

The Forces in the Tug of War of Taiwanese Orthographic Change*

1. Introduction

The written language of a dominated group suffers two stages of handicaps. Before the tide of nationalism, the writing of such a group of people is considered inferior and not worth teaching in formal education, and thus has difficulties becoming popular, though it is normally allowed to exist without being challenged. In the wake of nationalism, the existing writing system of a dominated group not only still finds difficulties in gaining popularity but also faces challenges from members of the ethnic elite. By the time of autonomy or independence, competing systems may have come to exist. Norwegian orthography is a good example of this tendency (Katzner 1995:82–83), and Taiwanese writing could be the most complicated case in world history.

In the past, Taiwanese (a Hokkien branch of the Southern Min language group, hereafter TW) had only two orthographies. One comes from the Southern Min area in southern China and uses Chinese characters with the addition of indigenous kanji (i.e. Chinese characters or the like). The other originated in Malacca and uses the roman alphabet with diacritics. These two orthographies were used by separate groups of people till after World War II.

The earliest extant Southern Min text, dated A.D. 1566, is a block-printed play script that circulated in the area between modern Choân-chiu (泉州) and Tiô-chiu (潮州), where Southern Min is spoken. The writing medium of the play employs common Chinese characters (e.g. 〈七〉 ‘seven’) for Chinese cognates, supplemented by borrowed Chinese characters (e.g. 〈卜〉 ‘want; intend to’) and innovative Min characters (e.g. 〈火〉 (4 dots) underneath 〈毛〉 ‘to lead’) for non-cognates. This writing tradition was developed in southern China and carried over to Taiwan, where it has been used for all secular literature works and for many post-World War II Christian works, in both cases with many borrowed and innovative characters added.

Romanized TW writing began as a Chiang-chiu (漳州) Hokkien romanization designed by Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857) in Malacca prior to 1820 (Âng Û. 1993b). Although many of his sound–symbol correspondences were changed later by other missionaries, his system is considered the origin of the traditional romanization, called POJ or *Pêh-ōe-jī* ‘colloquial script’ by the users, and called ‘Church Romanization’ by those who do not esteem it.

Neither of the traditional orthographies enjoys broad acceptance by TW speakers owing to their shortcomings and to other factors that are related to colonization and sinicization. The shortcomings of kanji are serious, but it seems that the earlier users were not aware of them. Although Taiwan’s language movements started as early as the 1920’s, the issues at the time were either the adequacy of TW as a language or the legitimacy of POJ (see Iûⁿ Û. 1993.14:11–13, 15:6–9, 16:6–11; Ng S. 1993: 88–91, 377–79). The difficulties an all-kanji writing system encounters seem to have come to light only in the 1960–1970’s. Measures were then taken to overcome the difficulties, but nobody dreamed of completely getting rid of kanji, the only logography left in the world, from TW until the end of the 20th century. At present, kanji remains the most widely accepted writing medium despite the fact that an all-kanji writing system is impractical and limited.

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On the other hand, the shortcomings of POJ received a great deal of attention, and many new spelling systems were designed with the aim of replacing it. Meanwhile, the oppression of the Taiwanese language and writing since 1949 caused POJ to lose its prestige in the eyes of Taiwanese writers and encouraged reforms. In the 1950's, Ông Iók-tek, who escaped the 1947 massacre and lived in exile, began to experiment with orthographic reforms (e.g. Ông I. 1957). In the 1980's, accompanying Taiwan's democratization, language movements resurged and, especially after martial law was lifted (1949–1987), more proposed systems appeared. According to Iúⁿ Ú. and Tiuⁿ H. 1999, there have been at least 64 TW writing systems proposed in history. Gradually, the reformers came together and formed coalitions. Currently, there are three major spelling systems which can be seen as serious competitors, namely, the traditional POJ, the TLPA (Taiwan Languages Phonetic Alphabet), and the TY (*Tōngyòng Pīnyīn* 'Universal Spelling System', English translation mine). All of them are romanizations. In addition to these three systems, there are various non-roman systems based on the Chinese National Phonetic Alphabet that form an influential group.

The challenges to kanji are mainly due to its inadequacy in recording TW and in modern word processing. However, in recent years, the desire to desinicize seems to be the primary motivation for some people to totally reject Chinese characters and to restore TW orthography to an all-roman POJ writing or, at least, to limit the use of characters. The challenges to POJ are based in claims of the system's alleged inadequacy. Basically, however, they stem from people's false ethnic identity in believing that they are real Chinese, even 'pure' Chinese, and from their anti-Western and anti-Christian mentality, which are results of sinicization.

There are many socio-political and psychological factors that are responsible for reform proposals. They are complicated and intriguing, and this paper tries to interpret them in as orderly a way as possible.¹ Generally, they are related to the non-Chinese linguistic substrata and superstrata in TW on the one hand, and, millenaries of continuous sinocentric education and the reaction to it on the other. In other words, the main underlying forces in the tug of war of TW orthographic change are resinicization (Mandarinization) and desinicization.

2. Linguistic and technological motivations for changes

Kanji was developed as a logographic written script more than 3000 years ago for a language or languages of a people in northern China foreign to most of the ancestors of Taiwanese. It is therefore not suitable for TW, which is more than 1000 miles away and 3000 years younger. POJ was also designed and revised generations ago based on dialects slightly different from TW. The historical and geographical distances also make it not completely fit for TW. These two traditional orthographies also have met processing problems since typewriters became a writing tool. In the current computer age, processing problems remain. Comparatively, kanji has more linguistic and technological difficulties than POJ, but this fact is obscured by sinicization, so that kanji has been more favorable than POJ, as will be discussed later.

2.1 The dreams of an ideal writing system

Owing to the shortcomings of traditional orthographies, new writing systems have been proposed by various reformers, who can be classified into five groups with overlapping membership, namely, those who have a misconception of the phonetic values of roman letters, the universalists, the 'phonemists', the semanticists, and the 'automation/computation enthusiasts'. All of them suffer a limited perspective. None of them see orthography as orthography *per se*. They see orthography only from their limited points of view based on their disciplines, knowledge or experience, like the blind men 'seeing' the elephant. Some see it as a phonemic expression of

¹A great deal of the data in this paper is from the author's first-hand experience as a language movement activist and from personal contacts with other activists.

‘God’s truth’ (versus ‘hocus-pocus’) or the true nature of phonological system,² some see it as requiring visual morphemes, some see it as a wand of computer wizards, and so forth. Of these philosophies of writing, only the semanticists understand that the main function of written language is to communicate visually (cf. Chao Y. 1923:107, 108, and Bolinger 1946). None of the various schools of thinking consider the century-old traditional romanization as a legacy and cultural asset.

The proposal to present semantic fields in writing is but a one-man show by Mr. Tân-Khèng-chiu (陳慶洲), a dentist, without followers and without any impact on the TW orthography movement. This school of thinking will be ignored hereafter. The universalists and those who have a misconception of the phonetic values of roman letters are the by-products of sinicization education and, therefore, will be discussed in the section on socio-political factors. There remains the ‘phonemists’ and ‘automation enthusiasts’.

The majority of linguistically-minded reformers pay special attention to sounds and symbols. Many of them are trained phonologists who only know phonetics and, especially, phonemics. Their primary criterion for an orthography is that it must have one-to-one correspondences between phoneme and letter. In this respect, they have a prejudice against POJ that is worth elaborating on here.

POJ was designed by a non-linguist in a time before phonemics became a guideline for ‘reducing language to writing’ (Pike 1947) and in a time when typesetting was the only advanced technique of word processing. It was also designed only for the purpose of representing Hokkien pronunciation of Chinese characters. Consequently, it has many shortcomings, such as superfluous symbols, diacritics and superscripts, excessive use of hyphens, and, as the phonemists accuse it, the lack of pattern congruity and inconsistent phonemic symbols, such as spelling /wa, we, wi/ as *oa, oe, ui* respectively. Furthermore, a writing system cannot represent all dialects of all times; neither can POJ. There are, therefore, discrepancies between POJ and common TW pronunciation, i.e. *ian, iat, eng, ek* corresponding to [en, et, ieŋ, iek]. These cases of inconsistency are specks in the system but logs in the eyes of the phonemists.

The phonemists are short-sighted in at least three aspects. Firstly, they forget that the limitations of the roman alphabet do not allow one-to-one correspondences, for there are more phonemes in TW than letters in roman alphabet. As a result, what they designed is not what they proclaimed it to be. For instance, TLPA does not alter POJ’s use of *h* for both initial glottal fricative and final glottal stop. TLPA was designed to be a phonetic alphabet to substitute IPA for representing the sound of characters but turned out to be a phonemic writing system. Secondly, they are not aware of the non-uniqueness of phonological analysis (Chao Y. 1934). That is, they do not know that there can be more than one solutions to a phonemic problem, that phonemics is a ‘hocus-pocus’ (see note 2). For instance, the syllabic inventory written as *am, iam, an, ian, ang, iang, eng, im, in, un, om, ong, iong* in POJ is rearranged by designers of TLPA as *am, iam, an, ian, ang, iang, ing, im, in, un, om, ong, iong* for what they consider to be in pattern congruity. Nevertheless, the TLPA activists are unaware of better solutions in the ‘hocus-pocus’ phonemic game. Since *ian* is phonetically [en] in the majority speech, one could arrange the inventory above as *am, iam, an, en, ang, iang, eng, im, in, un, om, ong, iong*, for instance, for even better congruity. The game of phonemicization could even change *un* to *on* or change *om, ong, iong* to *um, ung, iung* for economy’s sake. Thirdly, they overlook the fact that, in romanized writings as well, discreteness in forms enhances reading and helps to disambiguate them (Chao Y. 1923). POJ has *oa, oe, ui*, where *o* and *u* share the functional load of writing the phonemic /w/, but TLPA has *ua, ue, ui*, where *u* carries all the functional load. It is actually easier for POJ to detect spelling mistakes than TLPA.

As its name suggests, TLPA is merely a phonetic transcription system. It is meant to be used as a phonetic notation system for an all-kanji orthography. The promoters and supporters are in

²In the 1960’s a question was raised by Prof. Householder of Indiana University asking whether phonological solutions are ‘God’s truth’ or just ‘hocus-pocus’.

effect all-kanji conservatives, as demonstrated by their periodical *Iā-chéng* (掖種, *Seed-sowing*). They consider all romanizations as merely phonetic notation systems (e.g. Âng Û. 1989a) and disparage POJ by calling it ‘phonetic alphabet’. Comparing the two ‘phonetic alphabets’, they claim that TLPA is superior for being more consistent.

TLPAT does have an advantage over POJ, however. It can be 100% linear, that is, there are no diacritics, and superscripts can be lowered when necessary, e.g. *cua²* (POJ *chóa*) alternating with *cua₂* ‘paper’. This linear or unidimensional writing is the kind of writing that orthographic ‘automation enthusiasts’ prefer (Lîm Kè-hiông 1988, Tiuⁿ J. 1990, and Chng and Ng 1997). The automation enthusiasts are the TW activists who dream of TW being used in computer networks and, especially, corpus processing. POJ has diacritics, which means that the special software is required to read and write it, like kanji texts. It also means that the POJ corpus cannot be digitalized without further encoding in current state of the art software. With such handicaps in view, TW activists designed at least two tone-spelling systems, one tone-numbering system (marking tones by using numerals, i.e., TLPA), and one toneless system (except in lexicography).

The automation enthusiasts expect writing to be trimmed in order to fit the computer. On the contrary, POJ supporters have been endeavoring to make the computer serve POJ, just like the Chinese and the Japanese make the computer serve kanji and kana (i.e. Japanese syllabary), not the other way round. As new POJ software is developed (Lâu K. 2002; Lâu and Iúⁿ 2002), the argument of those who accuse POJ of being technologically unfit are losing ground.

3. Kanji and the non-Chineseness of Taiwanese

After millennia of sinicization and resinicization (Tiuⁿ J. 1997) and, especially, after more than half century of Mandarinization in education since 1945, most Taiwanese think that they are ethnically Chinese, and many think or endeavor to prove that TW is the purest or oldest Sinitic language from the Middle Kingdom (e.g. Têⁿ C. 2000). Since, according to the belief, TW is a Chinese dialect, ‘where there is a sound, there must be a character’ (translated from a radio advertisement of Iúⁿ C. 1992). Eventually, they believe, etymologists will discover all the historically correct characters. Even most non-believers deem all-kanji writing as the only appropriate form of recording TW.

As a matter of fact, the so-called ‘major Chinese dialects’ are descendents of different creoles or varieties of ‘vulgar Chinese’ (*à la* ‘vulgar Latin’) of different times spoken by different sinicized peoples in different areas in what is now modern China (Tiuⁿ J. 1997 and 2000). Some have claimed that genetically Taiwanese people have more non-Chinese blood than Chinese blood (Tân S. 1997; Chu J. 1999 and 2001; Lîm M. 2001). Linguistically, as such, TW has many non-Chinese substratificational lexical items (Tiuⁿ J. 1997; Sakai 2002). Besides, in the 50 years of Japanese jurisdiction over Taiwan (1895–1945), TW borrowed no less than 1500 Japanese words and, especially, Western words, via Japanese (Tiuⁿ J. 1993; Tiuⁿ J. and Tiuⁿ K. 1995; Tiuⁿ K. 2005), in addition to the loanwords acquired from various languages before and after the Japanese era. Lexically, it is almost a different language from other Hokkien dialects (Ông T. 1994; Tiuⁿ J. 1999; Lí K. 2000).

In a non-Chinese all-kanji writing, whether it is Japanese *Manyōshū* (萬葉集, *An Anthology of Ten Thousand ‘Leaves’*), Korean *hyangga* (鄉歌, folksongs), Vietnamese *chữ-nôm* (字喃, Vietnamese demotic writing system) literature, or TW ballads and play scripts, obscure as well as familiar characters were borrowed to represent either meaning or sound, and indigenous characters were created when there were no suitable Chinese characters. Beside phonemic loans, in TW there are thousands of colloquial lexical items not cognate to Chinese.³ About 25% of TW common vocabulary does not have suitable characters to record it (Âng Û. 1989b). When

³Xiamen University’s *A Chinese-Amoy Dictionary* (廈門大學《普通話閩南方言詞典》), 1982, Hong Kong: Life, Reading, and New Knowledge Book Stores) lists about 2000 Amoy Hokkien lexical items that are different from Chinese (Ông T. 1994).

committed to writing in an all-kanji system, these native and borrowed items also have to be sinicized graphically. It means that TW needs hundreds more borrowed and created characters in addition to the two to three thousand common characters identical with Chinese. Since different writers have independently borrowed and created different characters, only the writers themselves can correctly read their respective works.

Before the era of word processing by machines, innovation of characters was theoretically without limitation. TW all-kanji writing is permeated with innovative indigenous characters and rare Chinese characters. In the typewriting era, these characters were ignored by Chinese typewriter manufacturers in Taiwan. In the computation era, they have been ignored by computer manufactures and software programmers. Being a language institutionally suppressed and invisible, TW does not attract commercial interests so as to enjoy writing efficiency.

There are only two ways to solve these problems. One is to go to the extreme by replacing the all-kanji system with an all-roman system, such as POJ. As a matter of fact, POJ has been used in lieu of kanji for about 160 years by a small portion of Hokkien speakers in Southeast Asia, in China and in Taiwan. Unfortunately, an all-roman writing is not yet acceptable to a society where Chinese characters have become indispensable. Between the two extremes, i.e. the linguistically handicapped all-kanji system and the unpopular all-roman system, there emerged a compromise by preserving kanji to a reasonable extent and spelling out words and syllables that do not have suitable characters to represent or when existing characters will hinder reading comprehension. In 1977, a periodical using the mixed system of kanji and POJ called *Tâi-oân Gú-bûn Goêh-pò* (台灣語文月報, *Taiwanese Monthly*) appeared in publication in the United States. The mixture has become the most popular way of writing. All TW publications except those that were purposely published all in kanji or all in roman script use the mixture system, some employing more characters and some employing less.

4. The socio-political and psychological factors of changes

Since both of the solutions above involve roman letters, they meet the same obstacles, namely, the Japanese and Chinese colonizers' language and cultural policies and the mentality of the society molded by continual sinicizing education. The linguistic and technological factors of orthographic change are easier to detect, but the socio-political and psychological factors are more difficult to discover. The latter factors are all related to Chinese colonization and Taiwanese resistance.

4.1 The colonizers' language and cultural policies

In the past 107 years since 1895, Taiwan has been ruled successively by the Japanese and the Chinese with identical aims to assimilate indigenous Taiwanese by promoting Japan's and China's national languages, respectively. At the end of World War II, the Republic of China, i.e., the current colonizing political entity originally run by the foreign Chinese Nationalist Party and now by the indigenous Democratic Progressive Party, inherited the Japanese policy on Taiwan's languages, cultures and ethnicity and inherited the Japanese practices of the policy by only changing the contents, substituting Mandarin Chinese for Japanese and substituting Mandarinization for Japanization.

The Chinese ways of ethnic assimilation are far more intensive, subtle, and brutal than the Japanese. The Chinese policy defines Mandarin Chinese as Taiwan's national language; it defines TW and other Taiwan languages, including Austronesian languages, as 'dialects'; and it defines Taiwan cultures as extensions of Mandarin culture (see *Tâi-pak-chhī* 1971). In these definitions, TW writing certainly has to be all-kanji. It makes the people who support all-kanji TW writing on the one hand unwittingly support Chinese nationalism, which suppresses Taiwanese nationalism, and on the other hand, ironically, support Chinese colonialism, which

oppresses the language and writing that these same people are trying to revive and develop. The colonized and the colonizers thus collaborate very well in preserving Chinese script and rejecting romanization for TW.

The Taiwanese were further told and are continually reminded that they are genetically Chinese and thus are the compatriots of the colonizers. The aboriginal Austronesians were told that their ancestors also came from China (Tâi-pak-*chhī* 1971:199-260) and, therefore, they are also Chinese nationals. Since the colonial policy requires that all Chinese nationals speak the Chinese national language, all the Taiwanese, being Chinese nationals, must speak Mandarin. Pupils speaking their ethnic language at school were punished and/or humiliated; the use of ethnic languages in public domains was discouraged and a proposal was made in 1985 for it to be forbidden by law; TW accent of Mandarin has been ridiculed; speakers of TW and those who speak Chinese with a TW accent have been cast as rascals and fools in T.V. shows and in public propaganda; speaking TW in formal occasions has been labeled 'Hokkien chauvinism'. Cases of such incidents multiply (Lîm C. 1983: *passim*; Lîm Kîm-hiân 1990:*passim*). As a result of more than 50 years of Chinese colonial language promotion, many people feel ashamed of speaking their ethnic language. There are few educated indigenous parents willing or able to speak their ethnic language to their children, and many who advocate language rights and mother tongue education are no exceptions. The outcome is that a very low percentage of the pupils understand their own ethnic language (Formosa 1996; Tân S. and Í K. 1997).

When a language loses its prestige, so will its writing. There were few people literate in their mother tongue before Japanese rule. After more than a century of colonial education, more native speakers became mother-tongue illiterates, and most of them brush their ethnic writing aside as something funny or something unworthy to know about. Furthermore, the colonial policy also suppresses indigenous written resources, especially POJ, as a measure to blur Taiwanese identity. As early as 1955, the Republic of China government started to interfere with the use of POJ and other non-kanji writing systems, which were unintelligible to the people in intelligence services (Tiuⁿ J. 2001:18-19). POJ was finally banned in publications in 1970. Bibles published in ethnic languages were confiscated (*ibid.*). The teaching of POJ in Sunday schools stopped, and the originally all-roman Presbyterian Church of Taiwan became all-kanji. All TW-speaking Christians today are Chinese character users, like all other people, but the all-kanji TW Bible is still unintelligible to most of them, for they are not trained to read TW written in characters either.

4.2 Sinocentricism

The people who prefer writing in characters to roman letters are in effect the majority in Taiwan's non-Austronesian society, which is completely sinicized and is nearly Mandarinized, and, therefore, they are sinocentric. The sinocentric mentality dichotomizes things and matters into either belonging to the center (the Middle Kingdom or anything Chinese/Mandarin) or belonging to the periphery (the barbaric/foreign countries or anything non-Chinese/non-Mandarin). Only those belonging to the center are deemed worth keeping, and the rest are merely means to an end. Roman letters are useful in noting the pronunciation of characters at most. Many people hold that if *Taiwanese* is not written totally in *Chinese* characters, it is not a written language, and POJ, as such, does not count as a written language.

The sinocentric logic is sometimes illogical in determining what is Chinese and what is not. For instance, Buddhism and characters are Chinese, and Christianity and roman alphabet are foreign. Buddhism forced its way into China, has stayed for nearly 2000 years, and has become a part of Chinese culture, then a part of Hokkien culture, and then a part of Taiwanese culture. Chinese script forced its way into southern China during the processes of sinicization and resinicization and has become a part of Hokkien culture, which has been carried over to Taiwan since the early 1600's, and has become a part of Taiwan's culture also. On the other

hand, Christianity and roman letters forced their way into China and then to Taiwan less than 300 years later. They also became a part of Taiwan's culture, though a minor one, yet most Taiwanese, like most Chinese, do not consider them a part of their culture.

Christianity and romanization followed Western imperialism and colonialism to Asia and are stigmatized. Besides, romanization, especially POJ, was originally used by the Christian Church and, therefore, is stigmatized in two ways. Enclosed in the atmosphere of Chinese tradition and indoctrination, the Taiwanese reject romanization just like the Chinese do (cf. Iûⁿ Ū. 1993.15:7). POJ thus became an easy target of Chinese nationalism. The promoters of rivalling romanizations swiftly confined it to 'Church' romanization to discourage people from supporting it.

Chinese culture, conservative and self-centered as it is, hinders the spread of POJ but does not challenge it. On the contrary, it is POJ that poses a threat to kanji, just like it is Western culture that threatens Chinese culture. As such, both the opponents of Taiwanese indigenization and the supporters of characters must have thought that POJ has to be suppressed. One scheme to suppress it is to continue calling it 'Church Romanization'. Another scheme is to demote it from orthography to phonetic alphabet, as done by the promoters of TLPA and supporters of all-kanji writing. If POJ is merely a phonetic alphabet, it is a very bad transcription system indeed. This is where the idealists come into play.

4.3 Misconceptions and universalism

The value system concerning orthography can also be molded by misconceptions about languages. Mandarin, unlike TW but like most other Sinitic languages, has only a one-way distinction between aspirated and unaspirated non-continuant obstruents. On the other hand, many languages using roman letters also have only a one-way distinction, but between voiced and voiceless consonants. Incidentally, in Standard American English and British Received Pronunciation, the voicing of voiced stops is delayed, and voiceless stops are aspirated prevocally when stressed. German non-continuant obstruents are also aspirated. In addition, the names for *k*, *p*, *q*, *t* in English and German alphabets, being prevocalic and stressed, are also pronounced as aspirated, e.g. [k^hej, p^hij, k^hju, t^hij] respectively in English. As a result, Chinese speakers have a wrong impression that roman letters *b*, *d*, *g*, *j*, etc., should be pronounced as voiceless unaspirated, and *p*, *t*, *k*, etc. should be pronounced as voiceless aspirated. This misunderstanding has been realized in foreign language teaching, especially English teaching, in Taiwan since 1945. The majority of Taiwanese now pronounce foreign words written in roman letters the Chinese way, no matter what language it is. They then 'hear' fortis voiced stops in any language as voiceless unaspirated and would write [p, t, k, tʃ] as *b*, *d*, *g*, *j* respectively and [p^h, t^h, k^h, tʃ^h] as *p*, *t*, *k*, *ch* respectively.⁴

From this misconception emerged a fallacy claiming that there is a dichotomy between a Romance phonation of roman alphabet and a Teutonic phonation of roman alphabet.⁵ It claims that in Romance languages *b*, *d*, *g*, *p*, *t*, *k*, etc. are pronounced as [b, d, g, p, t, k] etc. respectively and that in Teutonic languages they are pronounced as [p, t, k, p^h, t^h, k^h] etc. respectively. It further claims that Teutonic languages, represented by English, are more important than Romance languages and have more speakers in the world, that Taiwan languages have to go Teutonic, and that POJ, being Romance in its nature, has to be replaced. As such, POJ *ka-pi* /kapi/ 'coffee' would be written in a way similar to that in Iûⁿ C. 1992, i.e., as *gabi*, whereas *gân-bók* /goanbok/ 'log' would be written as *quanvok*, as it is in *ibid*.

⁴The wrong phonetic transcriptions of the Chinese examples in File 5.7 and Chinese and Hakka examples in Exercise 0 of File 10.5, *Languages Files*, 6th and 7th editions, Ohio State University Press, 1994 and 1998, are examples of such phonetic values.

⁵Mr. Í Pek-chôaⁿ (余伯泉), the leader of the universalists, probably is the person who first made the claim. Though he stopped making the same claim after being refuted by the author in a personal contact, many of his followers continue to spread the fallacy.

The misconception and the fallacy serve as a theoretical foundation for the universalists. Chinese Hanyu Pinyin, incidentally, is also ‘Teutonic-based’, and it is now the international romanization of Chinese. Like the former Soviet Union claiming the Russian language and Cyrillic alphabet to be ‘international’ in the union (Kreindler 1989:*passim*), the universalists claim that China’s Pinyin is ‘international’ in the [Chinese] world. They want Taiwan’s writing systems to be compatible with Pinyin and also compatible with Taiwan’s English language teaching (cf. Î P. *et al.* 1999).

The Chinese phonetic values of roman letters conflict with traditional Taiwanese values, which are manifested in POJ. In POJ, *p*, *t*, *k*, etc., represent voiceless unaspirated sounds, *ph*, *th*, *kh*, etc., represent voiceless aspirated sounds, and *b*, *l*, *g*,⁶ etc., represent voiced sounds. POJ is, therefore, accused of being phonetically incorrect, educationally misleading, and socially unfit by those who are ignorant of the basic international phonetic values of roman letters according to the IPA (Zhou Y. 1961:103).

Nevertheless, the universalists later became aware that a single universal alphabet would not work for all the 14⁺ languages in Taiwan, owing to the facts that Chinese is a language where aspiration is a distinctive feature for obstruents, but voicing is not, whereas in almost all indigenous Taiwan languages, except Sinitic Hakka and Austronesian Amis, voicing is a distinctive feature, that in Austronesian languages aspiration is not a distinctive feature (and thus is ‘Romance’), and that in TW both aspiration and voicing are distinctive features. In order to solve the problem, two universal alphabets instead of one were proposed — to be universal. A ‘Teutonic’ universal alphabet was designed for Sinitic languages, and a ‘Romance’ universal alphabet for Austronesian ones. As for TW, both a ‘Teutonic’ romanization and a ‘Romance’ one were proposed for it. The ‘Romance’ TW script is identical with POJ. It is reserved for the purpose of appeasing POJ supporters. In practice, only the ‘Teutonic’ version (where [b, g] were written as *v*, *q* respectively and now are written as *bh*, *gh* respectively) is being promoted.

It is evident that a universal romanization based on Chinese phonology is not suitable for most languages in Taiwan. However, since the Chinese are the dominant group in Taiwan, albeit being in minority, and since most Taiwanese are Mandarinized, the universalists are supported by the media and some educators.

4.4 Chinese language teaching and TPNA’s

While romanization is the trend in current Taiwanese language movements, there is a group of non-roman phonetic notation systems that could cancel the efforts of the language workers of all other systems. This group of systems are called ‘Taiwanese Phonetic Notation Alphabets’ (TPNA’s). They are based on the Chinese National Phonetic Alphabet (CNPA), which is a set of characters with simple strokes used for marking the pronunciation of regular characters in dictionaries and texts.

CNPA was promulgated by the Ministry of Education in 1918 in China and implemented in 1945 in Taiwan for Chinese language teaching. Every pupil has to learn it before learning characters; therefore, every Taiwanese knows it. When it is applied to TW teaching, new symbols are added for sounds that do not occur in Chinese. Different designers use different new symbols, but the core CNPA symbols are identical. As such, TPNA’s are the phonetic systems most familiar to the Chinese educated Taiwanese. What one has to learn are only the special symbols for TW. Many school teachers, who are accustomed to CNPA, support TPNA’s and, especially those who are weak in English and carry their fear of English over to romanized Taiwanese, insist that a TPNA be used in mother tongue teaching. Many TW text books that use romanization, whether as an orthography or as a phonetic alphabet, will include some variety of TPNA’s. TLPA even has a variety of TPNA’s as a secondary alphabet.

⁶TW /d/ [d̥ ~ ɿ ~ ɿ̥] is written as *l* in almost all systems.

It is apparent that TPNA's achieved the social goals of writing (Pike 1947) higher than any other system. Nevertheless, a TPNA is never intended to become an orthography. It is always a set of phonetic notation symbols for characters in an all-kanji writing. It will not become an orthography, but it has the social power to help the all-kanji orthography elbow out POJ. As long as Chinese remains the national language in Taiwan, indigenous languages will continue to decline, and as long as CNPA is used in teaching Chinese, POJ and other romanized systems will have difficulty thriving.

4.5 Desinicization

While the educational system is still endeavoring in Mandarinizing Taiwanese, Taiwanese nationalism has been gradually awakening. The awakening is a reaction to (1) decades of unequal treatment between Chinese and Taiwanese (Tiuⁿ J. 1996:96–99), (2) the threat from China, and (3) the leaguings of Taiwan's Chinese with China to continue their ideological domination and socio-economic advantages in Taiwan. The awakening nationalism stirs up the vogue of indigenization and desinicization. In the orthographic aspect, indigenization seems not to have as yet stimulated any thoughts or actions, whereas desinicization, which is slowly spreading, urges a small group of intellectuals to reconsider the value of Chinese characters.

One argument, originally put forth by Sakai (p.c.), holds that since Chinese script is a tie that binds Taiwan to China, in order to cut off the tie, kanji has to be discarded. Linguistically and culturally, unlike Japanese, where Chinese characters have become indispensable, TW writing did not and does not have to depend on kanji. Politically, Japan's existence is not threatened by China, and Japan will not be mistaken as a part of China. Even though many Chinese claimed that the Japanese and the Chinese are of the same race and have the same culture, such claims will not evoke Japanese sentiment toward China. On the other hand, most of the world mistake Taiwan to be a part of China, as do many Taiwanese. Since the Taiwanese and their ancestors have undergone sinicization and indoctrination for thousands of years, it is very easy for them to lose their Taiwanese identity. One cannot revive the lost language of one's assimilated ancestors, but one can at least stop further sinicization and Mandarinization by giving up Chinese characters.

With or without Sakai's theory or any other theory that elaborates on it, the pros and cons of desinicization have been discussed occasionally by intellectuals and politicians, and desinicization is accused by China as 'cultural independence'. Armed with the desinicization ideology, more and more language activists are considering the possibility of restoring orthography to an all-roman POJ. They are not conservatives, as the orthographic reformers accuse them to be, for the transmission of POJ was disrupted more than a generation ago. Rather, they are the vanguard. There seems to be no all-POJ advocates except Sakai as yet, but there are many who are practiced in all-POJ writing in periodicals such as *Tâioânjī* (*Taiwanese Script*) and, especially, in computer networks. In computer networks, even when the system provides Chinese characters, TW correspondences are normally carried out in POJ alone, omitting tone marks and substituting superscripts with other letters.

An all-roman alphabet is the only way for the desinicization for Taiwan. The Vietnamese were under heavy Chinese cultural influence even on the eve of World War II, but as soon as Quốc Ngữ was made the national orthography, the Vietnamese succeeded in stopping further sinicization, and the new generations became 'illiterates' in kanji. The all-roman Vietnamese experience appears to be a valuable lesson for Taiwanese desinicization.⁷ In TW, the current use of romanization mixed with kanji has already reduced Taiwanese dependence on Chinese script to some extent. In the future, more use of all-roman writing will release Taiwanese from the

⁷According to Sakai (p.c.), the Koreans stopped using kanji as a measure against Japan rather than a measure to desinicize, for the mixture of kanji with Korean hangul and the mixture of kanji with Japanese kana are the same kind of writing in essence.

bondage of Chinese characters and, also, reduce Taiwanese sentiment toward Chinese culture.

5. Conclusion

As the current state of affairs shows, the status of Chinese characters is actually untouched. Except for all-roman writing systems, all the romanized systems incorporate kanji to a great extent. On the contrary, it is the territory of POJ that suffers dents and erosion. It lost the literary market in 1970, as stated above, except in dictionary making. Later, when Taiwanese nationalism emerged, POJ faced competition from different phonetic systems and writing systems. At present, the territory of POJ includes most of TW publications (mostly in mixture texts), most or all TW associations at high schools and colleges, and all college-level TW courses in foreign countries. TLPA, as a result of appealing to politics, once occupied almost all TW teachers' training curricula sponsored by local governments. Though the territory is being taken over by TY, it remains strong, for it is the system used in teachers' colleges and in Taiwan Languages Association, functioning as a reading aid to all-kanji texts and as phonetic alphabet for field works. As for the so-called 'teutonic-based' systems, they are more attractive to the sinicized general public. Among these systems, TY is the only influential one. It is not supported by any trained linguists who are promoting Taiwanese, but it is gaining ground, also by appealing to politics. TPNA's, mutually supporting and being supported by the all-kanji orthography, are almost everywhere. Both TLPA and TPNA's assist in stabilizing the all-kanji writing.

The stability of kanji in the tug of war of TW orthographic change is due to the Chinese mentality, whereas the shaky ground of POJ is also caused, in part, by the Chinese mentality. POJ is conspicuously different from all of its threatening competitors in its high potential to return to all-romanization and, therefore, is counter-Chinese. Other systems discussed in this paper are not designed to become all-roman and will have to use kanji. It thus seems that, among all the tugging forces, resinicization versus desinicization is the underlying source of conflict. Resinicization sustains kanji and phonetic notation alphabets, which, in turn, sustain all-kanji writing, the product of sinicization. Resinicization also keeps TY and universalism, the by-products of sinicization, popular in the non-academic circles. Meanwhile, it keeps POJ unpopular in many arenas. Desinicization, on the other hand, can lead to the elimination of kanji and restore POJ to its position. The competition between resinicization and desinicization appears to be triggering the competition between the two traditional orthographies, which had not existed before modern Mandarin colonization.