define China English by what it is. As Wang Rongpei astutely noted, “China English (*Zhōngguó Yīngyǔ* 中国英语) is defined as that which the Chinese use on the mainland, which takes SE as its core but is an English with Chinese characteristics” (qtd. in Gao 2010, 54). However, we cannot simply accept China English as an established WE variety because it has

been the subject of substantial study since 1980. According to Butler’s framework for determining the “nativization” of an English variety, China English is still a developing language variety because, though it exhibits various unique linguistic features, CE is still too young to have a written literature and a body of reference works. Due to this lack of reference materials, those outside of the linguistic community tend not to take China English seriously when compared to a long-studied, well-established, and popularly accepted variety such as Indian English. However, by drawing together the findings of various studies of CE and examining the variety’s unique linguistic characteristics in detail, I hope to lend credibility to the argument that China English is a developing but nonetheless legitimate variety of WE that conforms to the underlying principles of English while transmitting the unique aspects of Chinese identity.

2. FEATURES OF CHINA ENGLISH

PHONOLOGY

Butler’s first qualification for a nativized language variety is a standard and unique pronunciation, and so I will begin my examination of China English’s linguistic characteristics with the variety’s phonological features. Keep in mind that while these features are not standardized so that the speech of every CE speaker does not exhibit all of the following features, the majority does exhibit a plurality of these distinct phonological characteristics:

- $/\theta/ \rightarrow /s/$ and $/ð/ \rightarrow /z/$ or $/d/$. Because the phonology of Modern Standard Mandarin lacks the voiced dental fricative $/\theta/$ (as in *theory*) and unvoiced dental fricative $/ð/$ (as in *then*), these consonants are often replaced in CE by the close but more familiar phonemes $/s/$ and $/z/$ or $/d/$ respectively.
- *Anaptyxis of final $/ə/$* . Because the phonology of MSM syllables only contains two final consonants ($/n/$ and $/ŋ/$), Chinese speakers tend to add a schwa ($/ə/$) to the ends of English words in CE to make it more readily pronounceable.

These are a few of the main phonological features of CE that linguists agree upon (Eaves 2011; He and Li 2009; Schneider 2014). According to He and Li, it is still too early in the study of CE, as well

as the development of CE itself, to give an exhaustive list of the variety's phonological features. However, several linguists have reported seeing many other characteristics "on the horizon," namely "general lack of voiced fricatives, certain types of diphthong simplification, avoidance of weak forms for function words, and a tendency to pronounce multisyllabic words or word groups with syllable-timing" among others (He and Li 2009, 72). Zhang points out that most current research on the phonology of CE is focused on the segmental level (i.e. the phonemic level), with little scholarship dedicated to the more salient suprasegmental level which deals with units larger than the phoneme. As CE develops and gains greater acceptance and attention, we may be able to satisfactorily codify all of CE's features; for the time being, I believe the features listed above sufficient to fulfill the first requirement of Butler's standards for a legitimate nativized language variety.

Many who oppose the acceptance of WEs cite a fear of such varieties becoming mutually unintelligible. But the fact of the matter is that linguists agree that each English variety has small differences in pronunciation (Hu 2004; Yang and Dai 2011). As Yang and Dai argue, "As long as they do not bear such differences in speech that would cause a change in meaning and by using them people from different nations can communicate with one another without restraint, they are acceptable and reasonable at least on the level of phonology, which is the case of China English" (Yang and Dai 2011, 9). There are differences in phonology between the two English varieties taken as standards, British English and American English, but they are still mutually intelligible. And although there is technically a codified "Received Pronunciation" from Standard British English that English-learners could refer to, only 3–5 percent of the population in England use this pronunciation (Yang and Dai 2011, 9). It is in light of this Received Pronunciation being so far from the norms of spoken English that Peter Roach referred to it as a "convenient fiction, not a scientific fact." Moreover, in a study published by Wang Weihong in 2015, it was found that 97.8 percent of the 1,782 Chinese university English teachers and students had no problem understanding the phonology of CE. While prescriptive biases may still afford a more "standard" accent certain currency in the linguistic market, CE's phonology still exhibits the core of English pronunciation and its unique features are also mutually intelligible. It is clear that there should be no objection to accepting China English as a legitimate WE variety on the grounds of phonological differences.

LEXIS

Following Butler’s framework, it is next necessary to explore the ways in which the China English lexicon expresses the local culture better than SE could. As a matter of fact, many words that speak to Chinese history and culture have made their way into popular use in SE due to borrowing. Yang and Dai posit that at least sixty-five words in English are derived from the word “silk,” “reflect[ing] the high level of silk culture of ancient China,” and many more words have been adopted to refer to Chinese cuisine and other cultural aspects (Yang and Dai 2011, 10). And as the growing phenomenon of globalization has enabled the spread of culture around the world, we require new words to describe things and ideas for which SE lacks proper equivalents. Since the primary purpose for the development of China English is to create a variety of English that more aptly expresses the Chinese “experience” better than any other variety, it stands to reason that new words must be added to the lexis of CE to do just that. Words are added to the CE lexis through several mechanisms (Eaves 2011; Han 2007; He and Li 2009; Yang and Dai 2011; Wang 2015):

- *Loanshift.* As Eaves defines it, loanshift (or semantic shift) takes words from the base language (SE in this case) and extends the meaning beyond its original usage (Eaves 2011, 69). The most prominent example of a loanshift is the word *face*. In Chinese, the concept of *face* (面子) — as explained by Hu — “means honour, dignity, pride, or even identity ... expressions like *give face*, *save face*, *no face*, *lose face* are very often used” (Hu 2004, 28). Although the expression *to lose/save face* may be used by speakers of other SE and WE varieties, it does not cover the full range of meaning that *face* has in Chinese. Thus, CE extends the meaning of *face* through loanshift by using it in other expressions, thereby slowly changing the meaning of *face* in general over time.
- *Loanblend.* Loanblend may be the least used mechanism for creating new CE lexical items, but one word created through loanblend stands out: *taikonaut* (Han 2007; Fang 2011; Yang and Dai 2011). This term came into use at the turn of the millennium and follows the practice of adding an affix to the *-naut* suffix to refer to space workers according to their country of origin (e.g. *astronaut*, *cosmonaut*). The affix *taiko-* is derived from Mandarin *tàikōng* (太空),

meaning *space*. This instance of loanblend suggests that certain CE lexical items are created to participate in international discourses and demonstrate power or gain prestige.

- *Loan translation or calque.* The mechanism of loan translation literally translates Chinese concepts or idioms for which there is no existent equivalent into English. What distinguishes these loan translations from the terrible translated phrases of Chinglish is that loan translations still follow general word meanings and English grammar so that the words or phrases, though they may seem a bit strange at first, are readily understandable. Loan translation is often used for China-specific historical and political terms like the *May Four Movement* and the *One Belt, One Road* initiative, but it is also responsible for culture-specific terms like *color wolf*, *paper tiger*, and *Mid-Autumn festival*.⁶
- *Transliteration.* Words that are not so easily or concisely translated directly into English can be added to the CE lexis through transliteration from Pinyin. A few transliterated Chinese words have already become part of the SE lexis, such as *fengshui*, *ping p[o/a]ng*, and *Renminbi (RMB)*.⁷

I have already mentioned that, as one would expect from a variety of any language, the core of the CE lexis is derived from SE. Clearly, rather than degrading the core SE lexis in any way, as some might fear, CE simply adds to the richness of WE as a whole with new vocabulary while allowing Chinese to express their unique experiences (Hui 2013).

SYNTAX

Yang and Dai note that manipulation of syntax allows for linguistic creativity and the expression of one's own aesthetic. By incorporating certain syntactical structures from their native language, speakers of CE may easily pursue aspects of beauty that they appreciate in Chinese but which may not

⁶ See Wang and Wang 2013 for an analysis of the considerations involved in translating idioms into English.

⁷ As Hui points out, a majority of transliterations of Chinese words in the SE lexis come from names for China-specific ingredients and dishes, since terms for native cuisine in one language may not have proper equivalents in another (*tofu*, *jiaozi*) or may be interchangeable with loan translations (e.g. *jiaozi* vs. *dumpling*). Notice that Pinyin diacritics are not used once a Chinese word has been loaned into a WE variety.

be normal in SE. The most commonly distinguished syntactic features of CE are as follows (He and Li 2009; Eaves 2011; Yang and Dai 2011; Hui 2013; Yang and Zhang 2015):

- *Parallel structure.* Parallelism, often coupled with parataxis and repetition, "characterized by conciseness, rhythm and symmetric beauty ... wins the affection of Chinese people and makes itself at home in China English," according to Yang and Dai (2011, 11). They stress that the goal of using such structures to reinforce ideas is the achievement of "language eloquence."⁸ While these features are similarly used for their aesthetic in SE poetic genres, they are not used as often in spoken SE as in CE.
- *Topicalization of adjuncts.* While modifiers such as adverbial clauses are typically added at the ends of SE sentences, it has been observed that CE speakers prefer to place them at the front.
- *The Null Subject parameter.* Because subjects are optional in Chinese and are often dropped when the subject is considered obvious from context, CE speakers also tend to omit subjects in certain cases. Subjects are required according to standard SE syntax, but upon considering examples of CE such as "*Very glad to see you*" and "*Miss you a lot*," one may recognize phrases like these coming more into casual SE speech and text (e.g. emails). While speakers of other WEs may have to refer to the context of the conversation to intuit the subject in CE sentences, I still believe that the Null Subject parameter will not affect mutual intelligibility too greatly.
- *Open head vs. open end.* The open head structure is preferred in CE, where sentences are "top heavy"; that is, subordinate clauses are often put in front of main clauses.

Wei and Fei go on to list several other features that have gone unaddressed or glossed over, including tendencies to arrange sentences in chronological order; prefer simple and compound sentences over complex sentences; replace the formal subject *it* with special subjects; disprefer using the passive voice; and respond to negative or tag questions based on agreement with the question, rather than the fact. Most of the linguists referenced in this paper also offer a few unique features to

⁸ I find Yang and Dai's definition much more realistic than He and Li's argument that parallelism is chiefly reserved for "words of wisdom" (273).

consider. But all linguists agree on the need for more research to establish an exhaustive consensus on CE's syntactic features.

Members of the ELT community often advocate clinging to SE norms for fear of every prescriptivist's nightmare: poor grammar (Wang 2015). In the case of CE, however, its syntactic features are still generally permissible within the grammar of SE. Although an American would prefer to say "*There is a cat on the chair*," "*On the chair there is a cat*" is still an acceptable and intelligible sentence. It is just that CE syntax uses particular structures more than is the norm in written or spoken SE. Therefore, accepting CE — once the variety has been codified — should bear no negative effect on the integrity of English grammar. Actually, if it were to be taught in schools, CE may even improve the overall grammar of Chinese English-speakers by making the syntactic structures of English more relatable to their native language.

DISCOURSE PRAGMATICS

The discourse features of CE have been the least studied and agreed-upon characteristics to date (He and Li 2009). It is difficult to distinguish unique discourse features for CE because, as mentioned above, it is still too young a variety to have a written literature and a body of reference works to analyze. However, discourse pragmatics in WE varieties are typically informed by the "world outlook, philosophical view, value system and thinking patterns" of the host country, and so a few features have been pointed out along these lines (Yang and Dai 2011, 11; Schneider 2014). Eaves notes that emails written in CE often begin with "facework," "whereby [the sender] creates 'good face' by complimenting the recipient and noting his connection to her via a third party" and then moving on to the purpose of the message (Eaves 2011, 70). Many linguists argue that CE texts have a tendency to be organized according to inductive reason, a Chinese discourse feature, rather than deductive reasoning, the favored Western approach (He and Li 2009; He and Zhang 2010; Wang 2015) — although You states that inductive and deductive patterns are both used according to the genre⁹ of the literature (You 2008, 238). Yang and Dai comment that there is a "roundabout" quality to Chinese and

⁹ See You 2008 for an in-depth analysis of CE discourse pragmatics in digital media genres.

CE, citing the aesthetic beauty of implications and room for interpretation (Yang and Dai 2011, 12).¹⁰ Each linguist in the conversation seems to have their own ideas about CE discourse pragmatics. Perhaps in the interests of helping to develop CE into a rich, well-supported, and recognized WE variety, more attention should first be given to identifying reference works exemplary of CE from which we can later draw conclusions about discourse pragmatics.

3. BENEFITS OF CODIFYING AND OFFICIALLY ACCEPTING CE

Linguists studying CE have identified several ways in which accepting and further developing CE is beneficial to speakers of CE and English as a whole. As was discussed earlier in evaluating CE's lexical features, the new vocabulary being created to express Chinese ideas enrich the English lexis at large and make communications more exact. Hui points out that adding China-specific words to the lexis of non-Chinese English-speakers can also reflect current Chinese society and encourage a greater understanding of modern Chinese politics, economics, etc. (Hui 2013, 120). Furthermore, CE is certainly more capable of expressing the Chinese experience than any other variety of English. Fang argues that adopting CE will empower China in the English-dominated world:

With Chinese culture and traditions growing more and more popular in the world, Chinese English speakers will too be gaining the power of discourse in intercultural communication, because they are no longer passive culture receivers but culture disseminators. This, in return, may reinforce their sense of pride in their native cultural identity and serve as a strong incentive for them to further explore and protect Chinese cultural legacies. (Fang 2011, 379)

Many proponents of institutionalizing CE remark that due to China's growing military, economic, and cultural influence, it is high time that China was able to hold its own in terms of communications in English.

¹⁰ Fang cautions against using this "indirect manner," arguing that in CE this would likely cause confusion and thereby compromise mutual intelligibility.

CONCLUSION

If accepting CE as a valid WE variety and putting in the effort to develop it more formally could do so much for international communication, why not pursue such a course? The problem is that CE is still victim to prescriptive biases both within China and outside. In Wang's study, although over 96 percent of teachers and students agreed that all features of CE were understandable, only 30.8 percent viewed them as acceptable (Wang 2015, 64). In order to improve language attitudes in China towards CE, two things must happen in tandem: (1) a sound pedagogy must be devised and widely implemented to create a powerful community of fluent, confident speakers of CE; and (2) linguists must reach a consensus on the core features of CE and thereafter inform the general public so that CE can gain legitimacy around the world. This may sound like a tall order, but if a larger group of CE speakers is not encouraged, then linguists will not be able to amass the necessary body of reference works for CE to qualify as a developed WE variety; similarly, if linguists do not continue to develop our understanding of CE, the variety will not gain enough traction within China to allow for the CE community to grow. The first step in the long journey to legitimizing CE in the eyes of the general population is for linguists to come together in a highly visible way. We need to get the word out about CE through collaborations, conferences, seminars, interviews — whatever channels are open to us. It's time for the reality of CE to be brought to light.

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The Role and Prospects of Non-Sinitic Languages in China

Carolyn Lye

INTRODUCTION

China is an ethnically diverse country made up of fifty-six officially recognized ethnic groups. Approximately 1.2 billion of its people are in the Han majority, and 112 million compose the population of the remaining fifty-five ethnic minorities.¹ Among these fifty-six ethnic groups, there are 292 attested living languages in China that are part of at least nine language families, including Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Turkic, Tungusic, and Mon-Khmer.² Each language family is composed of languages that are historically related, and together they share similarities in word forms, grammar, and syntactic structure.³

While Standard Chinese, or *Putonghua*, is considered the official national spoken language of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and also serves as a lingua franca for regions of the PRC, the remaining languages of China serve an important purpose for the maintenance of ethnic identity among the ethnic minorities of China. The focus of this discussion is the past treatment, current role, and future prospects of the non-Sinitic languages of China.

The treatment of the non-Sinitic languages of China has changed over time, but it has always been an important topic of discussion within the political arena of China in terms of ethnic minority and language policy and within the ethnic minorities themselves.

¹ Minglang Zhou, "The Politics of Bilingual Education in the People's Republic of China Since 1949," *Bilingual Research Journal* 25.1–2 (2001): 147–171.

² M. Paul Lewis, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, eds., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 18th ed. (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2015. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>).

³ Fang-Kuei Li, "Languages and Dialects of China," *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 1.1 (1973): 1–13.

This study first outlines the role of language in shaping ethnic identity, both in a broad sense and as it applies to non-Sinitic languages in ethnic minority communities in China, to demonstrate the perspectives of ethnic minorities when China's language policies have been repressive. An overview of language policy in the PRC since 1949 will subsequently be presented in three stages, each stage characterized by either accommodationist or integrationist views of minority languages. Finally, case studies of four non-Sinitic languages used by ethnic minorities in China will then be explored: Uyghur, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Korean. These four languages were chosen because (a) they all have the status of languages with writing systems that have had broad usage for an extended period of time, and (b) the four languages are associated with ethnic minorities in China that have been treated in vastly different ways. These analyses show that the preservation of non-Sinitic languages for ethnic groups in China is crucial for the preservation of ethnic identity, and language policies in China have affected language use differently, depending on the culture and outlook of the ethnic minority called into consideration.

ROLE OF NON-SINITIC LANGUAGES IN ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Language and ethnic identity are concepts that are very closely tied together. In terms of communication, language is the medium with which cultural information is transferred from one generation to the next, and therefore it is the primary way that an ethnic group is enabled to learn about itself and understand its place in the wider community. Furthermore, most people tend to identify with a certain ethnic group through socialization within their immediate community — their family and friends. What underlies this socialization is the language used at home and in the surrounding community, and thus language becomes an important factor in identifying with a social group.⁴

Besides its use in communication, language also has other characteristics that help to forge communities and social groups. First, language can be used as a means to create boundaries between

⁴Joshua A. Fishman, Ofelia García, and the Anne and Joseph Trachtman Memorial Book Fund, *Handbook of Language & Ethnic Identity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.)

the "in-group" and the "out-group." Ethnic boundaries such as these serve to preserve the culture, traditions, and customs of an ethnic group from outside influence.

In addition, people often make positive or negative attributions to speakers of a language or dialect different from their own. In some cases, this escalates into the repression or threatening of certain languages by another social group. Ethnic groups whose languages are repressed view this repression as an attack on their ethnic group or culture as a whole, and they often find ways to resist subjugation by the dominant group.⁴

In China, the non-Sinitic languages that ethnic minorities speak are therefore regarded as defining features of the ethnic minorities, particularly as the Han majority form almost 92 percent of the population and, through time, have "diluted" ethnic minority communities through their migration within China.¹ In response, these ethnic minorities have attempted to maintain their identity through the promotion of minority language use. Koreans in China have, for instance, advocated for Korean schooling and minimal teaching in Chinese and have imposed restrictions on the number of Koreans who can attend Han Chinese schools in the area.⁵ Mongolian communities have similarly advocated for early education in Mongolian to instill in Mongolian students the culture and traditions of their ancestors.⁶ Before delving into the ways in which different ethnic minorities have responded to the language policies imposed on them, this study will first survey the way in which language policy in the PRC has developed and changed since 1949.

LANGUAGE POLICY IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA SINCE 1949

Language policy in the PRC since 1949 can be divided into three periods: (a) the period 1949–1957 that generally promoted accommodationist views of minority rights and language use, (b) the period 1958–1977 in which integrationist views to assimilate minorities into the Han majority were dominant, and (c) the period from 1978 onwards in which accommodationist views were revived. Each period is characterized by the enactment of policies that have affected the language rights of ethnic minorities

⁵ Woo-Gil Choi, "The Korean Minority in China: The Change of Its Identity," *Development and Society* 30.1 (2001): 119–141.

⁶ Uradyn E. Bulag, "Mongolian Ethnicity and Linguistic Anxiety in China," *American Anthropologist* 105.4 (2003): 753–763.

in China. This study will look at each period in detail to highlight the important policies and legislation that have influenced non-Sinitic language use in ethnic minority communities.¹

ACCOMMODATIONIST PERIOD, 1949–1957

Overall, this time was crucial in developing the infrastructure for minority language education and developing legislation that provided ethnic minorities the right to their own languages. In September 1949, even prior to the establishment of the PRC, a provisional constitution — the Commons Program — outlined provisions in Article 53 that gave minorities the right to speak and develop their own languages, and that obligated the government to help minorities with this effort. This, along with other provisions that supported more recognition of minorities in China, helped the Chinese Community Party (CCP) win support from ethnic minorities in China in the first place. These minority language rights were officially recognized in the first constitution of the PRC at the First Chinese People's Congress, with institutions later created to promote minority language education and language development.¹

In 1951, the Ministry of Education in the PRC made preliminary decisions on bilingual education. Their decisions addressed the diverse range of minority languages that exist in China. First, for minority communities in which languages with widely developed writing systems are used, all courses should be taught in the minority language in primary and secondary education systems. Second, for communities without a language with a writing, students should either be taught in Chinese or another minority language of their choice. Finally, Chinese should be taught to some degree in school; however, the degree to which it is taught should be determined by the minority community and their need for Chinese education. Outside of education, the government further required local governments to use minority languages in official business and cultural activities in 1952 through the *Implementation Program of Autonomous Governing in Minority Regions*. Quite interestingly, research and advisory committees were established within the Ministry of Education to develop writing systems for oral languages for which writing systems did not yet exist.¹

All of these efforts were made to improve minority education and reduce illiteracy in minority communities, and although progress was made, the government grew increasingly impatient with the slow development of minority language affairs. Soon, the CCP would remove the right of engaging in

minority language affairs from regional minority autonomous governments, and instead, all matters would be in the hands of the Han Chinese.¹

INTEGRATIONIST PERIOD FROM 1958–1977

During this period, language policies for minority languages were no longer considered separately from language policies for Chinese. This created a huge shift towards promoting Chinese as the primary language used throughout China, instead of advocating for minority language use within ethnic minority communities. Bilingual education, therefore, was severely reduced, and efforts were made to integrate minorities into Han communities.¹

In 1958, the Minority Culture and Education Department of the State Commission on Nationalities Affairs suggested that minority languages that already had a well-developed writing system should still play some role in education, while developing writing systems for oral languages should be strictly limited. In addition, substantial use of Chinese was recommended in communities without a writing system. In practice, however, even communities that used languages with established writing systems were affected by these language policies. In Uyghur communities, for example, Chinese classes were no longer limited to secondary schools. Primary schools, particularly in more urban cities, began to introduce Chinese to students much earlier on in their education.¹

SECOND ACCOMMODATIONIST PERIOD, FROM 1978 TO PRESENT

In 1978, the CCP reverted to its initial accommodationist views. In December 1978, academic forums were held on minority issues in China, and a consensus was reached among academic and government officials that minority language issues should be deliberated on their own, without being grouped into Chinese language issues. This was a favored view at the time and it resulted in positive backing from the congress of the CCP, leading to further legislation in support of bilingual education and minority autonomy in terms of language use.¹

In 1982, the constitution of the PRC was revised such that every ethnic group was re-granted the right to utilize and develop its language, and regional local autonomous government were given the freedom to make decisions on the use of the minority language in business and education. Specifically, in 1984, the Law of Autonomous Governing of Minority Regions stated that the local

governments should choose for themselves the primary language in which education is conducted. Since the 1980s, there have additionally been several pieces of legislation passed to continue to promote minority language use. Overall, efforts to improve the minority language situation have been made to increase minority regions' economic independence, develop education and literacy, and improve ethnic unity across China.¹

CASE STUDIES

Through these three periods of changing views on language policy for ethnic minority communities in the PRC, all minority languages were affected. However, the degree to which a language was affected rested on the community itself. Different languages have experienced different levels of repression and development depending on the cultural values of the community and the government's outlook on the importance of the minority language in society.

Here, case studies for four non-Sinitic languages, Uyghur, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Korean, will be presented. These four languages have writing systems that have broad usage, and were collectively used in education to a greater extent during the accommodationist periods. As will be discussed, the repression imposed on these languages manifested in different ways depending on the ethnic minority involved.

CASE STUDY: UYGHUR LANGUAGE

On the surface, the cycling of accommodationist and integrationist views in the PRC seem to have affected the Uyghur language to the same extent as other languages. In 1949, cultural policies promoted diversity and provided minority communities with the autonomy to use their minority language. During the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, Uyghur was suppressed, as were all other minority languages, and from 1978 onwards, rights promoting minority languages were reinstated. However, although the overt policies allowed for Uyghur language use during the accommodationist periods after 1949, in practice, Uyghur was severely repressed to the extent that some consider it cultural genocide.⁷

⁷ Aurora E. Bewicke, "Silencing the Silk Road: China's Language Policy in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region," *San*

In the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), Uyghur has been recognized as the official language of the XUAR government since 1955. While the local government was given the right to use Uyghur under new legislation, relevant departments in the government were required to promote Chinese language use in the region. This resulted in a domination of the Chinese language in the XUAR, permeating media, education, and business.⁷ For instance, Chinese was used as the primary broadcasting language for television and movies. Movies produced in the XUAR, in fact, were required to be first made in Chinese and then translated or re-adapted into Uyghur. Signs and advertisements used in the XUAR must also be written or spoken in Chinese. In terms of business, everything in the service trade, such as packaging for boxes, must be written in standardized Chinese. In terms of education, while minority languages could supposedly be taught in ethnic schools, efforts were made to encourage Chinese language instruction rather than Uyghur language instruction. Schools in which Uyghur is the primary language of instruction would receive fewer educational supplies than equivalent Chinese schools. Even in schools that do teach Uyghur, education in Uyghur is limited only to primary education and serves the purpose of transitioning the students from Uyghur to Chinese in later schooling.⁸ Presently, teaching in Chinese begins in the first grade in the XUAR.

While Uyghur already has a well-developed Arabic script, the language was not treated the same as other languages with well-developed scripts. Depending on China's relations with the Soviet Union, for example, China has either imposed or restricted a Cyrillic script for Uyghur. Additionally, as neighboring countries like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have moved towards a Latin script, China has similarly promoted the use of a Latin script for Uyghur. From the Uyghur perspective, however, the Arabic script is the most preferred, and at times the Uyghurs were restricted from using the script of their choice.⁷

In 2002, two significant events occurred in the XUAR that further restricted Uyghur language use. First, in Xinjiang University, while Uyghur and Chinese were both used in teaching, a government mandate required that the majority of classes would only be taught in Chinese. While the government reasoned that it is crucial for Uyghurs to be proficient in Chinese, and that textbooks in Uyghur were

Diego International Law Journal 11.135 (2009): 136–70. HeinOnline.

8 Arienne M. Dwyer, *The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse* (Washington, DC: East–West Center Washington, 2005).

not as readily available as Chinese textbooks, Uyghurs saw this action as a direct attack on their language and culture, even suggesting that the Uyghur language is a “lesser” language than Chinese. Second, in June 2002, it was reported that copies of *A Brief History of the Huns and Ancient Uyghur Literature*, written by prominent Uyghur historian and poet Turghun Almas, were burned.⁷ Both book burning and book banning have been common occurrences in the XUAR, and have reduced the ability for Uyghurs to learn about their culture and native language. These acts of burning and banning have largely been spurred by the separatist ideas of the writers of the books, like Turghun Almas, but also as a broad ideological campaign against the separatist ideas that exist within the larger community in the XUAR.⁹

Early in the 1940s, China mostly targeted underground Islmaic organizations and political groups in the XUAR that threatened its control over the XUAR. However, with the growing separatist movements and discontent with the government, China has actively attempted to integrate Uyghurs into the Han society (who, presently, constitute a minority in the XUAR) by directing their attention to the spoken and written language of the Uyghurs. The totality of China’s language policy in the XUAR discourages and even punishes the use of Uyghur on many levels, promoting and perpetuating the notion that Chinese is the superior language to Uyghur.⁷

CASE STUDY: MONGOLIAN LANGUAGE

In the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR), the sentiments toward minority language policies have been quite different. In 1985, approximately 96 percent of Mongolian heads of household could speak fluent Chinese, and surprisingly, 34 percent of Mongolians could no longer speak Mongolian at a proficient level.¹⁰ In 1998, almost a quarter of the Mongolian population in the IMAR solely used Chinese. One of the main reasons that this shift towards speaking Chinese over Mongolian has occurred is that, despite having autonomy in the IMAR, the Mongols constitute only approximately 17 percent of the population, while the Han Chinese constitute almost 80 percent.¹⁰ This social environment has made it difficult for Mongols who solely speak Mongolian to survive and live

⁹ Michael Dillon, “Uyghur Language and Culture Under Threat In Xinjiang,” *Analytical Articles* (2002): n. pag. CACI Analyst.

¹⁰ Ma Rong, “Bilingual Education for China’s Ethnic Minorities,” *Chinese Education & Society* 40.2 (2007): 9–25.

successfully in a community largely inhabited by Han Chinese. Even though pastoralism and herding are known to represent Mongolian culture, being able to communicate with other agricultural communities in the IMAR that are now mostly composed of Han Chinese has made it necessary to know how to speak Chinese.

Therefore, although there exists the linguistic anxiety that Mongolian as a language is decreasing in use, the practical value of learning and primarily using Chinese has become more important. Students who studied in Mongolian schools were not able to assimilate into society after graduation because the IMAR is a Chinese-dominated society. The only communities in which knowledge of Mongolian would be valuable is in Mongolian peasant villages, and thus Mongols who are educated in Mongolian schools generally can only become "elite" members of society in these peasant villages.⁶ However, Mongols who were educated in Chinese schools could better adjust to the larger community, and therefore could become more successful in fields such as production, business and trade, and science.¹⁰ In terms of the jobs actually available in the IMAR, there are hardly any jobs in which proficiency in Mongolian is useful. On the other hand, knowledge of Chinese is very useful, even necessary in many cases as almost all jobs are controlled by the Han Chinese in the IMAR.

While the general consensus is that the Chinese language is more useful than Mongolian for Mongols in the IMAR, some Mongol intellectuals do support movements to include Mongolian education through childhood as a means to maintain the cultural identity of the Mongols.⁶ However, during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, as with schools for other minority languages, Mongolian schools were mostly closed down. After this period, Mongolian schools were in an unstable situation and constantly opened and closed. Even with some Mongolian schools available, Mongolian schools lose more students every year to Chinese schools.¹¹ The government has also reduced funding for Mongolian schools, and therefore surviving without many students proves to be difficult.

While the language policies in China have limited Mongolian language use, the Mongols themselves have moved away from promoting Mongolian education because they believe that

¹¹ Naran Bilik, "Language Education, Intellectuals and Symbolic Representation: Being an Urban Mongolian in a New Configuration of Social Evolution," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 4.1-2 (1998): 47-67.

Chinese is needed for upward social mobility even in the IMAR. Thus, the Mongolian language seems to be heading for vernacular use in the community as Chinese becomes more and more dominant in Mongolian communities.¹¹

CASE STUDY: TIBETAN LANGUAGE

Tibetan has faced high levels of repression since the latter half of the twentieth century, largely because of unrest in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). When the PRC spread its control over Tibet in 1951, language policies in general promoted cultural diversity and the use of minority languages. However, after the 1959 rebellion in Lhasa, Tibet, wherein Tibetan rebels had an armed conflict with the Chinese officials, the PRC imposed stricter language policies over the Tibetan communities, more so than other minority communities at the time. At this time, Chinese was enforced as the primary language of instruction in schools in the TAR.¹² However, because of discontent with the Chinese government, the Tibetans saw these language policies as a form of imposing Han Chinese ideologies upon Tibetan communities. Over time, this resulted in increases in illiteracy rates within Tibetan communities, with almost 70 percent of Tibetans over fifteen years of age being illiterate, compared to the 22 percent of Han Chinese over fifteen years of age who are illiterate.¹³

In 1984, to combat illiteracy rates and incorporate Tibetan language use in schooling, the TAR formed their own policies that recommended Tibetan language as the the primary language of instruction, with Chinese as the second language of instruction. The objective of this was to encourage students to become proficient in both languages after graduation, so as to preserve Tibetan culture but also provide students with the language background to work successfully in the larger society. In 1987, regulations became even more progressive in that Congress developed plans to enforce the sole use of Tibetan in school textbooks and in the classroom. However, within a couple

¹² Minglang Zhou, "Language Policy and Illiteracy in Ethnic Minority Communities in China," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 21.2 (2000): 129–48.

¹³ Yuxiang Wang and Joanne Phillon, "Minority Language Policy and Practice in China: The Need for Multicultural Education," *International Journal of Multicultural Education* 11.1 (2009): 1–14.

years, these plans were quickly abandoned because of separatist movements in Tibet, mostly by the Drepung and Sera monasteries, for independence from China.¹³

Thus, through the mid-1990s, the proportion of Chinese to Mongolian language instruction favored Chinese enormously. Chinese language instruction began as early as the first grade in primary school in the larger cities of the TAR. In society, Chinese use was enforced in the local governments and in business, and this further decreased Tibetan use and the motivation to pursue Tibetan language learning. Like the Mongolians, the Tibetans saw that learning Chinese was a pathway for upward social mobility in order to improve their lives, and thus the Tibetan language experienced even further decreased language use.

In response to this substantial decline in Tibetan use, the Chinese government implemented a set of regulations, the *Decree on the Study, Use and Development of Tibetan Language*, to protect Tibetan language and culture. Within this decree, Article 8 states that those living in the TAR must learn Tibetan, and Article 10 states that those in the TAR who are bilingual in Chinese and Tibetan will receive priority in terms of recruitment for governmental positions¹⁴ While the implementation of such large goals will be difficult, and perhaps unfeasible, this positive mindset of preserving Tibetan may rescue the Tibetan language from complete extinction in the future.

CASE STUDY: KOREAN LANGUAGE

The Korean minority in China has had a relatively short history because, although Koreans migrated to China as early as the seventeenth century, the largest influx of Koreans into northeast China began in the late nineteenth century. The Korean population in China has often been labeled the "model minority" in China because of its high level of education in comparison to other ethnic minorities in China.⁵ Even so, during the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, Korean language use was repressed. However, after accommodationist views of ethnic minorities returned, the Koreans were able to revive Korean language education and maintain their ethnic identity.

The Korean Chinese have been able to maintain their culture in China largely because they

¹⁴ Nicolas Tournadre and Peter Brown, "The Dynamics of Tibetan-Chinese Bilingualism: The Current Situation and Future Prospects," *China Perspectives* 45 (2003): 30–6.

have formed ethnic boundaries that have separated them from other ethnic communities in northeast China. It is said that the Koreans have lived on a “cultural island” in northeast China, away from the Han Chinese society, and have therefore been able to practice and maintain their own customs and values.⁵ Additionally, geography has protected their culture: the Chinese Communists have not been as active in areas where Koreans settled, and so received little pressure to conform to the Han majority.¹⁵ Thus, ever since the Koreans have lived in northeast China, they have maintained their ethnic identity and have not experienced any organized assimilation into the larger society.

While many schools in Korean-inhabited regions, such as the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, were closed during the integrationist period, after the Cultural Revolution, Korean education in these areas was restored. The minority language policies post-Cultural Revolution allowed the Koreans to manage their own educational system, and thus local governments, such as the Yanbian government, enforced regulations that required Korean children to attend Korean schools through secondary education and limited enrollment in Chinese schools. The entire educational system for the Korean Chinese has been successful for a variety of reasons that did not apply to the ethnic minorities discussed earlier. First, before coming to China relatively late in the twentieth century, the Koreans had already established a culture in which education was a top priority. Second, the Koreans have very adamantly protected their ethnic identity by practicing their customs, promoting Korean language education, and discouraging intermarriage with other ethnic groups in China. The ethnic boundaries that they created helped maintain the integrity of the Korean communities in China. Third, because the Koreans share a Confucian-influenced background with the Han Chinese, there is common ground between the Koreans and Chinese that has made Korean cultural values acceptable by the Chinese. Finally, when the Koreans inhabited northeast China, they made use of the infrastructure that the Japanese colonial system had built, and thus the Koreans were able to quickly develop their own society from a base that had previously been made available to them.¹⁶

¹⁵ Jean-Young Lee, “The Korean Minority in China: The Policy of the Chinese Communist Party and the Question of Korean Identity,” *The Review of Korean Studies* 4.2 (2001): 87–131.

¹⁶ Chae-Jin Lee, “The Korean Minority in China: A Model for Ethnic Education,” *Korean Studies* 11.1 (1987): 1–12.

While Koreans have been very successful in maintaining their own cultural identity, they have created a new challenge for themselves in adapting to the larger society of China. With population movements in China, the "cultural islands" are slowly starting to sense the influx of the Han Chinese, and thus it is increasingly useful for Koreans to learn Chinese as well. Korean students are now required to study Chinese for a number of hours per week, but it is likely necessary for a larger portion of the curriculum to be focused on Chinese language education in order for the Koreans to reach a level of proficiency that will allow them to participate in mainstream Chinese society.

CONCLUSION

Currently, minority languages in China, such as the non-Sinitic languages cited earlier in this study, are facing a period of accommodationist views in which minority language use is generally supported by the government. Looking back through history, we note that instances in which minority language rights are revoked tend to occur when separatist movements arise. As long as the political, social, and economic situations in ethnic minority communities are stable, the Chinese government has no reason to infringe on minority language use.

However, since the mainstream society does use Chinese as the main mode of communication, ethnic minorities have increasingly become aware of the importance of learning Chinese in interacting with the larger society. Thus, a balance must be found between teaching Chinese and the minority language of a given community in these bilingual educational systems. Communities such as the IMAR and TAR have recognized the importance of learning Chinese, but in turn, Mongolian and Tibetan language and culture have suffered. It should be the responsibility of governments and the people to preserve the rich culture and language of its ethnic minorities.

From this brief look into how four non-Sinitic languages have been affected by language policies in China, it is clear that no two languages have experienced the same levels of promotion and repression. Depending on the circumstances of the ethnic minority group, languages have either faced severe domination or have received little oppression at all. However, since integration into mainstream Chinese society is increasingly being viewed as a path to leading successful lives, even languages that have been mostly untouched will soon feel threatened by the presence of Chinese.

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Sinographs in the *Man'yōshū*: Nature, Function, and Double Meaning

Ashley Liu

The sinographs in the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 ("Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves") are a complex system of recording syllables. In the Chinese writing script, sinographs are capable of reflecting pronunciations to considerable extents as characters often carry phonetic components, or "phonophores", that suggest their pronunciations. Given that phonophores are central to sinographs' capacity of representing sounds in the Chinese script, it is meaningful to consider how sinographs can represent syllables in the *Man'yōshū* without reliance on phonophores. On the other hand, although the semantic usage of sinographs is central to sinographic representation in the *Man'yōshū*, it is possible to convey meanings without regard to the graphs' semantic components, or "semantophores," via phonetic transliteration. Unlike in the Chinese script, the relationships among sinographs, syllables, and words are manifold and highly varied and flexible in the *Man'yōshū*: the sinographic representation of syllables and words is not determined but only loosely guided by the semantic or phonetic functions of the graphs. In the *Man'yōshū*, the sinographic representation of a syllable or word can be chosen from a wide range of possible representations and subject to purposeful manipulations by the poets to achieve certain artistic effects such as double meaning. In some cases, poets even fabricate ways to represent syllables and words with sinographs by pushing the limits of and expanding the graphs' semantic and phonetic functions and representations. This essay examines the nature and usage of sinographs in the *Man'yōshū* and explores the ways in which poets manipulate the links among syllables, words, and sinographs to convey double meaning. I argue that such manipulations can produce a sinographic layer of meaning that is separate from the syllabic layer of meaning. The staggering range of representative possibilities of sinographs and their manipulations found in the *Man'yōshū* can significantly broaden our understanding of not only the

representative capacity of sinographs but also the possible interactions among writing scripts, meanings, and sounds in human history.

The *Man'yōshū* is the oldest existing anthology of Japanese poetry. It was compiled before the proliferation of *kana* and is written with sinographs. Whereas sinographic writing in Japan do not always need to be associated with syllables, the sinographs in the *Man'yōshū* are necessarily tied to syllables because the poetic metrical structure that regulates the number of syllables per line is one of the essential, defining characteristics of the *waka* poetry genre. In other words, sinographs in the *Man'yōshū* must be seen as representations of syllables as syllables are fundamental to *waka*. In the *Man'yōshū*, one sinograph represents from less than one to four syllables; the pattern is highly irregular. On one end of the spectrum, two graphs like 五十 can represent just one syllable: *i*. On the other end, one graph like 古 can represent as many as four syllables: *inishie*. Some syllables are not directly represented by the graphs but implied by the metrical structure of the poem and/or grammatical needs. For example, see the following poem:

tachibanano shimanomiyaniwa akanekamo sadanookaeni tonoisshiniyuku

橘之 嶋宮尔者 不飽鴨 佐田乃岡辺尔 侍宿為尔往 (MYS 2:179)

The island palace

of Tachibana—

We cannot fall out of love with it.

Perhaps this is why we go to the hill of Sada

To perform guard-duty.

In this poem, the numbers of represented syllables per graph are irregular as mentioned above. Graphs that represent just one syllable are 之 (*no*), 尔 (*ni*), 者 (*wa*), 不 (*ne*), 佐 (*sa*), 田 (*da*), 乃 (*no*), 辺 (*e*), 宿 (*i*), and 為 (*shi*). Graphs that represent two syllables are 宮 (*miya*), 飽 (*aka*), 鴨 (*kamo*), 岡 (*oka*), 侍 (*tono*), and 往 (*yuku*). There is no graph that represents three syllables in this poem, albeit it is fairly common. A graph that represents four syllables is 橘 (*tachibana*). Not all syllables are

explicitly represented. The *no* in *shimanomiya* ("island palace") is not explicitly represented but implied by the metrical and grammatical structures. This poem follows the 5-7-5-7-7 syllabic metrical structure, which determines that the line in which *shimanomiya* appears must have seven syllables. The four graphs in this line, 嶋宮尔者, when read in their conventional pronunciations, only produce six syllables: *shimamiyaniwa*. In order to find seven syllables in these graphs, one must either apply less conventional pronunciations to the graphs or add an implied syllable based on the grammar. In this case, it is apparent that the latter option is more reasonable because adding the attributive marker *no* between *shima* ("island") and *miya* ("palace") is a much more obvious solution than somehow finding unconventional pronunciations of these graphs that add up to exactly seven syllables. Whereas two nouns do not need to be connected with an attributive marker to have an attributive relationship and the *no* is not grammatically necessary, adding it here fills the seventh syllable and thus is metrically necessary. The attributive marker *no* is explicitly represented in other lines by 之 and 乃. From this, we can tell that the poet has considerable freedom in deciding whether and how to represent *no*.

There are four major ways in which sinographs in the *Man'yōshū* represent syllables. The first is *ongana* 音仮名. *Ongana* is the phonetic transliteration of syllables with sinographs based on Chinese pronunciations of the graphs. For example, in the phrase *shiranamino* 志良奈美能 (MYS 12:3023) ("of the white waves"), the sinographs that represent these five syllables were chosen based on their Chinese pronunciations. The graph 志 can represent the syllable *shi* because of its similar Chinese pronunciation (*zhi* in modern Mandarin); the other graphs function in the same way. In *ongana*'s representation of sounds, like in the Chinese script, phonophores play a significant role as *ongana* borrows from Chinese pronunciations. Another way in which phonophores function in Japanese pronunciation of sinographs is *ondoku* 音読. Whereas *ongana* is the phonetic transliteration of Japanese syllables, *ondoku* is the pronunciation of sinographs in ways that resemble their Chinese pronunciations while comprehending (or trying to comprehend) their original meanings in Chinese. *Ondoku* is usually applied when a Japanese person reads a Chinese text. Despite its widespread usage and significance outside the *Man'yōshū*, *ondoku* is virtually absent in the *Man'yōshū* as *waka* rarely employs *ondoku*. Besides *ongana*, the other three ways in which sinographs represent syllables in the

Man'yōshū rely on *kundoku* 訓読 rather than phonophores. To examine how they represent syllables with sinographs but without reliance on phonophores, one must first learn about *kundoku*.

David Lurie defines *kundoku* as “a complex of practices that: 1) associate [sinographs] with Japanese words and 2) transpose the resulting words into Japanese order while 3) adding necessary grammatical elements.”¹ For example, in *kundoku*, the sinograph 船 (“boat”) is pronounced as *fune*, which is unrelated to its Chinese pronunciation (*chuan* in modern Mandarin) because the pronunciation stems from the Japanese word for boat, *fune*. In other words, the Japanese word *fune* is used as the pronunciation of the sinograph 船. In such cases, the pronunciations of sinographs are unrelated to their phonophores. The usage of Japanese words as pronunciations of sinographs is 1) in Lurie’s definition. 2) and 3) must be illustrated with a phrase: *nagakiyowo hitoriyanemuto* 長夜乎独哉将宿跡 (MYS 3:463) (“Will I sleep alone through the long night?”). The syntax of this phrase is adjective (*nagaki* “long”)-noun (*yo* “night”)-adverb (*hitori* “alone”)-verb (*ne* “sleep”). The noun, adverb, and verb are connected with particle *wo*, *ya*, *to*, and auxiliary verb *mu*. Whereas the verb precedes the noun in the Chinese script, this phrase, as Lurie describes in 2), transposes words into Japanese syntax and adopts the Japanese noun-verb structure. In addition, Japanese grammatical elements like particles and auxiliary verbs were added as Lurie describes in 3). For another example, recall the island palace poem quoted above. Although the graph 不 precedes 飽, its represented syllable *ne* is actually read after 飽’s represented syllables, *aka*. In *kundoku*, the reading order of the syllables can differ from the order of their representing graphs because of grammatical needs. In this case, the negating auxiliary verb *ne* grammatically follows the verb *aka* (“to be tired of something after having too much”).² However, *ne* is represented with the graph 不, which should grammatically precede a verb in Chinese writing. In this case, the order of the sinographs follows Chinese syntax, but the reading of the syllables follows Japanese syntax. According to Kim Bunkyo 金文京, *kundoku*

¹ David B. Lurie, *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 175.

² The literal translation of *akane* is something like “we do not get tired of it.” However, in the context of the poem, it describes that the “we” in the poem cannot fall out of love and become emotionally detached from the island palace; thus, I translated the line as “we cannot fall out of love with it.”

originated in annotations of Chinese Confucian classics.³ When the Confucian classics were imported to Japan, the Japanese borrowed from the Chinese tradition of annotating the classics and annotated them with Japanese words, which was the origin of the association of sinographs with Japanese words, which is a central aspect of *kundoku*. The *kun* in *kundoku* refers to the process of annotating and explaining difficult texts as its usage derived from the Chinese word *xungu* 訓詁, which is the Chinese art of glossing and annotating texts.

Other than *ongana*, the major ways in which sinographs represent syllables in the *Man'yōshū* are *kungana* 訓仮名, *seikun* 正訓, and *gikun* 義訓; their representations of syllables are all related to *kundoku*. *Kungana*, like *ongana*, is the phonetic transliteration of Japanese syllables with sinographs. But unlike *ongana*, whose representation of syllables is based on Chinese pronunciations, *kungana*'s representation of syllables is based on the *kundoku* pronunciations of the graphs. For instance, in the phrase *wasuretamauna* 忘賜名 (MYS 4: 521) (“Do not forget it.”), the graph 名 is a *kungana*: its representation of the syllable *na* is derived from the *kundoku* association of the Japanese word *na* (“name”) with this sinograph, which also means “name” in Chinese. Here, 名 is used merely as a phonetic transliteration for the negating particle *na* and does not reflect its meaning in Chinese.

Whereas *ongana* and *kungana* are phonetic transliteration, *seikun* and *gikun* are semantic usage of sinographs and the principal ways in which sinographs are used in the *Man'yōshū*. As Lurie points out, phonetic transliteration and phonetic usage of sinographs are of relatively minor importance in the *Man'yōshū* compared to the semantic usage of sinographs, which dominates the nature and function of sinographs in the *Man'yōshū*: “Only about a quarter of its [the *Man'yōshū*’s] poems are written in a predominantly phonographic mode, these are concentrated in four books [. . .] The remaining three-quarters of the anthology [. . .] are written in a primarily logographic register, with varying amounts of phonographic adjuncts.”⁴ “Logographic register” here refers to the semantic usage of sinographs. In *seikun*, sinographs are “linked with Japanese words of equivalent meaning to the original Chinese words with which those characters are associated.”⁵ The association of the

³ Kin Bunkyo, *Kanbun to Tōajia: kundoku no bunkaken* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2010), 19–21.

⁴ Lurie, 271.

⁵ Lurie, 273.

sinograph 名 with the Japanese word *na* above is an example of *seikun*. The association of the Japanese word *yama* (“mountain”) with the graph 山, which means “mountain” in Chinese, is another example. Note that in *seikun*, the Japanese word is more or less equivalent to its associated sinograph’s meaning in Chinese. This equivalence differs it from *gikun*. In *gikun*, the relationship between the Japanese word and its associated sinograph is not that of exact equivalence but approximate description or relevance. For instance, in *kinoyamamichiwa sabushikemu* 城山道者不樂牟 (MYS 2:576) (“The mountain alley of the castle is probably lonely.”), the association of the sinographs 不樂 with the word *sabushi* (“lonely” or “lacking”) is not a relationship of exact equivalence but that of approximate description or relevance and therefore a *gikun* association. The meaning of 不樂 in Chinese is “unhappy”, which is broader and vaguer in meaning than “lonely.” In this case, the author likely consciously chose graphs related to but not equivalent to the associated Japanese word to expand the semantic denotation of *sabushi* in this poem. By using 不樂 to represent *sabushi*, the author is able to invoke the meanings associated with *sabushi* and the graphs 不樂. In the *Man'yōshū* and Japanese writing in general, *gikun* is an important way in which double meanings are conveyed as one can freely associate relevant graphs and words. Given such a wide range of possibilities in sinographs’ representation of Japanese words and syllables, the poets of the *Man'yōshū* enjoyed tremendous freedom in manipulating the links between words and graphs, which result in unique channels of artistic expressions that will be discussed below.

One of the most noteworthy characteristics of *waka* poetry is its ability to convey double meaning in an astonishingly concise manner. Consider the following poem in the *Man'yōshū*:

ashigarano hakonenoyamani awamakite mitowanareruwo awanakumoayashi

安思我良能 波祢祢乃夜麻尔 安波麻吉弓 実登波奈礼留乎 阿波奈久毛安夜思
(MYS 14: 3364)

On Mt. Hakone

of Ashigara,

I sowed the seeds of foxtail millet.

Although they have ripened,
It is strange that we do not meet.

This poem is almost entirely written in phonetic transliteration with the exception of the graph 実, which represents and is a *seikun* graph of *mi* ("fruit"). The first four lines are about millet farming, but the subject seems to suddenly change in the last line, which is puzzling. The word "although" in the fourth line connects the line with the last line and suggests that there is a concessive relationship between them,⁶ which is also puzzling as it is not obvious what logically connects the ripening of the millet with meeting someone. These puzzles suggest that there is a hidden layer of meaning in this poem and the first four lines are not solely about millet farming. The word *awa* ("foxtail millet") in this poem functions as a "pivot word" (*kakekotoba* 掛詞). A pivot word is a prominent poetic device in *waka* that "merge[s] two syntactically and semantically distinct phrases within a single poem by providing two meanings for a single set of [syllables]".⁷ In this poem, *awa* semantically pivots between and signifies both "foxtail millet" and the verb *au*, "to meet"; the syllables *awa* is the *mizenkei* 未然形 inflected form⁸ of *au*. Other than what its pronunciation suggests, the word *awa*'s semantic merge with *au* is reinforced by this verb's appearance in the last line, again in its *mizenkei* form *awa*, in the context of "we do not meet." It is noteworthy that the syllables *awa* appear twice in this poem and are represented with different sets of sinographs: 安波 and 阿波. This illustrates the freedom and flexibility in using sinographs to represent syllables: both 安 and 阿 can be *ongana* that represent the syllable *a*. There does not seem to be any semantic significance in the difference between these two sets of sinographs other than that these two *awa* are being used differently: one is a pivot word and the other is plainly a verb. In addition to the surficial meaning of millet farming, the semantic pivot of the first *awa* suggests that the narrator of the poem/character

6 The concessive relationship is signified by *towa*. The translation of this line in modern Japanese in the *Shogakukan* 小学館 edition of the *Man'yōshū* is もう実となったのに.

7 Gustav Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony: Poetry and Power in Early Heian Japan* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2008), 21.

8 The *mizenkei* is one of the six forms of inflection in Classical Japanese verbs. The form of inflection here is irrelevant to the meaning of the poem; what matters is that *awa* is a possible form of and should remind the reader of *au*.

depicted in the poem is thinking about meeting someone while farming. This illustrates how double meaning can be achieved concisely in *waka* and via pivot words.

As discussed above, pivot word is an important poetic device in *waka* that concisely conveys double meaning. In fact, the *Man'yōshū*'s title is a pivot word in itself. The syllable *yō* is represented with the sinograph 葉, which means “leaf” in Chinese; this meaning of *yō* gave birth to the conventional English translation of the anthology as “Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves.” Besides this, the term *man'yōshū* can be interpreted as and pivot among a number of different meanings. *Yō* is the *onduku* pronunciation of 葉, which resembles its Chinese pronunciation (*ye* in modern Mandarin). This pronunciation of 葉 is also found in the word *shiyō* 紙葉, which means “paper” or “page.” Thus, the term *man'yōshū* can also be interpreted as “collection of ten thousand pages.” Moreover, the *seikun* reading of 葉 is *ha*, which can be associated with the *ha* in the word *kotonoha* (“speech” or “language”) since 葉 can be used to represent the syllable *ha* in *kotonoha*. In this light, *man'yōshū* can be taken as “collection of ten thousand speeches.” Finally, the syllable *yō* can denote the Japanese word “generation,” also pronounced *yō*, which gives yet another meaning to *man'yōshū*: “collection of ten thousand generations.”⁹ Despite its prominence in the development of later *waka* and presence in the very title of the anthology, pivot words in the *Man'yōshū* are of relatively minor presence compared to its proliferation in *waka* from the Heian period onward in terms of quantity and variety. Scholars have suggested that the proliferation of pivot words in *waka* since the Heian period was intimately tied to and enabled by the usage of *kana* rather than sinographs to write *waka*, which inevitably implies that the usage of pivot words in the *Man'yōshū* is limited by the fact that the *Man'yōshū* is written with sinographs rather than *kana*.¹⁰ From personal experience, Professor Linda Chance has confirmed that sinographs usually hinder native Japanese readers' ability to detect pivot words in a text. Regardless of whether an all-sinographic writing system inherently limits the

9 Matsuura Tomohisa, *Man'yōshū to iu na no kakekotoba* (Tokyo: Taishukan Publishing Co., Ltd., 1995), 1. It is controversial among scholars which interpretations are more historically plausible. However, there is a general consensus that the term *man'yōshū* is a pivot word with more than one meanings. See Matsuura, 2–40.

10 This is argued in Akiyama Ken, *Ōchō no bungaku kūkan* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1984), 57–59. Also in Heldt,

development of pivot words, which is controversial,¹¹ it is undeniable that pivot words play a relatively minor role in the *Man'yōshū* compared to later *waka*. In his studies of the *Man'yōshū*, Uchida Kentoku 内田賢徳 offers insightful observations regarding the interpretation of the sinographic nature of the *Man'yōshū*. He points out that the perception of sinographs as a limiting medium of *waka* composition is ahistorical and only reflects the view of later readers who are uncomfortable with the writing system in the *Man'yōshū*. He argues that rather than solely focusing on what an all-sinographic writing system is incapable of, we should consider what it can achieve and has achieved.¹² Without the central role of pivot words, we may ask, how does the writing system in the *Man'yōshū* convey double meaning?

Lurie claims that there are two levels of aesthetics to poems in the *Man'yōshū*: the external and the internal. The external level refers to the aesthetics associated with the calligraphy of the sinographs. The internal level refers to the "interplay between words and the graphs that inscribe them."¹³ As discussed above, poets of the *Man'yōshū* enjoyed tremendous freedom in matching sinographs with syllables and words due to the wide range of representative possibilities; the complex interplay among syllables, words, and sinographs in the writing system produces unique poetic expressions and aesthetics. Although the sinographs in the *Man'yōshū* are representations of syllables, the sinographs and syllables are not necessarily unified in meaning since sinographs, unlike scripts that are purely phonetic, can represent sound *and* meaning. A considerable portion of poems in the *Man'yōshū* has two layers of meanings: the syllabic layer and the sinographic layer. The syllabic layer of meaning refers to the meaning conveyed by the syllables in a poem; the sinographic layer of meaning refers to the meaning conveyed by the sinographs. In the remaining body of this essay, the English translations of the poems only translate the syllabic layer of meaning; the sinographic layer is explained in the analysis.

¹¹ Thomas LaMarre is cynical about this position. See Thomas LaMarre, *Uncovering Heian Japan: An Archaeology of Sensation and Inscription* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 63.

¹² Uchida Kentoku, "Uta no naka no kanji hyōgen: kunji to kana wo megutte" *Manyō* 161 (1997), 17.

¹³ Lurie, 7.

In the *Man'yōshū*, sinographs can acquire a separate layer of meaning from syllables via *gikun* representation. See the following poem:

yoshinogawa yukusenohayami shimashikumo yodomukotonaku arikosenukamo

芳野河 逝瀬之早見 須與毛 不通事無 有巨勢濃香問(MYS 2:119)

The Yoshino River:

Its flowing stream's swiftness—

Not even

A bit of stagnation.

Hopefully it is like this.

This is a poem composed by Prince Yuke 弓削皇子 (d. 699) for Princess Ki 紀皇女. Like the poem about millet farming above, this poem has an additional layer of meaning beyond the surficial context of water flow. This additional layer is signaled by the *gikun* graphs for the word *yodomu*: 不通. *Yodomu* is a verb that means “to stagnate” and primarily applies to water. The equivalent graph in Chinese is *zhi* 滯, which is also a verb that means “to stagnate” for water. However, an electronic search in the *Man'yōshū* on *JapanKnowledge* yields no result of a *seikun* graph for *yodomu* despite the existence of an exact Chinese equivalence. In almost all cases, *yodomu* is represented with phonetic transliteration. This poem is one of the very few cases in which *yodomu* is given *gikun* graphs, which highlights the verb's importance in this poem as it is apparent that the poet intended to manipulate the sinographic representation and express meaning beyond the word *yodomu*. The graphs 不通, unlike *yodomu*, is very vague and have a wide scope of meanings that include “do not flow,” “do not connect,” “do not make sense,” “do not exchange,” “do not communicate,” “do not understand,” and so on. The association of *yodomu* with 不通 is made possible by one of the graphs' meanings as “do not flow,” which is related to “to stagnate.” The association of “do not flow” and “to stagnate” opens up *yodomu*'s possible associations with other meanings of 不通 like “do not communicate” and “do not connect.” By associating graphs with such broad applications to a word of such specific usage, the

poet drastically expands the meaning of the poem. In the last line, the poet expresses his wish for the lack of “stagnation.” In the syllabic layer of meaning, he wishes for the absence of stagnation in the flow of the Yoshino River. In the sinographic layer, the graphs 不通 suggest that he also wishes for the absence of breaks in his communication, connection, and mutual understanding with Princess Ki and perhaps in other aspects of life as well.

Another example of double meaning conveyed through *gikun* association can be found in the following poem:

sasanohawa miyamamosayani sayagedomo warewaimoomou wakarekinureba

小竹之葉者 三山毛清尔 乱友 吾者妹思 别来礼婆 (MYS 2:133)

Sasa leaves:

The whole mountain is rustling,

Rustling with the soft wind.

I think of my wife,

As we have separated.

In this poem, *sayage*, which is the *izenkei* 已然形 inflected form of the verb *sayagu*, is given the *gikun* graph 𪛗. *Sayagu* means “to rustle” and applies to the action of sound-making when leaves and other thin things move about. Again, a search on *JapanKnowledge* yields no result of a *seikun* graph for it in the *Man'yōshū*. A potential equivalent graph in Chinese is *su* 簌. Like *yodomu*, it is almost always represented with phonetic transliteration. In this case, its *gikun* representation is unusual and signals the poet’s intention to convey meaning beyond *sayagu*. The graph 𪛗 means “to be disturbed,” “to be volatile,” or “to be disarranged.” *Sayagu*’s association with 𪛗 is enabled by the similarity between leaves rustling and leaves being disturbed and disarranged. Whereas *sayagu* conveys the action of sound-making, 𪛗 provides a visual image of the leaves being disturbed and disarranged. Through this *gikun* association, the poet is able to merge the aural and visual aspects of the leaves’ motion, which eliminates the need for a separate word to describe the visual aspect and

enables extraordinary conciseness. Moreover, 乱 is often used to describe the volatility and disturbance of the human mind. Besides the disarrangement of the leaves, 乱 here likely also refers to the poet's volatile and disturbed mind when he longs for his wife, which cannot be expressed by *sayagu* alone as it does not carry this dimension of meaning. All the meanings added by the *gikun* graph 乱 are untold in the syllabic layer of meaning and belong to the sinographic layer of meaning.

Another major way via which double meaning is conveyed through the interplay among syllables, words, and sinographs in the *Man'yōshū* is the semantic usage of *ongana* and *kungana*, which seems to be considerably more frequently used to convey double meaning than *gikun* representation. Due to the semantic nature of sinographs, it is possible for phonetic transliteration with sinographs in China and Japan to have semantic significance. For example, when the Chinese phonetically transliterate foreign names, they can choose to use flattering, degrading, or neutral graphs to represent the names. The name of the Japanese shaman queen Himiko (r. 189–248) is transliterated in premodern Chinese historical sources with the graphs *beimihu* 卑彌呼, which is an intentionally degrading choice as *bei* 卑 means “low” or “humble.” As methods of phonetic transliteration, *ongana* and *kungana* in the *Man'yōshū* can carry semantic functions alongside their phonetic functions and add additional sinographic layers of meaning to the poems. See the following:

harusugite natsukitarurashi shirotaeno koromohoshitari amenokaguyama

春過而 夏來良之 白妙能 衣乾有 天之香來山 (MYS 1:28)

It seems that spring has past,
And summer has arrived.
The purely white clothes
Have dried,
On the heavenly Mt. Kagu.

This poem is composed by Empress Jitō 持統天皇 (645–703). In this poem, the syllables *kagu*, which is the name of the mountain, is represented with 香來. The graph 香 means “fragrance”; here, it

is a *kungana* whose representation of the syllable *ka* derives from the Japanese word for “fragrance”: *ka* or *kaori*. The graph 來 means “to come”; as a *kungana*, its representation of the syllable *gu* derives from the Japanese word “to come”: *ku*. The syllables *ku* and *gu* can be interchangeable because voiced and unvoiced syllables were not necessarily distinguished before the Nara period (710–794).¹⁴ In the syllabic layer of meaning, *kagu* is plainly the name of the mountain. However, the two *kungana* graphs, when interpreted semantically, means “fragrance comes,” which adds an additional sinographic layer of meaning. “Fragrance comes” is likely related to the arrival of summer described earlier in the poem and invokes the image of seasonal transition accompanied by the approaching fragrance of summer.

The following is another example of phonetic transliteration’s semantic significance in achieving double meaning:

wagasekowa idukuyukuramu okitsumono nabarinoyamawo kyoukakoyuramu

吾勢枯波 何所行良武 已津物 隱乃山乎 今日香越等六 (MYS 1:43)

My husband—

Where has he gone?

Today,

Is he crossing over

Mt. Nabari of seaweed?

The syllabic layer of meaning as translated here is about a wife wondering where her husband has gone. However, the unusual graphs of phonetic transliteration for *okitsumo* (“seaweed”) and Nabari (name of the mountain) signal the author’s intention to convey something beyond the meaning of the syllables. The graph 已’s representation of the syllables *oki* in *okitsumo* is unusual and involves a complex process of inference. In Japanese, 已 carries the meaning “to give up”; it can be

¹⁴ Haruo Shirane, *Classical Japanese: A Grammar* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 19.

found in the representation of the word *yamu*, “to give up.” Another word for “to give up” is *oku*, which apparently is the origin of 巳’s representation of *oki* here as *oki* is the *renyōkei* 連用形 inflected form of *oku*. However, an electronic search on *JapanKnowledge* and the annotation of this poem in the *Shogakukan* 小学館 edition of the *Man’yōshū* suggests that there is no conventional association between the word *oku* and the graph 巳.¹⁵ In this case, the association between 巳 and *oku/oki* is likely fabricated and stretched from the semantic similarity between *oku* and words 巳 can represent (like *yamu*). The matching of relevant graphs and words is characteristic of *gikun* representation. However, 巳 is not a *gikun* graph here because it is being used to phonetically transliterate part of a word: *oki* in *okitsumo*. *Gikun* is the representation of Japanese words with semantically relevant sinographs; 巳 is not semantically related to “seaweed.” To me, 巳 here can be seen as a *kungana* whose pronunciation derived from a very obscure or even fabricated *kundoku* reading of it. The *Shogakukan* annotation suggests that 巳 here is a so-called *kariji* 借字, which refers to graphs used as phonetic transliteration like *ongana* and *kungana*; this is in accordance with my interpretation. Why did the poet go through such a complex process of inference to insert the meaning “to give up” into this poem? Let us consider another graph whose representation of syllables deserves attention in this poem: 隱. 隱 here represents the syllables *nabari*, which is the name of a mountain but also the *renyōkei* inflected form of the verb *nabaru*, “to hide.” Unlike in the case of 巳 and *oki*, *nabari* is a conventional *kundoku* pronunciation of 隱; thus, 隱 is a normal *kungana* for the syllables *nabari*. The semantic functions of these two graphs interpreted in the context of the poem invoke the idea of a husband who has given up his marriage and left to hide from his wife, which is a sinographic layer of meaning not found in the syllabic layer.

The manipulation of the semantic functions of graphs used in phonetic transliteration can also be found in this poem:

wagimokowo izaminoyamawo takamikamo yamatonomienu kunitoomikamo

吾妹子乎 去來見乃山乎 高三香裳 日本能不所見 国遠見可聞 (MYS 1:44)

¹⁵ Kojima Noriyuki, Kinoshita Masatoshi, and Satake Akihiro, ed., *Man’yōshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: *Shogakukan*, 1971), 86–87.

My lover:

Is it because of

The height of Mt. Izami

That I cannot see the land of Yamato?

Or is it because of the distance?

There are two sets of sinographs that call for attention in this poem. The first set is 去來見, which represents Izami in Mt. Izami. All three graphs are *kungana* graphs. The graph 去's representation of the syllable *i* is derived from its representation of the verb *inu*, "to leave." The graph 見's representation of the syllable *mi* is derived from its representation of the verb *miru*, "to see" or "to look." I have not been able to identify the origin of 來's representation of *za*. It is possible that it also derives from a fabricated *kundoku* reading of the graph like in the case of 已 above. On a second thought, it might be related to the word *saru*, also "to leave," but *saru* is usually represented with the graph 去 ("to leave" in Chinese), not 來 ("to come" in Chinese). If this was the case, this representation reflects a technique called *gikun* 戲訓 (not to be confused with *gikun* 義訓), which refers to seemingly bizarre associations of words and graphs for playful purposes. Although both *i* and *za* can be represented with the *kungana* graph 去, 去去見 is redundant and looks awkward so the author might have playfully substituted the second 去 with its semantic opposite, 來. Regardless of the origin of 來's representation of *za*, the fact that there is no obvious explanation for why it is represented this way and its unusualness suggest that this graph might not merely be a phonetic transliteration. When interpreted semantically, 去來見 means "go, come, and see"; in the context of this poem, it is likely related to the travelling implied in the narrator's longing for the land of Yamato. Moreover, the particle *kamo* is represented with 香裳, which semantically means "scented clothes." On the syllabic level, it is merely a particle that renders the sentence a question. However, its sinographic level of meaning likely corresponds to the mentioning of a lover at the beginning and invokes the image of a lover with scented clothes.

For those who are used to how sinographs function in the Chinese script, the range of representative possibilities and freedom in the writing system of the *Man'yōshū* is astonishing. As demonstrated, the poets of the *Man'yōshū* do not shy away from exploring such possibilities and test

the boundaries of the representative capacity of sinographs. Today, we are able to avoid being absolutely bewildered and dumbfounded by how the sinographs function in the *Man'yōshū* because we benefit from centuries of scholarship on annotating the *Man'yōshū* that are readily available. The availability of comprehensive annotations sometimes overshadows the near-incomprehensibility of many poems in which poets use unconventional, radical, and even fabricated sinographic representations. The ingenuity of these poets expands and challenges our conception of sinographs' representative capacity and makes us wonder at what point such capacity becomes incomprehensibility. If meant to be virtually incomprehensible to most, how do such writings affect our understanding of the function and meaning of poetry and writing in human history? We may consider Lurie's proposition that writings do not need to be either legible or illegible and can be "alegible," which means that legibility is irrelevant to its function and significance.¹⁶ If we consider poetry as a genre of writing that often intentionally employs inaccessible language to unfamiliarize and mystify what is being represented, perhaps alegibility is a meaningful lens through which we may interpret the sinographic representations in the *Man'yōshū*.

¹⁶ Lurie, 15–56.

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Power Shifts and Changing Scripts: The Development of the Sinographic Script through Media and Authority

Zachary S. Hershey

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Sinographic script¹ prior to its standardization at the beginning of the early imperial period of China is quite complicated, but it can be broken down into a series of manageable stages or categories progressing from the earliest graphs seen on bones and shells, through the adaptation of the script for use in the bronze inscriptions and the seal script, to the emergence and refinement of the clerical script in the Qin (221–206 BCE) and Han (206 BCE–221 CE) dynasties as a standardization of the confusingly variant set of scripts which existed during the Warring States period (475–221 BCE). Each of these large developments in the script can be analyzed as stemming from the specific needs of a power group within the culture, the literate elite.

Considering the development of the script in a chronological fashion provides one perspective but is not successful in all cases due to the fluid nature of the subject — people did not confine themselves to one calligraphic style, just as contemporary writers are not confined to one font. In later chronological divisions, it is common to see scholars reaching back into the textual tradition to mimic, modify, and make use of classical style for reasons distinct to the individual's preference. Observing the development from a new angle allows for further understanding of the script that may not have been possible in previous narratives. Rather than dividing the stages of the script in time, divisions in

¹ I adopt the term “Sinographic script” rather than “Chinese script” mainly to draw attention to two points. The script dating back to the Shell and Bone Script (*jiǎgǔwén* 甲骨文) is not “Chinese” in the modern sense for numerous reasons with the most obvious being that the language was different. Additionally, this recognizes the fact that cultures other than those who identified as Chinese used the system that developed from this for a diverse collection of languages.

media are an enlightening way to organize the changes seen in the Sinographic script. This study takes this approach while limiting the scope of the study to the time period up to the standardization of the script during the Qin dynasty.

The direct effects of media in studies of the development of the Sinographic script, are not usually considered in scholarly study; rather, they are often mentioned as a side note in a larger chronological narrative.² In drawing attention away from the media used, possible explanations of why the script changed at different points in East Asian history are lost, because the acquisition of and role that these media played in society are intimately connected to the functioning of power on the central plain.³ In order to understand the influences behind the changing script, developing models for the infrastructure and skills needed to acquire the media and marry them to the script is necessary. Viewing the script through the lens of the media on which it was inscribed or brushed, not only offers a reflection of the changing needs of the government as seen in script modifications, but allows us to see clearly how media impacted those needs.

DIVINATION AND THE POWER OF BONE

The exact nature of the origin of the Sinographic script is still unclear and may never be clarified,⁴ but the earliest extant graphs that have been reliably demonstrated to be related to language are those incised onto the scapulae of bovines and the plastrons of tortoises dating as far back as about 1200 BCE. A scholar by the name of Wang Yirong 王懿榮 (1845–1900) is said to have been the first to

² For an in-depth chronological approach to the development of the Chinese writing system, see, for example, Qiu 2000, 59–149.

³ The “central plain” or *zhōngyuán* 中原 here refers to the portion of the North China Plain at the lower reaches of the Yellow River, which covers parts of modern day Henan, Hebei, Shanxi, and Shandong provinces. The term is commonly used to refer to the location of the “origin of Chinese civilization.” For an introduction to the early cultures associated with the central plain, see for example Li 2000.

⁴ Some scholars argue that the earliest forms of the script are found on pieces of pottery from sites such as Banpo in Shanxi, which is attributed to the “Yangshao culture” (an etic term to identify a group of archaeological excavations; see Li, 2015, 25–30, for a brief discussion), which date back to a much earlier period than the Shell and Bone Script, but these graphs have not been reliably connected to any form of language. See Qiu 2000, 29–44.

recognize that these inscriptions were actually ancient forms of the Sinographic script, but this discovery has since developed into a myth involving the use of these bones in Chinese medicine where they were identified as “dragon bones.”⁵ The initial source of these, near modern day Anyang 安陽, was discovered by another Chinese scholar, Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866–1940) in 1908, but official archaeological excavations of the site, supervised by Li Ji 李濟 (1896–1979) did not begin until 1928, after the founding of Academia Sinica.⁶

The term most often used to identify this script is “oracle bone script,” because a majority of the inscriptions unearthed have dealt with divinatory practices that will be discussed further below. A more appropriate gloss is adopted here from Gilbert Matteos and Jerry Norman’s 2000 translation of Qiu Xigui’s 裘錫圭 *Chinese Writing*, “Shell and Bone Script,” which both recognizes that the content of the inscriptions is not restricted to divinatory practice⁷ and stays truer to the Chinese term, *jiǎgǔwén* 甲骨文. The Chinese name directly reflects the media which was used for the inscriptions, plastrons and scapulae.

In order to understand the earliest extent developments of the script, the nature and usage of the media on which it was inscribed, turtle plastrons and ox scapulae, must be explored. An “economic” interpretation of the choice of material is illuminating. Both turtle plastrons and ox scapulae would have been rather rare commodities during the Shang. While oxen were available in sufficient number on the central plain, the acquisition of these scapulae would require the slaughtering of a great many of these oxen, which a majority of members of this early society would not have been able to manage frequently enough to account for the numbers seen in the excavations. As for turtles, the situation is similar, but made more difficult by the fact that the species of turtles used are found in regions to the south of the central plain.⁸ This means that the turtles needed to be brought from other regions beyond the immediate vicinity of the site where the divinations took place. To account for the vast number of plastrons that have been recovered would require a sophisticated

⁵ Shaughnessy 1991, 13–15.

⁶ Li 2015, 66–75.

⁷ Bagley in Houston 2007, 213–214.

⁸ For a discussion of the origins of the shells used in divinations, see Keightley 1978, 8–12.

system of transporting goods between regions — whether that involved trade, tribute, and/or enterprise is unclear. Both of these observations draw attention to the fact that these practices would be the prerogative of the elite of the society, and the existence of these elites is supported by excavations which demonstrate material wealth disparity in Shang graves.⁹

The Shang elite used these bones and shells in the practice of pyro-osteomancy. Pyro-osteomancy is the practice of divination, “mancy,” through the use of fire, “pyro,” on bones, “osteo.” Before the divination was conducted, the scapula or shell needed to go through a process of preparation. The bone was cleaned and any protruding pieces were cut away to provide a flat surface with which to work, which was then polished.¹⁰ Holes were then bored into the surface into which a hot metal rod would be inserted later during the divination ceremony; these facilitated proper cracking of the material. The divination ceremony was done by first posing questions to be answered, a prognostication, after which a hot piece of metal was applied to the interior of the prepared holes, causing cracks to form in a similar shape to the graph *bu* 卜, which came to denote the action “to divine.” These cracks were then interpreted as answers to the prognostications, recognizing them as “auspicious” or “inauspicious.”

The inscriptions that have been unearthed often record various elements of these divinatory ceremonies, with the most common being the prognostications and interpreted answers. In rarer cases, the outcome of the actual events that transpired that were related to the divinations can be found inscribed as well, which may be a kind of affirmation of the divinatory interpretation and are commonly referred to as “verifications.” Important to note is the fact that these inscriptions often appear to have been completed in one act rather than in stages, suggesting that the record was made after the fact, and in the case of those with verifications, the period of time between divination and inscription may have been substantial. Bagley notes an inscription where the dates of the divination and the verification are separated by thirty-one days, yet the inscription seems to have been completed in one sitting.¹¹

⁹ Li 2015, 75–78.

¹⁰ This description closely follows Keightley 1978, 12–15.

¹¹ Bagley in Houston 2007, 193–200.

Suggesting that the inscriptions were done at a later date is not unreasonable after identifying the people involved in each step of the process. The names of individuals involved in the process are commonly inscribed, which reveals that while the king is often the persona announcing the prognostication, he is not the diviner or the scribe.¹² Beyond that, the diviner and scribe are also distinct individuals. It seems that the bones and shells might have been sent to a scribe who specialized in inscriptions on bone long after the ceremony with a transcript of the content of the ceremony which was to be inscribed.¹³ This would suggest that there could even have been two scribes in some cases — one taking notes on perishables and one who inscribed the bones following these notes. Evidence of perishable media that could have been used for such notes is suggested by the appearance of painted graphs on some extent bones as well as through the content of the inscriptions, which will be discussed in the final section of this paper. This reveals the complexity of the practice of divination as seen through the lens of these bones and shells.

The actual reason that these shells were inscribed, however, is still a matter of much debate. Some suggest that it may have been some kind of system of record keeping, but others point to apparent mass-discarding of the bones and inconsistent recording standards across the corpus as evidence against this proposal.¹⁴ While a subset of the inscriptions seems to fit the idea of a system of records, such as those recording punitive expeditions carried out by the king, examples such as these are just as easily explained by other models.¹⁵ In this specific case, Keightley explains that this detailed record of the divinations recorded on the punitive expedition may have served as proof of completion of these rituals that could be presented upon the king's return. Seeing the inscriptions as a limited form of demonstration, rather than as records to be stored, seems much more reasonable.

The practice of pyro-osteomancy on the central plain predates the appearance of these inscriptions,¹⁶ so the appearance of the script must coincide with the emergence of new needs

¹² For a discussion of diviners and diviner groups, see Keightley 1978, 31–32.

¹³ Bagley in Houston 2007, 197.

¹⁴ Bagley in Houston 2007, 198–200.

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of these inscriptions, see Keightley 2000, 45–47.

¹⁶ Keightley 1978, 3–6.

associated with the elite practicing these divinations. It may have been a kind of a display, similar to the inscriptions found on bronzes, which will be discussed in the next section. Bagley admits that this is possible with the caveat that the audience which these inscriptions were meant for must have been rather restricted in scope.¹⁷ It is unlikely that these early kings needed to demonstrate their ability to communicate with the spirits to the society as a whole through display of such inscriptions, but that it is likely that these inscriptions were of importance for demonstrative purposes to the literate elite of the time. Bagley even suggests that the inscriptions were a bridge for communication with the ancestral spirits, with the ancestors as another possible literate audience as perceived by the elite. A reasonable model for understanding the purpose of this practice as a whole would be as a two-stage display demonstrating proof of ritual performance to, first, the literate elite, likely branches of the king's family,¹⁸ and then to the ancestral spirits themselves in the burial of the inscriptions.

Osteomancy, or divination through the use of bones, is not unheard of in world history; there are even other notable examples of pyro-osteomancy discovered in North America.¹⁹ What is interesting to note here is the development and use of a script to record the events or results of the practice. Understanding the plastrons and scapulae as commodity goods restricted to the elite through both acknowledging the difficulty of their acquisition and observing the actors involved in the divination rituals recorded in the inscriptions, it is reasonable to suggest that the practice was developed to fill the needs of the literate elite. Since the practice of pyro-osteomancy in the central plain predates the emergence of the earliest of these inscriptions, the need for simple divinations seems to have escalated to the need to demonstrate completion of the practice, whether that may be to fellow members of the elite or to the ancestral spirits, and thus the Shell and Bone Script emerged to fill this need.

¹⁷ Bagley in Houston 2007, 199–200.

¹⁸ Keightley 2000, 98–103.

¹⁹ Keightley 1978, 3.

VESSELS, METALLURGY, AND CONSIGNMENT

The emergence of inscriptions on metal works was roughly contemporaneous with the emergence of the Bone and Shell Script, but the earliest examples of metal inscriptions are of a much simpler nature than those found on the bones. These early inscriptions are often found on vessels of various shapes and sizes cast in bronze for use in rituals, often related to ancestral worship and sacrifice.²⁰ Similar to the bone inscriptions, estimates for the dates of early bronze ritual vessels suggest that the earliest extent uninscribed vessels predate the appearance of their inscribed counterparts by about four or five centuries, so this suggests that the technology required to cast these vessels was developed long before anyone thought it necessary to inscribe them. Before investigating the possible reasons for the emergence of the script, a model for the process by which these objects were produced and inscribed is helpful for understanding their use.

Similarly to the scapulae and plastrons discussed in the previous section, the acquisition of the resources necessary to produce bronze and cast the bronze into vessels requires a sophisticated system consisting of multiple phases. Satisfying all of the necessary requirements of bronze production required discovering the location of the requisite ore, acquiring it through mining operations, transporting the ore to the metallurgists, proper understanding of the process of smelting and refining, transporting the refined material to the casters, the production of molds for casting, and proper understanding of casting techniques. The two main phases in this process are acquisition of the refined bronze and the casting of the vessel, and the media in question in these two phases are bronze and clay respectively.

²⁰ For an in-depth discussion of the development of methods for classifying and dating bronze vessels, see Robert Bagley's *Max Loehr and the Study of Chinese Bronzes*. In the course of this book, Bagley surveys early developments in the classification of bronzes mainly through examining the work of Bernhard Karlgren and Max Loehr.



Figure 1. Fāngyí 方彝, ca. twelfth century BCE. Winthrop Collection, Harvard University Art Museum (1943.52.109). Source: Bagley 1990, 7 (Fig. 1B).

Bronze is an alloy produced using copper, tin, and often other metals such as aluminum or lead in trace amounts.²¹ These metals are smelted and refined through an arduous process of repeated melting and the addition of such materials as carbon from charcoal to remove impurities. The addition of tin to copper resulted in a much stronger and durable material that could be used to

²¹ Tan and Lian 2011, 131–132.

created large, sturdy objects such as these vessels. Before these metals could be produced, the ores from which they are extracted needed to be mined and brought to the location of refining. Mining operations have been discovered that were in use during the Shang, and evidence of smelting workshops and bronze ingots suggests that the refining process probably took place in the immediate vicinity of the mines.²² Producing the refined metal on-site simplifies the first stage of transportation mentioned above, but by processing the metals at the mine, further shipments become more attractive to bandits.

Archaeological excavations that yielded bronzes suggest that the casting of bronzes in the earliest stages was restricted to the central power on the central plain, the Shang capital, the last of which was Anyang.²³ Workshops yielding mold fragments for the casting of bronze vessels have been found at Anyang, suggesting that production of the vessels was done here rather than at the mines after refinement of the materials.²⁴ The mines mentioned above were discovered far away from Anyang, so the ore, or more likely the refined metal, needed to be transported quite a distance to reach the workshops where the bronzes were produced. Banditry is a problem that arises whenever valuable goods are being transported, and so the shipments of metals would need to be accompanied by armed escort if the safety of the shipment was to be assured. While the refining of the ore at the mine would reduce the volume of material needing to be shipped, refined metal has added value due to the complex nature of the process by which it was produced, so those who were not privy to this process or lacked the resources to implement the infrastructure would place a high price on these goods. The condensed nature of the refined material is such that it is easier to transport and guard, but this must be weighed against the fact that the cargo would be quite precious. The people who developed the mining and refining operation needed also to maintain a system that allowed for regular armed shipments between the mines and the capital to provide a secure flow of metal, so possession of bronze itself was a symbol of the power of implementation, demonstrating that this

22 For a discussion of the Tonglushan mine site, see Li 2015, 63–64.

23 Notable examples of intricate bronze objects produced separately from those connected with Anyang have been unearthed at Sanxingdui 三星堆. See Li 2015, 86–89.

24 Shaughnessy 1991, 37–38.

would be an endeavor restricted to the elite.

As for the actual methods employed in casting the bronzes, early scholars assumed without much thought that the lost-wax method of casting which is commonly seen in early Western bronze working and later adopted on the central plain was also used in the earliest castings.²⁵ It was not until the 1960s that the piece-mold casting theory, which found its roots in Orvar Karlbeck's 1935 study of mold fragments, became the favored model.²⁶ Instead of creating a wax model that would be melted away, the model could be made of any material desired by the caster.²⁷ Clay would then be packed around this, divided into sections that could be removed from the model after baking. These could then be reassembled around an inverted core designed to produce the inner cavity of the vessel with proper spacing maintained by small pieces of metal shaped for the job. After fitting the various pieces of the mold, the bronze could be poured into the cavity, and the mold could be broken away from the finished vessel after cooling. Bagley provides excellent illustrations for this process as it would have been done to produce the *fāngyí* 方彝 seen in Figure 1. A schematic for the piece-mold sections can be seen in Figure 3, and fragments of an actual piece used to create a *fāngyí* can be seen in Figure 2. This second major stage of the process requires advanced understanding of mold production and casting techniques, which, similar to smelting and refining, would not have been widely understood, as evidenced again by the restriction of bronze production to few select areas in the earliest stages.²⁸ This is further evidence for the restriction of vessel to elite usage.

25 Archaeological evidence suggests that the lost-wax technique was not used until about the sixth century BCE. The lost-wax technique consists of first creating a model of the object to be cast in wax, with all of the details cut into it. This was then encased in clay, leaving holes to drain the wax and add the molten metal, and baked, causing a hardened mold to be formed and the wax to melt and drain away. See Shaughnessy 1991, 36–37; and Bagley 1990, 9.

26 Bagley returns to the question of molds used in the making of bronze vessels in Bagley 2008.

27 The description of the piece-mold process given here follows that provided by Bagley 1990, 9–10.

28 Li 2015, 59–65.



Figure 2. Part of the mold for a *fāngyí*, ca. eleventh century BCE, from Anyang Yinxu, Miaopu Beidi. Source: Bagley 1990, 10 (Fig. 6).

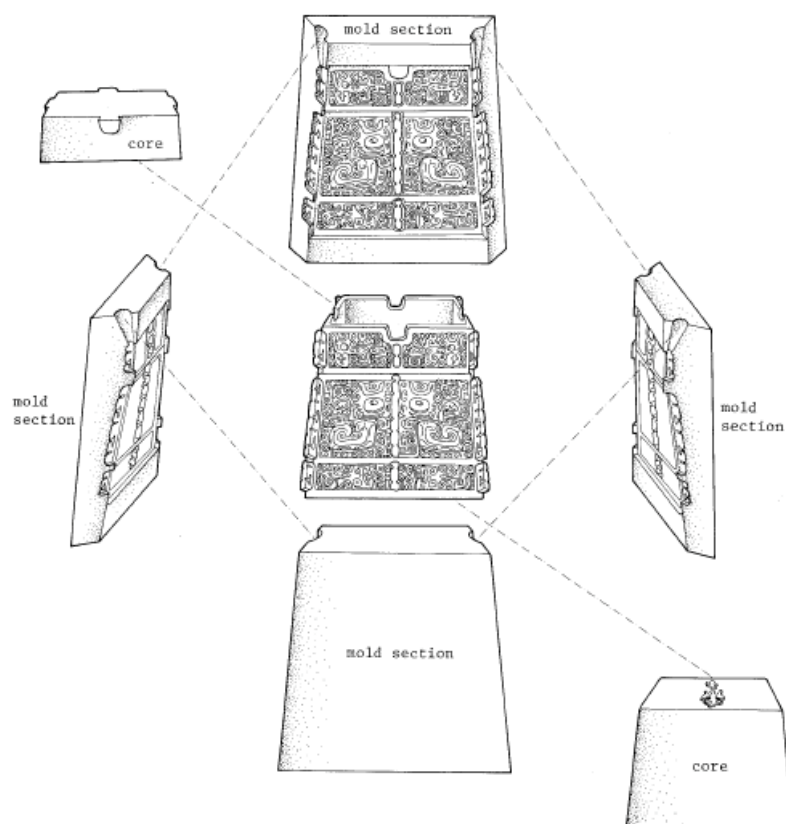


Figure 3. Mold diagram for the *fāngyí* of Figure 1. Drawing by Whitney Powell.
Source: Bagley 1990, 9 (Fig. 5).

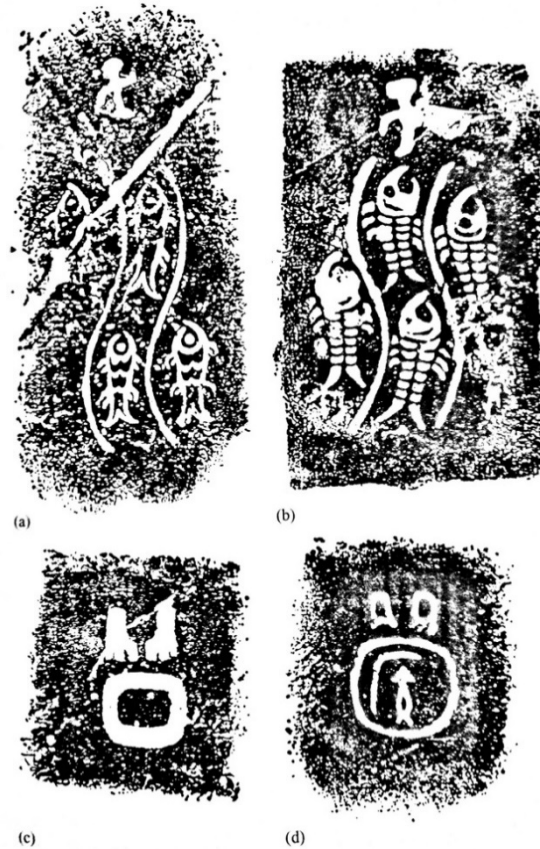


Figure 4. Name inscriptions of bronze vessels from Xiaotun M18 tomb, Anyang, c. 1200 BCE. (a)/(b): *Yu* 漁; (c): *Zheng* 征; (d): *Zheng Hou* 征侯? Source: Bagley, "Anyang Writing and the Origin of Chinese Writing," 203.

With a model for the production of bronzes, the purpose of the inscriptions can be addressed. The number stated above for the dating of the relative appearance of uninscribed and inscribed vessels is not static and could fluctuate pending the discovery of earlier examples of bronzes of either type, but the number of bronzes already unearthed or passed down by collectors is substantial, so it seems unlikely that the effect of this would be great. A factor of greater importance to this study is what is taken to be a meaningful inscription when looking at inscribed vessels. The earliest graphs seen on extant bronze vessels consist of only a few graphs, which often identify the person for whom the bronze was cast or possibly are a lineage symbol.²⁹ These short inscriptions tend to be highly

²⁹ Qiu 2000, 62.

stylized and much more pictographic than the graphs seen on the bones and shells, which Bagley suggests is due to the ease of inscription on the soft clay which formed the molds.³⁰ The inscriptions found on the bronze vessels are rather different from those of the Bone and Shell Script, because rather than being incised onto the media directly, the graphs were formed in the mold and thereby cast as part of the vessels.³¹ Bagley provides examples of stylized inscriptions with names like “Prince Yu,” or *Zǐ Yù* 子漁, or “Marquis of Zheng,” or *Zhēng Hóu* 征侯, which point to royal lineages. These inscriptions have been reproduced in Figure 4.

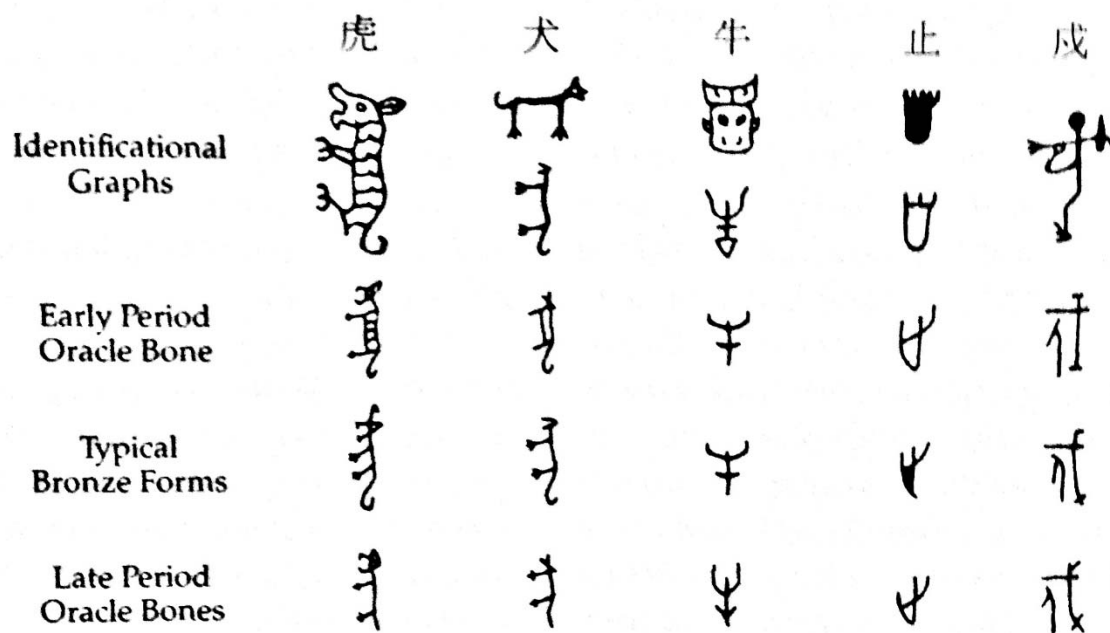


Figure 5. Examples of early differences in the Sinographic script from around 1200 BCE to 800 BCE. Source: Qiu 2000, 65.

Understanding the reasoning behind the appearance of the name and possible clan signs is a complete guessing game if taken alone, but using the longer, content-laden inscriptions of later

³⁰ Bagley 2004, 200–202.

³¹ Shaughnessy 1991, 40–42.

periods to reflect back on the early inscriptions provides clues.³² Bronzes were commissioned for numerous reasons ranging from the appointment of an official to the commemoration of a military victory. There are numerous examples during the Western Zhou (1046–771 BCE) of inscriptions which record appointment ceremonies, where an individual deemed worthy by the king is given an official position and the accoutrements to go along with it.³³ In general, four distinct sections are commonly found in the longer inscriptions — date and place notation, event notation, a gift list, and a dedication.³⁴ The date and place of the event are noted, followed by an account of the event, often including the reason for the event. Gifts were usually offered by the king to the person commissioning the vessel, and then the donor, or commissioner of the vessel, dedicates it to certain ancestors so that it may be used to worship their spirits.

This was a ceremonial appointment of both ritual and legal import in which the king conferred status onto the appointee and his family. Reflecting back on the early vessels whose inscriptions were short, usually containing only possibly a name or lineage symbol, it becomes clear that these inscriptions might be early forms of the later inscriptions commemorating appointments. However, the names seen in these early inscriptions suggest that the people involved in the production of the vessels were the royal family rather than officials. For both situations, the inscriptions have a demonstrative purpose, displaying status to those who are literate among the elite, but as time progressed, that status and literacy spread. Li Feng points to the dissemination of vessels to ritual centers beyond the capital as a way of pushing the influence of the Zhou state outward.³⁵ By providing appointed officials with inscribed bronzes and establishing them in regions on the periphery, the officials became tied to the Zhou central power through common ancestral worship, and the bronzes themselves and the inscriptions on them could serve as demonstrative proof of that

³² See Figure 5 for a reproduction of a chart demonstrating the differences in the Shang and Zhou script by media from Qiu 2000, 65.

³³ For multiple rubbings and translations of inscriptions recording appointment ceremonies, see Kern, "The Performance of Writing in Western Zhou China" in Houston 2007, 140–151.

³⁴ Here the terminology of Shaughnessy is adopted. See Shaughnessy 1991, 76–85.

³⁵ Li 2015, 146–155.

connection. However, this is a diffusive spiral, because the power represented by an inscribed bronze from the king lessens as they grow in number — not to mention that the power that they represented led other groups to begin to attempt to emulate the process.³⁶

The acquisition of the materials required to produce bronze vessels alone mean that the vessels would be a symbol of power due to the system that needed to be maintained for a steady supply. This suggests a possible explanation for the lack or simplicity of inscriptions on the earliest bronzes — the vessels were largely restricted to the royal family at the capital. The earliest inscriptions that appeared served as stylized marks of ownership, erring on the pictographic side, but the scope of participating individuals in this show of possessions was narrow. As vessels began to be consigned to a wider range, both genetically and spatially, of people through appointment ceremonies, the inscriptions became longer, providing greater detail of the reasons why this appointee received his honors and to which ancestors the vessel was dedicated. These served as reminders to its descendants of the reason the family earned the vessel, and made other members of the literate elite aware of the status of the family in question.

The quality of the script varies greatly, especially when the less skilled craftsmen of the later period are taken into consideration, but during the Shang and Zhou, the graphs are recognizably similar to the Shell and Bone Graphs discussed earlier, but more refined and smoother. The elegant character of the script is connected to factors associated with both of the media involved in the production process — clay molds and bronze vessels. The clay of the molds is easier to manipulate than the bones and shells, so the forms of the graphs can be made smoother with less effort. As symbols of power through either proof of ability to produce or proof of consignment from the central power, the demonstrative nature of the script would push the elite to desire elegant, aesthetically pleasing inscriptions to be displayed on their bronzes.

SEALS AND TEXTUAL IDENTITY

The problems involved with identifying the self are not easily solved, especially in pre-

³⁶ Shaughnessy discusses the appearance of bronzes cast by less skilled workers that could roughly pass as those created by the royal casters appearing as early as the Western Zhou. See Shaughnessy 1991, 78.

imperial China, but one method for proof of person that has remained popular throughout Chinese history up to the present day is that of the seal. Even now, the signature has yet to replace the personal seal in many aspects of formal interaction in East Asian countries such as China and Japan, but that is not to say that the nature of the seal in pre-imperial China was the same as the personal seals seen today. The methods by which seals are used underwent great change between their earliest use and the invention of paper.

The basic structure of a seal has not changed much over the millennia, and a few examples can be seen in Figure 6. Seals are made in a variety of different shapes and from many different materials, and so there are multiple possible processes for their production. The earliest extant seals were cast in bronze, and bronze has been the most prevalent material used in their production, but other materials, such as gold, silver, and jade, were also used.³⁷ The inscriptions tend to be found on one face of the seal, with the other faces being either unadorned or embellished with designs; however, there have been cases where multiple faces were engraved with different inscriptions.³⁸ The graphs of these inscriptions can either be in relief or intaglio, depending more on the style desired by the producer of the seal rather than the specific material, with different impressions being produced based on these design choices.

³⁷ See Lai 1976, xii.

³⁸ Ibid., xiii.



Figure 6. Top left: “Great Wealth Seal.” Warring States. Top right: Inscription of previous seal: *Yi You Bai Jin* 宜有百金. Bottom left: “Chang T'san Name Seal.” Bottom right: Inscription of previous seal: *Zhang Can Yin Xin* 張參印信. Source: National Palace Museum *Guoli Gugong Bowuguan* 國立故宮博物館.

Early in the use of seals, their role as markers of identity was tied to the physical seal; it was carried with the individual, perhaps attached to his belt, and, when necessary, the inscription on the seal would be presented as identification.³⁹ Early seal inscriptions recorded rank rather than specific identity, but as they came to be more widely used, both rank and personal names became common in the seal inscriptions.⁴⁰ Seals conjure up images of letters sealed with wax and marked with the seal of the sender as proof of authenticity, and a similar practice is evidenced in the sealing of bamboo slip

³⁹ See Lai 1976, 20.

⁴⁰ Ibid., x.

documents. Not wax but clay was often employed to encase the knot tied to secure the documents, and remnants of these pieces of clay have been discovered that retain the impression of seal inscriptions dating back to the Warring States period.⁴¹ Before the invention and widespread use of paper, seals were used to make imprints in clay rather than leave the ink markings so commonly seen in the later period.

The need to identify oneself inspired the production of seals with elaborately stylized script, which is reminiscent of the modern practice of stylizing money. The earliest inscriptions were very reminiscent of the script seen in the bronze inscriptions mentioned above, but during the Warring States period and into the imperial period, inscription styles evolved to fill the surface of the seals. The production of a seal inscription became heavily reliant on mastery of specialized seal scripts which differed in execution through their fluidity. The selection of each graph relied on the surrounding graphs in the inscription, and so each graph would be rendered differently on different seals depending on the content of the inscription. In this way, seal inscriptions began to fill the role that signatures fill in Western culture today. As the seals spread in use from simply identifying the rank of officials or royalty to presenting names of individuals, the script used evolved to fill the need to produce unique representations for proof of person. This script adapted to the media, the small surface of a seal, by filling the surface and allowing the graphs to conform to the scriptural environment in which they were written.

PORTABILITY AT THE COST OF PERMANENCE

The final section of this study of Sinographic script up to the Han dynasty addresses the problems involved with the many perishable media employed, specifically bamboo slips, wood, and silk.⁴² The earliest texts written on these perishable media that have been unearthed were written on bamboo slips which date to the late Warring States period, so little can be said about the nature of the script on

⁴¹ See Qiu 2000, 93–94.

⁴² This section will take a close look at the Chu bamboo slips found at Guodian 郭店, but there have been other important discoveries of texts written on perishable materials dating to the pre-imperial period, such as the Chu silk manuscripts discovered near Changsha 長沙.

these media prior to this point. Evidence of the use of these materials, likely bamboo or wood slips, can be seen in inscriptions on bone and bronze where the graph *cè* 冊, with some variation, is used, referring to other texts not preserved in the archaeological record as it is seen today.⁴³ The exact meaning of the graph in the various situations is a topic of debate, but scholars agree that at the basic level it refers to collections of slips lashed together with rope or string.

These bound collections of strips are distinct from the bones, bronzes, and seals by the convenience of the media. Texts written on bamboo, for example, are much more easily transported than inscriptions on bronze and bone, and bamboo allows for much longer texts than the surface of a seal. Not only is bamboo relatively light, if prepared correctly, the slips could be stacked and rolled in a neat fashion, allowing for the creation of *cè* documents. Texts written on these media range in content from short notes to longer texts such as the sections of the *Dàodé Jīng* 道德經 discovered among the Chu bamboo slips found at Guodian.⁴⁴ The possibility that bones and shells may have been used to keep a system of records was mentioned in the first section of this paper, but records kept on bamboo or wood slips are much more likely, and the bone and bronze inscriptions even suggest this with their mention of *cè* as noted above. The convenience of the media is key to understanding the influence which it had on the development of the script, especially in the late Warring States and into the early imperial period, the effects of which posed problems to a new power player on the central plain — the Qin Empire.

The situation prior to the standardization of the script under the Qin at the hand of the official Li Si 李斯 (280–208 BCE) is easiest to understand from the perspective of the emergence of new powers paired with the convenience of the media. The shift in power away from the Zhou into the hands of the smaller states that constituted the “Warring States”⁴⁵ saw the development of variants of

43 For a discussion of the appearance of *cè* 冊 in early texts, see Kern, 152–7. For references to *cè* in early texts, see Qiu 2000, 62–63.

44 The discovery of these texts has led scholars such as Paul Goldin to entertain the possibility that texts in the Warring States period circulated to a much higher degree than was previously understood, with literate elite collecting texts or various types or schools of thought (Goldin 2005, 4–5).

45 The main states that survived into the Warring States period were Qin, Han, Wei, Zhao, Qi, Chu, and Yan. For a discussion of interactions between these states, especially related to warfare and sacrifice, see Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*

the script unique to each state, which was mentioned in the discussion of late bronzes. The script seen on bronzes is designed for some level of demonstrative purpose, and so it is elegant and aesthetically pleasing, yet clear. When investing the resources necessary to cast vessels, wanting a clear and impressive inscription is understandable, but in the case of perishable, or even disposable materials, the need for standard presentation is not as intense. Because of this, the various script types seen throughout the states of the Warring States period probably emerged through relatively inexpensive, perishable media before being used to inscribe the bronze vessels. This explanation fits with early narratives of script development where it has been suggested that the inscriptions seen on bone, shell, and bronze from the Shang and Zhou may have been modelled on script that appeared on perishable media no longer extant.⁴⁶ Bagley points to a small collection of bones that have graphs printed on them.

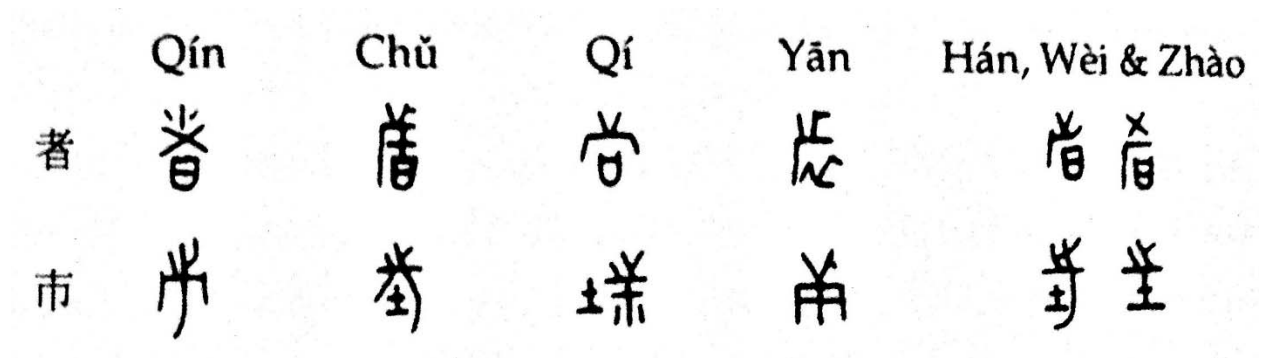


Figure 7. Graphs of the characters *zhe* 者 and *shi* 市 as they appeared in the regional scripts in the late Warring States period. Source: Qiu 2000, 87.

An examination of the style of the script as it appears on the bamboo slips reveals that it was most likely written in a haphazard and hasty manner, which is not unreasonable if modern handwriting is kept in mind. The graphs often vary in size, shape, structure, and execution, both across regions and internally. In studies of the script in the late Warring States period, scholars often mention the varying nature of the script, but it is difficult to conceptualize what this means without

in Early China.

⁴⁶ Bagley in Houston 2007, 200–201.

visuals. Figure 8 presents varying forms of graphs that have been interpreted to be forms of *wén* 聞, meaning “to hear,” and *wèn* 問, meaning “to inquire,” as seen in the slips unearthed at Guodian. The following short discussion involves the graphs found on various documents at Guodian, which are of the Chu script variety, but this is only one of the states mentioned above, so inconsistencies seen here are only a subset of the problems that Li Si and the Qin would face following the Qin unification. Qiu Xigui provides a simple but illuminating graphic demonstration of regional variance which has been reproduced in Figure 7.



Figure 8. Examples of script variation within the Chu Warring States period script.

Source: Ma 2001: (1) p. 242; (2) p. 187; (3) p. 218; (4) p. 214; (5) p. 303.

While character borrowing is not uncommon in Sinographic writing, the inconsistent interchangeability of graphs in texts such as these could easily cause confusion to a reader, especially if the reader is not versed in all possible variants. The standard script, or *kǎishū* 楷書, glosses are interpretations as seen in the 2001 publication of the Chu bamboo slips in the Shanghai Museum collection by Ma Chengyuan 馬承源. The first two examples demonstrate the graph, which is glossed in standard script as *hūn* 昏, being used semantically as both “to hear” and “to inquire” in different

sections of the text. The last three demonstrate not only that the same semantic idea can be glossed with multiple graphs with the addition of the graph represented in standard script as *wén* 聞 being used semantically as "to hear," but also that calligraphic differences could also vary greatly. The last two graphs are even found within the same text, but looking at their structure, it is not obvious that they are the same graphs. This example demonstrates the internal inconsistencies of the Warring States scripts, where graphs glossed multiple semantic ideas, multiple graphs were used for the same semantics, and the same graph was rendered in inconsistent structure.

Such variations or inconsistencies in the script, whether they are found within a single regional script or across regions, would pose a significant problem to an empire that wished to unite the peoples of these various regions. If regional scripts differ, then messages or edicts sent between different regions would not be intelligible, even under the assumption that the language used in each region was the same.⁴⁷ People in each region would need to be trained in all of the script varieties in order to function efficiently with individuals from other regions. Implementation of such training would be time consuming and would likely impair the functioning of governance through communication difficulties. Developing a clearer picture of the state of the Sinographic script at the time of the unification of the states under Qin in 221 BCE highlights the reasons underlying the need to standardize the script, but what this undertaking entailed is not clearly understood, so a brief overview is warranted.

Two major script styles were formalized throughout the Qin and into the early Han — the Qin seal script and the clerical script. The standardization of the script by Li Si refers to the formalization of the Qin seal script, which is directly related to the discussion of the Warring States scripts presented earlier. The formulation of the Qin seal script was not entirely the work of Li Si and those who worked with him. This style of the Sinographic script developed over time in ways similar to the scripts found in the other states during the Warring States.⁴⁸ The role which Li Si played in this process was likely two-fold, involving the elimination of variant graphs and imposing the script on the various

⁴⁷ This assumption is made for instructional purposes here, but it must be noted that different regions during the Warring States must have had diverse modes of speech.

⁴⁸ Qiu 2000, 97–103.

regions. As was demonstrated using the script of Chu, the script used within each of the individual states was not internally consistent, and so the first stage of Li Si's job would be to establish a set of standard graphs in order to "define" the Qin seal script. This can be likened to the methodology used in modern simplifications of the script, where certain graphs are abolished while others are preserved.⁴⁹ The work of Li Si is said to have been compiled as a collection of around 3300 graphs serving as these standard graphs in a work known as the *Cāngjié piān* 倉頡篇. Its existence has been called into question due to the fact that he was not associated with this work until around three hundred years after his death by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE) in the *Book of Han* 漢書, in spite of having a long biography in Sima Qian's 司馬遷 *Shiji* 史記 in the early Han.⁵⁰ The second stage of the process would require imposing this script across the empire to the regional governments in all of the regions, which was no simple feat. The Qin are notorious for the alleged "burning of books" at the behest of the First Emperor, but this is easily understood if taken as a part of the script standardization.⁵¹ If one is implementing a standardized script across the regions, destroying texts written in the variant regional scripts would be an effective way to discourage their use in favor of the standard script, but whether or not this was actually the case is an open question.

While the earliest usages of perishable media for writing on the central plain are unlikely never to be understood precisely, the later effects of the use of these media can be seen clearly from the Warring States period onward. Developments in the Sinographic script seen on such media as the bronze vessels seem to have had their roots in the perishable media as early as the Shang, which is reasonable due to the disposable nature of the perishable media. Writing on perishable media is efficient in both effort and portability, and so writings on these media are more likely to propagate mistakes or stylistic modifications. In the late Warring States period, the diverse regional scripts likely developed through the versatility of the perishable media, and this was accelerated by diffusion of power to the regional kings who no longer needed to model themselves after Zhou. This presented

49 For an overview of the methodology employed in the 1955 simplification of the Chinese script, see Hsia, *China's Language Reforms*. For a more detailed discussion, see Zhou 2013, 57–92.

50 For an English translation of the biography of Li Si in the *Shiji*, see Bodde 1967, 12–55.

51 Ibid., 150–151.

problems for the Qin unification in the form of inefficiency of governance, which led to forced modification and standardization of the script in the early imperial period.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the pre-imperial period, the interplay between media and government was at the forefront of the evolution of the Sinographic script. The inscriptions on bone and shell, which were clearly the prerogative of the king and his immediate relations only, sat alongside a fluid evolution of bronze inscriptions. With the practice of pyro-osteomancy predating the use of the Shell and Bone Script, the circumstances surrounding the script's emergence must have been incited by the elite's changing needs. The Shell and Bone Script seems to have been employed for either restricted demonstrative purposes between the royal elite of the Shang or possibly as a communicatory bridge with the ancestral spirits of the royal family.

A similar but complicated trend is seen in the evolution of bronze inscriptions. The restriction of bronze vessels to those who could muster the resources to maintain the infrastructure required to produce them is reflected in the earliest short but highly stylized name inscriptions as identification of property. Those restrictions slowly decayed as the vessels were consigned to appointed officials further down the royal family tree, and what was once a sign of royal power became a sign of royal approval of an individual and his lineage. In both situations, the role played by the script is demonstrative, so while similar in structure to the Shell and Bone Script, the graphs are refined for presentation. This was aided by the ease of manipulation of the clay of the mold, which allowed for elegant graphs to be produced with less effort. With the decentralization of power during the Western Zhou, the power to produce these spread to the many states of the Warring States period and became a way each could distinguish itself from other states, and underline its sovereignty. This was accompanied by fragmentation of the Sinographic script into multiple state-specific scripts, likely emerging from the script as it was written on perishable media.

Elegance of presentation was taken a step further in the refinement of the graphs seen on seals, whose production became intimately tied to the individual identified by the inscription. The earliest seals, as we have seen, were symbols of official positions held rather than an individual's name.

But as their use spread and they became tied to individual identity, stylistic calligraphic representation was key both for aesthetic demonstration and personal identification. Stylized inscriptions were a sign of refinement, and calligraphic style was associated with the individual identified.

Script on perishable media in the pre-imperial period, evidenced mainly by bamboo slips that have been unearthed in recent times, had a profound effect on the emergence of the diverse regional scripts seen in the Warring States period. The convenience and disposability of the media allowed for liberated development of the script that operated outside of the restricted framework of display on bronze, bone, and jade. While these other media are associated here with elegance and demonstration, the perishable media are for quick and efficient writing for the production of bamboo slip texts, messages, and letters. The need for efficient communication and solidarity led the Qin and their official Li Si to standardize the script in the formalization of the Qin seal script, but this spread to media beyond the perishables, being used in inscriptions as well. This observation aligns with the idea that scripts used on the perishable media ultimately influenced those employed in formal inscriptions. With this, the need to control the script following the wild Warring States period was finally given closure.

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