

**LANGUAGE, LITERACY, AND NATIONALISM IN
VIETNAM AND TAIWAN**

**WI-VUN TAIFFALO CHIUNG
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON
ARLINGTON, TEXAS**

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1. Introduction

Hanzi (Han character) cultural areas, such as Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and China, used Han characters and the classical Han writing¹ (*wenyan* 文言文) before the twentieth century. However, there were great changes before the advent of the twentieth century. In Vietnam, Han characters and its derivative characters, *Chu Nom* (字喃), which had been adopted as writing systems for more than a thousand years in Vietnam, were officially replaced by the romanized *Chu Quoc Ngu* in 1945, the year of the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The *Chu Quoc Ngu* was developed on the basis of romanized Vietnamese writing, which was originally developed by missionaries in the seventeenth century. In Korea, Han characters were finally replaced by *Hangul* (諺文) after World War II. *Hangul*, the Korean phonemic writing system, was originally designed and promulgated by King *Sejong* in 1446. In Japan, the

¹ For details about the Han characters and classical Han writing, see DeFrancis 1990; Norman 1988.

syllabary *Kana* (假名) system was gradually developed after Japan's adoption of Han characters; although Han characters are not completely replaced by *Kana*, the number of Han characters used by Japanese decreased from thousands to 1,945 frequently used characters in 1981 (cf. Hannas 1997).

In Taiwan, there are currently three types of Taiwanese writing schemes: 1) using only Han characters, 2) using Han characters and roman scripts, and 3) using only roman scripts (cf. Cheng 1990; Tiu^N 1997; Chiung 1999). The chaotic situation of writing Taiwanese reflects the complex of political claims and relation between Taiwan and China. That is, unification with China, maintaining current political status, or independence. In Hong Kong, people keep using Han characters with minor revision of Han characters to write Cantonese. It reflects their fate that Hong Kong had to return to China in 1997. As for China, although writing reform has been in progressing since the late period of the nineteenth century, Han characters are still widely used and taught in the national education system. It seems that Han characters will still be the dominant orthography, at least for the present (cf. DeFrancis 1950, 1990; Hannas 1997).

Among these countries, Vietnam and Taiwan were both introduced to romanized writings by Western missionaries in the seventeenth century. However, they have different consequences today. That is, Chu Quoc Ngu eventually became the official written language of Vietnam, but romanization is still excluded from the national education system of Taiwan. What are the factors that led to the different consequences of Vietnam and Taiwan? Is Taiwan going to adopt romanization in the future? This paper examines the developments and influences of romanization in the traditional Hanji dominant Vietnamese and Taiwanese societies. Both internal and external factors have contributed to the different outcomes of romanization in these two countries. Internal factors include the general public's demands for literacy and anti-feudal hierarchy; external factors include the political relationships between these countries and the origin of Hanji (i.e., China).

2. Socio-cultural Background in the Hanji Sphere

China's main influences on countries in the Han sphere include: 1) The adoption² of Han characters and classical Han

² The influence of Han characters on China's neighbors was reflected on the early historical books, which were the first annals written and compiled in classical Han by their governments to record their early history. They are “古事

writing to write Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese.

2) Imported Buddhism, Confucianism, the civil service examination (or imperial examination system 科舉制度) and the government official system. According to the Han characters and the imperial examination system, the books of Confucius and Mencius were accorded the status of classics among scholars and mandarins who assisted the emperor or king in governing his people. Everyone who desired to become a scholar or mandarin had to learn to use Hanji and read these classics and pass the imperial examination, unless he had a close relationship with the emperor. However, the classics were not only difficult to read (i.e., Hanji), but also hard to understand (i.e., the texts), because the texts were written in classical Han writing instead of colloquial speech (*Baihua* 白話). In other words, because most of the people were farmers who labored in the fields all day long, they had little interest in learning Hanji and classical writing. As a consequence, a noble class and a peasant class were formed and the classes strengthened the feudal society. This complication of Hanji could be well expressed with the old Taiwanese saying, “*Hanji na thak e-*

記” (712 A. D.) and “日本書紀” (720 A. D.) in Japan, “三國史記” (1145 A. D.) in Korea, and “大越史記” (1253 A. D.) in Vietnam.

bat, chhui-chhiu to phah si-kat 漢字若讀會 bat, 嘴鬚就打死結.”

It means that you can't understand all the Han characters even if you studied until you could tie your beard into a knot. Or another saying, “*Si-su Ngou-keng Thak Thau-thau, M-bat Ku Pih Chau* 四書五經讀透透, m-bat 龜鼈竈,” which means you still can not distinguish the characters of tortoise, turtle, and cooking stove even if you have studied all of the classics. In short, the demand for widespread literacy was the advising factor pushing reform of writing systems.

Writing in Hanji was considered morphosyllabic writing (DeFrancis 1990:88). The primary problem of the morphosyllabic writing is a higher number of characters inventory and its inefficiency³ for writing. Consequently, writing in Han character become a burden of its learner, and may cause some further problems as Chen pointed out “to a large responsible for the country's high illiteracy and low efficiency, and hence an impediment to the process of modernization” (Chen 1994:367).

In contrast to the internal factor of social demand of literacy, the external factor was the political interaction between

³ For detailed discussion about the efficiency of Han characters and classical Han writing, see DeFrancis 1990, 1996, Norman 1991, and Chen 1999.

China and those countries. Historically, the Chinese people had the dominant status in Han sphere prior to the twentieth century. Consequently, the reform of written language against classical Han writing would be considered a violation of the Chinese Empire. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Western colonialism came to the Han cultural areas. As a result, China was no longer able to dominate these areas. She was even unable to defend herself from the Western invasions. On the other hand, the rise of modern nationalism against the Western colonialism in these areas, forced those people to consider their national transitions from a feudal society to a modern society. To achieve this purpose, considering a writing reform to reduce the population of illiterate people became an important job. In addition, the nationalism against colonialism also caused Vietnam, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan to reconsider their relationships with China. That is to say, they had to maintain the vassal relationship with China or become a politically and culturally independent country. Under the influence of literacy and independence, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan were successful in the great changes from Han character to *Chu Quoc Ngu*, *Hangul*, and *Kana*. However, in China, although there were many proposed orthographic designs since the late period of

the nineteenth century, such as *Qie-yin-zi* (切音字), *Quan-hua Zi-mu* (官話字母), and Latinization, Han characters have been only successfully simplified so far. The pattern of writing reforms in Asia is the same as Gelb mentioned in his famous book about the world's writing reforms, “in all cases it was the foreigners who were not afraid to break away from sacred traditions and were thus able to introduce reforms which led to new and revolutionary developments”(Gelb 1952: 196).

3. Language, Literacy, and Nationalism in Vietnam

Hanji was first employed in the writing system of Vietnam. Later on Chu Nom occurred in the tenth century, and romanized Vietnamese in the seventeenth century. The relation between languages and political status since 111 B.C. in Vietnam is shown in **Table 1**:

Table 1. Relation between languages and political status in Vietnam

Period	Political Status	Spoken Languages	Writing Systems
111B.C.-939A.D.	Chinese colonialism	Vietnamese/Chinese	Chinese (Han characters)
939-1651	Monarchical independence	Vietnamese/Chinese	Chinese/Nom
1651-1861	Monarchical independence	Vietnamese/Chinese	Chinese/Nom/pre-Quoc Ngu
1861-1945	French colonialism	Vietnamese/Chinese/French	Chinese/Nom/Quoc Ngu/French
1945-	National independence	Vietnamese	Quoc Ngu

*Based on John DeFrancis 1977.

Nom or *Chu Nom* (字字 字南 or 字喃) was created gradually after the classical Han writing was introduced to Vietnam. The Vietnamese found that it was not easy to use Hanji to express their colloquial speech. Therefore, they modified Hanji to develop Nom characters. Although the Vietnamese created their own Chu Nom, it was generally regarded as a vulgar writing, which refers to the low language in digraphia (cf. Dale 1980; DeFrancis 1984). Consequently, it neither achieved the same prestige as Han characters, nor replaced the classical Han writing. This consequence reflects the facts in psychological and orthographic aspects. First, from the social-psychological perspective, classical Han writing in Han characters is considered the orthodox by the Vietnamese since it has been adopted as the official writing system in administration and examination for over a thousand years.

Moreover, any attempts to use orthography other than Han characters were regarded as hostile to the great China. For example, *Ho Quy Ly* was captured to China because he proposed to replace the Han characters with Chu Nom during his short-lived rule (1400-1407)(DeFrancis 1977:32). Second, from the perspective of orthography, Chu Nom was still difficult for the masses to learn to read and write. Sometimes, Chu Nom was even more difficult and complicated than Han characters because Chu Nom often combined two Han characters, one which expressed the meaning and another which expressed the pronunciation, to form a new Chu Nom. For example, they combined “字” with “字” to form a new Nom character “字字,” and combined “字” with “南” to form “字南.” The complication of Chu Nom reflects the consequence that Chu Nom was not widespread even under the promotion of Vietnamese rulers such as Ho Quy Ly (cf. DeFrancis 1977:20-48; Nguyen 1984).

In the early part of the seventeenth century, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, and French missionaries gradually came to preach in Vietnam. To get their ideas across to the local people, it was recognized by missionaries that knowledge of the spoken Vietnamese was essential. Romanized writing was thus devised to

assist missionaries to acquire the Vietnamese language. It is apparent that the Vietnamese romanization resulted from collective efforts, with the influences of diverse backgrounds of missionaries (Thompson 1987:54-55). Among the variants of Vietnamese romanization, Alexandre de Rhodes is usually referred to as the person who provided the first systematic work of Vietnamese romanization (DeFrancis 1977:54). In 1624, the French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes arrived in central Vietnam. He used Roman scripts as a writing system to describe the Vietnamese language and then he published the first Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin dictionary, *Dictionarium Annamiticum, Lusitanum et Latinum*, and a Vietnamese catechism *Cathechismus* in 1651. De Rhodes' romanized system with some later changes became the foundation of present Quoc Ngu, the national writing system of Vietnam (cf. Do 1972; DeFrancis 1977:48-66; Thompson 1987:52-77)

From the perspective of literacy, roman script was much easier to acquire than Han character or Chu Nom. However, Vietnamese romanization was not widespread until the early twentieth century. There are two primary reasons. First, the use of romanized Vietnamese was primarily limited to the Catholic community prior to the twentieth century. DeFrancis (1977:64) has

pointed out that most missionaries “looked upon it [romanization] chiefly as a tool in working with the Vietnamese language and were not greatly concerned with urging its use in other areas.” Moreover, even if people outside the Catholic community wanted to learn the romanization, they were afraid of being treated as Catholic or collaborators with foreign missionaries since there were conflicts between local people and foreign missionaries. Consequently, there was no wide usage outside the Catholic community (DeFrancis 1977:61). Second, it was the reflection of people’s psychological preference of the Han character since Han character has reached the orthodox status since the Ly dynasty. This phenomenon of preference is especially true to the traditional scholars and officials. For example, it was reported that Confucian schools, which are essential access to acquisition of Han writing and Chinese classics, continued to exist and attract students as late as the first decade or two of the twentieth century (DeFrancis 1977:124).

Since French colonization was involved in the colonial history of Vietnam, what role have the French (1861-1945) played in the orthographic transition of the Vietnamese language? First of all, the French had weakened or even replaced the role played by

the Chinese in Vietnam. In the nineteenth century, China was losing her dominance of Asia since the Opium war in 1842. In addition, Japan's successful Westernization, shown in such wars as her victories over China in 1895 and over Tsarist Russia in 1904-1905, had impressed the Vietnamese. The appearance of the French power in Indochina⁴ enforced the Vietnamese people to experience the new political power from Western society, and further reconsidering their relationship with the traditional feudal China. Second, French's antagonism toward Chinese had strengthened the promotion of the romanized system. Their hostile attitudes toward Chinese was summed up in a letter of 15 January 1866 by a French administrator, Paulin Vial, who held the position of *Directeur du Cabinet du Gouverneur de la Cochinchine* "From the first days it was recognized that the Chinese language was a barrier between us and the natives...; it is the only one which can bring close to us the Annamites of the colony by inculcating in them the principles of European civilization and isolating them from the hostile influence of our neighbors" (quoted in DeFrancis 1977:77). Thus, the actions taken by the French colonialists included termination of the traditional civil service examination,

⁴ Indochina includes present Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

and promotion of the romanized Vietnamese, which was regarded as a closer connection to French since both French and Romanized Vietnamese were using roman scripts. Nevertheless, the eventual goal of the colonialists was to replace Vietnamese with French after the Vietnamese acquired the romanized system (DeFrancis 1977:131).

Although the French colonialists and collaborationists had promoted romanized Vietnamese for decades by the twentieth century, it received only a slow growth (DeFrancis 1977:69). In contrast, romanized system reached a rapid growth under the promotion of the Vietnamese nationalists when they lunched their modern nationalist movement in the early twentieth century (DeFrancis 1977:159). Romanized *Quoc Ngu* or the National Language was promoted by nationalists in the example of *Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc*⁵. In 1907 Vietnamese nationalists established Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc (東京義塾), Tokin Free School, a private school to teach students Western ideas, science, and to train students as well-promoters of Vietnamese nationalist movement. One of the significant features of Tokin Free School was promotion of Quoc Ngu. As Marr (1971:167) stated, the teachers at

Token Free School showed “a new willingness to employ quoc-ngu when introducing outside ideas or techniques, and they urged each student to use the romanized script subsequently as a device for passing on modern knowledge to hundreds of their less literate countrymen.”

A few days after Ho Chi Minh declared the establishment of Democratic Republic of Viet Nam on September 2, 1945, Ho soon issued a decree to promote Quoc Ngu and Vietnamese on September 8 (DeFrancis 1977:239). The number of people who acquired to read and write Quoc Ngu after the achievement of independence was reported by Le Thanh Khoi (quoted in DeFrancis 1977:240) to have risen from 20 percent in the year 1945 to 70 percent in 1953.

How could Vietnam successfully replace Han characters and Chu Nom with romanized Quoc Ngu? Hannas (1997:88-92) stated twelve factors, and concluded that “the compelling factor behind this success is that Vietnam never had a top-down, coordinated, state-backed movement to effect the reform” (1997:84). Although it is true that bottom-up grass root movement played an important role in Vietnam’s orthographic transition, I

⁵ For details, see Marr (1971:156-184).

would attribute the consequence to two crucial factors: 1) external factor of political interaction between Vietnam and China in the international situation of the first half of the twentieth century, and 2) internal factor of social demand for literacy. These two crucial points can apply to the case of Taiwanese romanization, and explain why romanized system has not achieved popular and official status in Taiwan.

The external factor involves the complexity of international situation in the 1940s, as Hodgkin (1981:288) stated that the Vietnamese “faced with a varying combination of partly competing, partly collaborating imperialisms, French, Japanese, British and American, with *Kuomintang* China.” At that time, Vietnam was considered an important base to attack southern China⁶ when Japan’s invasion of China became more apparent and aggressive since the 1930s (Hodgkin 1981:288). The Japanese military eventually entered Vietnam and sharing with French the control of Vietnam in the early 1940s. From the perspective of China, suppression against Japan’s military activities in Vietnam was desired. However, in the viewpoint of the French, they were afraid

⁶ In the view point of Japan, domination of Vietnam and its northern trade-route was essential for effective control of southern China since the *Tonkin* Railway from *Haiphong* to *Yunnan* was vital source of supplies for *Kuomintang*

that China would take over Vietnam again if Chinese troops entered Vietnam on the excuse of suppression against Japanese forces (Jiang 1971:181). For the Vietnamese people, how to maintain their national identity and achieve national independence from the imperialisms were considered priority by their leaders such as Ho Chi Minh. Ho's Chinese strategy was to keep Chinese forces away from Vietnam, and minimize the possibility of Chinese comeback in the Indochina. Politically speaking, Ho refused Chinese army entering Vietnam (Jiang 1971:107) as well as instigating anti-Chinese movement (Jiang 1971:228-240); Culturally, romanized Vietnamese was considered a distinctive feature of cultural boundary between Vietnam and China. These considerations have impelled Ho in favor of romanization rather than Han characters which are used in China.

The internal factor of social demand for literacy is understandable. Since Ho Chi Minh claimed that 95 percent of Vietnam's total population were illiterates, it was important to equip the people with primary education, which was considered essential to modernization in order to fight against imperialisms. Thus, the efficient and easily learned romanization was the best

China (Hodgkin:288).

choice for literacy in contrast to the complexity of Han characters. In addition, it is more aggressive for illiterates to accept a new writing system than literates to shift their literacy to a different orthography. For example, in the case of English, Stubbs (1980:72) points out that “conservatism and the inertia of habits and tradition” played an important role in explaining why English spelling reform is not successful. Since the majority of Vietnamese were illiterates, and only a few elites were skilled in Han writing or French during the promotion of Quoc Ngu, it was clear that romanized Vietnamese would be favored by the majority, and thus win the literacy campaign.

4. Language, Literacy, and Nationalism in Taiwan

The first written language in Taiwan was the so-called *Sinkang* Manuscripts (新港文書), a romanized system to write the vernacular of indigenous Siraya tribes during Dutch occupation of Taiwan in the seventeenth century. Thereafter, the classical Han writing was adopted as an official language by government, and *Koa-a-chheh* was treated as the popular writing for the public during the Koxinga and the Qing occupations. In addition to those

two written forms, other romanized systems, such as *Peh-oe-ji*⁷ have been developed to write Taiwanese⁸ and Hakka languages since the nineteenth century. After Taiwan became a part of Japan (1895-1945), Japanese writing became the official written language in Taiwan. After World War II, Mandarin Chinese became the orthodox of writing under Chiang Kai-shek's occupation of Taiwan. The relation between language and political status in Taiwan was shown in **Table 2**.

⁷ cf. Chiung 2000.

⁸ Taiwanese is also called Taigi, Tai-yu, Holoee, Southern Min, or Min-nan. The broad definition of Taiwanese includes all the indigenous languages, Hakfa, and Holoee. Occasionally, Taiwanese refers to Holoee only. Holoee speakers account for 73.3% of Taiwan's population, Hakfa 12%, indigenous 1.7%, and Mandarin speakers who came to Taiwan with KMT account 13% (Huang 1993:21).

Table 2. Relation between language and political status in Taiwan

Period	Political status	Spoken Languages	Writing Systems**
-1624	Tribal society	Aboriginal	Tribal
1624-1661	Dutch colonialism	Aboriginal/Taiwanese*	Sinkang (新港文) Classical Han (文言文)
1661-1683	Koxinga colonialism	Aboriginal/Taiwanese	Classical Han Sinkang
1683-1895	Qing colonialism	Aboriginal/Taiwanese	Classical Han Koa-a-chheh (歌仔冊) Peh-oe-ji Sinkang
1895-1945	Japanese colonialism	Aboriginal/Taiwanese/Japanese	Japanese Classical Han Colloquial Han (in Taiwanese) Colloquial Han (in Mandarin) Peh-oe-ji Kana-Taiwanese (臺式假名)
1945-2000	KMT colonialism	Aboriginal/Taiwanese/Mandarin	Chinese (Mandarin) Taiwanese Aboriginal

* Taiwanese means Hakka-Taiwanese and Holo-Taiwanese here.

** The order of listed writing systems in each cell of this column do not indicate the year of occurrences. The first listed orthography refers to the official written language adopted by its relevant governor.

Prior to the twentieth century, the classical Han writing was the dominant writing system in Taiwan. Most literary works were then written in this system. However, about two decades later under the Japanese occupation, Taiwanese intellectuals started the issue of reforming classical Han writing. In general, the movement

of colloquial writing from the 1920s to the 1930s centered on two points. First, they intended to reform the complicated classical Han writing and then develop a new writing form, which was based on the colloquial speech. Second, they attempted to create a new literature which was based on the new colloquial writing, instead of the old literature which was based on the classical Han writing. (Iap 1993; Phenn 1992; Lim 1993; Lim 1996; Tiunn 1993).

Regarding the claim of reforming classical Han writing, it quickly and successfully aroused a sympathetic echo from the public. However, it raised another controversy. What language should be the base of colloquial writing? Japanese, Mandarin, or Taiwanese? At that time, Taiwan was under the control of Japan, and the modern Japanese writing was taught through the national education system. It seemed that Japanese writing was the best choice, if considering the economic factors. However, Japanese was not the vernacular of the Taiwanese people. Most of the people still used Taiwan languages in their daily life. Therefore, people such as *Chioh-hui Ng* (黃石輝 1930) and *Chhiu-seng Koeh* (郭秋生 1931) advocated that Taiwanese people should use colloquial Taiwanese to write poems, fiction, and so on. In other words, they asserted that the new literature should be written in

Taiwanese. In addition to Taiwanese, Mandarin was also proposed by some people such as *Ngou-kun Tiunn* (張我軍), who had studied in China. Because Tiunn thought that Taiwanese vernacular was too vulgar to become a literate language, he advocated using Mandarin⁹ as the literate language to create this new literature.

As a consequence, the so-called New Literature developed in the 1920s was generally written in the colloquial speech of Japanese, Taiwanese, and Mandarin. Although Japanese writing was the only official written language, writings in colloquial Taiwanese or Mandarin, which primarily used Hanji (these were so-called *Hanbun* 漢文) were still allowed in some particular newspapers and magazines until 1937, the year the Japanese started to attack China. In order to win the war against China, Japan promoted the *Hong-bin-hoa*¹⁰ movement in Taiwan, which

⁹ Under the Japanese occupation, most of the Taiwanese spoke either Taiwanese or Japanese. Only a few who had studied abroad in China were able to speak in Mandarin. The key point that someone proposed to promote Mandarin writing as the new writing system was because Mandarin was written in Han characters. People would be able to guess the meanings from Han characters, even though Mandarin was not the vernacular of the Taiwanese people. Besides, modern colloquial writing of Mandarin had been promoted since the movement of May 4, 1919 (五四運動) in China. Those promoters asserted that it would be better for Taiwan to follow China's writing reform.

¹⁰ 皇民化運動: Movement of being the glorious people of the Japanese Empire.

strongly forced Taiwanese to identify themselves as Japanese, and then fight for the Japanese against the Chinese. During the Hongbin-hoa movement, Han writing, which was the symbol of a connection between Taiwanese and Chinese, was then prohibited by Japan. The movement of colloquial writing since 1920s was therefore ended in 1937.

Although the colloquial writing movement successfully converted the traditional classical Han writing to modern colloquial writing, Hanji still was the dominant orthography. There were only a few colloquial writing promoters such as *Poe-hoe Chhoa* (蔡培火 1925), who pointed out that colloquial writing in Hanji was still a heavy burden for most Taiwanese. However, although romanization is much more efficient than Hanji, romanized Taiwanese is not widely accepted by people in Taiwan. Writing in roman script is regarded as the low language in digraphia.¹¹ There are three crucial points for this phenomenon:

First, people's preference for Han characters is caused by their internalized socialization. Because Han characters have been adopted as the official orthography for two thousand years, being

¹¹ cf. Tiuⁿ 1998; Dale 1980; DeFrancis 1984.

able to master Han characters well is a symbol of scholarship in the Han cultural areas. Writing in scripts other than Han characters may be regarded as childish writing.

Second, misunderstanding of the nature and function of Han characters has enforced people's preference for Hanji. Many people believe that Hanji are ideally suited for the Han language family, which includes the Taiwanese language; they believe that Taiwanese cannot be expressed well without Hanji because Hanji are logographs and each character expresses a distinctive semantic function.

The third reason that Peh-oe-ji is not widespread in Taiwan is because of political factors. Symbolically, Han characters are regarded as a symbol of Chinese culture by the Chinese ROC regime. Writing in scripts other than Han characters is forbidden because it is perceived as a challenge to Chinese culture and Chinese nationalism. For example, the romanized New Testament "*Sin Iok*" was once seized in 1975 because the romanized Peh-oe-ji was regarded as a challenge to the orthodox status of Han characters.

The second period of Taiwanese language movement refers to the "*Taibun* movement" from the mid-1980s to the present 2000.

It reveals the upsurge in promoting standardization for Taiwanese languages, and the promotion of *Taigi* literature.¹² Taibun, on the grounds of its characters, means modern Taiwanese writing or Taigi writing. It was created in contrast to *Zhongwen* (中文), which means modern Mandarin Chinese writing.

As the colloquial writing movement became allied with the political movement in the 1920s, the Taibun movement also occurred along with the rise of the native political activities against the foreign KMT regime in the middle of 1980s. Generally speaking, the Taibun movement consists of two dimensions: the linguistic and the literature dimensions. From the linguistic dimension, vernacular education and standardization of written Taiwanese are the two primary goals of Taibun promoters. From the perspective of literature, the Taibun movement attempts to link to the issue of Taiwanese writing, which occurred during the colloquial writing movement in the early period of the twentieth century, and then establish Taigi literature. For example, Yam Poetry Society was established by some Taiwanese writers in May 1991. They claimed that their objectives were “to create the

¹² The term “Taigi literature” (台語文學) is to specify the literature in Taiwanese language(s). It refers to literature works written in native languages

Taiwanese literature in the native Taiwanese languages,” and “to achieve the standardization and literaturization of Taigi” (Lim 1996:97-99). While “Taigi literature represents Taiwan Literature” was the claim, some Mandarin writers, such as *Kiau Li* (李喬 1991) and *Sui-kim Phenn* (彭瑞金 1991) argued that language is not an important component of literature. They asserted that literary works in any language could be Taiwan Literature. In other words, both Li and Phenn recognized the legitimate status of Mandarin writing for the literature of Taiwan.

In short, the contemporary Taibun movement since the 1980s reflects Taiwan’s socio-political complexity and its colonial background. In terms of nationalism¹³ and nationism,¹⁴ it reveals the controversial relationship among Chinese nationalism-

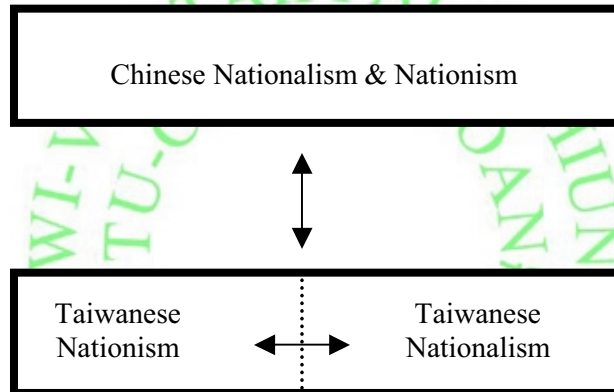
such as Holoee and Hakfa. Occasionally, it refers to works in Holoee only.

¹³ Fishman (1968:41) defines nationalism as the “process of transformation from fragmentary and tradition-bound ethnicity to unifying and ideologized nationality.” The role of language in nationalism is that it serves as link with the glorious past and with authenticity. A language is not only a vehicle for the history of a nationality, but a part of history itself (Fasold 1984:3).

¹⁴ Fishman (1968:42) describes nationism as “wherever politico-geographic momentum and consideration are in advance of sociocultural momentum and consideration.” The role of language in nationism is that whatever language does the job best is the best choice (Fasold 1984:3). In other words, language in nationism plays a more instrumental role. For example, considering government administration and education, a language or languages which do the job best must be chosen.

nationism,¹⁵ Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1. Relationship among Chinese nationalism-nationism, Taiwanese nationalism, and Taiwanese nationalism.



In the dimension of nationalism and nationism, it reveals the political tensions between Chinese and Taiwanese. Chinese nationalism can be inherited from the internal Chinese KMT and as well as external People's Republic of China. The strong conflicts between KMT's Chinese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism were overt in the anti-KMT movement¹⁶ in the second half of the

¹⁵ At the beginning of Chinese KMT's occupation of Taiwan, Chinese nationalists could have different opinions from Chinese nationalists. However, later on when the use of Mandarin by people in Taiwan had dramatically increased, the objects of Chinese nationalism and Chinese nationism have become the same. That is to keep using Mandarin since it has dominated educational and governmental functions in Taiwan. Therefore, I do not distinguish Chinese nationalism from Chinese nationism here.

¹⁶ In this paper, I consider 1986, when the first native opposition party

1980s and the entire 1990s. The conflicts between PRC Chinese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism started in the late 1980s¹⁷ and reached the climax in 1999 when the former president Teng-hui Lee claimed that Taiwan and China hold “special state to state” relationship. In the dimension of Taiwanese, it shows the expanding tension between Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism. Many politicians and intellectuals who lead socio-political movement, such as *Hong-Beng Tan* (陳芳明), *Sui-kim Phenn* (彭瑞金) and *Chhun-Beng Ng* (黃春明), do not value Taibun movement as a necessary step even though they identify themselves as Taiwanese rather than Chinese. In their ideology, they disapprove with KMT’s strict national language policy; however, they have come to the stage to accept the results of the national language policy. In other words, they recognize the legitimate status of the colonial language, i.e., Mandarin Chinese as the official language since it has been widespread in Taiwan after more than fifty years of promotion. However, it is criticized

Democratic Progressive Party was born, the beginning of anti-KMT movement though its origin can be traced back to the 1970s. KMT lost its ruling status in the 2000 presidential election; therefore, 2000 was considered the end of the anti-KMT movement.

¹⁷ For example, Iu-choan Chhoa (蔡有全), Cho-tek Khou (許曹德), and Lam-iong Tenn (鄭南榕) claimed the independence of Taiwan to the public in

by Taiwanese nationalists that the Taiwanese nationalists have ignored the threat of Chinese nationalism from China. From the perspective of Taiwanese nationalism, Taiwanese language is not only a communication medium, but also a part of history and spirit of Taiwan. Moreover, it is considered a national defense against Chinese nationalism of the PRC and the ROC. In short, whether or not Taiwanese people are willing to accept or shift to Taibun deeply depends on people's national identity and their attitudes toward a new orthography.

5. Conclusion

In the case of Vietnam, romanized system was promoted when the Vietnamese reached the climax of demand of anti-illiterate and anti-feudal society in the early twentieth century. In addition, the contradictory relationship among Vietnam, China, France, and Japan in the early 1940s have enforced Vietnamese leaders to choose romanization as a distinctive cultural boundary between Vietnam and China. These two crucial points have contributed to Vietnam's successful transition from Han characters to roman scripts. In contrast to Vietnam, romanized Taiwanese was

1987.

not widely promoted to the general public while they reached the demand of literacy and anti-feudalism in the early twentieth century. Moreover, Taiwan was directly under the military occupation of the Chinese KMT at the end of World War II. Thereafter, the Chinese ROC regime was renewed in Taiwan since 1949. Consequently, romanization in Taiwan has a reverse outcome from Vietnam.

How can Taiwan reverse the language and orthographic situation? At least, the Taiwanese have to solve two crucial problems. First, most people in present Taiwan have acquired Modern Written Chinese and Han characters to some degree. Thus, how to persuade people to approach a new orthography is important. Second, the current ambiguous national status and diversity of national identity in Taiwan reflect people's uncertain determinations on the issue of written Taiwanese. On the other hand, people's uncertain determinations on the Taibun issue also reflect the political controversy on national status. Chiung's (1999:135) research on the attitudes of Taiwanese college students toward written Taiwanese reveals that national identity is one of the significant factors to affect students' attitudes toward Taiwanese writing. Hence, the promotion of Taiwanese identity

and nationalism against Chinese nationalism are considered important.



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