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Introduction

Victor H. Mair

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Despite the common misconception that China has only a single language and that everybody there speaks and reads the same tongue, China is home to an astonishing array of topolects and scripts. Furthermore, speech and writing in China are constantly changing, ensuring that the linguistic mix never grows stale and stable. This is especially so under the impact of new electronic technologies, which enable people to express themselves and interact in novel ways.

Tracking the development of language and writing in China has always been a challenge, but now it is even more so. Fortunately, in the present volume, we have four interesting papers that focus on diverse topics covering a range of significant issues. Katie Odhner's paper on character simplification under the Nationalists reveals that script reform was a vital topic long before the People's Republic of China was founded. Wei Shao's finely nuanced investigation demonstrates the intricate ways in which the vibrant language scene in Taiwan interacts with Mandarin and other languages on the Mainland. Nora Castle's essay on bilingual education in Tibet shows how politics and culture are intertwined in the lives of the people, calling attention to the centrality of language in society and government. Petya Andreeva's exquisite study of the interaction of language and art in contemporary society is extremely revealing of both the angst and the aspiration caused by the swift transformations in esthetics and values.

All four of these papers were originally presented in my class on "Language, Script, and Society in China" during the fall semester of 2013. Two of the papers were written by undergraduate students and two by graduate students. It is always a thrill to witness the excellence of students who write such wonderful papers under the pressure of a full load of other courses and within a very limited time frame. I am especially impressed that they not only undertake solid research, but that they also engage in cutting edge, creative scholarship that goes far beyond mere accumulation of data.

I am pleased to present these four valuable papers on recent and contemporary developments

in the languages and scripts of China, and I am confident that they will prove useful for all those who take and interest in these subjects.

Political Ideology and Character Simplification under the Nationalist Government

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In an era characterized by enthusiasm for creating a phonetic system to replace Chinese characters, efforts to simplify rather than eliminate the traditional script in Republican era China are conspicuous for their conservative approach to the issue of script reform. However, simplification schemes were themselves considered radical in the sense that they suggested a major change to a writing system that was imbued with cultural significance and traditionally had strong support from the ruling elite. Character simplification schemes were neither as multitudinous nor as varied as proposals for phoneticization. However, the diverse range of political ideologies present behind simplification schemes demonstrate a complexity that equals that of their more popular counterpart. These ideologies served as a foundation for both the methodologies employed by the compilers, and the arguments used to justify simplification. The response of the Nationalist Government to the simplification proposals of Qian Xuantong, Luo Jialun, and Chen Guangyao reflects the struggle between different types of nationalist ideology in the Republican Era and immediately following the retreat to Taiwan.

The inherently political nature of script and language reform in China has been widely acknowledged. In his work *Nationalism and Language Reform in China,* John DeFrancis discusses the connection between nationalist ideology and phoneticization efforts in the late Qing and Republican periods. Perhaps because the scholarly debate at that time focused principally on proposals to replace characters with a phonetic system, DeFrancis scarcely addresses character simplification. However, many of the conclusions he draws about the nationalist ideology that guided phoneticization also apply to character simplification. DeFrancis separates nationalism into two fundamental categories: integral nationalism and federal nationalism. Integral nationalism, which he associates with conservatism, preservation of Chinese characters, and the forced adoption of a national language,

aims to "achieve a unitary state in which language and other aspects of nationalism are as nearly uniform as possible."[1] DeFrancis associates this type of nationalism with the Nationalist Party. In contrast, federalist or "healthy" nationalism "seeks to achieve unity in diversity by agreement among various peoples to live as partners in the same state."[2] DeFrancis characterizes integral nationalists as skeptical of the need to enforce a standard national language[3] and consequently unconcerned with the fragmentation of Chinese script that would result from phoneticization. He associates this type of nationalism with Mao Zedong and the New Democracy movement.

These two forms of nationalism are useful to keep in mind as we examine the ideologies behind character simplification. In general, simplification schemes aligned with the "integral nationalism" described by DeFrancis in that they advocated for linguistic unity in China. Most of those who rejected phoneticization in favor of simplification felt that characters were the only means of imposing linguistic unity on the diverse population of China.[4] Even the simplification advocates who envisioned an eventual transition to phonetic script viewed enforcing a common spoken language as an important step that awaited resolution.[5]

However, despite the fact that DeFrancis associates integral nationalism almost exclusively with conservatism, within this division there were distinctive strains of conservative and progressive ideology. All advocates of simplification viewed script reform as a necessary means of increasing literacy rates and making the Chinese script more efficient. Most were also concerned that the cumbersome writing system would cause China to lag behind the West. But despite these common goals and concerns, simplification efforts can be divided into two main approaches. Some simplifiers viewed the Chinese script as inherently valuable, and saw simplification as a way to preserve the script by adapting it to fit modernity. These simplifiers subscribed to more conservative nationalist

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[1] John DeFrancis, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 213.

[2] Ibid., 214–15.

[3] Ibid., 226.

[4] Ibid., 83.

[5] Dayle Barnes, "A Continuity of Constraints on Orthographic Change: Chen Guangyao and Character Simplification," *Momenta Serica* 38 (1988–1989): 141.

ideology. Others were not concerned with preserving the Chinese script, but merely sought a temporary means of achieving efficiency within the script while better solutions to the cumbersome writing system were being explored. These simplifiers aligned with more progressive nationalism. So despite the fact that most simplifiers followed the trend towards integralism, simplification efforts nevertheless were divided between conservative and liberal groups.

Qian Xuantong's scheme for simplification, a portion of which was adopted by the Nationalist government in 1935, exemplifies a progressive approach to simplification. Qian viewed simplification as an intermediate step on the road to the phoneticization of Chinese. In 1923, he stated that it was both necessary and feasible to implement a phonetic script within a period of ten years.[6] Qian believed that officially adopting simplified forms that had historical precedent would be a simple method of lessening the burden of the complex script (especially in an educational setting) while plans for phoneticization were being finalized. In 1923 Qian suggested the simultaneous promotion of the newly created phonetic script, *Zhùyīn Zìmǔ* 注音字母. He advocated using phonetic script to represent vernacular words that could not be encoded with characters, and to record loan words which proved cumbersome to write in characters.[7] Qian's simplification scheme, therefore, does not represent an attempt to preserve characters through reform, but rather a practical step in a transition to phoneticization.

If the goals which Qian championed emphasized utility, so did his procedure for simplification. Qian developed eight methods of character simplification, which were later to serve as the foundation for the Communist simplification in the 1950s.[8] The methods suggested adopting preexisting simplifications for complex characters wherever possible. For example, replacing the traditional 書 (shū, book) with its cursive counterpart 书, or replacing 雲 (yún, cloud) with an ancient variant, 云. His methods suggested replacing complex characters with simpler ones having a shared or similar pronunciation. For example, in an article in *The New Youth* Qian proposed replacing

[6] Ping Chen, *Modern Chinese: History and Sociolinguistics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 152.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Shouhui Zhao and Richard B. Baldauf, Jr., *Planning Chinese Characters: Reaction, Evolution or Revolution?* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 46.

驚 (*jīng*, to be frightened) with 京 (*jīng*, capital city).[9] His methods also make provision for formulating new characters, such as 灶 (simplified from 竈 *zào*, kitchen stove). However, in the same article Qian warned against creating too many new forms. He advocated using preexisting characters wherever possible, and limiting forays into fabrication only to those cases where the traditional form was very complex and no other alternatives existed.[10] His goals were ease of adoption both for those learning to read and for those already literate in the traditional forms. Therefore, even though his eventual vision of phoneticization seemed radical to some, his methods emphasized continuity with the system already in place.

The fact that the Nationalist government adopted this scheme displays the liberal attitude that prevailed in nationalist reform at that time. Qian's "Bill to Simplify and Reduce the Strokes of the Currently Used Characters" was brought before the Preparatory Committee for Unifying the National Language in 1922,[11] and in 1928 "the problem of simplified characters was favorably considered by the National Educational Conference."[12] The increased interest in character simplification in the 1920s and 1930s corresponds with other progressive initiatives that were gaining government support in this period. Following the May Fourth Movement, the national education system underwent major liberalization. In 1922 a Western-influenced system of education was adopted. The goals for the reformed system emphasized the need for social evolution, the development of individuality among the young, and the importance of popular education.[13] Script reform was a natural partner to these goals, in that reform to the writing system was seen as a means to achieve both widespread literacy and the popularization of education. Therefore, the official support for phoneticization reflected an

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[9] Xuantong Qian, "Jiansheng Hanzi bihua tiyi," *Xin Qingnian* 7, 3 (1920):113.

[10] Ibid., 114.

[11] Zhou Youguang, *The Historical Evolution of Chinese Languages and Scripts,* trans. Zhang Liqing (Columbus, Ohio: National East Asian Languages Resource Center, 2003), 60.

[12] "Chinese Language Reforms," *Quarterly Bulletin of Chinese Bibliography* 2 (1935): 74.

[13] Gang Ding, "Nationalization and Internationalization: Two Turning Points in China's Education in the Twentieth Century," in *Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-Century China,* ed. Glen Peterson et al. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 167.

open attitude toward reform. In 1918, *Zhùyīn Zìmǔ* 注音字母 (later changed to *Zhùyīn Fúhào* 注音符号) became the first phonetic system to be formally sanctioned by the Ministry of Education.[14] In 1928, the Ministry additionally promoted *Gwoyeu Romatzyh* 国语罗马字 as a system of Romanization for Chinese.[15] In view of this historical context, the approval of the "First Set of Simplified Characters" by the Senate Session and the Central Political Conference on August 21, 1935, fits into the broader pattern of liberal nationalist reform.[16]

However, the methods of adopting script reform that the government employed displayed a certain amount of hesitation in confronting conservatism in the government. Rather than decisively selecting and broadly implementing one plan for script reform, the government adopted both phoneticization and simplification in a piecemeal fashion, as evidenced by the three separate reforms which coexisted in the nationalist government (*Zhùyīn Fúhào, Gwoyeu Romatzyh*, and simplified characters). It made no attempt to eliminate traditional characters, which significantly lessened the impact of the reform. Of the list of 2,300 characters Qian Xuantong submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval, only 324 were selected for immediate implementation.[17] The government intended to release further lists "when the prejudice against simplified characters [had] been overcome."[18] An English language report in *The Quarterly Bulletin of Chinese Bibliography* states that, on October 4, 1935, the government "authorized" the use of simplified characters in official and private documents.[19] In other words, the government granted permission for the use of simplified characters, but did not insist that they be used. This passive attitude toward script reform was not sufficiently powerful to undermine the edifice of well-established tradition it faced. Thus in January of 1936 the simplified character scheme was withdrawn before it could be truly applied. This withdrawal is typically attributed to the intervention of Dai Jitao, an influential conservative in the government who

[14] Chen, 180.

[15] DeFrancis, 80.

[16] Zhao and Baldauf, 30.

[17] "Chinese Language Reforms," 74.

[18] Ibid., 74–75.

[19] Ibid., 74.

used his connections in the Ministry of Education to have the scheme rescinded.[20] Whether or not the withdrawal can be traced back to a specific individual, conservative opposition was certainly the major factor in its failure.

Yet for conservative advocates of simplification, script reform was seen not as an enemy of traditional Chinese identify, but as a vital means of preserving it. For simplifiers such as Luo Jialun and Chen Guangyao, simplified characters had an inherent connection to nationalism in that they formed, at least rhetorically, a part of the Chinese national identity. Some scholars argued that Chinese characters were not only well suited to the Chinese language, but were in fact a vital part of Chinese national and ethnic identity. This attitude can be seen as an adapted version of earlier traditional nationalists like Deng Shi who believed that China needed to maintain its distinctive language and writing system (he did not clearly distinguish between these two) in order to survive as a nation.[21] Deng felt that abandoning Chinese characters would make China dependent on foreign languages and scripts.[22] Though Deng himself had no interest in simplification, some simplifier's opinions about the importance of characters to Chinese national identity and survival are reflective of some of the same principles.

Though the simplification advocate Chen Guangyao was not as conservative as some, his approach reflects the traditional mindset that characters could both represent and preserve the Chinese identity. Though he was not opposed to phoneticization per se, like the "integral" nationalists, Chen was concerned that a phonetic system would lead to fragmentation of the script across linguistically diverse regions. He also believed that characters were "ethnically distinct," and concluded that Chinese people would not accept a Western-derived phonetic writing system in the near future.[23] Unlike Qian, Chen believed phoneticization of Chinese was inherently problematic and thought of simplification as a semi-permanent solution. Therefore many of his theories concerning

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[20] Zhao and Baldauf, 31.

[21] Elisabeth Kaske, "Philology, National Essence, and the Emergence of a Nationalist Language Policy," in *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919,* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 329–30.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 141.

the importance of characters aligned with a more conservative approach to simplification. However, it appears that this conservative mindset did not appeal to the government any more than Qian's more progressive ideology. According to Dayle Barnes, Chen was acknowledged to be the "leading representative of one of the two principle schools of character simplification."[24] Chen wrote prolifically on the subject of simplification, coming out with many articles in the late 1920s and a book with a proposed scheme in 1931.[25] Given that he was well known in script reform circles and wrote repeatedly to the Ministry of Education to promote his scheme,[26] the government was certainly aware of his work as a possible option. Yet Chen's work was apparently never seriously considered for implementation.

The lack of government attention to his scheme was probably due in large part to the unusual methodology Chen employed. Although his ideas about simplification carried some of the trappings of conservatism, the methodology of his scheme was quite radical. While Qian proposed adopting simplified forms for only those characters in common use that exceeded ten strokes, Chen Guangyao advocated simplifying to the greatest possible extent. Therefore while Qian suggested simplifying 2,000–3,000 characters, Chen believed that all characters should be subject to simplification. Qian and many other reformers emphasized the historical precedent for simplification and the continuities inherent in adopting simplified forms that had existed for hundreds of years or more.[27] However, Chen's scheme also displayed an enthusiasm for "fabrication." If a sufficiently simple form did not exist, Chen advocated creating a new character to replace the original.[28] Even in cases that involved a character that was already quite basic, Chen believed simplification should still be carried out.[29] For instance, in his version of *The Great Learning* (大学), Chen simplified the basic character 止 (zhǐ, stop)

[24] Barnes, 139.

[25] Ibid., 142.

[26] Ibid., 140.

[27] Zhou Youguang, 60–61.

[28] Barnes, 148.

[29] Ibid.

to 𠃌.[30] Chen also supported fabricating new characters for the purpose of imposing order on the organic system of characters. Chen envisioned a radical recreation of Chinese characters that would produce an orderly and consistent system reduced to the bare minimum of required distinguishing features.

Setting aside the practical difficulties implementing this scheme would have caused, Chen's conception defied the conservative methods of simplification that nationalist government adopted when they implemented Qian Xuantong's table of characters. In 1935 the Ministry of Education promised that all further character reforms would be based on the principles of adopting simplified forms already commonly used in society and simplifying only characters that were complex and frequently used.[31] These principles set the parameters of the reform so as to keep radical change to a minimum. Despite the liberalization process that the nationalist government was leading in Chinese education and language reform, the adoption of fairly conservative simplification principles indicates a concern for gaining acceptance from the conservative community. This concern was consistent with the practices of the government that directed script reform to be accomplished through a set of discrete steps rather than in one dramatic change. Though Chen Guangyao's scheme conformed to conservative nationalist ideology in that he believed that characters had inherent value as a force for unifying the Chinese people and preserving a national ethnic identity, in practice his scheme had little chance of gaining acceptance among conservatives. Therefore, the government's decision to set Chen's scheme aside demonstrates the care that was taken to balance the liberal and conservative forces at play, as well as a concern for practicality that superseded ideological rhetoric.

The withdrawal of the "First Set of Simplified Characters" in January 1936 marked the end of government-sponsored character reform under the Nationalists. However, individual scholars continued to publish schemes and proposals for simplification. Rong Geng published a scheme in 1936, as did the determined Chen Guangyao. In 1937, the Character Shape Association of Beijing Academy published a table of simplified characters.[32] After 1937, simplification efforts were impeded

[30] Ibid., 151.

[31] Zhou, 61.

[32] Zhao and Baldauf, 39.

by the invasion of the Japanese and the civil war. However, in 1954 the scholar Luo Jialun published a book entitled "The Simplified Character Movement" (*Jiǎntǐzì Yùndòng* 简体字运动) from Taiwan. Despite the fact that Luo's scheme was one of the most conservative proposed both in terms of rhetoric and in terms of method, the movement was crushed by Chiang Kaishek for political reasons. By this time plans for character simplification were already well under way on the mainland, and Chiang felt the need to separate the actions of the Nationalist government from those of the Communist Party.[33]

Luo Jialun's proposal was conservative in method and nationalist in ideology. Luo suggested following the principles for simplification laid out by the government in 1935. According to his proposal, simplified forms would be selected from three types of sources: simple forms used in ancient times, fabricated forms already in common circulation among the people and the military, and simplifications formed by the use of reduced radicals. Many of the characters he suggested were also used by the Communist simplifiers. For example, the ancient characters 万 (wàn, ten thousand) and 从 (cóng, follow).[34] Other characters were adopted from folk or ancient forms not used by the mainland simplifiers, such as (*è*, evil).[35] Despite the occasion divergence between Luo's suggestions and the simplifications proposed by the Communists, both followed the conservative methodology of Qian.

Qian's justification was also conservative. He stated that characters had to be reformed if they were to be preserved. He believed that characters needed to be maintained in order to preserve the linguistic unity of China. Like other integral nationalists, Luo feared that phoneticization would divide the Chinese population. In order to illustrate his point that linguistic unity is essential to political unity, Luo argued from the example of India, which did not become a unified nation until English was used as a common tongue to tie it together.[36] He also expressed the common fear that a phonetic system would be incapable of encoding the Chinese language because of the potential for

[33] Ibid., 37.

[34] Jialun Luo, *Jiantizi Yundong* (Taibei: Zhongyang Wenwu Gongyingshe, 1954), 11.

[35] Ibid.,12.

[36] Ibid., 3.

confusing homonyms.

In giving his reasons for simplification, Luo Jialun openly addressed the politics of script reform. He pointed out that simplification directly applied to the goals of modernization expressed by Chiang Kaishek, citing specific mottos and speeches given by President Chiang that he felt were relevant to character simplification.[37] Rather than arguing that the Nationalists should avoid simplification because the "Communist bandits" were implementing it, Luo insisted that this only made reform more imperative. According to Luo, when the Nationalists recovered the mainland, the people living there would not be willing to accept traditional characters again. Therefore the Nationalists needed to produce a competitive simplification plan that could equal the one that the Communists were in the process of creating. He argued that simplification would promote knowledge and strengthen the skills of the Chinese people on Taiwan, helping them towards the goal of recovering the mainland.[38] This sort of overt politicization of script reform was not seen in the work of Qian or Chen. The fact that Luo emphasized the role of simplification in the struggle between the Nationalists and Communists probably reflects the sensitivity of this issue, and Luo's desire to defend his position. The failure of simplification efforts on Taiwan is overwhelming attributed to the desire on the part of the nationalist government to separate themselves ideologically from the communists.

The fact that Luo's proposal failed demonstrates the growing strength of conservatism in the Nationalist government following the civil war. The government on Taiwan may have encouraged modernization, but character simplification was now tainted by association with its communist rivals. As Zhao and Baldauf point out, "simplification was regarded as akin to the ideological embodiment of the communist doctrine as there was seen to be an innate relationship between the ordinary people, simplification and the mass movement."[39] Although Zhao and Baldauf also report that Luo Jialun's simplification movement "received significant and enthusiastic support from the population,"[40] the civil war had ended liberal nationalist reform.

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[37] Ibid., 4–5, 49.

[38] Ibid., 36–37.

[39] Zhao and Baldauf, 37.

[40] Ibid., 38.

Simplification efforts of the Republican era and its immediate aftermath display a nation in the throes of self-definition. Conservative nationalists sought a modern nation rooted in Chinese traditions, while progressive nationalists wanted to create a new national identity grounded in the dynamic culture of the present. Character simplification provided a halfway point, a middle ground between conservative and liberal forces contending for power in the nationalist government at that time. The implementation, repeal, and continued agitation for simplification of characters demonstrate the struggle between a national identity based on dynamic culture and one based on traditional culture.

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The Cultural Influence of the Taiwanese Language in Mainland China

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Taiwanese,[1] a sub-topolect of Southern Min,[2] is spoken by nearly eighty-five percent of the population of the Republic of China in Taiwan. Its status has fluctuated since the Kuomintang (KMT) political party took over Taiwan and mandated the use of Guoyu (standard Chinese)[3] as the only official language.

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[1] Taiwanese (*taiyu* 臺語) is a topolect derived from Southern Min. The ancestors of most Southern Min-speaking Taiwanese emigrated from Fujian province to Taiwan between the 14th and 17th centuries. Since then, Southern Min brought over from the mainland has undergone significant change due to contact with other languages (the Malayo-Polynesian aboriginal population in Taiwan, Dutch and Japanese colonialists, and the mainlanders who arrived in Taiwan in 1949) and through adding locally developed words. Although Taiwan is historically separated from other Southern Min-speaking areas, Taiwanese is mutually intelligible with Southern Min spoken by people in Fujian or Singapore.

The population of Taiwan is about 75 percent Hoklo Taiwanese, 10 percent Hakka, 13 percent mainlanders (post-1945 immigrants) and 2 percent aboriginal peoples (data cited from Lin 1999). The term "Taiwanese" should be used perhaps more properly to refer to Southern Min as well as Hakka and aborigine languages. However, because Taiwanese is conventionally used to refer to the Hoklo language, this paper will follow that common usage. I will use the term "Taiwanese" to refer to Southern Min spoken by people in Taiwan and differentiate that from Hokkien, the Southern Min spoken mainly by people in Fujian.

For the orthography of Taiwanese in this discussion, I use Pe̍h-ōe-jī, abbreviated POJ, literally "vernacular writing," also known as Church Romanization.

[2] Southern Min (Minnanhua 闽南话, "South of the Min River Speech") is one of the 8–10 Sinitic languages, variously known as Amoy, Hoklo (Holo), or Hokkien (DeFrancis 1984, p. 58). It is a Sinitic language spoken by 38,950,000 speakers, approximately 4% of the one billion speakers of Sinitic. It is used in parts of Fujian province, Northeastern Guangdong, and Hainan, as well as in Taiwan and in Southeast Asia, where it is spoken in communities in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines. See Ramsey 1987, p. 33.

[3] *Guoyu* 國語, literally "National Language," is the common term in Taiwan for standard Chinese. Guoyu and Mandarin share the same origin from the Vernacular Movement of May Fourth, which promoted the use of vernacular Chinese

The political division of Taiwan and Mainland China since 1949 has created various kinds of barriers for Chinese people from both sides. The differences between the two groups that resulted from these artificial barriers can readily be observed in their respective cultures, ideologies, and languages.[4] However, as developments in the Internet and social media enable them to transcend geographical boundaries, there has been increasing communication in recent years "across the Strait." Despite all the political conflicts and struggles, mainlanders have always enjoyed various aspects of Taiwan's culture, particularly its popular entertainment.

For most people in Mainland China, Taiwanese is equated with the linguistic identity of Taiwan. In this paper I investigate from a linguistic standpoint the language loans of Taiwanese in Mandarin.[5] By tracing the origins of these words in Taiwanese, I explore their transmission into Mandarin and attempt to explain the cultural and social implications underlying this phenomenon.

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instead of Classical Chinese in modern literature. The major part of Mandarin and Guoyu remains the same. However, due to political division since 1949 and Language Reform in PRC during the 1950s, some of the pronunciation and vocabulary of Guoyu and Mandarin are slightly different from each other.

A slight variation from Guoyu is Taiwanese Mandarin (Taiwan *Guoyu* 台灣國語), abbreviated TM hereafter, a combination of standard Chinese and Taiwanese words influenced by the syntax and accent of Taiwanese. Guoyu and TM both play important roles in linguistic exchange across the Taiwan Strait. For more information about TM, see Cheng 1985a.

[4] In order to distinguish Chinese sources of Mainland China origin from those of Taiwanese origin, both Simplified Chinese (*jianti* 简体) and Traditional Chinese (*fanti* 繁體) characters are used in this paper. Simplified Chinese characters indicate that the sources are from Mainland China or generally used in Mainland China; traditional Chinese terms are derived from Taiwan. This also applies to the bibliographical sources, including the dictionaries.

[5] Mandarin (*putonghua* 普通话), "Common Talk," refers to the standard Chinese and official language of the People's Republic of China. The phonology of the standard language is based on the Beijing dialect, but its vocabulary is drawn from the large and diverse group of Mandarin dialects spoken across northern, central, and southwestern China. The grammar is standardized to the body of modern literary works that define written vernacular Chinese, the colloquial alternative to Classical Chinese developed around the turn of the 20th century.

Taiwanese Words That Entered Mandarin

"Topolect loan" (*fangyan ci* 方言词), a term that refers to a borrowing from a topolect into the standard form of the language, is widely recognized as an aspect of Mandarin, and Taiwanese is one of the main sources of such topolect loans. Taiwanese loans[6] arrive in various forms: some are directly translated or transcribed into Mandarin, but some enter Mandarin via layers of transformation. These words are derived from varying sources under diverse circumstances. While the spread of Internet use and social media facilitates communication and linguistic exchange, they have also made it extremely difficult to locate and trace back the Taiwanese loans.

I will demonstrate in the following discussion the methods by which some representative words, selected from dictionaries, newspapers, and the Internet, entered Mandarin. These examples were chosen because they illustrate various forms and origins of Taiwanese loans. My discussion starts with one of the simplest and most convincing examples, 打拼 (打拚, *dǎpīn phah-piàⁿ*).[7] The entry for 打拼 in the *Modern Chinese Lexicon* (*Xiandai hanyu cidian* 现代汉语词典) says:

〈方〉【动】努力去干; 拼搏.

〈topolect loan〉【verb】to make great efforts; to fight for.[8]

This Taiwanese word, *phah-piàⁿ*, is a colloquial expression that can be seen everywhere in newspapers and on television in Taiwan. The word 打拼 came to be known by mainlanders via a song lyric that went: 三分天注定七分靠打拼, "thirty percent of success depends on foreordained fate;

[6] See Wang Wenwen 2012. According to Wang, there are three phases of language borrowing: (1) Some words were once popular for a short period but eventually disappeared from daily use. (2) Some words cannot yet be found in Chinese dictionaries, but appear in high frequency in newspapers and other media. (3) Some words came from Taiwanese but are already "fixed" in Mandarin, and can be found in a Chinese dictionary. In this paper I will employ examples of the last two kinds to demonstrate Taiwanese loans. The ephemeral popular words will not be examined.

[7] The words presented here are written in simplified Chinese characters, traditional Chinese characters, Pinyin (拼音 (the official phonetic system for transcribing the sound of Chinese characters into Latin script in the PRC), and POJ, in that order. All illustrations of Taiwanese loans will follow this format.

[8] See the *Modern Chinese Lexicon*, p. 246. I made the translation with reference to the *ABC Chinese-English Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996).

seventy percent depends on your own hard work," from a popular Taiwanese song, 爱拼才会赢 (愛拚才會贏 *àipīn cáihuì yíng, ài-piàⁿ chiah-ē iâⁿ*),[9] which literally means "only those who love to fight are able to win." According to the *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon* (*Taiwan minmanyu cidian* 台灣閩南語辭典),[10] the direct transcription for *phah-piàⁿ* should be 拍拼 (拍拚 *pāipīn*), which means "to work hard." However, people in Taiwan seldom write 拍拼. Instead, they choose the character 打 to illustrate the sense of a fighting spirit that characterizes this verb.

When we deconstruct the components of 打拼, we see that both of these characters share the same radical, 扌, which resembles the image of a hand, implying movement. The character 打, which means "to hit; to strike," conveys a more dynamic message than 拍, which means "to pat; to beat." The character 拼 alone has the meaning of "be ready to risk one's life" (in fighting, work, etc.). Before 打拼 was introduced into Mainland China, people used to employ 拼搏 (*pīnbó*, to struggle for) to express the same meaning. But 拼搏 struck people as being a literary phrase lacking the vivid emphasis of colloquial language, so it was quickly replaced by 打拼 in everyday conversation. In fact, 打拼 has become such an appealing phrase that even Mainland state leaders, including President Hu, have started to use it in public speeches:

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[9] "Aipin caihui ying 愛拼才會贏" is a Southern Min song composed by Chen Baitang 陳百潭 (from Tainan 台南市, a city in southern Taiwan) and sung by Ye Qitian 葉啟田 (from Jiayi county 嘉義縣, in southwestern Taiwan). The album was released in 1988, a time when Taiwan's people were striving to foster the economic growth of their country. Its lyrics encourage the audience to fight for their dreams in spite of temporary frustration and failures. The song has achieved great popularity among Chinese people all over the world, and later it was translated into Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, and Teochew (the topolect spoken in the Chaozhou 潮州 and Shantou 汕头 areas). The song title, "Aipin caihui ying 爱拼才会赢," has become a common phrase in Mandarin and is used everywhere.

For more information about the use of the phrase, see http://baike.baidu.com/view/123933.htm?force=1 (accessed on December 19, 2013).

[10] See the *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon*, p. 1011.

> 我们都希望国家富强、人民富裕，让我们一起继续来打拼![11]
>
> We all hope that our country becomes prosperous and powerful, and our people become wealthy. Let's continue to strike for that goal together!

The word 打拼 illustrates the most immediate form of borrowing — from one script, written Taiwanese, into another script, written Mandarin, with the same characters and with no reference to other linguistic or cultural contexts. It also casts light upon the unofficial cultural communication "between the two shores." As demonstrated by this case, a Taiwanese loan word, coming out of nowhere, can easily reach the speech of Mainland political leaders within a decade.

Taiwanese as a branch of Southern Min is not only rich in vivid expressions, but also is a living archaic language.[12] A great number of phrases are preserved from the literary register[13] of Classical Chinese texts and are still in circulation within Taiwanese-speaking communities to this day. Yan (2008) classes these words in the category of "revival word"[14] (*fugu ci* 復古詞). Among Taiwanese loan words of this type of origin, 死忠 (死忠 *sǐzhōng sí-tiong*)[15] is a typical example. Here are some examples taken from newspapers appearing within a single week:

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[11] See *Riben Xinhua qiaobao* 日本新华侨报 (China Press Net Japan), 2009/10/09. *Riben Xinhua Qiaobao* is a special version of *Rinmin ribao haiwai ban* 人民日报海外版 (People's Daily Overseas Edition) for Chinese people living in Japan. President Hu said the quoted sentence on October 7, 2009, when he happened to encounter a group of Canadian Chinese on his way to inspect the tourism industry in Beijing.

[12] For the archaic features of Taiwanese, or more broadly, Southern Min, see DeBernardi 1991, pp. 8–10.

[13] See DeBernardi 1991, pp. 4–17. According to DeBernardi, the literary register of Southern Min is a pronunciation system specialized for reading Classical Chinese. Due to the enforcement of the use of Guoyu after 1949, the latter has gradually replaced it in the role of literary register, and the majority of its pronunciation is lost among Taiwanese speakers. Some of the literary register is still evident in Hokkien (Amoy), but only in public uses such as broadcasting or news reporting.

[14] The term "revival word" is borrowed from Xie and Chen, "Guoyu zhong de minnanyu jieci dui guoyu suo chansheng de yuyi yingxiang." Yan agrees with and continues to use the definition of "revival word" in that work — that it designates a word that "once appeared in Classical Chinese texts but is not used in modern Chinese until Taiwanese loan spreads in Guoyu."

[15] According to DeBernardi (1991), it can be speculated that some of these revival words must have preserved the literary register of Taiwanese. In the case of 死忠, the pronunciation in Hokkien and Taiwanese are the same. I consulted Grace

"…跨过护栏跟死忠球迷团体…一起庆祝."

"…went across the barrier and celebrated together with the die-hard fans' groups "

(*Nanfang dushi bao* 南方都市报 Southern Metropolis Daily 2013/12/20)

"无论怎样跌，比特币的死忠是不会退出的."

"No matter how much the price drops, the hard-core fans of Bitcoin will not quit."

(*Xin jing bao* 新京报 Beijing News 2013/12/19)

"但身边也不乏死忠之士."

"Yet there is no lack of loyal supporters around him."

(*Beijing ribao* 北京日报 Beijing Daily 2013/12/17)

"以牺牲合格政治人才为代价提拔对本组织的死忠…饱受批评."

"Promoted loyal supporters of their own organization instead of capable political talents…drew much criticism."

(*Jingji guangcha bao* 经济观察报 The Economic Observer 2013/12/14)[16]

The *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon* explains the phrase as 至死忠心不變,[17] "to remain loyal until death." No entry for it can be found in the *Modern Chinese Lexicon*, the *Sea of Phrases* (*Cihai* 辞海) or *The Kangxi Dictionary* (*Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典), indicating that this is a word that has long been out

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Wu, the Taiwanese language instructor at the University of Pennsylvania, and she confirmed that *sí-tiong* is a case of literary register. Here "tiong" is definitely a literary pronunciation kept from Classical Chinese. All cases of *tiong* allude to a Classical Chinese phrase such as 忠烈 *tiong-liát*, 忠义 *tiong-gī*, or 效忠 *hāu-tiong*. People seldom speak these syllables in everyday conversation. As for "sí," with reference to *Taiyu shiyong zidian* 臺語實用字典, p. 299, I confirmed that it is a literary pronunciation as well.

[16] These are listed only to indicate the high frequency with which 死忠 appears in daily use. In every piece of news, the word 死忠 is underlined. Since the content of the news is irrelevant to my argument, I do not offer an English translation here.

[17] *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon*, p. 1148.

of use but lately[18] has entered the vocabulary pool of Mandarin. Then where did 死忠 come from? The most famous, and also possibly the earliest, use of 死忠 emerged in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279) in a poem written by Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236–1283):

> 为子死孝，为臣死忠，死又何妨.
>
> As a son one shall die filially, as a minister one shall die loyally. If he died like this, then how would death do harm to him in any way?[19]

The meaning of 死忠 here is in accordance with the *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon*; however, it is slightly distinct from that employed in Mainland newspapers. Out of the four news reports mentioned above, only the third, 死忠之士 (ministers who are willing to remain loyal to the death), matches Wen's poem and the *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon*. Nevertheless, the other three render a more common contemporary usage of the word in Mandarin and Guoyu[20] — where it is usually refers to loyal fans or/and supporters. When we examine the topics of the news artcles where it is included, we see that this Taiwanese word is closely connected to pop stars and professional athletes,[21] both groups requiring support from a large number of fans. In this usage, the serious meaning of "staying with loyalty until death" is discarded; moreover, it is transformed from a verbal into an adjectival phrase.

Although I am not able to trace all of the exact route of its transmission, its contemporary usage offers an informative hint: *sí-tiong* is preserved in Taiwanese and was incorporated into Taiwanese Mandarin, the relatively non-standard variation of Guoyu, then absorbed into Guoyu by no

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[18] The earliest use of 死忠 in mainland newspapers is from *Dalian wanbao* 大连晚报 (Dalian Evening News) on November 17, 2007: "还邀请到了几位比较著名的死忠‘刚丝.'" This doesn't mean mainlanders began to use it since 2007, but at least it provides a clue to the timing.

[19] Wen Tianxiang, *Qin yuan chun· ti chaoyan Zhang u er gong miao* 沁园春·题潮阳张许二公庙. The phrase "为臣死忠" can be found quoted in the Ming text by Wu Qiurui 吾丘瑞 (?-?), *Yunbi ji·Fuzii sijie* 运甓记·父子死节.

[20] For the usage of 死忠 in Guoyu, see the Appendix in Yan 2008.

[21] It should also be noted that the word is often seen in descriptions of presidential elections in Taiwan, but this usage does not apply to Mainland China.

later than 2000.[22] A broad examination of Taiwanese newspaper materials shows that the early usage is highly political and very similar to usage in the *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon*. However, while the original meaning is kept, the word is extended to a wider range of topics and is turned into a symbol of celebrity worship, an indispensable part of Taiwan's popular culture. It diffuses into Mainland China probably via entertainment news or similar sources, given that in most situations it is used together with 粉丝 (fans). 死忠 is a prominent case of ancient phrases which are rejuvenated from their origins in topolect loans. Its form of transmission is simple and direct, but the origin and extension of the meaning tell an interesting story.

Guoyu or Taiwanese Mandarin is not only influenced by topolects but also by other languages. From 1895 to 1945, Taiwan during Japanese colonization underwent dramatic social turbulence for half a century. The Japanese occupation and the language policy carried out during that period left a linguistic legacy among local communities. While the KMT government, from its very beginning in Taiwan, and with all its force, tried to eliminate the Japanese impact upon Guoyu, some effect persists in Taiwanese. It is difficult to classify these borrowed words when they got re-introduced into Guoyu and then Mandarin. Here I will follow the convention of Chinese scholars and call these "extraneous words"[23] (*wailai ci* 外来词 外來詞).

One example is 便当 (便當 *biàndāng piān-tong*). This word, however, is not new to Mandarin. The *Modern Chinese Lexicon* explains it as:

> biàn·dɑng 【形】方便; 顺手; 简单; 容易.[24]
>
> 【adj.】convenient; handy; easy.

It should be noted that the pronunciation rendered in the *Modern Chinese Lexicon* and that of the Taiwanese loan word differ from one another, mainly for the character 当. This distinction of

[22] News can be found in *Xin Taiwan* 新台灣 (New Taiwan) in vol. 242 (2000):"執政黨也算是對死忠的支持者有了交代."

[23] "Extraneous word" refers to a word in the vocabulary that came into Taiwanese from another language, especially Japanese, and via Taiwanese entered the vocabulary of Mandarin.

[24] *Modern Chinese Lexicon*, p. 85.

pronunciation alludes to a corresponding distinction of meaning. How is 便当 used contemporarily? In the same manner I employed in the discussion of 死忠, I start from examples in newspaer reports:

"发达国家政要在街头吃便当和热狗十分流行…"

"It is very popular among politicians of the developed countries to eat bentos and hotdogs on the street."

(*Changjiang ribao* 长江日报 Yangtse River Daily 2013/12/20)

"列车组为记者们提供的是牦牛肉便当."

"It is lunchboxes of yak meat that train attendants provided to the journalists."

(*Yangcheng wanbao* 羊城晚报 Yangcheng Evening News 2013/12/18)

"还有闽南卤肉便当、厦门沙茶面等."

"There are also lunchboxes of Minnan sauced pork and Xiamen shacha noodle."

(*Shenzhen tequ bao* 深圳特区报 Shenzhen Special Zone Daily 2013/12/18)

"这个便当店在杨家坪很受欢迎."

"This bento store is very popular in Yanjiaping."

(*Chongqing chenbao* 重庆晨报 Chongqing Morning News 2013/12/15)

All the reports use *biàndāng*, meaning "lunchbox; takeout food; convenience pack" instead of the usage in the *Modern Chinese Dictionary*, and from this we can infer a change of usage. As I sought to trace this shift, I found that there was a moment in the word's history when the historical material shows that the usage was the same, before the earlier meaning was replaced entirely by the later. The moment is captured here:

"桂纶镁..外出买齐二人份的便当."

Gui Lunmei…went out and bought a lunchbox for two.

(*Xin kuaibao* 新快报 New Express 2009/11/30)

"炒纸黄金是很<u>便当</u>的…"

To invest in Paper Gold is very <u>convenient</u>…

(*Xinmin zhoukan* 新民周刊 Xinmin Weekly 2009/12/30)

便当 (convenient; easy) is widely employed in twentieth-century Chinese literature,[25] whereas the meaning "lunchbox" is actually a transcription of a Japanese word 弁当 (べんとう *bento*).

Due to five decades of colonization and the enforced influence of a foreign language, the Japanese pronunciation and usage are recorded in Taiwanese as *piān-tong* and written as 便當. The word was so frequently used that it was not long before it spread from Taiwanese into Guoyu, now understood as a Taiwanese word. Then why is it written this way? The entry of 便 in *The Kangxi Dictionary* says: "顺也, 利也, 宜也."[26] 便 always represents the meaning of "convenient; handy," and in the case of *piān-tong*, a lunchbox that is convenient to carry, a perfect description of that object's salient feature. As for the other character, 當, it simply keeps the Japanese writing of 弁当. But then where did the Japanese word 弁当 come from? Exactly the same Chinese word, 便當 ("convenient")![27]

When Taiwanese restaurants first made their way to the other side of the Strait, they were launched in Hong Kong. The "lunchbox" and "convenient pack" term gained great popularity and gradually became part of everyday language. However, it was not Taiwanese restaurants but Stephen Chow's film in 1999, 喜剧之王 *King of Comedy*,[28] that brought the word 便当 (as "convenience pack") into Mainland China. With its passage through different languages, different writing systems, and different locations, the journey of 便当 can be regarded as an allegory of cultural exchange.

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[25] For instance, Ding Ling (1904–1986) in *Sunshine Over Sanggan River*, Chapter 3.

[26] *The Kangxi Dictionary*, p. 103

[27] To see details of the origin of the Japanese word 弁当, refer to http://gogen-allguide.com/he/bentou.html (Accessed on December 15, 2013). See also the Wikipedia entry for Bento, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bento (Accessed on December 15, 2013).

[28] In the film, the protagonist is an actor who cannot seem to catch a break, since his only professional jobs are limited to being a movie extra, and he is often tormented on stage. At the beginning of the film, he had gone to the casting site every day only in the hope of getting a lunchbox 便當 to feed himself.

The use of all three of the Taiwanese loan words discussed above benefits from pre-existing Chinese characters and rarely meets with any difficulties in writing. However, another popular Taiwanese loan travels a far more convoluted route: 飙车 (飆車 *biāochē kà-chhia*)[29]. The entry in the *Modern Chinese Lexicon* says:

> biāochē〈方〉【动】开快车[30]
>
> 〈topolect loan〉【verbal phrase】to drive a car at top speed.

It is hard for someone who only knows either Mandarin or Guoyu to tell at first glance how the syllable *kà-chhia* came to be 飙车. Obviously, the Taiwanese syllable for "a car; a vehicle" is *chhia*, which is simply written 车/車 in Chinese characters. Things get very complicated when it comes to the syllable *kà*, for which no matching character can be found. The first possible match for *kà* is 駕. *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon* explains this as 操作舟車,[31] "to drive (a vehicle or a boat)." But this doesn't account for the meaning "at top speed." Another match that has to be taken into consideration is 絞, which gives the extra meaning 扭轉而栓緊,[32] "to turn to tighten." When Taiwanese speakers talk about *kà-chhia*, they actually have both meanings in mind. Therefore, the Taiwanese *kà-chhia* provides a quite picturesque motion: when someone is driving a motorcycle, he/she turns and tightens the handlebars to speed up.

Although the meaning of *kà* is thus accounted for, a further question remains: how should one write this in Chinese characters? The unofficial writing for *kà* that is broadly used is 尬 or 軋, a transcription of its Taiwanese pronunciation. While this is comprehensible to the majority of the population in Taiwan, it makes no sense to non-Taiwanese speakers, especially those in Mainland China. This is the reason that there the character 飙/飆 is preferred. Actually, there is a synonym for

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[29] It should be noted that there exists a synonym for *kà-chhia* in Taiwanese that is pronounced *pio-chhia*. The direct transcription of *pio-chhia* is actually 飆車. But I will articulate the reason I identify *kà-chhia* instead of *pio-chhia* as the origin of the Taiwanese loan.

[30] *Modern Chinese Lexicon*, p. 89.

[31] *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon*, p. 555.

[32] Ibid., p. 554.

kà-chhia in Taiwanese pronounced as *pio-chhia,* which can be transcribed as 飆車. The entry for *pio* in *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon* says:

> 飆 pio
>
> 由狂風引申為競走、賽車。例：飆車 pio-chhia (一般說"軋車" kà-chhia)[33]
>
> From its original meaning "wild wind," a second meaning, "racing," is derived. For example: pio-chhia (usually said as ka-chhia)

As is shown above, although the word *pio-chhia* does exist in Taiwanese, it is seldom used and is dominated by its synonym.[34] So I assume it is the word *kà-chhia* that should be identified as the origin of this Taiwanese loan.

Then why is 飆 *pio* adopted when it comes to Mandarin? The entry for 飙 in *The Kangxi Dictionary* says, "扶摇风也; 暴风也,"[35] which is the same as the entry in *Taiwan Southern Min Lexicon.*[36] This apparently indicates the speed is "as fast as the wind." Also, when one searches back into early Chinese texts, the imagery of 飙车 as "a marvelously quick vehicle that goes with the wind" emerges from ancient myths.[37] In this case, 飙车 fits both Taiwanese- and Mandarin-speaking users.

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[33] Ibid, p. 1027.

[34] I have also checked this with my Taiwanese informists and with Taiwan newspapers. I reached the conclusion that Taiwanese-speaking people strongly prefer ka-chhia over pio-chhia.

[35] The Kangxi Dictionary, p. 1415. The explanation literally translates as "fierce wind."

[36] This resemblance makes me wonder whether the Taiwanese synonym *pio-chhia* is a result of the popular Mandarin word 飙车 that travels back to Taiwanese, or at least a word rejuvenated by its popular Mandarin twin. I cannot yet find evidence whether *pio-chhia* is a relatively new word in Taiwanese or not. However, since the paper is about Taiwanese loans in Mandarin, not vice versa, I will leave this issue open to discussion.

[37] 飙车 is a commonly used figure in Classical Chinese poetry and prose. To name a few who use it, Huan Lin 桓驎 (dates unknown but active as a high official of the Huan Emperor of the Eastern Han dynasty 汉桓帝, 146–168), *Xiwangmu zhuan* 西王母传, "所居宫阙……其山之下，弱水九重，洪涛万丈，非飙车羽轮不可到也;" Li Bai 李白 (701–762), *Gufeng* 古风, "羽驾灭去影，飙车绝迴轮;" Gao Qi 高启 (1336–1374), *Yanyuan jiuqu* 剡原九曲, "何必瀛洲外，茫茫问飓车."

The transition from *kà-chhia* to 飙车 provides a case of mutual selection in language contact. The less used word is chosen over its dominant synonym when transmitted into another language, and a dated word from classical materials is rejuvenated and given a new meaning.

Originally a nominal phrase, now it is used as a verbal phrase. What's more, because 飙车 little by little replaces 赛车 ("racing automobile"), the character 飙 now has been given the meaning of "to race; to compete." The usage can be seen everywhere:

"参与创作山路飙车漫画《头文字 D》"

"participated in creating the popular mountain-road car racing manga *Initial D*."

(*Xin kuaibao* 新快报 New Express 2013/12/18)

"《中国好声音》人气学员一起飙演技比唱功"

"popular singers from *The Voice of China* competed in singing and acting together"

(*Xinxi shibao* 信息时报 Information Times 2013/12/17)

"全国各地 30 余支代表队千余名舞林高手一起飙舞"

"Over a thousand master dancers from more than 30 teams all over China competed in dancing"

(*Beijing ribao* 北京日報 Beijing Daily 2013/10/15)

"富二代飙富比飙车更可怕"

"The rich second generation's competition in showing off wealth is even more terrible than their car racing."

(*Changsha wanbao* 长沙晚报 Changsha Evening News 2010/4/12)

The first report mentions 飙车 as it is in the *Modern Chinese Lexicon*, while the other three are illustrations of using 飙 as a verb, meaning "to compete in acting skills," "to compete in dancing," and "to compete in wealth," respectively. The word 飙车 pre-exists the spread of Taiwan popular culture, but this usage may also benefit from the popularity of a 2005 film that depicts car racing, *头文字 D*

(Initial D), which starred the most popular singer from Taiwan at the time, 周杰伦 Jay Chou. At the same time, the original meaning of this character — "fierce wind" — is still in use in such contexts as 飙升 (to rise violently; to soar) and 狂飙 (wild whirlwind).

From the issue of writing to the issue of linguistic function, the case of 飙车 shows very well the complexity of language contact, particularly for a Taiwanese loan that has no unified writing.

Behind the Rise of Language Communication across the Straits

What lies behind this increasing language communication? What fosters Taiwanese loans in Mandarin? This question has to be answered from two perspectives: the Taiwan side and the Mainland side.

In Taiwan the recent promotion of Southern Min by the Taiwan Independence Movement drives a current trend to revalue that language and restore its social prestige.[38] Opinions have changed dramatically: in the 1950s, speaking Taiwanese in public was forbidden by the KMT; now, on the contrary, it is considered to be a statement that one takes pride in a Taiwanese identity.[39] Countless efforts have been made to devolop a writing system that can properly express the rich linguistic elements of Taiwanese. Although a character-based writing has not yet been developed, the government has promoted a well-developed orthography called the Taiwanese Modern Spelling System (TMSS), a Latin alphabet for Taiwanese based on POJ (Pe̍h-ōe-jī). The orthography and its later version, Modern Literal Taiwanese (MLT), laid the foundation for teaching Taiwanese to a younger generation. However, research demonstrates that a character-based writing of Taiwanese is strongly preferred to Romanization.[40] Therefore, more and more Taiwanese words are being

[38] See DeBernardi 1991, p. 8. See also Chung 1990.

[39] For the issue of language and presentation in Taiwan, see Klöter 2008 and Harrison 2008. See also Klöter 2012.

[40] See Chiung 2013. By asking students from various cultural backgrounds about their attitudes towards six different Taiwanese writing systems, Chiung concludes that, regardless of the students' place of residence, major, and mother tongue, a character-based system is always preferred to a Han-luo (characters and Romanization) combination or a pure Romanization.

introduced into Guoyu and written in Chinese characters. As time passes, some phrases find appropriate matches and start to appear frequently in written form.

On the Mainland, people are experiencing better incomes and lifestyles now that the Reform and Opening-up policies have significantly boosted economic growth. Such growth has increased the purchasing power of mainlanders while leaving their desire for entertainment unsatisfied. From the late 1980s to the early 2010s, mainlanders turned to Taiwan and Hong Kong for literature, pop music, movies, video games, and TV shows. The popular culture of Taiwan and Hong Kong became so dominant in Mainland China that the word for "popular culture" 流行文化 is used to refer exclusively to Taiwan and Hong Kong (港台) cultural production. Many such works are introduced into Mainland China and together with them goes the language naming them.[41] The Taiwan Independence Movement brought Taiwanese words into Guoyu, and popular culture has brought them to Mainland China. It is by this means that Taiwanese loans settled into Mandarin.

But the choice of agency goes beyond the issue of expression. Rather, it is a way to articulate cultural, linguistic, and social identity. On the one hand, just as Taiwan people choose Taiwanese as the symbol of their sense of belonging, mainlanders by using Taiwanese loans assume certain cultural implications. In the past, when Taiwan dominated the entertainment industry, Taiwanese loans presented the image of a modern, developed, and Westernized society. Anyone using that language or at least pretending to use that language (with a fake accent) is labeled with the same identity. The desire to attach oneself to a "cool" culture drives mainlanders, especially the younger generation, to consume and follow the fashions of Taiwan. On the other hand, faced with the challenge of stimulating a slowing economy, the Taiwanese have had to find a market large enough to sustain their society's economic development, and there is no better choice for that than Mainland China. This commercial force encourages Taiwan's people to be more productive in the entertainment industry to meet the mainlanders' demand, and even to tailor some works to the taste of mainlanders.

Will the situation remain the same in the future? If so, for how long? Some evidence implies, in fact, that this trend has already turned around. Taiwan's pop stars, who first came to Beijing with a heavy Taiwanese accent, are attempting to get rid of their topolect accent as soon as possible, some

[41] Likewise, many Cantonese words come to be known by mainlanders through similar ways. See Snow 2004.

even going further and simulating a Peking accent. Mainland movies are becoming more and more popular in Taiwan. From 1994 on, mainlanders have several times won the Golden Horse Awards, the Oscar of Taiwan.[42] In fact, some recent Mainland TV shows are becoming so popular in Taiwan that local people have started to mimic the lines from these shows even in their daily lives.[43] Moreover, just as the mainlanders did in reverse in the 1990s, Taiwan people have begun to experience a "Shanghai Fever," admiring the economic growth and highly globalized culture of Shanghai.[44] In light of this situation, it might not be long before people start to talk about Mandarin loans in Taiwanese.

Language, accent, word choice, syntax — all are means of representation. Behind such representation, consciously or not, we always convey a self-identity or an expected self-identity that is shaped by our social and cultural contexts. The Taiwanese loan word is a special case, given its complicated political and ideological background. However, it is also a representative case in that we have witnessed the rise of regional identities globally in recent decades.[45] Cultural, linguistic, and psychosocial factors all function in the communication process. And the case of Taiwanese loans in Mandarin provides us with a good illustration.

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[42] There are in total ten Mainland actors/actresses who have won Best Actor/Actress of Golden Horse Awards. In 2012, the 49th awards ceremony, Huang Bo became the first host from Mainland China.

[43] By "Mainland TV shows," I am referring to *Zhenhuan zhuan* 《甄嬛传》 The Legend of Concubine Zhenhuan (2011–2012), *Zhongguo hao shengyin* 《中国好声音》 The Voice of China (2012–2013)，and *Baba qu nar* 《爸爸去哪儿》 Daddy Where Are We Going 2013. There are many Taiwan news reports concerning the popularity of these Mainland TV shows. To list a few: 華夏經緯網 2013/01/10 "《甄嬛傳》火爆台灣全記錄" (Jingwei Network 2013/01/10: *The Legend of Zhenhuan* Becomes a Hit in Taiwan); TVBS 新聞 2014/01/23 "看不膩？《甄嬛傳》台灣 3 年重播 10 次" (TVBS News 2014/01/23: Never Feel Bored Watching? *The Legend of Zhenhuan* Got Rebroadcasted Ten Times within Three Years in Taiwan); 東森新聞 2013/09/18 "中國好聲音，台灣買了什麼單？(ET-News 2013/09/18 *The Voice of China*, What Did Taiwan Pay For?)"；Yes 娛樂 2014/06/09 "親子實境節目療癒系萌娃收服人心 《爸爸去哪兒》掀熱潮 (The Healing Children in Parent-Child Reality Show Gain Popularity, *Daddy Where Are We Going* Becomes a Hit in Taiwan)."

[44] See Wang Wenwen 2009, pp. 322–326.

[45] I am referring to Gunn 2006.

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The Sociopolitics of Language:
Bilingual Education in Tibet

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In late October 2013, China released the nation's first Tibetan-Chinese smartphone. While a Tibetan language phone has been available since 2005 (Luo), as well as an iPhone app that provides limited Tibetan capabilities (Da & Jin), this is the first instance of a phone specifically targeted at the large Tibetan-Chinese bilingual population on the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau.[1] The phone, which is marketed to those living in isolated areas, features dual-language input and recognition, allowing users to easily switch between languages. The main attraction of the phone, besides easier communication for bilingual users, is that it will push notifications of severe weather updates and other national notifications to users who might otherwise be unreachable due to their remote locations (FlorCruz, Luo). (It is unclear, however, how peasants are expected to afford the 990 yuan price.) Those quoted as praising the phone in various media responses to the phone's release cite its ability to promote Tibetan language use. The national news aspect, however, seems to be more in line with China's "One China" agenda, ensuring that rural Tibetans get their information straight from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s news outlets.

The phone's release, which displays a cooperative and helpful relationship between China and Tibet and the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), masks a complicated political history between the two regions. Any investigation into Sino-Tibetan relations involves entering a veritable political minefield; accounts vary wildly based on political leanings, and one is more likely to encounter page after page of "Free Tibet" websites than scholarly articles when doing an online search. The main crux of the Tibet-China dispute is Tibet's status: is Tibet an integral part of China, or should it be

[1] The iPhone, however, while not created especially for this population, seems to be the preferred device among Tibetans, according to field observations by Dr. Patricia Schiaffini of Southwestern University.

considered autonomous? The various answers to this question given by different parties have one thing in common: they rely on historical evidence to claim either sovereignty or independence (Sperling). The Chinese government contends that Tibet has been a part of China since the thirteenth century, whereas Tibet contends that despite close relations, it never lost its independence ("Q&A: China and the Tibetans"; Barnett). Those in favor of an autonomous Tibet also point to the Simla Accord of 1913, in which Tibet declared its status as an independent nation, but the accord was never ratified by China and is therefore not recognized by the Chinese government today (Kapstein). While the conflict purports to be a long-standing dispute, the Tibetan-Chinese discord we think of today actually was instigated by CCP's assertion of control over the region in 1950-51. In fact, Elliott Sperling, in his article, "The Tibet-China Conflict: History and Polemics," even contends that the historical arguments put forth, while formulated as representing centuries of consensus on either side, are relatively modern constructions that first appear in the twentieth century, and furthermore that both sides misconstrue historical facts so as to support their respective side. Regardless of the veracity of either side's claims, the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s involvement in Tibetan regions does shed light on some of the issues regarding language in those areas today.

Sino-Tibetan Relations from 1950 to the Present

By 1950, the CCP had already consolidated control of most of Amdo and Kham. These regions, located in eastern Tibet, were not under the Dalai Lama's rule but are still considered parts of ethno-cultural, if not political, Tibet. The rest of Tibet was in a state of internal turmoil after the death of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, who had not explicitly named his successor, and it was not prepared to deal with the threat of Chinese invasion. Through limited radio broadcasts, Tibetans learned that Mao's plan was to liberate them from imperialist forces (which, according to Michael Kapstein in his book *The Tibetans*, was perplexing, considering the paucity of imperialists in Tibet at the time). On October 7, 1950, China launched an attack and neutralized Tibetan forces in the Chamdo region. The governor of Chamdo surrented, and the PRC opted not to continue with an invasion of Tibet. Instead, the PRC pushed a "peaceful liberation" in which Tibet would retain their political and military systems as well as their religious bodies, but also in which China would incorporate Tibet's armed forces into its own national defense force, and would assume authority over the region. Panic ensued and the Dalai Lama

fled Lhasa, but on May 23, 1951, the 17-Point Agreement was concluded, and on October 24, 1951, the Dalai Lama sent a telegram to Mao accepting the agreement. The agreement solidified China's control over Tibet, phrased as the return of the Tibetan people to the "big family of the Motherland" (quoted in Kapstein 283). The agreement also meant that large numbers of Chinese troops would occupy posts around the capital of Lhasa.

Tibetan leaders were mixed on whether to support the CCP in their efforts, and even leaders within the CCP were conflicted on policy implementation. Mao, Zhou Enlai, and the Southwest Bureau of the CCP favored a gradual approach, during which Tibetan opinion could be swayed. The Northwest Bureau preferred a swifter approach that rapidly installed Communist policy. Implementation varied between political Tibet and the areas of Amdo and Kham that had been incorporated into China earlier. The gradualist approach was favored at first, but soon many felt that it had failed and sought more radical reform in Tibet. Tibetans began to suspect that the gradualist approach had been mere pretense, and tensions grew between Tibetan and Chinese influences.

In 1959, uprisings began, prompted at least in part by land reform policies implemented, and, on March 17, the Dalai Lama fled Tibet. With the Tibetan government in exile, Tibet became even more affected by CCP political action. This was the period of the Great Leap Forward, and religious institutes came under particular scrutiny and subsequent dismantlement. The Cultural Revolution in 1966–1976 then effectively destroyed what was left of traditional Tibetan culture. After Deng Xiaoping's rise to power in 1978, however, policies toward Tibet underwent a change of pace. Sweeping reforms were proposed to enact a cultural revival, and to address the appalling living conditions in Tibet. Certain religious activity was cautiously allowed to resume. Unfortunately, reforms did not completely calm Sino-Tibetan relations, and demonstrations erupted in 1987, continuing intermittently through 1989. In 1988, the Dalai Lama made a speech acquiescing to China's assertion that Tibet is a part of China, but stipulating that Tibet (including Amdo and Kham) still must be considered autonomous regions. Those in favor of a free Tibet saw this as a betrayal, while those in the Chinese government saw it as proof that the Dalai Lama was not to be trusted. Tensions over choosing a successor to the Panchen Lama in 1995 worsened the situation, and another riot broke

out.[2] Uprisings continued, with a series of riots in 2008, and these continue to the present. Self-immolations became a prominent feature of these protests, with at least twelve dead from their injuries between March 2008 and January 2012, according to CNN (CNN Wire Staff), and more than 125 people are confirmed as having set themselves on fire in protest between March 2011 and May 2014, according to Free Tibet ("Self-immolation Protests in Tibet").

These conflicts were instigated not only by religious and cultural issues, but also by the repercussions of a push for economic development in the region by the Chinese government. These reforms resulted in the sinification of the atmosphere of Tibetan towns. In addition, while developmental efforts flooded the region with Chinese monetary support, it also brought a flood of Chinese workers, calling into question who the main beneficiaries of these efforts would be. Reforms also influenced education policies, as regulations sparked protests; in October 2010, students rebelled against governmental policy, claiming that their culture was being destroyed by limiting the use of Tibetan in schools (CNN Wire Staff). The spectacular response to these reforms points to the importance of education in maintaining cultural identity. As a demonstration of the power of politics to influence language and culture intimately, the education policies in Tibet merit an in-depth exploration.

Bilingual Education Policy: A Retrospective History

Bilingual education in Tibet continues to face the challenges posed by bilingual education in general, with the addition of the specific sociopolitical situation in Tibet. Prior to the CCP's takeover, the Tibetan education system had relied primarily on monasteries; efforts to establish secular education continually met with failure as they were seen as potentially harmful to Tibet's religious and cultural traditions. As a result, literacy was abysmally low. Chinese sources estimate that, in 1951, the illiteracy rate was at 90% of the population (Bass 2). Mao, after securing sovereignty over Tibet with the 17 Points Agreement, set out to educate the masses now under his administrative control. His initial gradualist method for asserting control over Tibet was accompanied by the installation of an

[2] The historiographical information up to this point in this section has come predominantly from Kapstein, 269–300, though some information derives from Oster et al.

education system that accorded respect to the Tibetan language (Ma 14). Community-funded schools were set up in the early 1950s with the intent of producing skilled personnel who would become governmental cadres (Bass 26-28). These efforts were grouped under the desire for a "quality" (rather than "quantity") approach to education, which corresponded to the "expert" part of Mao's "red and expert" equation. Around 1957, however, a more quantitatively motivated approach was adopted as agrarian reforms got underway. Community schools were developed alongside state-funded ones, and rapid expansion was encouraged (Bass 27). This "quantity" strategy was meant to make education more accessible across Tibet. It was paired with a dismissal of Tibetan as part of the "old customs" that needed to be fought against (Dilger 158); Mandarin was therefore privileged to the exclusion of Tibetan. After the failure of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1961), policy shifted again to a "quality" approach in the early 1960s. Bilingual education was reintroduced. Community schools, which soon proved unable to meet staffing and funding demands, were left aside (most, in fact, were closed) in favor of state-run institutions. Rather than promoting education across Tibet, the new policy targeted "key schools" that were the beneficiaries of the majority of state funding and supplies (Bass 27). In 1960, a group was convened to compile Tibetan language teaching materials, and Tibetan texts for the study of Tibetan, Chinese, math, natural science, and geography were ready for primary school use by 1963 (Ma 17). The onset of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) rapidly overturned all of the progress in bilingual education made in the intervening years. Schools specifically oriented toward minority students and minority languages were labeled elitist (and therefore anti-Communist), and were closed (Bass 34). Communes were instructed to teach only Chinese (Kolas & Thowsen 95). Rather than trying to catch up to the international standards for education levels, policy now pushed for mass education (Pepper 27), which was ideologically oriented and often consisted solely of learning quotations from Chairman Mao (Bass 35). The Cultural Revolution also wreaked havoc on the higher education system (Kolas & Thowsen 95). Just as suddenly as the Cultural Revolution had reversed policies, they were reinstated when Deng Xiaoping came to power in 1978.

Deng's administration marked a return to the "quality" policies of the early 1950s and 1960s. Many laws were drawn up in the interest of improving education (and thereby improving China economically). Bilingual education was again promoted, and minority-language education became a priority. Autonomous areas were given the right to set up their own education programs (Kolas &

Thowsen 96). Efforts were made to research the situation in Tibetan areas, especially the TAR, specifically in order to revive Tibetan culture (as long as socialist ideals were upheld). Yang Jingren, the head of the State Commission for Nationalities Affairs, wrote a report about the findings of a group sent to the TAR, which was led by Hu Yaobang. In his report, he advocated the installation of Tibetan cadres in place of the current Han cadres in the TAR. Various conferences took place during the early 1980s on the subject of minority language policy, and new measures were adopted to safeguard minority language and culture and to build up minority education through special funds, boarding schools, and a department under the State Ministry of Education (Bass 50–51). One of these conferences, namely the National Conference on "Minority" Nationalities, led to the development of a system to aid Tibetan education efforts while simultaneously linking Tibet back to the mainland. These included *neidi* schools, boarding schools in China proper where Tibetan students were sent to receive their secondary education, and the importation of Chinese teachers from other provinces (Bass 53). In 1987 a resolution was passed such that all junior middle schools in the TAR were instructed to switch to using Tibetan as the language of instruction within the subsequent five years, followed by its mandated use in senior middle schools within the five years after that. These policies, however, were never implemented, and in fact a new policy in 1997 stated that Chinese-language education would commence from the first year of primary school (Kolas & Thowsen 96). Tibetan areas outside the TAR, instead of following policies set by a central body like the TAR Congress, crafted their own policies on a province-by-province basis. This led to dual-track systems in many areas, where students could choose to have Chinese or Tibetan be the principal language of instruction with parallel tracks in each of the languages. Hours of instruction in each language (with the other language as a second language taught within the primary language track) varied widely, as did the school year in which the second language was added to the curriculum. In areas such as Qinghai, however, it appears that the Tibetan language track is not available in most areas above the primary school level (Kolas & Thowsen 120).

The unrest of 1987 in Tibet, as well as the protests in Tiananmen in 1989, signaled the beginning of a withdrawal of the concern for minority education by the central government. Instead, the government began to push nationalism and patriotism as a method of gaining stable CCP control. National unity factored heavily into these campaigns (which were pushed in 1990, 1994, and 1997), and

policies for including more Tibetan culture were overrun by patriotic education that attacked the Dalai Lama and described Tibet and Tibetan culture as "backward" (Bass 56). The campaign calls for a focus on life in Tibet in the present as compared to pre-1950 through the use of archival and personal materials in order to legitimize the CCP in the eyes of younger Tibetans (Bass 57). Paradoxically, the "Guidelines for Implementing the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China in the Tibetan Autonomous Region," propagated in 1994, the same year as one of the nationalism campaign pushes, stipulates that a bilingual education must be perfected that uses Tibetan as the principal language of instruction (quoted in Ma 12–13).

Conflict continued through the 2000s, culminating in the October 2010 protest against language policies. This non-violent protest was sparked by the publication of Qinghai's 10-year education plan, which stated that Mandarin would be the primary language of instruction in primary schools by 2015, and minority languages would be considered secondary (Bristow). The new policies meant that all classes would be taught in Mandarin with Mandarin textbooks except for courses teaching the Tibetan and English languages ("Tibetan students in China protest over language policy"). The governmental attempted to clarify that Mandarin would be used as a teaching language to help minority students learn both Mandarin and their own language ("NW China Province Clarifies Purpose of Bilingual Education Reform"). How exactly Mandarin was meant to help ethnic minorities students learn their mother tongues was not, however, explained. In addition, the emphasis in the statement of Wang Yubo, director of the provincial department of education, was on connecting ethnic minorities through a common language as well as bridging the education gap between ethnic groups. He further stated that reforms would not be pushed in places where "conditions are not ripe" ("NW China… Reform"). The lack of specificity and the emphasis on the "One China" ideal rather than an actual response to the issues indicates the speech was more a public relations ploy than any real promise of compromise.

Confounding Issues Affecting the Bilingual Education Policy

As one can begin to discern, an examination of bilingual education in Tibet is made difficult both by the wide range in the implementation of policies, and because of the difference in policy in differently administered Tibetan areas. What is clear, however, is that policies regarding language of instruction

have been inextricably tethered to the political whims of the powers in Beijing since the founding of the PRC. Furthermore, the development, and more importantly, the implementation, of education reforms that sufficiently met the needs of both the bilingual community for which it was intended and the central government have been problematic since the beginning of the CCP's rise to power. Historically, CCP's leaders focused predominantly on finding the best way to further their ideological goals, but with increasing globalization and international communication, it has become necessary to place more importance on their international image. With its new policies, the government needed somehow to further its own agenda without inciting uprisings it would be unable to quell, and that would affect its reputation on the international stage. They did not, of course, achieve that balance, as the protests demonstrate, and Western and diaspora advocacy groups continue to back "Free Tibet" causes because of the perception that the PRC is destroying Tibetan culture. Some critics go so far as to argue that these policies threaten to cause the extinction of Tibetan language, and therefore of the culture inextricably tied to it (Tournadre et al.). The issue of education in Tibet, however, is not as simple as that of an authoritarian majority culture vs. a disenfranchised ethnic minority culture. There are several confounding factors that hinder the success of bilingual education reforms, including paradoxical desires on the part of parents, in addition to the complex home language backgrounds of many students in areas that implement bilingual schooling.

Paradoxical Desires

While policy-makers were forced to juggle the importance of minority identity with the desire for a unified China that communicated in Mandarin, parents were also forced to choose between education that could get their children good jobs, and education that kept their traditions and language alive. In schools in which students do not get to choose their language of instruction, the pupils must complete the standardized curriculum (for which there are standard exams) in addition to their Tibetan language studies, but no extra hours are added to the school day (Kolas). This limits the ability of Tibetan children to compete with students who only need to learn the standardized Chinese curriculum. Even if Tibetan students were able to take exams different from the standardized ones and split their time more easily between Chinese-taught and Tibetan-taught classes, problems would still arise in the form of "target colloquial competencies" (Tournadre et al.). "Target colloquial competencies" refers to the ability of students to converse about specialized topics in a given language.

For example, a student who learned biology in Tibetan but law in Chinese might not have the requisite vocabulary to talk about biology in Chinese or law in Tibetan. Similarly, a person might have native fluency in Tibetan but lack the vocabulary to talk about physics or computer science. This would create innumerable communications difficulties and make it even more difficult for Tibetan students to compete in the job market.[34]

The dual-language track that exists in some areas is meant to alleviate some of this pressure on Tibetan students. The track, however, is not as equitable as it seems. Between the two tracks, the Chinese language one has better resources, the classes are often of better quality, and the classes tend to encompass more subject areas comprehensively. Chinese classes also continue to higher levels than the Tibetan track, and the higher levels of education are more accessible. The opportunities for higher education in Tibetan are extremely limited, with very few spots opening up each year in a limited numbers of universities. Furthermore, job opportunities for students who were educated in the Tibetan track are severely limited due to language ability; worthwhile employment most likely requires an advanced proficiency in Chinese (Kolas & Thowsen 128–29).

Parents in Tibetan areas, therefore, want their children to learn Chinese in order to have access to better economic opportunities, though they do not want those opportunities to come at the expense of their children's cultural heritage. This leads to what Chinese sources describe as parents paying lip service to Tibetan while showing a bias towards Chinese language (Liu Qing, quoted in Ma 20). Parents want their children to learn Tibetan but enroll their children in the Chinese language track or, if they have the means, send them to *neidi* schools where they can better understand Chinese society. Economic necessity for privileging Chinese (imposed by the Chinese government) appears to be understood by the government as a secret willingness to go along with the CCP's desire for Mandarin as the language of instruction. This assumes that Tibetan families are able to make an informed and empowered decision in the language track system, but the Chinese system is set up

[3] These deficiencies in target colloquial competency do exist already in Tibet, manifested as a private/professional dichotomy. Tibetans do not know the vocabulary in their own language for professional settings due to their education in Chinese in those areas (Tournadre et al.).

[4] This account also does not delve into the difficulties posed by adding a third language, English, into the curriculum, especially when English is required for standardized exams.

such that any decision that does not dovetail with its desires is self-defeating. It also does not take into account the complicated home language background that may affect the ability of Tibetan children to perform in a bilingual education environment.

Home Language Background

"On all occasions when the Chinese language is used, the school will promote and use both Mandarin, which is spoken throughout the nation, and standard Chinese characters" (quoted in Ma 13). So says the Tibetan Autonomous Region Government in the 1994 guideline to the compulsory education law. In regions where there are not many Han residents, this condition is made difficult by a dearth of qualified teachers. In regions where there *are* Han residents, however, the ease with which Mandarin is learned by minority students does not necessarily increase. One would think that more daily interaction with the language would facilitate language learning. This supposition, however, assumes that Han residents in Tibetan regions are speaking the standard *putonghua* taught in schools. Surprisingly, the literature on education in Tibet does not address this point. For example, the topolect that is predominant on the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau is Sichuanese, primarily from Chengdu (Atshog & Wang 547). Speakers of what is referred to as "standard" Mandarin (based on the Beijing topolect) may not be able to understand Sichuanese, which is considered a type of Mandarin, and even speakers of different types of Sichuanese from different districts may not be able to understand one another (Mair). Additionally, Tibetan is a language with a long written and oral tradition. It is not a single topolect, but rather has a variety of mutually unintelligible variants. Nicolas Tournadre, a professor at the University of Provence and a specialist in Tibetic languages, argues for 25 distinct Tibetic languages (2008, 282–83). The variation in Tibetic languages, like that in Sinitic languages, is also not addressed in the literature on bilingual education. It is unclear what type of Tibetan these students are being taught. Teachers may teach in regional topolects or may utilize standard Tibetan, which is derived from the speech in Lhasa. This standard is referred to by Prof. David Germano of the University of Virginia as "proto-standard Tibetan" and is not actually standard across many Eastern regions of Tibet. Regardless of the spoken topolect, the written language, whose evolution dates back to the seventh century, is often markedly different from various types of spoken Tibetan. Germano further explains that classical Tibetan is a very conservative tradition, such that someone who understands what he terms "modern classical Tibetan" could read classical Tibetan texts written in

the tenth century (Tournadre et al.). So, in order to receive a bilingual education, Tibetan students must learn a topolect of Mandarin that does not necessarily correspond to what they hear at home on a day-to-day basis (though presumably the Han people in the area have also been instructed in *putonghua*), they must use a Chinese script that is not intuitive even for Han people whose mother tongue may be a different topolect, they must master a Tibetan written script that differs greatly from their spoken language, and they must learn a spoken topolect of Tibetan that may not be the one they speak at home.

On top of this already absurdly complex situation, the phenomenon of mixed languages has served to further complicate things. China has several creole languages, at least two of which, Wutunhua and Daohua, are Chinese-Tibetan mixed languages.[5] These languages, which on the whole take as their basic vocabulary Chinese words, but use Tibetan grammar structure, and incorporate a mixture of phonetic aspects drawn from each language respectively (Atshogs & Wang), are a result of the sudden contact between Han Chinese and Tibetan populations due to the Chinese government's importation of Han people into Tibetan areas. The need for immediate communication between these two different language groups meant that these mixed languages became the lingua franca. According to Tournadre, these mixed languages have become the mother tongue for some of the younger generation in these areas, causing people to be unable to speak either Tibetan or a topolect of Chinese fluently (Tournadre et al.). For these children, bilingual education may then mean immersion in two foreign languages and no instruction in what has become their mother tongue. If the worst-case-scenario version of the newest CCP language education policies goes through, these children may in fact end up speaking a creole at home, learning Chinese at school, and not learning Tibetan at all.[6]

[5] Wutunhua is more specifically an Amdo Tibetan-Kansu Mongol-Chinese language (Muysken & Smith 7).

[6] It is interesting to note that there has been push back against mixed language, with poster campaigns in 2013 that read "No mixed language!" instigated in anticipation of Tibetan Mother Language Day on Feb. 21st (Finney). The mixed languages are considered a microcosm of the erosion of Tibetan language and culture that many feel is at the heart of China's policies toward Tibet.

Conclusion

The Chinese government has made efforts on to preserve Tibetan language and culture, most of which have centered on the education system. Certain actions on the part of the Chinese government, such as its support of the development and release of the bilingual smartphone in October 2013, can be seen as gestures of good will, or at least of a desire to be perceived by the international community as benevolent toward minority populations.[7] The actual policies that China has put forth regarding Tibet have vacillated, tracking the political winds, to such an extent, however, that it is difficult to observe any real concern for the Tibetan population beyond the desire to maintain stability and control. This can be seen particularly in the simultaneous promises to proceed only according to the actual conditions in Tibet, and the lumping together, in other policy statements, of the Tibetan people with all other ethnic minorities. Tibetan is a language with 1,300 years of literature behind it, but in the Chinese system, it evinces a distinct lack of prestige. The system is broken for minority students. The government at least nominally supports minority language education, but at the same time it has not made concessions for ethnic minority students; they either need to learn Chinese and follow the standardized Chinese system, or vie for the very few opportunities for higher education in the Tibetan language.

The secular education system in Tibet is largely due to the CCP's intervention. The insistence upon "One China" following one educational path, however, has been detrimental to both learning in Tibet and to Sino-Tibetan relations. An understanding of the historical and sociolinguistic background of Tibetan areas and the language policies executed therein demonstrates that a Chinese education system with Tibetan characteristics does not solve the problem of Tibetan education. In the words of Losang Rabgey, an anthropologist who specializes in contemporary Tibetan culture and gender relations, "Simply adding Tibetan language to the curriculum or solely advocating a bilingual education will not necessarily suffice. This is clearly a complex problem requiring a complex solution" (Tournadre et al.). The situation is more complex than merely China vs. Tibet or majority vs. minority. Political pressure is changing Tibetan culture and language in ways that may soon become inalterable,

[7] The Chinese government has also established publishing houses that deal only with ethnic minorities. I am indebted to Dr. Schiaffini for this observation.

and factors such as linguistic variations and new language formation are compounding the problems in ways that were likely not anticipated by authorities. In order to adequately address these problems and preserve the Tibetan language,[8] and therefore the extensive Tibetan cultural tradition, the Chinese government needs to create culturally specific support systems that provide alternatives to the standard Mainland pathways. China must develop the necessary infrastructure and dedicate the necessary resources to teacher preparation if it wishes to emulate countries like Denmark and Sweden that successfully produce trilingual students. Otherwise, what will result is the continued marginalization and devaluation of the Tibetan language, and therefore the Tibetan people, and the continued instability of the Chinese government's authority over Tibet.

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From Xu Bing to Shu Yong:
Linguistic Phenomena in Chinese Installation Art

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Introduction

When we look at contemporary Chinese installation art, we inevitably wonder: Is what we see a Chinese narrative with a Western plot or a Chinese plot with a Western narrative? When we think of installation works of art, we almost automatically refer to Marcel Duchamp's "Dada" or "Nude descending the staircase," for such a high level of abstraction has conventionally been regarded as the preserve of Western artists. In view of the fact that installation art emerged on the Chinese art scene rather recently, finding the "Chinese-ness" in contemporary installation art can present challenges.

That being said, this paper will address case studies of works that evince a sense of Chinese-ness through their subject matter — Chinese spoken language, script, and society. The purpose of my study is to identify Chinese art installations dedicated to various linguistic phenomena and to delve into their iconography and artistic media. I hope to trace current developing themes, identifying those that appear repeatedly in addition to the new and emerging language-related topics in recent installation pieces, with the intention of offering an analysis of significant linguistic problems within a sociopolitical framework, as well as evaluating the current state of language-related installation art in China as an artistic field.

Xu Bing: The signpost of nostalgia points to the lost meaning of the written word

The first artist whose work I would like to examine is Xu Bing, one of the pioneers of the Chinese installation art field. I use his art as a focal point of my research and also as a yardstick with which to evaluate other works, because he has blazed a new trail in installation art that is being followed by generations of artists.

However, before exploring the iconography of Xu Bing's work, we should examine his personal experience with language, bound as it was by political reform and other limitations.

When a member of the Chinese cultural realm starts his or her education, he or she needs to spend years memorizing thousands of characters, and that whole process of paying tribute to the written word supposedly instills immediate respect for the Chinese script. However, these traditional circumstances changed for Xu Bing's generation. At that time, everyone in Chinese society, especially the literati, became the victim of the simplification of characters. When Xu Bing was just old enough to read, the government initiated its simplification policy. Xu Bing himself pointed out in an interview that the abandonment of the old characters and the promulgation of new ones had a profound impact on his earliest memories of language, ultimately leaving him confused about the fundamental concept of culture.[1] The problem of one's culture being turned upside down and rendered unstable became a prominent part of Xu Bing's work, and it brought to the fore other issues that would later become a major impetus for the creation of his language-related installation art.

Born into a family of intellectuals, Xu Bing was fascinated by books at an early age. But he experienced a disturbing interruption at a formative age: he longed to read the books that mesmerized him, but at first he was too young — and when he was old enough to read a sufficient number of characters, he was no longer allowed to read those same books.[2] It happened that this was the period during which people could no longer read whatever they liked, a time when Mao's "Little Red Book" became the epitome of wisdom transcribed into words.[3] In fact, Xu Bing represents a whole generation of people who were scarred by the limitations the Chinese political agenda of the period imposed on both speech and script. Thus his art reflects the nostalgic contemplation, confused memories, and wishful yearnings of his generation. It is exactly Xu Bing's early feelings of bafflement with the relationship between culture, politics, and language that triggered and inspired the creation of his "Book from the Sky."

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[1] Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing: Words Without Meaning and Meaning Without Words* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute, 2001), pp. 14–15.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

Panel from "Tian Shu"

Xu Bing's sense of confusion relating to script, arising, as noted above, from the fact that he began to learn to read just at the time that the Chinese government began to simplify Chinese characters, led him to view characters themselves as unreliable and unstable. He became interested in the external forms of language, rather than in its content. It is precisely the dichotomy between form and content that defines his major projects, the most highly acclaimed of which is "Book from the Sky." Another issue that fostered his artistic interpretation of linguistic problems is the fact of the importation of Western texts after 1978, emphasizing the stark contrast in reading material available prior to and after the Mao era with what was available under Mao. According to his own recollections, the more he read and the more engrossed he became in historical and other texts, the more muddled

and confused his mind became.[4] He felt that a Chinese reader's mind, still bearing the brunt of decades of restraints, could not catch up overnight with the influx of new information. In "Book from the Sky," for example, Xu Bing focused on the external forms of characters rather than on their inherent meaning, as if to lift such burdens from his mind. What is more, he, in fact, "stripped" characters of their semantic connotations, and used only their external shape to convey his message.

As a result, "Book from the Sky" is preeminent in its idiosyncratic format and fidelity to the structure of traditional Chinese book arts. The work is a combination of books, scrolls, and panels. To enhance the visual impact, Xu Bing carved all 4,000 characters in reverse form into pear wood and used these to typeset the books — movable type. This technology, so consequential in the West, had been invented in China in the eleventh century, but it proved impractical because of the vast number of characters, and rapidly went out of use.[5] Xu Bing went to great lengths in his determination to use exactly this technique, and even taught factory workers how to adopt it in carving the characters.[6] His insistence on using an obsolete technique for rendering Chinese characters also has its hidden meaning. It is the excessive difficulty and large number of Chinese characters that made techniques like movable type hard to use. By exploiting this traditional tool and demonstrating the onerous burden it reveals, Xu Bing reminds us of the problems that relying too heavily on characters entails. The excessive number of Chinese characters has been an impediment to conveying one's thoughts in a free manner throughout Chinese history, not only in modern society: it is only that, at different times, characters have brought about different problems.

The handscroll section of the exhibition drapes down from the ceiling of the installation, taking the form of Chinese text scrolls from 2000 years ago, as those scrolls bear a particular resemblance to Buddhist sutras. It is worth noting that all Chinese characters have been created from a limited group of components and combined to create tens of thousands of characters. The wall panels of "Book from the Sky" are evocative of hanging scrolls of calligraphy and have also been

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[4] Ibid., p. 36.

[5] Carolyn C. Guile, *Reading Space: The Art of Xu Bing* (Hamilton, N.Y.: Dept. of Art and Art History, Colgate University, 2009), p. 29.

[6] Erickson, *Art of Xu Bing,* p. 44.

compared to revolutionary posters of the Mao era. Xu Bing himself mentions more than once in his interviews and articles that one should focus on the works' political context. The meaningless characters, intriguing and eye-catching on the surface, and yet lacking in content, are strongly redolent of Cultural Revolution posters and all the propaganda texts that inundated Chinese society during that decade.[7]

Perhaps it would be impossible to do this major work justice by putting emphasis only on its political messages and not considering its purely linguistic concerns. In order to reveal its linguistic conceptions, one needs to view the work in a larger context, taking into account Xu Bing's later works dedicated to language. His subsequent project, "Square Words," is the mirror opposite of "Book from the Sky" and yet accomplishes a similar goal.

"Square Words" investigates the distinction between graphic form and linguistic content by generating English-language writing according to a Chinese-looking brushmark and composes whole words within a square space.[8] The end result is a kind of "Orientalized" English (also French, Spanish,

[7] Ibid.

[8] S. J. Vainker, Judith Goldman, Peter D. McDonald, and Bing Xu. *Landscape/landscript: Nature as Language in the Art of Xu*

German, or even Chinese transcribed into Pinyin). The work incorporates fascinating texts such as poems by Robert Frost, Tang dynasty poems by Wang Wei, the lyrics of Bob Dylan, and children's nursery rhymes. While "Book from the Sky" takes language away from writing, "Square Words" forces the language back into the written word, but in a disturbing way.[9] "Book from the Sky" appears to be readable, but in fact, it is not; by contrast, "Square Words" seems unreadable but in fact, it is, at least by those who know the Roman alphabet. Ultimately, the dichotomy that exists between these two exceptional works — Book from the Sky and Square Words — carries its linguistic message. It touches upon issues identified by such thinkers about Chinese linguistics as John DeFrancis.

One of those issues is the tension between the spoken word and written language. In both of these works, characters, stripped of their semantic function, serve merely ornamental purposes. However, in the second project readers can actually read what is before them, since the characters are used to emulate either Pinyin or actual words written with the Roman alphabet. Putting excessive emphasis on the characters' content and meaning results not only in the illusion that one can read it "all," when in reality, one cannot, but it also creates limits on what one can express in written words. It appears that these two exhibitions expose and exhibit underlying myths about Chinese writing—ones that have been debunked by the scholar John DeFrancis— particularly regarding the monosyllabic and idiographic myths about Chinese characters.[10] Putting excessive emphasis on the meaning behind characters is inherently flawed, for they are not reliable bearers of constant meaning. Characters formerly served a specific function in classical Chinese, a function that is no longer relevant to their use in a modern script, strongly influenced as it is by a new sociopolitical context and by technological developments.

The notion of the instability and unreliability of characters through time is further discussed in another exhibition of Xu Bing, called "The *Can* Series." The word "can" written in Chinese Pinyin means "silkworm" and serves as a logical title, considering that silkworms are the only actors and narrators in this installation project. The word, however, is homonymous with a different "can"

Bing (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archeology, 2013), p. 121.

[9] Ibid.

[10] John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), pp. 162–176.

character that means "disfigure." Such word play is not arbitrary and, as it turns out when we note the hidden meaning of the installation piece, the title itself plays a specific role in the installation. Xu Bing gathers several silkworms, and times the process of laying eggs in an extremely meticulous and precise manner, making sure the eggs will hatch during the exhibition.[11] During the installation, Xu Bing placed egg-laying moths on open blank pages with strips of paper. When the process of laying eggs was complete, he removed the paper strips. The black eggs that appeared there emulated rows of classical Chinese script arranged in an orderly fashion. However, when the eggs hatched and the larvae came to the surface, they started moving and created chaos among the orderly composition. The end result was simply a messy and distorted deviation from the original neat composition. The installation adeptly exposes the unreliable and constantly shifting nature of characters.

As John DeFrancis adamantly concludes, there has not been a major language reform in the Chinese script since the Han dynasty, about two millennia ago.[12] Thus, all too often we are faced with characters that are simply untraceable, and even if one could trace their roots back to some dynastic historical records, doing so would not necessarily make the character relevant to the present needs of Chinese script usera. As seen from the three exhibition projects mentioned above, and particularly the last installation, the beauty and meaningful order of the original composition of characters is gradually lost over time. In my opinion, the indispensability myth creates more hindrances to language reform than any other myth: the idea that characters are irreplaceable by other forms of writing stems from a one-sided "cannot=should not" perspective. According to the rather optimistic hypothesis of the distinguished Swedish Sinologist, Bernhard Karlgren, the Chinese script is "so wonderfully adapted to the linguistic conditions of China that it is indispensable."[13] Such an overly enthusiastic view of characters as the only possible writing system for the Chinese has its provenance in the obstinate belief that characters are the foundation of Chinese culture, and thus, breaking away from them will shake that basis. Actually, such a view of Chinese culture is simply derogatory: is Chinese culture indeed so fragile and transient that it will cease to exist once characters are not

[11] Erickson, *Art of Xu Bing*, p. 63.

[12] DeFrancis, *Chinese Language*.

[13] DeFrancis, *Chinese Language*, p. 199.

viewed as indispensable? Accepting Karlgren's elitist approach to characters as a signpost of cultural stability is tantamount to pretending you can read "Book from the Sky" when you already know the meaning is simply not there.

Art historians and museum professionals have consistently over-analyzed Xu Bing's art pieces dedicated to language, placing them within complex sociopolitical frameworks, whereas the simply linguistic aspect of those works has been consistently overlooked. A typical example is the "Landscript" series he created while he was in the Himalayas. He was one of six artists participating in a project organized by the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Finland in 1999.[14] The trip was a turning point in Xu Bing's career for two reasons. Firstly, this was the first time he would use characters as the sole medium for creating landscapes. Secondly, he experienced unexpected feelings of discomfort and shock at the sight of the rural poverty in Nepalese villages[15]; he himself had spent a considerable amount of time in impoverished rural areas in China in his youth, but he now saw misery on a much larger scale.

[14] Vainker et al., *Landscape/landscript,* p. 121.

[15] Ibid., p. 129.

This opening scene in the Helsinki sketchbook, featuring the first of his Landscript series, shows on the left the character "shi," meaning stone or rock, which becomes the standard building block for mountains in his Landscript works. On the right, Xu Bing draws a small landscape composition with the character for water at its center, repeated so as to create a river.[16] The form here is reminiscent of seal script and other ancient forms of writing. To the right of the river, we see a cliff, and to the left, stones and plants, all of which are represented by their respective characters. Each character is drawn on the reverse of the thin paper page and the media used is entirely Nepalese paper, which shows fidelity to the local environment. His newest project, intended to be viewed as a continuation of the 2000 series, was first exhibited at the Ashmolean Museum in May 2013.

One of the main reasons the Landscript series continues to attract the interest of both museum specialists and audiences is the background story of the work's creation—the environment of Nepal in the late 90s—that plays with Westerners' inclination to romanticize poverty. However, it is rather unfortunate that most of the Landscript series have been analyzed only in a cultural and social context. Most of the attempts of contemporary art specialists revolve around viewing Xu Bing's Landscript series as a reflection of his self-discovery and contemplation of existential problems in the austere environment of rural Nepal.[17] Unfortunately, few have actually touched upon the rather conspicuous yet significant linguistic messages of the project. Landscript, as viewed from a linguistic standpoint, is actually not much of a departure from "Book from the Sky," "Square Words," and the "Can Series," as it is concerned with similar issues. In all of his works, including his landscapes painted with characters, Xu Bing reflects upon the written word and its questionable function as a bearer of meaning. In his landscape, one needs to see the characters for stone grouped together shaping a mountain or a rocky formation, to understand that the object is indeed a mountain.

The unreliability of writing in conveying every concrete notion that crosses the complex landscape of one's thought process brings us back to the seminal conception put forward by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure: the field of linguistics (new at the time) needs to concern itself with the spoken form alone, because "language and writing are two distinct systems," and the latter exists

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Jiehong Jiang, *The Revolution Continues: New Art from China* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008).

for the sole purpose of transcribing the former.[18] The extended series "Landscript" reflects upon writing by foregoing the pictographic elements of Chinese writing, and thus going against the classical view of Chinese script, drawing attention to the intersection between calligraphy and painting. To Xu Bing, this is not about the pictographic aspects of Chinese characters, but rather about the word aspect of Chinese painting, which students learn by practicing strokes outlined in manuals that are more like dictionaries than anything else.[19] Similarly, Xu Bing questions the pictographic nature of Chinese characters as passive indicators of the world around us. In one interview, he asked the rhetorical question whether the construction pattern of Chinese windows influenced the nature of the character for "window," or was it the character for "window" that influenced the design of Chinese windows.[20] The pre-conceived notion of many linguists that the characters' unchanging nature cannot go wrong in representing speech, is rather naïve: characters served their indisputable role in traditional Chinese classics, but in this day and age, they also need to respond to the influx of new technological and myriad other concepts and terms.

To delve further into what we might call the "monosyllabic" and "indispensability" myths about Chinese characters[21] as seen through the eyes of artists, it is worth looking into another well-established artist, who created his works at the same time as Xu Bing. Qiu Zhijie's installation work "Copying the 'Orchid Pavilion' preface a thousand times" is a post-modern deconstruction of the art of calligraphy.[22]

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[18] Francis P. Dinneen, "Introduction," in *An Introduction to General Linguistics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967).

[19] Vainker et al., *Landscape/landscript,* p. 186

[20] Hsingyuan Tsao and Roger T. Ames, *Xu Bing and Contemporary Chinese Art: Cultural and Philosophical Reflections* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011).

[21] The myths serve as titles of two separate chapters in John Defrancis's "The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy."

[22] Wu Hung, *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

In this installation he copied the preface of a popular Chinese poetic calligraphic masterpiece. However, he pushed the copying process to an extreme and instead of rendering each of the copies on a separate sheet of paper, he placed them all on the same sheet of paper.

The work's multi-dimensional nature allows for several equally plausible interpretations. First, it evinces the shifting and spontaneous nature of calligraphy: after Wang Xizhi completed the original piece, the spirit and beauty of the written word could not be captured again, even by its creator; hence we see the fragility and transience of calligraphic masterpieces. Moreover, the final product, from an aesthetic point of view, is not pleasing to the eye, and appears to be erased rather than beautifully rendered; it challenges tradition and raises questions about the obsolete nature of the written word. In the same manner in which Qiu carries out his installation, linguists and native speakers of Mandarin have tried to repeatedly "fit" characters into newer contexts, yet the final results appear to be more and more washed out and uncertain.

New trends in language-related installation art: From "political" to "global"

With the start of the twenty-first century, there has been a gradual shift in the issues contemporary Chinese artists choose to address in their works. According to my observations, they have been moving away from heavily politicized topics, and going towards a more global framework and broad

approach toward Chinese script. For instance, Zhang Huan's "Family Tree," from 2001, touches upon issues of self-identity and uses words rendered as calligraphy as a pure medium for raising philosophical questions about one's unclear and transient roots in a rapidly globalizing society.

For this installation, the artist asked three calligraphers to write texts on his face from day to night, until his facial features slowly disappeared under the heavy ink at the same time that the day light faded, so that his sense of self identity was lost.[23] At the same time, the texts so inscribed were thematically related and referred to issues of family and kinship relations, loyalty, and other traditional themes of the Chinese classical tradition. Thus, the end product of this obliterating accumulation of black ink on the white canvas of the man's skin represents the impact of the intricate social and family "guanxi" that obscures the individual, and more often than not, deprives him of his

[23] Jeannette Tremblay, "The Digital, the Analog, and the Spectral: Two Case Studies of Contemporary Chinese Art," M.A. thesis, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2012.

most essential being. The new man of the new century is seen as merely the byproduct of a symbiotic relationship among cultural constructs, family ties, and social precepts that have a strong binding power, thus often impeding and even erasing one's own aspirations.

Zhang Huan's installation is a significant stop on the journey we have embarked on to explore the intricate relationship between language and contemporary art in China. The work reminds us a little of the calligraphic installation of Qiu Zhijie's discussed above. But a significant difference is the active participation of Zhang Huan himself as the passive bearer of meaning and the focal point of the installation—this is not comparable to any previous installation piece. While Qiu's copies of calligraphy were smothered in a pile of ink, here it is the artist's own presence and identity that are being overpowered by the stark blackness of the ink. Zhang's work uses script as a mere medium to touch upon global issues that happen to have become increasingly and persistently exposed in Chinese society in the new age of openness. However, the linguistic aspect of the work is still present. The characters written on the artist's face literally and figuratively obscure his individuality, causing his face to appear expressionless and devoid of emotion. A similar phenomenon occurs when Chinese people attempt to use characters to transcribe their local speech into writing. For instance, many local Beijing people, including the famous novelist Lao She, cannot render many of their favorite expressions in writing, simply because there are no characters that allow them to do so.[24] In that sense, the characters in the installation are not there simply to cover up one's face, but also to deprive one of the essential ability to express in writing all thoughts that might be expressed in one's local topolect — one's native tongue.

When one compares the approaches of Xu Bing and Zhang Huan in their language-inspired art installations, a shift towards a global perspective on language and its correlation with Chinese society immediately stands out. This shift is even more noticeable when one considers Gu Wenda's United Nations installation series, a project that includes twenty-one different art works, all of which use human hair and cryptic calligraphy to convey the abstract notion of "internationalism." Especially prominent is the installation "Temple of Exoticisms" illustrated below.

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[24] I first learned about Lao She's statement from Prof. Victor H, Mair during a class lecture for the course "Language, Script and Society," for which this paper was originally produced.

The temple above is made of human hair and features pseudo-Chinese characters, as well as made-up Hindi and Arabic alphabets. It is worth noting that the human hair in his installations was gathered from representatives of various racial and cultural backgrounds, including various minority groups in China. The hair is glued together to create an amalgam of colors and life stories, representing an emerging global world order, where identity is a fluid and complex concept. The characters he chooses to incorporate in his exhibitions are not chosen randomly: he uses either old low-frequency Chinese characters that are no longer in everyday use, or mixes Chinese characters with Western alphabets.[25] Thus, he touches upon the rapid entry of new Western terms into the Chinese language, and the gradual "Westernization" of Mandarin. Judging from the plethora of recent examples to be taken from the Chinese social landscape, his "Westernization" theory seems to be verifiable. Shortly before the Summer Olympics held in Beijing in 2008, the Chinese government incessantly promulgated and distributed video "tutorials" in public venues, including the subway and other transportation facilities, instructing Beijing people how to approach foreign guests. As the concept of "losing face" (*diu lian*) is central to Chinese culture, the Chinese government did not hesitate to

[25] Ying Wang and Sun Yan, *Reinventing Tradition in a New World: The Arts of Gu Wenda, Wang Mansheng, Xu Bing, and Zhang Hongtu* (Gettysburg, Penn.: Gettysburg College, 2004.

initiate dramatic changes in language to fit the Western concept of "politeness" and "good manners." Consequently, some rather unusual phrases and artificial expressions were "dumped" into the spoken language and promulgated as the proper way of communication with strangers, regardless of how foreign those expressions were to native local speech.

The expression "xie xie," which has become the standard translation of "thank you" into Chinese, has come to be used on a regular basis among Chinese people. However, "xie xie" was not originally a typical Chinese way of expressing someone's gratitude and was simply meant as an artificial equivalent of the Western notion of "thank you."[26] In addition, while it is a common practice in the West and particularly, in the United States, to be courteous to strangers, it is not a typical Chinese custom to greet strangers and ask them, out of politeness, how they are. Now, however, the expression "*ni hao ma,*" which is literally translated as "How are you (doing)?" is now becoming acceptable in everyday speech, particularly among young people. In fact, during the field research on institutionalized eldercare that I conducted in China with my anthropology professor last summer, I interviewed many elderly from both urban areas and the countryside, asking them to comment on the changes in Chinese society they found most surprising and/or disturbing. My records indicate that around 40 per cent of the elderly I interviewed brought up the issue of the "Westernization" of Chinese speech even without my asking the question explicitly.[27] They exhibited great dismay at the new expressions coming into Chinese overnight through media and technology, and many of them were, not surprisingly, disgruntled at the idea of sudden changes in the language they considered their "own."

While old people might find these phenomena downright bizarre and difficult to assimilate, in his installation Gu Wenda does not necessarily make a negative comment about the internationalization of Chinese speech. In fact, many of his works in the United Nations series are meant to celebrate globalization and the cultural transfer between East and West, as it has facilitated

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[26] Mary S. Erbaugh, "China Expands Its Courtesy: Saying "Hello" to Strangers," *Journal of Asian Studies* 67 (2008), pp. 621–652.

[27] The full report of my findings can be found on the ASIA network website: http://www.asianetwork.org/2012/11/2012-student-faculty-fellows-program-report-colby-college/

cultural exchanges that would not have been feasible a few decades ago. The Westernization of Chinese speech is not the problem at hand; the actual problem resides in the inability of characters, due to their excessive number and convoluted structure, to capture those changes. The written word in Chinese script cannot catch up with the dynamics of the spoken word, and therefore, the clash between the two is emerging as one of the greatest issues in Chinese linguistics, and most difficult to resolve.

The most recent and vivid example of a global approach to Chinese language in installation art is Shu Yong's "Guge (i.e., Google) Bricks," an installation that received positive reviews during the 2013 Venice Art Biennale.

The artist constructs a sculptural reflection on the fragile divide between East and West and illustrates the Westernization of Chinese languages. To that end, Shu Yong gathered 1500 popular phrases, idioms, or inspirational sentences that are commonly used by native Chinese speakers, and translated them word by word using Google translate.[28] The rather peculiar and meaningless phrases that resulted serve as a reminder of the divide that still exists between Western and Eastern values,

[28] Hamilton Lea, "Lost in Translation: Shu yong's Guge Bricks," *Art and Science Journal*, 2013. http://www.artandsciencejournal.com/post/55096087645/shu-yong-gugebricks

cultural constructs, and languages. However, the inclusion of words such as "photobomb" among the bricks serves to indicate and remind us of cross-cultural influences in a globalizing world. As a result, the installation as a whole has a rather "international" feel and has clearly accomplished the transition from politicizing language to viewing language reform as a necessity of global significance.

Conclusion

It is apparent that the new generation of contemporary Chinese artists has distanced itself from politically charged discussions of language reform and political agendas that are backgrounded by the lack of adequate writing reform. While it is indubitably true that the Chinese writing system desperately needs reforms that would shorten the distance between script and speech and allow the written word to catch up with its spoken counterpart, artists now address these problems from a global standpoint, rather than a national, political one. Issues such as the impact of the Internet and of active and passive censorship have risen to the surface and have become favorite subjects of installation artists. However, those problems invariably lead us to the core issue that Xu Bing's generation addressed—a society's speech and script ultimately need to intersect, and that urgent need is not being addressed in the current Chinese writing system.

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Square Words. Exhibition View of the Katonah Mueum of Art; photograph courtesy of Margharet Fox.

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