WRITING REFORM AT A CROSSROADS IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA:

THE INTERPLAY OF LINGUISTIC AND NON-LINGUISTIC FACTORS

by

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B.A., Beijing Second Institute of Foreign Languages, 1984

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS (COMMUNICATION)

In the School

of

COMMUNICATION

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

July 1994

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DEGREE: M.A.

TITLE: Writing Reform at a Crossroads in Contemporary China: The Interplay of Linguistic and Non-Linguistic Factors

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ABSTRACT

Since the creation of the first alphabetic writing system for Chinese in 1892 by Lu Zhuangzhang, a reform-minded Chinese intellectual, reform of the writing system (hereafter writing reform) has become an inseparable component of China's socio-political discourse. The traditional character-based script with a history of 3,500 years has been questioned and challenged throughout this century by intellectuals like Lu. They contend that the difficult script is an impediment to mass literacy, modernization and national development.

However, writing reform as a movement, an ideal, and a long-term project over the past century has met with much opposition in the 1980s and 1990s, as writing reformers continue to address the long-term reform goal for a simpler script. The opposition comes from a group of intellectuals who challenge the reformers' claim that there is a causal relationship between the script and national development. They argue that Chinese characters should not be blamed for the country's large illiteracy rate and underdevelopment. Moreover, they argue that the Chinese script is a unique symbol of Chinese culture and national unity. Thus writing reform in China has come to a crossroads.

The thesis focuses on the writing reform debate in the 1980s and 1990s and examines the reasons why the reform has come

to the present stalemate. It argues that both linguistic and non-linguistic factors have contributed to this state of affairs. Moreover, it suggests that both domestic and international environments have influenced the arguments about, and the direction of, the debate in the 1980s and 1990s.

The study illustrates that reforming the writing system in China is an extremely complicated, sensitive, and controversial issue. It is mainly based on a review of the literature regarding the origins and development of writing reform in China. This method is supplemented by interviews with leading figures from the two opposing sides of the reform debate.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents and sister and all the ordinary Chinese citizens like them. It is also dedicated to those intellectuals--Chinese and foreign--who are devoted to working for a "New China" in which everyone will have an equal right to and opportunity for life, education, and personal improvement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

In the mid-1800s China was beset by a series of crises of both an internal and external nature. [1] A large number of reform-minded Chinese intellectuals were awakened and attempted to find the reasons for, and solution to, these crises. They concluded that a major cause lay in the very low literacy rate of the vast masses of the population.

The intellectuals believed that this vast illiteracy had its genesis in the complexity of China's traditional character-based script as compared to the alphabetic writing system of Western countries and even to the Japanese kana syllabic system. They reasoned that the traditional script had made it difficult for ordinary people to become literate. Consequently, education and science as a whole lagged behind, which resulted in the country's weakness and backwardness. [2]

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[1] In 1851, the Taiping Rebellion led by Hong Xiuquan broke out in South China and spread to more than half of China. Involving an estimated number of 100,000 participants, most of them peasants, it lasted for 11 years. As for the external crisis, the Opium War of 1840-1842 with Britain was followed by a series of Western invasions and unequal treaties.

[2] The following comments by Lu Zhuangzhang, a writing reform forerunner, are typical of his like-minded contemporaries: "...the wealth and strength of a country depend on science. The growth of science depends on everyone--men and women, young and old...Their ability to have a love of learning and a knowledge of theory depends on using a phonetic system of writing; then, once the alphabet and spelling have been mastered, everything can be read by oneself without a teacher. It depends on speech and writing being the same, then what is read by the mouth will be understood by the mind. It also depends on having a simple script...This will save more than 10 years' time. If all this time is applied to the study

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The writing reformers attempted to reform Chinese characters mainly in two divergent ways. The |first| approach aimed to improve the Chinese script by limiting the total number of characters in actual use or by reducing the number of strokes required to complete a character. The |second| approach called for a fundamental change. This involved the reform of the non-alphabetic system into an alphabetic one by using graphic symbols derived from Chinese characters, Latin (Roman) letters, or other devices such as shorthand. These ideas and attempts have continued to surface for a century and have been characterized by a general term--writing or script reform, or language modernization. [3]

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 witnessed a continuation of writing reform, more or less along the same line as the historical movement in terms of motivation and approach. The reform in the 1950s targeted three major tasks: simplifying a number of frequently used Chinese

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of mathematics, the natural sciences, chemistry, all sorts of practical studies. How can there be any fear that our country will not be rich and strong?" (in DeFrancis 1950:34-35)

[3] "Writing reform" (wenzi gaige) also refers to the "writing reform movement" and "language modernization movement" as a kind of activity or trend in thinking for specific purposes during a period of time. The term may include speech reform as well since scripts always represent speech systems, and a reform of a script has to be based on a certain form of speech. For example, the Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (Hanyu Pinyin Fang'an, hereafter as Pinyin), though not an official writing system, is based on the Beijing pronunciation and can be used to write the "common language or speech" (Putonghua).

characters, promoting a national standard common speech (Putonghua), and designing a phonetic alphabet (Pinyin) [4] in order to facilitate the learning of Chinese characters and Putonghua (Zhou 1958). Under the leadership of the Committee on Script Reform, [5] a governmental institution which was directly under the State Council, the three tasks were implemented nation-wide with considerable vigor and force. The results of this reform have had a significant impact on Chinese society in the subsequent decades. [6]

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), writing reform was discontinued to a large extent and even plunged into chaos. [7] However, interest revived again in the late 1970s when the Chinese government started to implement economic reforms and the policy of opening the country to the outside world. The writing

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[4] Pinyin literally means "spelling sound." I will use this system for writing Chinese personal and place names, transcribing the pronunciation (including tones) of Chinese characters, and translating some important terms for their English counterparts. However, exceptions are made to keep some conventional spellings of personal names, such as Mao Tse-tung and Chao Yuen Ren.

[5] The Committee's name in Pinyin is Wenzi Gaige Weiyuanhui.

[6] Since the mid-1950s, all the publications are printed in simplified characters, except for a small quantity which are still printed in complex characters for academic or other specific use. Also, Pinyin has been taught as a must at the elementary level to facilitate the learning of the characters and Putonghua.

[7] According to Zhou Youguang, a member of the Committee on Script Reform, most of the Committee members were sent to the May Seventh Cadres' School during the Cultural Revolution. Without consulting them, the second batch of simplified characters were prepared by non-professional people in the Committee. As it was not a well-thought scheme it was unpopular among many people. In 1981, the government decided to officially withdraw the whole plan.

reformers, who are either directly or indirectly affiliated with the official Committee on Script Reform, emphasized the importance of their initiatives for language modernization in accordance with the then official goals of the Four Modernizations. [8] As the political atmosphere was much freer than previously, and the advent of computerization challenged Chinese written script, they obtained considerable support for Latinizing Chinese written language. [9]

However, writing reform as a movement, an ideal, and as a long-term program, met with much opposition in the 1980s and 1990s, compared to 1950s. [10] The opposition came from a non-governmental organization--the Society for Research on the Modernization of Chinese Characters. [11] Comprised of intellectuals, the Society also emphasized its ties with the government initiatives for modernization, but from a very different line from that of writing reformers. They wanted to either keep the basic square form of Chinese characters with

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[8] The Four Modernizations are agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology.

[9] For example, the Language Reform Association of Chinese Institutions of Higher Learning (Quanguo gaodeng yuan-xiao wenzi gaige xuehui) was established in 1980 and was very active in promoting language reform in terms of Latinization of the Chinese script. It published a journal entitled Language Modernization (Yuwen xiandaihua) and also frequently held symposiums attended by influential figures who supported language reform.

[10] In the writing reform campaign in the 1950s, the establishment of a highly centralized Communist government and the overwhelming force in support of reform effectively suppressed the opposition to writing reform.

[11] The Society's name in Pinyin is Hanzi Xiandaihua Yanjiuhui.

improvement in some aspects such as sound function, or leave the whole writing system intact. [12]

They also challenged the reformers' claim that there is a causal relationship between the script and mass literacy, modernization, and national progress. They argued that Chinese characters should not be blamed for the country's underdevelopment. While writing reformers attempted to further promote reform projects including the efforts to expand the use of the official phonetic alphabetic system (Pinyin), their opponents sought to negatively evaluate the century-old writing reform movement, particularly the mainstream efforts aimed at Latinizing the Chinese script. The debate between the two opposing groups culminated in a bitter and acrimonious exchange of arguments in 1992, when the anti-reformers produced "The Miraculous Chinese Characters," a four-episode televison series, which extols the virtues of the Chinese script. [13] Thus, Writing

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[12] There is an interesting switch in the Society's approach towards reform--from promoting a phonetic script scheme based on the Chinese characters to a firm defence of the characters in their original form. Yuan Xiaoyuan, a rich Chinese expatriate who is the founder and head of the Society, returned to China in 1978 to promote her own character-alphabet scheme for reforming Chinese characters. Derived from the characters, her 108 character-like symbols are used as phonetics to indicate sound of a particular Chinese syllable, and as semantic radicals to distinguish homonyms. The implication of her scheme is explained in the conclusion.

[13] The Society invited a number of supporters, including influential government officials, to watch the premiere and claimed that the series was well received. It planned to have it shown on China Central Television (CCTV) but it was prevented from being shown as scheduled. It remains unclear who gave that order to stop it.

reform has come to a crossroads.

This thesis is an updated and comprehensive study of the century-old writing reform movement. It focuses on the more recent reform debate in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and examines its current state and dilemma. The purpose of this study is not to argue for or against the reform. Rather, it attempts to investigate the reasons why writing reform has come to the present stalemate. It argues that both linguistic and non-linguistic factors have contributed to this state of affairs. Moreover, it suggests that both domestic and international environments have influenced the arguments about, and direction of, the current writing reform.

This study illustrates that reforming the writing system in China is an extremely complicated, sensitive, and controversial issue. It is mainly based on a review of the literature regarding the origins and development of Chinese writing reform. The method is primarily descriptive and interpretative. It is supplemented by interviews with leading figures from the two opposing sides of the writing reform debate.

This thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach as it attempts to examine the reform from various interrelated aspects including linguistics, culture, politics, education, economy, and technology. Moreover, as a practitioner directly involved in teaching Chinese to native English-speakers and to speakers of

various Chinese dialects in Canada, [14] I have drawn on first-hand observations and experiences related to this study.

The thesis contains four chapters. Chapter 1 is a brief review of the study of both spoken and written Chinese, with an emphasis on the latter. The purpose of this chapter is to offer a linguistic background for some understanding of the perception of the need for reform on the part of reformers. Chapter 2 is devoted to a historical account of writing reform which took place between the 1890s and the 1950s. This chapter provides a historical background for the next chapter.

Chapter 3 examines the linguistic complications of the more recent debate on writing reform in the 1980s and the 1990s, with an emphasis on the latter period. Chapter 4 looks at the cultural implications of the reform debate. Chapter 5 analyzes writing reform and national development in terms of the former's relation to politics, education, economy and technology. Finally, the conclusion attempts to speculate on some problems and prospects of writing reform in the future.

The outside world is familiar with the economic reform as well as the limited political changes in post-Mao China. However, except for a small circle of academic linguists in the West, few "outsiders" are aware of the writing reform debate,

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[14] I have worked as a Mandarin Chinese Monitor for two years for two school boards in the Greater Vancouver Regional District. My duty is to assist teachers in elementary and secondary schools in teaching Mandarin Chinese as a second foreign language as part of regular curriculum.

which has been ongoing in China for more than a century. [15] Inside China, except for a large coterie of linguists, Chinese language professors, computer experts, and some non-professionals interested in and concerned about writing reform, there are few people who have paid attention to this issue. [16]

It would seem that this is not an insignificant matter in the sense that writing reform is a window through which one can observe how an ancient civilization contends with the outside world and reacts to external changes and challenges. More than a century ago, the writing reform movement was a response to the cultural, political, economic, and military impact of the intrusion of the Western world. Today, the fact that the writing reform debate is still going on also reflects this historical legacy and the contemporary reality in which China is getting more involved with the global market, particularly with the Western market. Western technology and culture have exerted

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[15] I have personally spoken to a few Western friends interested in Chinese affairs. But they told me they were not aware of this subject and were even surprised to hear about it.

[16] I have also asked a few Chinese friends and acquaintances about this subject. One of them told me she heard about the earlier debates but did not pay attention to the recent developments. Nevertheless, she believes that the Chinese script will be replaced by a phonetic system in the future because that is the evolutionary law of development of writing.

At an international conference on Chinese teaching held in August 1993 in Beijing, a few Chinese teachers believed that writing reform had become a dead issue, which was a particular product of the historical circumstances in the late 1800s. They did not think China's writing system would change towards a phonetic system. Also at the conference, I was particularly surprised when a Chinese expatriate, educated in China and now teaching Chinese in the United States, told me she was not aware of this topic at all.

considerable influence on Chinese society. Especially over the past few years, the country has been facing the impact of Western culture that accompanies technology transfer and other economic activities. I believe that the writing reform debate can provide us with an interesting perspective to examine this kind of cultural impact and conflict in China's pursuit of modernization and prosperity.

Chapter 1

Writing Reform: A Linguistic Sketch

Since the West became acquainted with Chinese over the past few centuries, there have been voluminous academic and popular books in various Western languages that introduce the Chinese language in both its spoken and written forms. The study of Chinese has become an important part of an established academic field known as Sinology.

This chapter attempts to present a linguistic sketch of Chinese in both its spoken and written forms. However, emphasis will be given to the latter for the purposes of the present work. In view of the fact that literature on the Chinese language is legion both in China and in the West, the following pages will focus on the most recent developments in the field and will highlight some major linguistic problems relating to writing reform.

SPOKEN CHINESE

In his 1984 book _The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy_, John DeFrancis, an American specialist in Chinese, waged a forceful battle against the widespread and deep-rooted belief regarding the ideographic nature of Chinese characters which constitute the writing system. Basically, this belief holds that characters can express ideas and concepts directly to the human

eye without the intermediary of speech sound. DeFrancis aimed to dispel this "ideographic" notion and other related popular ideas which he labeled as "myths". He noted that one of the major reasons for the development of the myths lies in the incorrect and confusing definition of some basic terms such as "language" and "Chinese". He follows the definition of "language" in mainstream Western linguistics:

> Linguists--not polyglots but scholars concerned with linguistics, the science of language--generally use the term in the restricted meaning of speech. In their view language must be clearly distinguished from writing. Speech is primary, writing secondary. The two are related, but by no means identical, and the areas where they coincide or differ need to be carefully noted. (1984:37)

The word "Chinese" is even more difficult to define than "language." Aside from referring to the Han Chinese nationality which comprises 94 per cent of the population of China, [17] it also refers to their language in both spoken and written forms. The latter appears to be easily defined because Chinese characters have formed the only official writing system from antiquity to the present day. But spoken Chinese is not so easy to define, for it includes a number of mutually unintelligible varieties of speech in the south (mainly Cantonese) and east. They are apart from one another as far as French from Spanish in Romance languages. The diversity and mutual unintelligibility of these different oral communication systems lead some Western

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[17] The remaining six percent are called national minorities, most of which have their own spoken languages and some of which have scripts, such as Tibetan, Mongolian, and Uighur. These minority languages are beyond the scope of this thesis.

linguists to replace the term "dialect" with the term "language." (DeFrancis 1984:55) DeFrancis made up the word "regionalect" to refer to the mutually unintelligible speech and reserved the word "dialect" for mutually intelligible speech. However, the Chinese always prefer "dialect" to "language" because historically they belong to a cultural entity. In fact, many people can speak more than one dialect. According to the official classification by the Chinese government, there are eight major dialects (fāngyán) across the country. Appendix 1 is a linguistic map of China and the statistics about the eight regional dialects and the number of speakers.

Putonghua--the Common Standard Language

The overwhelming majority (more than 70 percent) of Chinese speakers use as their first language the Northern dialect known as Putonghua in its broad sense. This is one of the major reasons for its being formally adopted in 1956 by the Chinese government as the basis of the country's standard language. Putonghua literally means "Common Speech" or "Common Language". According to the official definition, Putonghua (in its narrow sense) "takes the Beijing pronunciation as its standard sound, the Northern dialect as its basic dialect, and the exemplary literary works written in the modern vernacular as its grammatical model." Because the phonological standard for Putonghua is based on the Beijing speech and the basic dialect

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is based on the Northern dialect, there is a popular tendency among both scholars and the general public to take the three things (Putonghua, the Beijing speech, and the Northern dialect) as one thing. Both Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 indicate this kind of popular tendency in Western scholars. [18]

Putonghua originates from *guanhua*, that is, "speech of officials or mandarins". *Guanhua*, loosely based on the Beijing dialect, had been used as a *lingua franca* among officials and administrators since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). But it was officially promoted, with Beijing dialect as the standard, as the country's standard language called Guoyu ("National Language") in the Republican period (1911-1949). While Taiwan (Formosa) under the Nationalist government has continued to use the term Guoyu, the P.R.C. replaced it with Putonghua for the purpose of playing down the inherent exclusiveness to non-Chinese languages and to other dialects inside China. However, Putonghua in its essence is similar to Guoyu.

In 1956, the government decreed that Putonghua should be used as the language of instruction in all the school systems and as the working language in government organizations. All textbooks and most dictionaries are compiled using the sound of Putonghua. It has become an almost equivalent term for Chinese (Hanyu), particularly in academic writings. This thesis follows

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[18] The definition of Putonghua remains vague in the minds of both scholars and of the general public, partly because it has both a broad and a narrow sense. It needs further scholarly study. But partly because of its political nature, it is not an easy task for scholars to accomplish.

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this conventional use of the term Chinese as Putonghua, that is, the Modern Standard Chinese. In Western literature, the term Putonghua is unanimously translated as "Mandarin" (a literal translation for *guanhua*). Though it appears to be inappropriate for the official Chinese definition, the term has become too prevalent to get rectified in the English language. Thus this thesis sometimes will also follow the popular use of referring to Putonghua as Mandarin.

The number of native speakers of Mandarin ranks first in the world, reaching 610 million which includes the figure in Taiwan. (Hayes et al. 1987:186) While the largest bloc of speakers live in mainland China, the second largest area of speakers live in Taiwan. It is also one of Singapore's official languages, known as *Huayu* ("Chinese Language"). In addition, Mandarin is also used as a common language for communication for some 30 million people of Chinese origin scattered in most parts of the world.

Pinyin--China's Romanized Phonetic Alphabet

To facilitate the learning of the "Common Language" and Chinese characters, the Communist government approved the Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (Hànyǔ Pīnyīn Fāng'àn, usually referred to as Pinyin) in 1958. It is based on Roman (Latin) letters with some changes adapted to Putonghua, whose phonological structure is much simpler than the seven other

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dialects.[19] Prior to the creation of the Pinyin system, there had been several transcription systems for Mandarin. Appendix 3 displays a comparison of Pinyin with four other such schemes.

A syllable of Putonghua usually contains a consonant (called initials in Chinese) and a vowel or two vowels (called finals). Examples of this type are "le" or "lei". Another type of syllable is an initial and a final which are mediated by a gliding final; for example, "jia" or "duan". There are two finals which are not vowels: one is n as in "an" (n is also used as an initial as in "ni"); the other one is ng as in "ang", which only appears together as a final. There is another final r as in "huār" (flower) or "wánr" (to play), which is very common in the Beijing dialect but whose status in Putonghua is subject to considerable dispute. Except for the two cases just listed (the "ang" and "wanr" type) where two consonants go together, "there are no consonant clusters in Chinese, so that the single English syllable 'splints' would have to be represented by four syllables: si-pu-lin-ci." (DeFrancis 1984:43)

Another distinctive feature of Chinese is its tones. Tones function as phonemes--basic units of sound, which differentiates meaning. In other words, different tones for the same Chinese syllables have a function similar to distinguishing the sounds

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[19] Putonghua has lost a large number of phonological features which are still kept in other dialects, such as the Cantonese dialect. Cantonese has kept the finals p, t, k and m, and it has at least six tones, compared to four in Putonghua.

p and b in English words "pit" and "bit". Standard Chinese has four tones plus a neutral tone or toneless pronunciation whose status is uncertain and disputable. [20] The following is a graphic illustration of tones and a few examples of words (in both Pinyin and characters) that contrast with each other in meaning with different tones.

Tone 1	Tone 2	Tone 3	Tone 4	Toneless
→	↗	∨↗	↘	
mā	má	mǎ	mà	ma 吗／嗎
mother	hemp	horse	scold	a question particle
妈/媽	麻	马/馬	骂/罵	placed at the end of a sentence.
xī	xí	xǐ	xì	xi 西
west	mat	wash	play	a suffix as in
西	席/蓆	洗	戏/戲	dōngxi (things) 东/東西

Putonghua has approximately 400 basic syllables and about 1,300 syllables if four tones are added. Appendix 2 is a chart of the basic syllables combined by initials (consonants) and finals (vowels) in the phonological system of Putonghua.

There have been numerous debates over the nature of Chinese

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[20] The issue of neutral tones is largely ignored in academic writings about Chinese. There are no specific rules for standardization and systemization regarding some syllables written in Pinyin. In a popular Chinese textbook for foreigners, there are two ways of writing some syllables, for example: xuéshēng, xuésheng (student), jièshào, jièshao (introduce) (Liu Xun et al. 1986). As the distinction between tonal syllables and neutral syllable can alleviate the homophone problem in the Pinyin writing system, this is no small issue for some writing reformers who seek to make Pinyin an official orthography which will enjoy an equal status to Chinese characters.

speech in the West. At first spoken Chinese was considered to be "primitive,"

> because it lacks such features common to European languages as their complex phonologies and systems of conjugation and declension....Subsequently this nineteenth-century view was replaced in some minds by the notion that Chinese actually represents a higher stage of linguistic development because it dispenses with unnecessary features such as conjugations and declensions that were retained in varying degrees by European languages. " (DeFrancis 1984:50-51)

DeFrancis has rejected both extreme views about spoken Chinese, maintaining that all the languages are equally capable of serving their speakers but simply with different strategies. (1984:51) Other scholars have also pursued this line of thinking. (Ramsey 1987:49-55)

WRITTEN CHINESE

While the notion that spoken Chinese is inferior and insufficient in expressive power has largely been dismissed and condemned as a Eurocentric bias in the West as well as in China, the debate over the nature of the Chinese script continued in an uncompromising fashion in both Chinese and Western linguistic circles. [21] Generally speaking, there are two

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[21] In China, the intense arguments about the nature of Chinese characters were expressed at two major conferences specifically addressing the issue. The two conferences were respectively sponsored by supporters and opponents of writing reform in 1986 and 1990. In the West, a celebrated acrimonious debate took place in the 1930s and 1940s between two leading Chinese specialists G. Creel and P. Boodberg. (DeFrancis 1984:85) The most recent argument in support of Chinese writing reform was forcefully initiated by

major opposing views about the Chinese system of writing utilizing characters, called /Hanzi\ in Chinese. One views the Chinese script as ideographic and the other sees it as phonetic.

Before we go into the details about these two views, it is necessary at the outset to have a broader picture of the place of the Chinese script in the writing systems of the world. It is also necessary to have some basic ideas and understanding about characters which constitute the Chinese system of writing.

I. J. Gelb, an important author on the history of writing, identifies seven original and fully developed systems of writing that emerged in the Orient, the vast belt of Asia extending from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the western shores of the Pacific Ocean. (1963:60) All defined as logo-syllabic or word-syllabic systems of writing--that is, writing in which signs express words and syllables, three of the seven systems are as yet undeciphered or only partially deciphered. The remaining four are: Sumerian in Mesopotamia, 3100 B.C. to A.D. 75; Egyptian in Egypt, 3000 B.C. to A.D. 400; Hittite in Anatolia and Syria, 1500 to 700 B.C.; and Chinese in China, 1300 B.C. to the present. [22]

Chinese writing is the only system which has survived to the present and therefore did not need the same kind of effort

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DeFrancis in his 1984 and 1989 books respectively.

[22] It is much debated over the exact time when the Chinese script was created. Some scholars maintain that it is resonable to assume that Chinese writing was created much earlier than 1300 B.C., in view of the fact that it was already a fully developed writing system by the time it was discovered. (Coulmas 1989:92)

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to decipher as the other six systems, for the living Chinese language and writing provided clues and sources. Although the Chinese script was not the earliest known script, it has the longest uninterrupted history among all the living scripts in the world today.   It has not only served to record one of the world's great civilizations for more than 3,500 years, but it also become an inerasable historical legacy in East Asia. From Beijing to Taipei to Tokyo, from Seoul to Hong Kong to Singapore, Chinese characters are a common sight, either as an independent or mixed writing system in this vast region.

The earliest record of Chinese characters are oracle bone inscriptions (Jiǎgǔwén) which were in use in the Shang dynasty (circa 16th-11th century B.C.). These forerunners of Chinese writing were accidentally found in 1899 by peasants on the site of the former capital of the late Shang and subsequently excavated by Chinese scholars. More than 100,000 fragmentary inscriptions, mostly on bits of tortoise shells and on ox and sheep scapulas, were unearthed during a few excavations. Among the 4,500 characters found, more than one fourth have been deciphered. (Song et al. 1982:215) Appendix 4 is a sample oracle bone inscription.

Over the past three and one half millennia, the characters have evolved into the present written form. Throughout this long period the characters have been the only official medium for written communication in China. Today the character-based writing system appears to stand alone in contrast to a vast

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landscape of alphabetic and other types of writing systems in the world. In order to understand the nature of the Chinese script, it is essential to have some idea of how Chinese characters (Hanzi) have evolved into their present form and how they are internally structured.

The Outer Form of Hanzi

The system does not have an alphabet and the basic unit of writing is a square character (fāngkuàizì) which consists of strokes which are marks made with a single continuous motion of the pen. The strokes (bǐhuà) are the smallest units of writing in a character. For example, the character 永 (yǒng, forever) contains the eight basic strokes commonly used in most characters. Appendix 5 illustrates the writing procedures and principles of yǒng.

The above feature of Chinese characters in terms of square form and strokes leads to an important aesthetic principle, that is, no matter how simple or how complex a character is, it should be written within a square. In fact, Chinese pupils' and foreign beginners' Hanzi exercise-books are printed with ready-made squares. In the case of writing on paper without squares, good writing is supposed to be executed with imagined squares in one's mind to achieve a beauty of balance. Of course, there are some styles such as cursive writing which are not confined to the square but are manipulated at the writer's will. Chinese

calligraphy has long been a highly respected art form. This is a unique feature of Chinese writing which distinguishes it from most other systems of writing. Japan and Korea, too, have maintained this traditional art form as an integral part of their cultural heritage. This is a legacy of their borrowing Chinese writing prior to the creation of their own scripts.

A Brief History of the Evolution of Hanzi

1) Oracle bone inscriptions (Jiáguwén)

As was mentioned in the preceding page, Jiaguwen is the earliest form of Chinese writing which was in use in the late Shang dynasty mainly for divination. In appearance many of the characters are pictographic and display unsystematic variation. As for the principle of character formation, many Chinese and Western scholars agree that the Shang writing system was a fully developed system. (Song et al. 1982:215; Gelb 1963:85)

2) Great Seal (Dàzhuàn)

This script came into being during the Zhou period (the 11th century--771 B.C.) It still exhibited many variants. "Standardization was impeded by the political and administrative disunity of that period." (Coulmas 1989:94)

3) Small Seal (Xiǎozhuàn)

Originally it was a script for the State of Qin. After the Qin unified China in 221 B.C., Prime Minister Li Si administered a script reform based on Small Seal. This reform is considered

as epoch-making in the history of Chinese writing.

4) Scribal/Clerical (Lìshū)

In the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), from which Chinese characters derived their name Hanzi, the "small seal script" gave way to the "scribal script" first and then to the "regular script" which is still used today. (Coulmas 1989:95)

5) Regular (Kǎishū)

As indicated above, this script was in use as early as the Han dynasty and has not changed much since then.

6) Cursive (Cǎoshū)

This style came into being as early as the third century B.C. on the basis of the scribal script. Further simplifications and abbreviations were adopted. But this simplicity also made it difficult to read.

7) Running (Xíngshū)

The running script also made its appearance in the Han dynasty. It developed into a style between the regular script and the cursive script. By absorbing advantageous features from both, it became a popular style for the average person. Appendix 6 displays the the evolution of two characters and a piece of calligraphy in the regular, the running and the cursive script styles.

The evolution of Hanzi shows that the Chinese script has generally proceeded from complexity to simplification. This phenomenon has influenced the outlook of writing reformers from generation to generation.

Chinese characters are basic building blocks for writing words, phrases and sentences. Unlike the method of defining a word by white space in English and other alphabetic systems, Chinese characters are written in a running text which does not rely on the white space for definition of words. [23] The Chinese language has a term called zì 字 (a single character which is usually a syllable when read and has a literal meaning), to which no equivalent can be found in English and which is usually translated into cí 词 /詞 (word). [24] In Western linguistics, a zi in Chinese is usually regarded as a morpheme, the smallest unit of meaning. This is reasonable to a large extent, for in modern spoken Chinese most words contain two syllables which are usually morphemes rather than words and thus are made up by two characters when they are written.

But a zi may represent a morpheme or a word in different contexts. This zi (character)-ci (word) distinction will be illustrated by using the character 远 / 遠 (yuǎn, far) as an

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[23] The definition of a written "word" is not certain and disputable even in English. For example, "night club" is also written as "nightclub" or "night-club".

[24] In my experience, most Chinese are more familiar with zi than ci. A Chinese quiz I marked in the school-calendar year 1993-94 indicated this tendency. The quiz, taken by 24 Chinese-Canadian students in Grade 11 (most of whom are new immigrants), included a translation of the English word "dictionary" into Chinese. Nineteen translated it as zìdiǎn (character dictionary); only four translated it as cídian (word dictionary which is used in their textbook).

example. The character is a morpheme when it is used together with the character 永 (yǒng, forever) to form the word 永远 (yǒngyuǎn) to express the same meaning as the single character 永. But when it is used in 很远 (hěn yuǎn, very far), it is an independent word. Some characters are mostly or exclusively used as morphemes other than words in modern Chinese. An example is the character 永 in the two-character word 永远 (yǒngyuǎn, forever), which expresses the same meaning as the single character 永 in classical Chinese or modern Chinese in which some idiomatic usages are retained.

In a Chinese running text, no matter how close or how far the meaning between adjacent characters, each character is separated by the same amount of space, or no space at all if the word "space" means the white space which separates each word in alphabetic writing systems. All this indicates a unique relationship between Chinese speech and writing, that is, in most cases, a meaningful syllable in speech corresponds to a meaningful character called zi in writing. It is in this context that many Chinese and Western scholars regard Chinese speech and writing as monosyllabic. [25] The way of writing Chinese

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[25] "Monosyllabism" in Chinese and in most other East Asian languages is of considerable dispute in both Chinese and Western linguistic circles. Most linguists tend to agree with this label, for example, Norman (1988:8) and Ramsey (1987:60), while a minority of linguists disagree. DeFrancis (1984) is the most recent scholar to refute this label as "a myth." However, the major difference between these two opposing views is that the former looks at the issue from the linguistic fact of Chinese in which there is a close correspondence between the syllable and the morpheme and each syllable usually means something, but the latter judges Chinese morphemes and words by the Western criterion and maintains that

characters has also influenced the way of writing Pinyin, which is usually written with one character-one syllable correspondence. But under the influence of Western linguistics in Chinese teaching with Pinyin, there is a tendency toward defining and writing words in the Western sense. The following example shows a Chinese text written in both the conventional way (one character-one syllable correspondence) and the Western way (some characters are syntactically joined to form words): [26]

English: Ding Yun is a student in the Department of English. She came here to study from Beijing. She lives in a student dormitory.

Conventional Way

Character: 丁 云 是 英 语 系 的 学 生。 她 从 北 京
Pinyin: Dīng Yún shì **Yīng yǔ** xì de **xué shēng**. Tā cóng **Běi jīng**

Character: 来 这 儿 学 习。 她 在 学 生 宿 舍 住。
Pinyin: lái **zhè er xué xí**. Tā zài **xué shēng sù shè** zhù.

Western Way

Character: 丁 云 是 英 语 系 的 学 生。 她 从 北 京 来
Pinyin: Dīng Yún shì **Yīngyǔ** xì de **xuéshēng**. Tā cóng **Běijīng** lái

Character: 这 儿 学 习。 她 在 学 生 宿 舍 住。
Pinyin: **zhèr xuéxí**. Tā zài **xuéshēng sùshè** zhù. [27]

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each syllable (morpheme) is usually not a word in Western sense.

[26] This short text is from Practical Chinese Reader I, a popular Chinese textbook compiled in Beijing especially for students learning Chinese as a second/foreign language.

[27] The simplified/unsimplified character comparison is as follows: 云 / 雲 , 语 / 語 , 学 / 學 , 从 / 從 , 来 / 來 , 这 / 這 , 儿 / 兒 , 习 / 習 .

As we can see, the Chinese way of writing is based on the correspondence between one syllable and one character (zi), unlike the Western way of defining and separating each word by white space. In a sense, this means that the Chinese written text is semantically and syntactically divorced from the actual speech, for in modern Chinese most words have two (sometimes more than two) syllables but the character-based writing cannot reflect this phenomenon in speech. And it leaves the reader to figure out the boundary and grammatical function of words. This is one of the important areas where writing reformers find Chinese characters inadequate to represent speech and insist on Latinizing the Chinese script.

Even T.K. Ann, author of the five-volume English work Cracking the Chinese Puzzles, who resolutely opposes Latinizing the Chinese script, believes this is a defect in Chinese writing. He suggests that Chinese sentences be written in Western way (as shown in the short Chinese text cited above), that is, separating each word semantically by white space. (1987:224) This is a very bold and liberal suggestion because it will dramatically change not only the long established appearance of Chinese writing but also the Chinese habit of paying more attention to characters (zi) than words (ci). In fact, how to define a word in Pinyin orthography is and has been a technical problem for reformers, and solving this problem will have particular significance for writing reform. This issue will be further dealt with in Chapter 3.

The Inner Structure of Hanzi

The traditional classification of Chinese characters was established 2,000 years ago by Xu Shen in his _Shuōwén Jiězì_. This is the first dictionary which systematically analyzes the internal formation of Chinese characters. Based on the characters written in the small seal script, Xu Shen identified six principles of writing (_Liùshū_):

1) pictographic (xiàngxíng)

2) simple indicative (zhǐshì)

3) compound indicative (huìyì)

4) phonetic loan (jiǎjiè)

5) mutually interpretive (zhuǎnzhù)

6) semantic-phonetic (xíngshēng)

The first three categories can be considered primarily semantic in nature.

The "pictographic" characters are basically derived from the shape of natural objects. The commonly cited examples are 日 (rì "sun"), 月 (yuè "moon"), 水 (shuǐ "water"), 田 (tián "field"), 火 (huǒ "fire"), 人 (rén "person"). The earliest forms of these characters (mainly in Oracle Bone Inscriptions) are recognizable, but in their present stylized form, there is no guarantee that their meaning can be easily deciphered without learning them first. [28] The "simple indicative principle"

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[28] The large gap between the original pictographs and their present stylized form makes it very difficult for beginners of Chinese writing to make connections between the two forms and to

refers to a method of using simple graphical strokes or adding strokes on an existing graph to indicate the meaning of words of a more abstract nature. For example, 一 (yī "one"), 二 (èr "two"), 上 (shàng "up"), 下 (xià "down"), 刃 (rèn "edge of a knife or sword"). The meaning of these characters in their present form may be easily grasped but is not self-evident if they are not first learned.

The "compound indicative principle" is a method of combining two or more independent characters or semantic elements together to form a new character whose meaning can sometimes be inferred from those parts. For example, the character 林 (lín "tree/forest") is combined by two independent characters 木 (mù "tree/wood"), the character 小 (xiǎo "small") is put on top of the character 大 (dà "big") to form a new character 尖 (jiān "sharp"), 休 (xiū "rest") is combined by a semantic element 亻 (rén "person") and 木 (mù "tree/wood").

Strictly speaking, the fourth and fifth categories are not ways of forming new characters but of using certain existing characters for new meanings. They are of considerable importance because they are used exclusively for their phonetic value. This is also an important argument for writing reformers to illustrate the phonetic tendency in Chinese writing.

The "phonetic loan" type is what is known as the "rebus principle," that is, some characters are used purely for their sound value. Usually a character with concrete meaning is

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guess the meaning of the latter.

borrowed to write either a homophonous or near-homophonous character with abstract meaning. For example, the character 来 (lái, "to come") is borrowed from a homophonous character which originally means a kind of wheat. Another example is that the character 其 (qí, "a personal or object pronoun") comes from the homophonous pictograph 其 , originally meaning winnowing baskets.

The "mutually interpretive" type is subject to scholarly dispute. There are two major categories. One category refers to those characters which have the same semantic elements and can be mutually interpretive. An example is 会 / 會 (huì, "to meet/ converge") and 合 (hé, "to combine/mix), whose meanings are similar and thus mutually explainable. In modern Chinese, these two characters form one word 会合 (huìhé) to indicate the original meaning contained in both characters. The other category refers to a situation in which a character can be used for different meanings with different pronunciations. For example, the character 乐 /樂 means music when it is pronounced "yuè", while it means happy when pronounced "le." Some characters have more than two usages with different grammatical functions and pronunciations. An example of this kind is the character 着 : it is a verb pronounced "zháo" in 着火 (zháohuǒ, "on fire") and 着急 (zháojí, "to worry"); it is an auxiliary particle pronounced "zhe" which usually follows a verb; it is a noun pronounced "zhāo", mutually exchangeable with the homophonous character 招 , meaning tactics in 一着儿 (yìzhāo'r "a

strategy").

The phenomenon described above in the fifth type is not an infrequent case in Chinese character usage. It is one of the points on which writing reformers and anti-reformers argue divergently. The former argues that the principles of grammar and pronunciation involved in this type is even difficult for scholars to master, let alone average learners. The latter argues that the same character used for different grammatical purposes is economical and is a merit in Chinese.

The characters based on "semantic-phonetic principle" account for more than 90 percent of total characters. In fact, many scholars argue that this is a device to remedy the ambiguity resulting from the large amount of phonetic loans in the fourth category in *Liùshū*. (Hong 1992; Norman 1988:60) In this category, a new character is created by adding a semantic element (commonly known as a "radical"), which usually evolved from the pictographs, to a character which is mainly used for its phonetic value. This approach is a revolutionary turning point in the development of Chinese characters in the sense that the total number of characters increased rapidly. Compare the following number of characters in different historical periods: (Coulmas 1989:100)

1. the Shang period (16th century-11 century): about 2,500

2. the Han dynasty (206 B.C. 206-A.D.220): 10,000

3. the Song dynasty (960-1279): 23,000

4. the Qing dynasty (1644-1911): 49,000

The semantic-phonetic category is of extreme importance in the Chinese system of writing as well as in the debate over writing reform, as will be illustrated in the remainder of this chapter and the rest of this thesis. First of all, let us look at a few concrete examples which can illustrate the general principles in forming this class of characters.

In the semantic-phonetic type character 沐 (mù "to bathe"), the 氵 radical on the left indicates the meaning of water, while the 木 part (pronounced mù) on the right suggests the pronunciation for the whole character. Though the 木 part in 沐 is a character in its own right which means trees or wood, the original meaning is completely lost and only used for its sound value. [29] In this example, the pronunciation of the character 沐 is completely identical with that of the radical 木, including the tone.

But there is a category in which the phonetic element can indicate both approximate pronunciation and semantic field. For example, the character 睡 (shuì "to sleep") is combined by the radical 目 (mù "eyes") and the phonetic 垂 (chuí "to fall down"). Thus, almost every compound character with this phonetic has something to do with the image of "falling down": 锤 /錘 (chuí "hammer/to hammer," with the semantic 钅 / 金 "metal"); (chuí "to beat", with the semantic 扌 "hand"). In this category,

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[29] However, Leung Laifong, assistant professor of Chinese language and literature at the University of Alberta and external examiner for the present thesis, suggests that the character 沐 has the original meaning of "trees/woods" washed by rain or water. (personal communication, 28/07/1994)

the phonetic 垂 (chuí) indicates partial pronunciation (not including the initial and tone) in the character 睡 (shuì), but indicates fully identical sound for the characters 锤 and 捶 .

Both Chinese and Western scholars unanimously agree that the characters in this class make up an overwhelming majority of total characters. However, they differ divergently on which aspect--the semantic or phonetic--is more important and should be used to characterize the Chinese script. Both past and contemporary debates on writing reform revolve mainly on this point. Thus there are two major views about the nature of the Chinese writing system. Now we are back to the beginning of this section and in a better position to elaborate a little on these two divergent views.

Emphasis on Semantic Ascendancy

One view emphasizes the semantic aspect of *Hanzi* and thus regards Chinese writing as primarily ideographic (*biǎoyì wénzì*), that is, Chinese characters can indicate and express ideas and concepts directly to the human eye and mind without the intermediary of sound. For instance, the most commonly cited examples are 山 (mountain); the combination of 女 (female) and 子 (child) means 好 (good). People who hold this view maintain that the meaning of these characters can be indicated directly by their single shape or semantic combination, no matter whether they are pronounced as "shān", "nǚ", "zǐ", and "hǎo"

respectively in Mandarin, or "shāan", "néuih", "jái", and "hóu" in Cantonese. Another reason for this designation is that more than ninety percent of Chinese characters, the radical plus phonetic type, contain a semantic element which indicates the meaning of the whole character. This kind of ideographic notion about the Chinese script is not only popular among the Chinese and Western general public but also among Chinese and Western scholars.

Emphasis on Phonetic Ascendancy

The other view emphasizes the phonetic aspect of Chinese characters and considers the script to be a phonetic system of writing (*biǎoyīn wénzì*), though a highly imperfect one. DeFrancis, who has widely written on the Chinese language, is instrumental in expounding this new characterization about the nature of the Chinese script.

DeFrancis represents this view and is the most recent scholar to systematize this line of thinking. In his 1984 book The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy, he severely criticized the widespread "ideographic" belief and other related notions which he labeled as "myths" about Chinese writing. Instead, he proposed that the Chinese characters are best designated as having a morphosyllabic nature--for it properly "describes a situation in which an overwhelming majority of the characters contain both a semantic element suggesting a broad category of

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meaning and a phonetic element suggesting a specific syllable of sound." (1984:88) [30] Moreover, he did not simply stop here but further characterized the script basically as phonetic and classified it together with syllabic scripts such as the Japanese kana system, for "the phonetic element is far superior in predicting pronunciation than is the semantic element in predicting meaning." (1984:128) He reaches the above conclusion about the nature of the Chinese script mainly by three steps, based on a fairly detailed analysis of primary features of Chinese characters. The following discussion is mainly based on his 1984 book. [31]

As a first step, he notes that there is an increase in the number of characters in the Chinese lexicon. He lists the total numbers of characters which were respectively collected during four different historical periods: about 1,000 deciphered characters on the oracle bones in the Shang dynasty, almost 10,000 in the second century, around 23,000 in the twelfth

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[30] In view of the fact that a phonetic mostly can only provide an approximate pronunciation for the compound character in which it forms a part, DeFrancis should have stated that the phonetic element indicates a "broad" rather than a "specific" syllable of sound.

[31] There are two reasons why I focus on DeFrancis' views. First, his views are typical of those who emphasize the phonetic element in the Chinese script and thus of those who support Chinese Latinization. Second, his book is the most recent and a comprehensive study of Chinese in relation to writing reform. My assessment of DeFrancis' arguments is presented in Chapter 3.

century, and 49,000 in the eighteenth century. (pp. 83-84) [32]

More importantly, by classifying these four figures under the four major principles of forming characters, that is, pictographic, simple indicative, compound indicative, and semantic-phonetic, he points out the high ratio of the semantic-phonetic type relative to the three other groups. The semantic-phonetic type accounts for 97 percent while the remaining three types--which can be considered primarily semantic in nature--make up only three percent. Equally important is that the semantic approach remains virtually stagnant from the second century on.

> All this means that the conveying of meaning through the medium of characters without regard to sound gradually came to play a distinctly minor role in the Chinese writing system as it evolved, like all other writing systems, from pictographic origins to a complex fusion of semantic and phonetic aspects. It also means that the common parlor game of characterizing Chinese writing by regaling the uninitiated with pictographic examples such as "sun plus moon equals bright" is a bad case of the tail wagging the dog. (pp. 84-85)

At this stage, DeFrancis has reached the conlusion that "Chinese characters have evolved from pictographic symbols to a morphosyllabic system of writing." (p. 88) The new term "morphosyllabic" is intended to suggest that each character is pronounced as a single syllable and represents a single morpheme. He believes that this term describes the real

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[32] The exact numbers of characters and collection sources are as follows: the approximately 1,000 deciphered characters are out of 4,500 found on the Shang oracle bones, 9,353 in Xu Shen's *Shuowen Jiezi*, 23,265 in Zheng Qiao's work, and 48,641 in the Great Kangxi Dictionary of 1716.

characteristics of the Chinese script much more accurately than other terms such as "ideographic" which only foster confusion and misunderstanding.

While recognizing that more than nine-tenths of Chinese characters contain a phonetic element, what DeFrancis is really interested in is "how effective these elements really are in suggesting the pronunciation of the characters of which they form part." (p. 105)

Thus the second step is to investigate the effectiveness of the phonetic aspects. He begins this undertaking by using a syllabary approach--characters which represent the sound of the basic 400-odd syllables of Putonghua--to classify and analyze Chinese characters. His analysis reveals that most Chinese characters are formed on a phonetic principle, though on an unstandardized and unsystematic sound basis.

He chooses three samples to test the effectiveness of phonetics which are represented by characters. The first one is based on Chen Heqin's list of the 4,719 most frequently occurring characters which are in the complex form, the second sample is based on Zhou Youguang's analysis of 8,075 simplified characters which are contained in a popular Chinese dictionary, and the third sample is his own examination of the first hundred characters in Lu Xun's famous story "Diary of a Madman." The results for phonetic utility in the three samples respectively are 66 percent, more than 65 percent, and no less than 72 percent. (pp. 107-110) Although he admits that "this is a far

cry from a good phonetic system, but it is certainly a farther cry from no phonetic system at all," he does not hesitate to put the Chinese script in the same category of syllabic writing system as the Japanese kana system. (p. 109-111)

Compared to the fixed Japanese syllabary of only forty-seven signs, he observes that "the Chinese left creators of characters, who might be professional scribes or just ordinary scribblers, free to make use of any existing character to represent all or part of the pronunciation of a new character." The result of this, he contends, is a highly flawed and inefficient representation of sound for many Chinese characters represented by the 895 phonetics which he takes as a sort of Chinese syllabary. (p. 99) Moreover, the Chinese syllabary has never been simplified and standardized as has the Japanese system of writing during the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and after the Second World War. (p. 114)

To sum up his reasons for labeling the Chinese script as a phonetic system of writing of the syllabic type, the third step is to analyze the semantic aspect of Chinese characters and then compare it with the phonetic aspect.

In the first place, he observes that most semantic classifiers are vague and limited in their ability to suggest meanings for the characters in which they are a part. In some cases, the radical is not only of no help in indicating the meaning for the compound character, but is also misleading. (p. 117)

In addition, he regards the classification of characters by radicals in Chinese dictionaries as highly imperfect because many characters are arbitrarily allocated under one or another radical without any semantic connection between the radical and the whole character in which the radical is a part. The few examples he cites for the above two cases include the radical 子 "child" in 孔 (kǒng "hole"), the radical 宀 "roof" in 实 / 實 (shí "true"); the radical 纟 / 糸 "silk" in 红 / 紅 (hong "red"). (1984:95) Countering the popular belief that these radicals are added to the phonetic symbols of the whole characters in order to contribute to the meaning of the characters, he maintains that the disambiguating function of radicals in some cases "is purely graphic...but merely as means of visually setting off one otherwise identically written homonym from another." The addition of more irrelevant graphs results in, he points out, even larger gaps between speech and writing and more difficulties in mastering the already complicated writing system. (p. 122)

Moreover, he uses a practical method to prove the primacy of the phonetic aspect over the semantic aspect. He takes a short Chinese text containing nineteen characters and rewrites it in two versions, one by taking just the radicals of the characters in the text, and one by using just the phonetics according to the sort of Chinese syllabary. When these two versions are presented to native readers to decipher, predictably the semantic or radical approach appears to be

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totally nonsensical, while the phonetic approach proves the unanimous identification of seven out of the nineteen characters and partial agreement on another two. (p. 127) From this practical example he states:

> Indeed, so long as writing actually reflects speech and not some sort of perhaps never spoken style such as classical Chinese, semantic clues are not needed and can even be ignored when they lead off in a different direction from that suggested by phonetic clues. (p. 126)

The above passage indicates his view that the function of writing is to reflect speech. This is consistent with his point of departure in the study of language as a science, that is, "language is primary, writing secondary." (p. 37) Therefore, both theoretical and practical studies have led DeFrancis to conclude that

> we must consider Chinese writing as an orthography in which the relation of sign to meaning is mediated primarily through a sound system based on a defective inventory of syllabic signs and quite secondarily through a semantic system based on an even more defective inventory of significs or radicals. (p. 128)

From this critical description he asserts that the Chinese script is a vague, cumbersome, and imperfect phonetic system, "which is incomparably more deficient than the frequently caricatured English orthography." (p. 129) Thus he advocates reform towards writing Chinese alphabetically for the sake of eliminating illiteracy and raising the cultural level of the vast majority of the population. "China's modernization, to say the least, is impeded by sole reliance on a script that has shown itself unsuccessful in producing mass literacy and meeting

other needs of a modern society." (p. 286) / Strong claims of this sort have been echoed by past and present advocates and supporters of writing reform. They have also been refuted by opponents who deny the alleged causal relationship between the structure of China's writing system and low literacy rates and underdevelopment in China. The following chapter will focus on writing reform in its historical context. The remaining chapters will discuss the contemporary debate.

Chapter 2

Writing Reform: A Historical Sketch

The year 1992 marked the centenary of the creation of the first Chinese alphabetic writing system by Lu Zhuangzhang, a reform-minded intellectual from Xiamen (Amoy) in the southeastern part of China. Language Planning (*Yǔwén Jiànshè*), the reform-oriented monthly journal of the State Commission on Language and Script Work [1] (formerly the Committee on Script Reform) carried a series of articles to commemorate the event. These articles hailed the event as a cornerstone for writing reform and spoke highly of the efforts and dedication Lu and his contemporaries had made to the cause of writing reform.

Zhou Youguang, a noted advocate for writing reform and a member of the State Commission on Language and Script Work (hereafter as the Commission), also acknowledges the influence of earlier Western missionaries on Chinese writing reformers. (Zhou 1979:16) The missionaries introduced the idea of alphabetic writing to the Chinese and started to use Latin (Roman) letters to transcribe Mandarin and other Chinese dialects. While Ni Haishu, another persistent writing reformer, includes the activities of missionaries as part of the writing reform movement, (Ni 1948:22) Zhou only regards their activities

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[1] The Commission's name in Pinyin is Guojia Yuyan Wenzi Gongzuo Weiyuanhui.

as a prelude prior to the development of the reform movement. His reason for this exclusion is that "they (the Latinized scripts for different Chinese dialects) are not our cultural revolution but cultural invasion by imperialists." (Zhou 1979:16) The following brief overview of historical origins and the development of writing reform is mainly based on the work of Zhou Youguang (1979) and will only include major events of the writing reform movement.

The Prelude: The Influence of Western Missionaries

Western Jesuits started to come to China as early as the sixteenth century and were mainly concentrated in Beijing, the then capital of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Because of their difficulties with China's character-based script during their stay, they adopted Latin letters to transcribe Mandarin. The major purpose for doing this was to use the Latinized form in their own works for writing Chinese place names, personal names and proper names. Another major purpose was to aid foreigners in learning spoken and written Chinese. (p. 18)

The first systematic work of annotating Chinese characters by using the Latin alphabet was published in 1605 by Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit missionary in China. Another important work, based on a revision of Ricci's work, was published in Chinese in 1626 by Nicolas Trigault, a French Jesuit. Entitled

A Guide for Western Scholars (_XĪ RÚ ĚR MÙ ZĪ_, literally meaning "An Aid to the Ear and Eye of Western Scholars"), this dictionary-like book did just what its title promised. These two works had been used by later missionaries as a tool to study Chinese and remained as a basis for them to compile several bilingual dictionaries of Chinese with other Western languages. (p. 19)

After China was forced open in the aftermath of its defeat in the Opium War of 1840-1842, a large number of Western Protestants came to China to preach their religions. They were mainly centred in the five cities which were designated as open ports for business as a result of the unequal Sino-British Nanjing (Nanking) Treaty. Coincidently, the five cities-- Shanghai, Ningbo, Fuzhou, Xiamen, and Guangzhou--respectively represented the Wu dialect, North Min (Fujian), South Min, and Cantonese, all typical Chinese dialects. (p. 20) In the face of such divergent non-Mandarin dialects spoken by millions of illiterates, the missionaries created separate phonetic scripts for the different dialects by using Latin letters rather than Chinese characters. They used the Latinized scripts to publish millions of Bible readings and other religious materials and messages. [2]

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[2] For example, the annual for-sale publications written in the Latinized Xiamen script reached 50,000 copies in 1921. Having begun to spread around 1850, this script was still used by about 100,000 people living both in Xiamen and overseas until the early days of the founding of the P.R.C. in 1949. (Zhou 1979:20)

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Different from the earlier Jesuits who used Latin letters as an aid to learn Chinese characters, the Protestants, both theoretically and practically, tended to replace the characters with Latinized scripts based on different dialects. (Zhou 1979:23) Some of them even made remarks such as "The Chinese characters are the most interesting mistake of the twentieth century," and "We should regard it (Latinized Chinese scripts) as a kind of Western science and experience which can best contribute to a nation's development." (in Zhou:21)

Another well-known Latinized Chinese scheme was devised in 1867 by Thomas F. Wade, the Chinese Secretary at the then British Embassy. Based on Mandarin, his scheme was originally used as a tool for diplomats to study Chinese. But its use was expanded later and became a popular and standardized way, not only for foreigners but also for the Chinese, to transcribe Chinese personal names, place names and proper names. It was revised by H. A. Giles in 1912 and was later generally referred to as the Wade-Giles system. Almost five decades later, the system is still in use in some instances in China and even more popular in Taiwan and among the overseas Chinese, although China's new Latinized phonetic alphabet--Pinyin--has generally become the norm elsewhere to transcribe Mandarin Chinese pronunciation. Appendix 3 contrasts the Wade-Giles system with a few other popular systems for transcribing Chinese.

Chinese Pioneers of Individual Phonetic Alphabets

As pointed out in the beginning of the introduction, a large number of reform-minded Chinese intellectuals attempted to find a way to save China from collapse, in the aftermath of a series of domestic crises following China's defeat in the Opium War. [3] One way they found to help revitalize the country was to promote popular education among the largely illiterate masses. But they concluded that the non-alphabetic character-based writing system constituted an insurmountable barrier to mass education. They contended that the Chinese writing system was the most difficult one in the world. The major problem with the script lay in the fact that it was divorced from actual speech, causing difficulties in learning and mastering it.

With the influence of the romanization activities of Western missionaries, many Chinese intellectuals became acutely aware of the "shortcomings" of the Chinese script, in contrast to the strengths of Western phonetic systems of writing. This awareness was also reinforced by their observations of Western educational models in relation to their writing systems. [4] They

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[3] The internal crises mainly included the Taiping Rebellion and the failure of the Reform Movement of 1898. The external crises mainly included the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the 1900 invasion by the Eight-Power Allied Forces (from Britain, the United States, Germany, France, Russia, Japan, Italy, and Austria).

[4] Quite a few devisers of Chinese alphabetic writing systems had been abroad. For example, Lu Zhuangzhang went to Singapore, Wang Zhao fled to Japan after the failure of the 1898 Reform

concluded that the high literacy rate, wealth and strengths of Western countries had much to do with their simple phonetic writing systems. [5]

Therefore, they devoted themselves to devising various alphabetic systems to annotate Chinese characters or to write the dialects on which they were based. During the twenty years following Lu Zhuangzhang's first alphabetic scheme in 1892 up to the Revolution of 1911, writing reformers proposed twenty-eight individual schemes, forming the earliest phase of the writing reform movement. (p. 27) They not only presented petitions to the Qing court to ask for support for their schemes, but also applied them in practice by running schools and classes to teach and promote them among the illiterates.

It is worth mentioning that the writing reformers made great sacrifices for the cause to which they were devoted. Suffice it to name a few individual examples. Lu Zhuangzhang, the creator of the first alphabetic writing system for Amoy, Mandarin and other dialects, spent more than ten years on his undertaking. After finishing the book which introduced his scheme, he copied it all by hand. Then he spent his own savings having it block printed for publication. (p. 26)

Movement, Cai Xiyong went to the United States, Japan and Peru on a diplomatic mission. Their observations and comments are carried in An Anthology of Language Reform in the Late Qing Dynasty, 1958.

[5] All the comments and opinions in this short passage are summarized from An Anthology of Language Reform in the Late Qing Dynasty.

Wang Zhao, the creator of the alphabet for Mandarin, was one of the participants of the Reform Movement of 1898. After the failure of the Movement, he fled to Japan, where he was influenced by the Japanese kana writing system. He returned to China secretly to devise his own scheme and published his Mandarin alphabet in 1900. While a political prisoner at large, he set up a class to popularize his alphabet. After he was pardoned, he was fully engaged in promoting the scheme. By 1910 when the Qing government prohibited the Mandarin alphabet, it had already spread to thirteen provinces, and the publications printed in this system reached more than 60,000 copies. The publications covered a wide range of topics including history, geography, ethics, biology, and diplomacy. (pp. 30-31)

These pioneers' hard work and sacrifice reflected their patriotic and nationalist spirit. Their purpose was to achieve mass literacy through a simpler writing system based on alphabetic principles. They hoped a universal literacy would rid China of weakness and backwardness and would make China become a strong and prosperous country.

Zhuyin Zimu: China's First Official Phonetic Alphabet

The twenty years of devising various alphabetic writing systems by individual reformers for different dialects in the late Qing dynasty finally led to a unified system after the

Revolution of 1911. (p. 33) This was Zhùyīn Zìmǔ (Phonetic Alphabet), which was promulgated at the Conference on Unification of Pronunciation sponsored by the Republican government in 1913. Writing reform pioneers including Lu Zhuangzhang and Wang Zhao participated in the drafting of this scheme.

The decision on the phonetic alphabet was reached only after intense debates over what form should be adopted as the phonetic symbols for the alphabet, and over which Chinese dialect should be represented by the alphabet symbols. The results were to adopt thirty-nine symbols, derived from Chinese characters, to represent the Beijing pronunciation as the national standard. So the Phonetic Alphabet was also called Guóyīn Zìmǔ (National Phonetic Alphabet).

The function of the system was confined to annotating the standard pronunciation for Chinese characters. In 1930 due to the fear that the Phonetic Alphabet might become an independent writing system, the Nationalist government decided to change the word Zìmǔ (alphabet) to Fúhào (symbol). Thus the Phonetic Alphabet became the Phonetic Symbols. Appendix 3 shows the Phonetic Symbols and their equivalent sound representation by other transcription systems such the Wade-Giles and Pinyin.

The Phonetic Alphabet was not formally announced until 1918 by the Republican government, five years after its creation in 1913. It was China's first official phonetic alphabet. In 1920,

it started to be used in elementary schools as an aid to learn the characters. "The Phonetic Alphabet laid a preliminary foundation for unifying the pronunciation of the characters, promoting Guoyu (the National Language), and spreading phonetic knowledge among the Chinese people." (p. 34) While Taiwan still uses this system in its educational systems and publications to annotate Chinese characters, mainland China replaced it with the Pinyin system in the late 1950s.

The Beginning of the Latinization Movement in 1906

Among the 28-odd alphabetical scripts devised by individuals plus the Phonetic Alphabet promulgated collectively in 1913, only four schemes loosely based their phonetic symbols on Latin letters and the remaining majority derived their phonetic symbols from Chinese characters. (p. 27) However, in 1906, Zhu Wenxiong was the first reformer who consciously adopted Latin letters as phonetic symbols for his scheme (p. 38). In the preface to his book The New Alphabet of Jiangsu, he wrote:

> Japan uses the phonetic kana system in its publications and that is why its education has been popularized. Nowadays Japan emphasizes even more the close correspondence between writing and speech. There are even people in Japan who advocate abolishing the kanji (Chinese characters) and kana system to adopt a romanized (Latinized) script... The appearances of the new alphabetic writing scheme (by Lu Zhuangzhang) appear bizarre and difficult to recognize; The Mandarin Alphabet (by Wang Zhao) was

derived from the Japanese kana and contained too many symbols. In my opinion, it is better to adopt the alphabet (the Latin alphabet) which is universally used in the world rather than create a new alphabet (in Zhou 1979:38, my translation.)

Liu Mengyang, another reformer adopting Latin letters for his phonetic symbols two years later, made a similar but more specific point in the preface to his book <u>Chinese Phonetic Writing</u>.

> If one says that our country's writing should not emulate those of other countries to avoid being ridiculed, I would say the person does not know that writing is only a kind of symbol. We adopt it just for its utility and we do not have to care whether it belongs to us or to others. Look at Britain, the United States, France, and other countries, their letters are the same...but Britain is still Britain, the United States still the United States, and France still France. If we adopt Latin letters, why would we not be China?" (in Zhou 1979:39, my translation.)

The mainstream phonetic schemes adopted symbols derived from Chinese characters; Zhu and Liu were in the minority in adopting Latin letters. Nevertheless, as pioneers in this direction, their influence on Latinization is not insignificant. The Latinization Movement (Lādīnghuà yùndòng) in its broad sense includes the trend of adopting Latin letters to annotate Chinese characters or to write different forms of Chinese independent of characters. This movement started around the time of Zhu's efforts. [6]

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[6] The Latinization Movement in its narrow sense began in the 1930s and 1940s when the Latinized New Writing was promoted and popularized by Communists and leftist intellectuals among the masses. This will be discussed in the following pages.

Literary Revolution and Latinization

The Literary Revolution prior to and during the May Fourth Movement of 1919, was first of all, a writing reform movement with a political and cultural nature. It fought for a transition from the classical Chinese written style to a vernacular written style called Baihua (Plain Language) based largely on the Beijing dialect. The event was referred to as China's Literary Renaissance for its resemblance in some aspects to the Renaissance in Europe. [7]

Some intellectuals who participated in the Literary Revolution not only challenged the written style of classical Chinese but also questioned the Chinese script itself. The leading progressive journals like The New Youth and New Tide all carried articles on the debate over Chinese characters and over adopting Latin letters to write the Chinese language. The hot

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[7] John DeFrancis, author of a few important books on the Chinese language and society, recently questioned the validity of this Renaissance analogy in an article entitled "China's Literary Renaissance: A Reassesssment". He contended that the Literary Revolution in China did not even succeed in a complete transition from classical Chinese writing to modern vernacular writing. The result is only a semi-classical and semi-vernacular style of writing, which makes the alphabetization of Chinese writing difficult because a writing style close to speech is essential for the proposed transition to alphabetic writing. However, the Renaissance in Europe completed a transition from Latin to other vernaculars such as Italian, French, and English, as a written medium. (DeFrancis 1985:52-63)

debates reached a peak when the journal <u>National Language</u> <u>Monthly</u> published a special issue on "Reform of Chinese Characters" in 1923. (Zhou 1979:40)

Among the most active participants in the debate, sponsored by the journal <u>National Language Monthly</u>, Qian Xuantong, a professor of philosophy and language, was particularly harsh in his criticism of Chinese characters. "The evils of Chinese characters, such as difficulty in recognition and writing, impeding the popularization of education, and the spreading of knowledge, are known to anyone who has acquired the new thinking." (in Zhou 1979:40) Furthermore, from the history of the evolutionary change of Chinese characters, he maintained that Chinese writing went away from reflecting images and came closer to representing the sound of speech. (p. 40) From a viewpoint of evolution, he asserted that phonetic writing was more advanced than Chinese characters which stopped short at this phonetic stage. (p. 42)

Qian, not satisfied with the Chinese Phonetic Symbols (Zhuyin Fuhao) he contended:

> While the Phonetic Symbols are derived from reformed
> Chinese characters for representing pronunciation,
> they are not adequate compared to the world alphabet--
> the Roman letters...The worst thing about Chinese
> characters is that they are incompatible with the
> culture of a modern world. The so-called Western
> culture is actually the culture of the modern world,
> not the private property of Westerners...If the
> Chinese are unwilling to live outside this culture,
> their phonetic alphabet should adopt the world
> alphabet--the Roman alphabet." (in Zhou 1979:41, my
> translation)

The above comments clearly revealed Qian's attitude toward Chinese characters and Western writing. Although his attack on the Chinese writing system was extreme, he represented a trend of thinking on this matter at that time. Other prominent linguists such as Li Jinxi and Chao Yuen Ren also published articles in the special issue of the <u>National Language Monthly</u>, proposing technical ways of annotating Chinese characters and writing the National Language in Latin letters. (p. 41)

Guoyeu Romatzyh: China's First Official Latinized Alphabet

As a result of the activities organized by Chao, Li, and Qian, a draft for romanizing the National Language was drawn up in \1926\, known as Guoyeu Romatzyh (National Language Romanization). Because the then Ministry of Education was unwilling to adopt the draft, its creators had to announce it on their own in the same year. It was not until 1928 that the Ministry of Education formally pronounced its legitimacy as the second form for the National Language Phonetic Alphabet, thanks to the personal efforts of Cai Yuanpei, the then Minister of Education who was a Latinization supporter. (p. 42)

As its name indicated, Guoyeu Romatzyh represented the Beijing dialect. The most distinguished feature about this scheme is its use of letters to indicate tones rather than

external symbols such as ‾ , ∕ , ∨ , and ∖ , which were added in

the character-like Phonetic Symbols and the Latinized Pinyin

system. Tone indications were integrated in the syllable

spelling by different letters. For example, the name of this

scheme is written on such a principle. It would be written as

√ㄍㄨㄜ ㄩ ㄌㄨㄛ ㄇㄚ ㄗ in the Phonetic Alphabet (Symbols) system, and as

Guóyǔ Luómǎzì in the Pinyin system.

This was China's first official Latinized phonetic

alphabet. Since its birth in 1926, Latinization has become the

mainstream thinking in the writing reform movement. (p. 42) More

importantly, it was designed not only for annotating Chinese

characters but also with the thought of using it as an

independent system of writing, for it has specific rules for

joining individual syllables to form words corresponding to

speech. But it remained mostly as an intellectual undertaking

with little practical use. In addition to the complicated rules

for tonal spelling, the major reason for its limited use is lack

of support from both the government and the masses. (p. 43) [8]

Latinized New Writing--the Peak of the Latinization Movement

In contrast to Guoyeu Romatzh, which was largely confined

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[8] But this system has been used until quite recently in the
Harvard University Chinese Language first year textbook, <u>Mandarin
Primer</u>, written by Chao Yuen Ren, and taught by his daughter Chao
Rulan.

to limited academic use, another Latinized **system for writing** Chinese which emerged after the former, received **considerable** support from the then outlawed Communist government, **leftist** intellectuals, and diverse segments of society. This **was the** scheme called Latinxua (Latinization), also known as Sin **Wenz** (New Writing) or Latinxua Sin Wenz (Latinized New Writing). It was also referred to as the Latinization Movement in its narrow sense. This popular movement was different from the previous Latinization efforts in the sense that it openly promoted the Latinized New Writing as an independent script rather than as a tool to learn Chinese characters.

This system was jointly devised in the early thirties by several Communists and their Soviet colleagues for about 100,000 Chinese immigrants in the Far East of the Soviet Union. Most of these immigrants were illiterate workers and peasants from Shandong Province and its surrounding areas. Since 1920, the Soviet Union started a nation-wide campaign against illiteracy in its minority areas, through reforming or devising writing schemes based on Latin letters. Thus the joint effort by Sino-Soviet Communists was part of the campaign initiatives.

However, when Communists Qu Qiubai and others devised the system, their goal was not confined only to assisting the Chinese illiterates in the Soviet Union in achieving literacy, but embraced a long-term vision of eventually replacing Chinese characters with the new Latinized script. (pp. 44-45) This idea

was explained in the "The Principles and Regulations for Latinized Chinese Writing":

> If (we) want to completely abandon the ideographs (Chinese characters) to replace them with a pure phonetic writing; to create a genuinely popular script for the masses; to adopt a modern scientific writing system; to attach importance to internationalization, we have no choice but to adopt Latin letters to Latinize the Chinese script. (in Zhou 1979:45, my translation)

In contrast to Guoyeu Romatzh, the main feature of the Latinized New Writing was that it was not strictly based on the Beijing dialect but loosely based on the Northern dialect. It also did not need to indicate tones, which was a complicated matter for Guoyeu Romatzh. More importantly, it could be adapted to write different dialects to meet the needs of non-Mandarin speakers. But this was also where it was strongly attacked by supporters of Guoyeu Romatzh for separating the country, for it advocated diverse writing standards rather than a single writing standard based on the National Language.

In 1933, the Latinized New Writing spread to Nationalist-occupied cities such as Shanghai, Beijing (called Beiping at that time), Wuhan, and Guangzhou. Although the Nationalist government prohibited it and regarded it as a Communist activity, more than seventy associations and societies for promoting the new writing were established in those cities. Between 1934-1937, they published more than sixty books and thirty journals on the new writing. Another forty newspapers and journals published articles or special issues on the new

writing. More than sixty newspapers and journals adopted the new writing for an additional masthead. The activity became a part of the campaign against the Nationalist rule and the Japanese invasion. The new writing also spread to overseas Chinese communities in Hong Kong, France, Thailand, the United States, and other countries. (p. 47)

In December 1935 a pronouncement, entitled "Our Opinions Regarding the Promotion of the Latinized New Writing," was published, jointly signed by 688 celebrities in cultural circles, including Lu Xun, Cai Yuanpei, and Guo Moruo. (p. 46) Among these influential figures, Lu Xun, author of a number of widely acclaimed works in modern literature, played a very important role in promoting the new writing.

Lu Xun's Views on Chinese Characters and Latinization

When Lu Xun died in 1936, the Communist leader Mao Tse-tung hailed him as the chief commander of China's cultural revolution, a great writer, thinker and revolutionary. But his views on Chinese writing and his role in supporting the Latinization movement were not well-known. Between 1934 and 1935 he wrote a dozen articles to support the Latinized New Writing, to advocate a writing style based on the language of ordinary people, and to refute the trend toward classics during that period. The following paragraphs are a summary of Lu Xun's views

on writing reform, based on two small selections of his work.

Lu Xun was very critical of Chinese characters. Through an analysis of their origins and development, he said the Chinese script tended to become phonetic symbols. Although these symbols were progressive in that they indicated sound, they were too complicated to write. Moreover, because of the change in pronunciation over time, the phonetic symbols could not function properly to represent the present pronunciation. In summary, "Our ancestors have left us the characters as a big inheritance, and we should be grateful. But in today's situation the characters have evolved to be neither graphs which are pure pictures nor graphs which can indicate sound, we have to hesitate to say thanks." (Lu 1974a:19)

Lu Xun maintained that because of the difficulty of the script, only two out of ten people in the country were able to recognize the characters, and even less than two people were able to write them. So the writing system became a tool for the privileged few to control a majority of the population. To maintain their control, they even created more difficulties in writing or writing style to keep people ignorant. Chinese characters were an inherited ailment for the majority of the Chinese people. If China wanted to survive, it should get rid of the characters; or it would be sacrificed to the characters. (Lu 1974b:36-38)

Lu Xun contended that the difficulty of Chinese characters

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made it impossible for the laboring masses to learn and master them. They were incompatible with the speech of the masses (because there was a basic contradiction between the polysyllabic speech and mono-syllable characters). Using the mono-syllable square characters to write the polysyllabic speech was not only a waste of brain but also a waste of time, paper, and ink. The Latinized New Writing was the only medium which could write the language of the ordinary people and it was much easier to learn because of its structural simplicity. It was the hope for the rebirth of the Chinese language. (Lu 1974b:34, 36-38)

He suggested that people should first learn the kind of Latinized New Writing based on their local or regional dialect. (Lu 1974b:23) After achieving literacy in their own dialect, they could start to learn the Latinized writing based on the Northern dialect for the purpose of communicating with people speaking or writing other dialects (Lu 1974b:40).

Lu Xun's views on Chinese characters and the Latinized New Writing did not receive much attention from his readers, except for a few who were concerned about writing reform and mass literacy. For example, one of the two booklets, which contained Lu Xun's articles on language reform and which was quoted in the above passages, was compiled and published in 1974 by writing reformers of the then Committee on Script Reform.

Some authors of writing reform frequently quote his views

on this issue. John DeFrancis, the American specialist in Chinese whose work was quoted extensively in Chapter 1, has paid special attention to Lu Xun's comments on writing reform. He dedicated his 1984 book to the "neglected memory of Lu Xun as an ardent advocate of Chinese language reform." He also maintained that Lu Xun's ideas about reform are the "most efficient means of achieving universal literacy." (1984:280)

The Communists and Latinized New Writing

First of all, several Communists including Qu Qiubai and Wu Yuzhang were directly involved in the creation of the new writing. The then outlawed position of the Communist Party and its philosophy of advocating reliance on the masses made the new writing a well-received item on its agenda. In other words, it has both theoretical and practical significance in the Communist cause.

In the Communist-occupied Yan'an area in Shaanxi Province, the new writing received considerable support from top-level Communist leaders including Mao Tse-tung. It was promoted with great zeal; classes were run and extensive publications covering various topics were printed in the form of the new writing. Both soldiers and the masses in the area were encouraged to learn it to achieve literacy. The Yan'an government even issued a decree to grant Latinized New Writing the same legal status as Chinese

characters. As a result, some official laws were also published in the form of the new writing. (DeFrancis 1984:254)

It was during this period that Mao published a few important articles on the work style of Party cadres and literary workers. In the important article, "On New Democray," he wrote: "The writing must be reformed under certain conditions. The language must be close to the masses." (in Wu 1955:13) The Latinized New Writing fit this guideline and was therefore taken seriouly in the Yan'an area. Moreover, in an interview with the American journalist Edgar Snow in Yan'an in 1936, he said:

> We believe Latinization is a good instrument with which to overcome illiteracy. Chinese characters are so difficult to learn that even the best system of rudimentary characters, or simplified teaching, does not equip the people with a really efficient and rich vocabulary. *Sooner or later, we believe, we will have to abandon characters altogether if we are to create a new social culture in which the masses fully participate.* (in DeFrancis 1984:247-248, Snow's emphasis)

With the advent of the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the following civil war (1945-1949), the activity of promoting the new writing was disrupted. Writing reform advocates and activists hoped to reintroduce the new writing in a unified, democratic China. (DeFrancis 1950:134)

Writing Reform after 1949

Ten days after the People's Republic of China was founded

on October 1, 1949, an unofficial Association for Chinese Writing Reform was established in Beijing, under the leadership of Wu Yuzhang, a writing reform advocate and activist. In 1952 the Association changed its name to the Research Committee on Writing Reform. And in 1954 the State Council formally placed the Committee under its administration, with the official name of the Committee on Script Reform.

In accordance with Mao's guidelines, the Committee placed its emphasis on three tasks: simplifying a batch of frequently used Chinese characters; promoting a Common Language based on the Beijing pronunciation (Putonghua); and devising a phonetic alphabet (Pinyin) for annotating Chinese characters and facilitating the learning of Putonghua. All these had been attempted and practiced in the previous writing reforms.

Simplification. This task was carried out in two ways. One was reducing the total number of characters by eliminating 1,050 rare and variant characters in 1955. The other was reducing the number of strokes that formed a character. In 1956 an official list was announced to simplify 515 characters and all the characters which contain one of 54 simplified character components, such as 饣 for the radical 食 (which has something to do with "food" or "to eat/drink"). The 1964 list of simplified characters increased the number to a total of 2,238, accounting for more than one third of the total characters which are used to write modern Chinese. After simplification, the average

number of strokes in the 2,000 most frequently used characters was reduced from 11.2 to 9.8. (DeFrancis 1984:260)

The 1964 list has remained the final official draft for character simplification. During the chaos of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), another list for simplication of more characters was prepared by the working staff of the Committee on Script Reform without consultation with the official members of the Committee. [9] It was not well-received by intellectuals as well as the general public and was formally withdrawn from use by the government in 1981. However, quite a number of characters from this list have been and are still being used by some people in some public places. This is one of the items which has been addressed for rectification by the Committee in recent years.

After China was opened to the outside world, its official writing policy in terms of simplified characters has created a dilemma, for the traditional characters are still being used by most overseas Chinese, especially in Taiwan and Hong Kong. This is one of the hotly debated issues in contemporary writing reform, which will be dealt with in Chapter 4.

Putonghua. As pointed out in Chapter 1, Putonghua is basically the Guoyu (National Language) in the Republican period (1911-1949), and further back, the *Guanhua* (Language of Mandarin Officials) during the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368-1911). The

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[9] However, the failure of this draft has become a piece of evidence to attack reformers in their reform endeavor on the part of their opponents.

pronunciation of Putonghua is based on the Beijing dialect. Putonghua is a vital link between speech and writing, for modern written Chinese is actually based on this spoken form, with the characters annotated by this pronunciation standard. In the contemporary debate on writing reform, Putonghua is the least controversial topic among the three reform tasks. [10] The significance and implications of Putonghua for writing reform will be discussed in the following chapters.

Pinyin. After 1949, interest in writing reform revived among professionals as well as the general public. When the Committee on Script Reform solicited opinions from the general public regarding the Chinese phonetic alphabet scheme, between 1950 and 1958 it received about 1,700 schemes from people of different walks of life across the country. The Committee selected six final drafts for consideration: four of them were based on Chinese characters, one on the Cyrillic alphabet, and one on the Latin alphabet. After intensive discussions and debates among specialists, the Committee decided to recommend the scheme based on the Latin alphabet. (Zhou 1979:50) In 1958 the final draft for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet was officially approved by the National People's Congress, the country's highest state organ.

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[10] On the one hand, this indicates that there is almost a unanimous agreement on the need for Putonghua as a common medium of communication among people from different parts of China. On the other hand, promoting Putonghua is a very important task on the part of the Party and the government. Therefore it is a politically sensitive subject which opponents of writing reform avoid arguing against reformers.

Among the three reform tasks, this is the most controversial topic in the contemporary debate on writing reform. The controversy centres on two aspects, form and function. From the aspect of form, advocates and supporters of Latinization of writing reform succeeded in adopting the Latin letters as opposed to adopting symbols derived from Chinese characters. From the aspect of function, they were discouraged when the word "writing" in the original draft title--the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet Writing Scheme--was deliberately omitted by the National People's Congress. That means their expectation of using the Latinized scheme as a script independent of the characters was not accommodated by the new government. The failure of official support of writing reform along lines similar to those of earlier years led an author on writing reform to label the reform after 1950 as "Mao's great leap backward." (DeFrancis 1984:257) However, from the viewpoint of those against writing reform, even the limited achievement on the part of reformers needs a reassessment. The following chapters will examine the contemporary debate between the two opposing sides on writing reform with respect to linguistics, culture, and national development.

Contemporary Debate on Writing Reform: Linguistic Complications

The year 1992 witnessed two related but opposed events
which involved Chinese writing reform. The first event was the
centenary of the creation of the first alphabetic writing system
for Chinese by Lu Zhuangzhang. As mentioned in the preceding
chaper, his aim was to reform China's character-based script,
which does not have an alphabet to systematically represent the
sounds of speech in writing. The second event was that a group
of intellectuals produced a four-episode television series "The
Miraculous Chinese Characters" to extol the virtues of the
traditional script. While Lu's contemporary followers of writing
reform spoke highly of his contribution to the reform, the
producers of the television series had reservations about Lu and
his past and present followers.

> ...There was a time when people had biased and
> mistaken views about this excellent script (Chinese
> characters). More than half a century ago, in the face
> of a crisis-ridden country, some idealistic people who
> struggled hard to save China unfairly blamed Chinese
> characters for all the ills. While they advocated
> learning Western science to salvage our motherland out
> of misery, they attempted to replace the characters
> with Latin letters and replace Chinese culture with
> Latin culture. They were good-willed and well-
> motivated. But their motivation did not achieve good
> results as they wished. Although they exhausted their
> youth and became white-haired for this cause, the
> results went contrary to their wishes. (Xu et al.
> 1992a:31)

This passage clearly indicates the attitude of the

producers of the television series toward the writing reform movement, particulary the mainstream efforts for Latinization of the Chinese script.

This group of intellectuals were affiliated with the non-governmental Beijing International Association for Research on Chinese Characters (hereafter the Association), which was formerly known as the Society for Research on the Modernization of Chinese Characters (hereafter the Society). Founded in 1980 by Yuan Xiaoyuan, then a Chinese expatriate from the United States, [11] this organization has gained greater momentum in the late eighties and early nineties as it obtained increasing support from a large number of influential scholars and government officials. They publish a quarterly journal--<u>Chinese Character Culture</u> (*Hànzì Wénhuà*), which was called <u>Script and Culture</u> (*Wénzì yǔ Wénhuà*) before 1989. They have also published a large number of books, small circulation newspapers and pamphlets on Chinese characters and general linguistic research. As early as 1980, and particularly in the past few years, this group of intellectuals has forcefully challenged the theories and practices of the official Committee on Script Reform regarding writing reform. A coterie of intellectuals, who do not belong to the Association, have also joined them in arguing against writing reformers. Their arguments cover both linguistic

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[11] Yuan restored her Chinese citizenship in 1985 at the expense of her American citizenship.

and non-linguistic aspects. This chapter focuses on the former which is mainly concerned with the relationship between speech and writing. For purposes of clarity, the theories of the reformers will be presented first and then followed by the counter-arguments of their opponents.

The Relationship Between Speech and Writing

The mainstream theory of modern linguistics in the West emphasizes the primacy of speech over writing. Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of modern Western linguistics, writes:

> A language and its written form constitute two separate systems of signs. The sole reason for the existence of the latter is to represent the former. The object of study in linguistics is not a combination of the written word and the spoken word. The spoken word alone constitutes that object. But the written word is so intimately connected with the spoken word it represents that it manages to usurp the principal role. (1972:24)

Leonard Bloomfield, the father of modern American descriptive linguistics, states outspokenly:

> Writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks. (in Vachek 1973:11)

This view has been upheld by several generations of American linguists. In his sixteen design features of universals of language, Charles Hockett excluded writing, because

> Writing is a recent invention, and has not yet spread to all human communities...Writing systems are quite varied in their designs, so that it is difficult to be

sure just what features are common to all. (1963:14, 15)

John DeFrancis, whose work was discussed in Chapter 1, follows this dictum in his assertion that "speech is primary and writing secondary." (1984:37) In his 1989 book <u>Visible Speech:</u> <u>The Diverse Oneness of Writing Systems</u>, he further reiterated his views on the relationship between speech and writing by stating that

> The concept of writing as visible speech summarizes the insistence throughout this book that the primary feature of writing is the representation of speech. (1989:248)

In a critique of some linguists' challenge against this dictum, he argued:

> Particularly astonishing is the failure of linguists to insist that writing--real writing, full writing-- first and foremost represents speech, however well or badly it may do its job, even if its role is acknowledged as not being limited to representing speech. (1989:217)

It was on this premise that he analyzed the Chinese writing system and concluded that "Chinese characters are an extremely bad example of phonetic writing." (1984:130) At the same time, he felt that Chinese writing exerted "preponderant influence" on speech. He pointed out that this was reflected in the fact that non-Mandarin (Putonghua) speakers have to learn to be literate in a script based on Putonghua. Moreover, the modern written style is filled with classical expressions and sentence patterns which are largely divorced from actual speech. All this causes

great difficulties in learning and mastering the script, particularly for non-Mandarin speakers. (DeFrancis 1984:233-237) His views regarding the contradictions between China's current integralist language policy and the goal of achieving universal literacy are worth quoting in full so that the logic of his argument can be fully understood.

> One contradiction is the incongruity between t h e difficulty of the characters and the limited ability of the masses to acquire the requisite mastery. Another contradiction...is the incongruity inherent in using characters to achieve a style of writing close to speech. Still another is that involved in the policy that replaces characters by a single Putonghua Pinyin orthography and places on regionalect speakers the extra burden of setting aside their own speech and learning Putonghua for purposes of literacy. In all these cases an enormous burden is placed on the segment of the population that is least able to afford the time and effort needed to attain and retain mastery of the writing system. (1984:280)

From his views on the primacy of speech over writing to the analysis of poor representation of sound by Chinese characters, DeFrancis came to the same conclusion as Marshall McLuhan (1962), Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1968) who extolled the virtues of the Greek alphabet. His views regarding the emphasis on the pivotal role of phonetization in the development of writing are identical to those of I.J. Gelb who espoused the view of evolutionary stages of development of writing--from logographic through syllabic to alphabetic. (1963)

Theory on the Three-Phase Development of Writing

It is necessary here to review the Chinese script in its

relation to the other six forerunners of writing in the world, for much of the controversy over writing reform has resulted from relevant theory on writing. The following brief discussion is largely based on Gelb's 1963 book, <u>A Study of Writing</u>. It is mentioned in Chapter 1 that Gelb identifies the Chinese script is as logo-syllabic or word-syllabic system of writing, along with the other six systems, of which three have been successfully deciphered. The term indicates a general feature of all the four systems of writing in which signs express words and syllables. The formation of word signs is identical or very similar in all the four systems, which partially corresponds to the six traditional classification of word signs identified as six principles of writing (*Liùshū*) in Xu Shen's <u>*Shuōwén Jiězì*</u>. (Gelb 1963:99) Syllabic signs are usually derived from word signs and used to write identical syllables of various words with identical signs. (p. 110)

The term logo-syllabic or word-syllabic writing system characteristic of the four Oriental systems also reveals that their "phonographic" character is the important unifying feature of all four. (p. 194) By "phonographic" Gelb means that all the four systems have established correspondence between sign and sound, the phonetization principle which is "the most important single step in the history of writing." (p. 194) In other words, a writing system could never become a full or real system, if it did not succeed "in attaching to a sign a phonetic

value independent of the meaning which this sign has as a word."
(pp. 193-194) A Chinese case in point is the character 马 (mǎ,
horse). When the radical 女 (nǚ, female) and the radical 口 (kǒu,
mouth) are added to the character 马 , the new compound
characters 妈 (mā) and 骂 (mà) respectively mean "mother" and
"to revile." Obviously the original character 马 becomes a
phonetic sign and is used only for its sound value independent
of its original meaning of "horse"--just like the previous
example of the function of the character 木 (mù, wood/trees) in
the compound character 沐 (mu, to bathe). A large number of
Chinese radicals plus phonetic type characters fit this
description.

Gelb's preponderant emphasis on the principle of
phonetization in the world history of writing has led to his
hypothesized three-phase development of writing. This is the
most controversial theory involved in the writing reform debate
in China.

> In going over this short sketch of the development of
> writing we can observe three great steps by which
> writing evolved from the primitive stages to a full
> alphabet. In chronological order they are: (1) the
> Sumerian principle of phonetization, (2) the West
> Semitic syllabic writing, and (3) the Greek alphabet.
> (p. 203-204)

DeFrancis, whose work was extensively quoted in Chapter 1
and is being discussed in the present chapter, admits that his
thinking has been greatly influenced by Gelb's stress on the
pivotal role of the rebus principle, that is, the principle of

phonetization, in the transition from the limited to the full system of writing. (1989:61) However, he does not agree with Gelb's characterization of the Chinese script as word-syllabic, because Gelb ignores or minimizes the phonetic aspect in Chinese writing. (1989:224). Moreover, DeFrancis shows that less than half of Chinese characters are free words and the remaining are bound morphemes (which must be used together with other words or morphemes). (1989:116) He proposes the term morphosyllabic (mentioned in Chapter 1) in order to reflect the situation in which a majority of Chinese characters "contain both a semantic element suggesting a broad category of meaning and a phonetic element suggesting a specific syllable of sound." (1984:88) [12]

Writing Reformers' Theory and Practice

Chinese writing reformers have followed the same line of thinking of DeFrancis and Gelb in terms of the principle of phonetization and the three-phase development of writing. They believe that phonetization is the ultimate direction of the Chinese script. They emphasize the primacy of speech in relation to the script and mass literacy. Their belief and emphasis lead them to pursue an alphabetic system for China.

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[12] Footnote 29 in Chapter 1 makes a criticism of DeFrancis' use of the word "specific" in the context. It should be replaced by the word "broad" in order to reflect the fact that a phonetic mostly suggests an approximate pronunciation for the compound character in which it forms a part.

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They point out several difficulties of learning Chinese characters. Basically their views are similar to DeFrancis because they begin with the identical assumption that writing is a device to represent speech. First of all, as a tool to record Chinese speech, characters cannot indicate pronunciation accurately. There are phonetic symbols in most Chinese characters, but the phonetic value is not systematic and consistent. Thus one cannot count much on the phonetics for accurate pronunciation. Secondly, most characters have lost pictographic value and a learner cannot directly know the meaning (or the pronunciation) of a character unless it is learned. Thirdly, the total number of characters in use in a certain period can reach more than ten thousand as defined in an ordinary dictionary (A Modern Chinese Dictionary, for example). Although one needs 6,000 characters to write modern Chinese and the most frequently used characters are further limited to 3,500, the latter figure is still considered too high for an average person because their structures are complicated and pronunciations are not represented by graphic symbols. In addition, there are not a few cases of the "mutually interpretive" type characters (in the six principles of writing discussed in Chapter 1) in which a character has two or more pronunciations and meanings. Reformers argue that many scholars find it difficult to master this type of characters, let alone the vast masses. (Lyu 1988:8-10; Chen 1988:39-49; Zheng

Another important argument made by writing reformers, based on the theory that writing is a devise to represent speech, is that "what can be spoken intelligibly can be written phonetically." (DeFrancis 1950:145) Since Chinese people, like peoples of other countries, have no difficulty expressing what they want to by using Chinese speech, a phonetic writing based on it does not constitute an obstacle to expressing their thoughts. This argument is to counter the widespread notion that the homophone problem makes Chinese characters a must to write Chinese unambiguously. (DeFrancis 1950:142-146; Yin 1992:42)

As pointed out in Chapter 1, in practice however, writing reformers have faced technical difficulties in promulgating rules for jointly writing Chinese monosyllables to form words in the Pinyin system in conformity with Western linguistic practice. This difficulty mainly results from the existence of a large number of homophones and also from flexible word formation and word order in forming sentences. It is true that in modern Chinese most words consist of two or more morphemes, which can more or less alleviate the homophonous problem. However, there are still a fairly large number of monosyllable words, such as 来 (lái, come), 去 (qù, to go), 走 (zǒu, walk), 好 (hǎo, good), and 坏 / 壞 (huài, bad).

Although Guoyeu Romatzyh (National Language Romanization) and Latinxua Sin Wenz (Latinized New Writing) have provided some

experience in writing words semantically, a theoretical and practical problem remains in this area. How to write verbs and verbal phrases proves to be particularly tricky, for many verbal expressions can be separated with various elements interceded between them. For example, 他睡觉/覺了 (Tā shuìjiào le, he has gone to bed). The verb shuijiao "has gone to bed" is a single verb in this case. But in 他睡了觉 (Tā shuì le jiào, he slept/had a sleep.), shui and jiao have become separate words. Yet in 他睡了五个/個小时/時的觉了 (Tā shuì le wǔge xiǎoshí de jiào le, He has been sleeping for five hours.), more elements can be interceded between the original one word "shuijiao". It is impossible to include such usages in a dictionary; the writer has to decide whether to join or separate words according to contexts in which they are located. It is both a theoretical and a practical problem which needs long-term research.

In order to establish standards for writing orthographic words in Pinyin, the Commission on Language and Script Work set up the Committee on Chinese Romanization Orthography (Hanyu Pinyin Zhengcifa Weiyuanhui) in 1982. <u>The Basic Principles for Chinese Romanization Orthography (draft)</u> was finalized in 1984. Some principles are similar to English orthography. For example, the most important characteristic of this work is that the basic unit of writing is words (ci) as opposed to characters (zi). Another example similar to English is that the first letter of a sentence and proper names should be capitalized.

Anti-Reformers' Counter-Arguments

Many opponents to writing reform charge that reformers have based their theory and practice on the three-phase evolutionary theory which was derived from the study of Indo-European languages and writings by Western linguists. As the two leading figures Yuan Xiaoyuan and Xu Dejiang point out:

> Over a long period of time in the past, the (Chinese) linguistic circles have mechanically followed the Indo-European linguistic model. Thus the mainstream view is that Chinese characters are extremely backward and cannot adapt to modernization. Chinese characters were charged with variously fabricated "crimes" and pronounced with the "death penalty". (Yuan and Xu 1989:76)

In fact, many of the opponents to writing reform along the line of Latinization, including Yuan and Xu, admitted that they used to ascribe to the Western linguistic theory and the necessity of reforming Chinese writing along the same direction of phonetization as Western writing. But after intensive and extensive studies of the Chinese language and writing, Western languages and writings, and through a comparison of these two language families, they realized that the Western model did not suit the reality of Chinese speech and writing. They insisted that generally taken-for-granted Western linguistic theories be questioned and rebuilt to better suit the Chinese situation. It was time to rehabilitate the reputation of Chinese characters and restore their prestige as a highly admirable system of writing in the world.

Firstly, they question the general Western linguistic thoery based on the speech-centred approach which regards writing as subordinate to speech. With this approach, the ideographic Chinese writing is naturally considered to be inferior to the Western alphabetic writing. (Xu 1992b:35) There are two different arguments on this point.

One argument held by a minority of opponents questions the mainstream definition of writing as a system of signs to record languages. It argues that the fact that speech came prior to writing in terms of time does not mean that the latter should be subject to the subordination of the former. It maintains that the nature of writing was to compensate for the limitations of speech in time and space through a system of visual signs to indicate meaning. Speech and writing are two different systems of signs on an equal footing, without one dominating the other. According to this perspective, Chinese writing is an ideal system of visual signs which can indicate meaning without the intermediary of speech. (Xu Jiahao 1991:3-8) A few authors argued for primacy of writing over speech. They assert that writing was a qualitative leap over speech and was constantly refined and perfected by its users. (Xu 1992b:22; Ann 1987:234-237) [13]

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[13] Another representative work is written by Li Xu, "On the Primacy of Writing over Speech (Shilun wenzi gaoyu yuyan)," <u>Chinese Character Culture</u>, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 13-19, 1991. Coincidently, "On the Primacy of Writing" is a chapter title in Fred Householder's <u>Linguistic Speculations</u>. John DeFrancis made a sharp

The other argument basically agrees with the Western mainstream definition of writing but emphasizes that Chinese characters are generally suitable to record the Chinese language. It argues that Chinese is an isolating language and its morphology does not have inflexional and declensional changes. In spoken form, one syllable corresponds to one morpheme or one word. In written form, a square character usually corresponds to a one-syllable word or morpheme. Furthermore, as there is a shortage of meaningful syllables (about 1,300 tonal syllables in Putonghua), there are a large number of homophones in spoken Chinese. Because there are many more characters than syllables, they are employed in writing to help distinguish the homophones in speech. Chinese characters do a relatively good job of recording different forms of Chinese speech. Therefore, there is no need for a fundamental reform towards a phonetic system of writing in the Western sense. (Hu 1989:21-22)

Another frequently argument of anti-reformers is that the Chinese writing system acts as a unifying force to unite the whole nation because of the diversity of dialects. Some argue that since it is difficult to unify pronunciation, Chinese characters should be kept for nation-wide communication. This

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criticism of Householder's approach by pointing out "the primacy turns out to be little more than the superior ability in English to predict pronunciation from spelling as compared to predicting spelling from pronunciation."

argument is closely related to the cultural aspect of writing reform which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Western Linguists against Mainstream Theory on Writing

The mainstream theory in Western linguistics regarding the relationship between speech and writing has also been challenged by some Western linguists over the past twenty years, particularly in recent years. The German linguist Florian Coulmas is one of them.

> Historians, anthropologists, and sociologists were always aware of the fundamental significance of writing. An avalanche of linguistic publications during the past two decades underscores what 19th-century linguists took for granted, but has been called into doubt in 20th-century mainstream linguistics, namely that writing and written language are legitimate objects of linguistic study. (Coulmas 1992:321 footnote 45)

Joseph Vachek, an important member of the Prague School, as early as 1939, started to emphasize the difference between speech and writing, arguing against the prescribed inferior status of the latter. He proposed a functional approach in which he viewed spoken language and written language as "functionally complementary" in a "cultured" language community. In this community, they could be chosen to serve different purposes of language users in communication. Moreover, he held that written language had its specific status as it was usually used to serve "higher cultural and/or civilizational purposes and functions

(use in literature, research work, state administration, etc.)".
(Vachek 1973:16-17)

The American linguist Dwight Bolinger made a modest argument against the superiority of speech by drawing attention to the phenomenon of "visible morphemes" in writing. He argued that while writing is related to speech there were some meaningful elements in writing that have independent existence. "Writing speaks words to the mind in a voice of its own, sometimes more clearly than words spoken aloud." (Bolinger 1975:474) He listed many interesting and convincing examples of English expressions where misunderstanding could arise without being written down and could be solved when they were put onto paper. For example, in speech, Peace Corps may be interpreted as P-Score, youth rehabilitation as U-3 habilitation. Many puns cannot be appreciated unless they are written; for example, robber barons as opposed to robber bairns, the estate called Belleigh Acres. Another interesting anecdote is about a librarian who misunderstood her customer's word "euthanasia" as "youth in Asia" and could not locate correct material for him. (Bolinger 1975:475)

It seems that both Western and Chinese scholars have noticed the lopsided tendency of subjugating writing to speech and of ignoring the special traits of writing. These arguments have had a significant impact on anti-reformers' opposition to both the theory and practice which judge the capacity of writing

systems for indicating pronunciation as the primary criterion of their superiority or inferiority. They argue that there should be other standards for evaluating a writing system, especially a unique system like Chinese characters.

An Assessment of DeFrancis' Arguments

The above argument leads to the present writer's assessment of DeFrancis' designation of the Chinese script as a phonetic writing system as discussed at the end of Chapter 1. While his description of Chinese characters as morphosyllabic appears to be reasonable, his elevation of the phonetic element over the semantic element so as to characterize the whole system as phonetic is hardly convincing or persuasive. After all, most radicals in Chinese characters can indicate a broad semantic field for the characters of which they are a part. The few examples he listed such as the radical 玊 in the character 理 (lǐ "principle" or "reason") are among some exceptions in which the radical does not follow the general rules to suggest a broad semantic field for the compound character of which it is a part. It is also possible that the etymological origins of many characters might have been lost due to the long history of evolution. [14]

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[14] The radical 玊 in the character 理 is actually a simple form of the character 玉 (yù, jade). T.K. Ann analyzed the origin of the character 理 , which originally has something to do with "to

To be sure, there are some cases in which a semantic element is added arbitrarily to a character to distinguish it from other characters. However, we should characterize the nature of a writing system on the basis of its major features, not just exceptions. In the case of Chinese writing, the major component is the semantic-phonetic type characters in which both features function mutually. Therefore, it is not appropriate to ignore the semantic element and designate the Chinese script as a phonetic writing system, as DeFrancis did. To a different extent, there are inconsistencies in the relationship between sign and sound in every writing system. English, with an orthographic history at least 2,500 years younger than the Chinese script, is particularly notorious for this problem. DeFrancis did not classify English as a different system rather than an alphabetic one because of the large number of common spelling irregularities; nor does he have reason to ignore the semantic part of Chinese characters in his designation of the system as a whole. DeFrancis has made a contribution to dispel the popular myth that Chinese writing did not indicate sound at all, but his minimizing of the semantic function for the purpose of relatively elevating the phonetic function has seriously undermined his otherwise insightful analysis.

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polish jade" and "to design one's residence based on understanding certain rules." The modern usage of this character has extended meaning of "principles" and "managing/dealing with human affairs." (1987:28-29)

The controversy over relative importance of the semantic and phonetic elements in the Chinese writing system has been a focus of dispute since the emergence of Sinology as a discipline. DeFrancis is only the most recent scholar to research and systematize the arguments for phonetic ascendancy over semantic ascendancy in the Chinese script. Ole Bjorn Rongen was right in his review of DeFrancis's 1984 book when he said: "after his book gets the attention it deserves, it is hard to see that there could be any future controversy about the phonetic function of Chinese characters." (Rongen 1985:64)

But it is also hard to see that there could *not* be any future dispute over the semantic function of the Chinese script. In Jerry Norman's 1988 book <u>Chinese,</u> he designated the Chinese script as morphemic. (p. 78), and he does not even include DeFrancis' 1984 book in his bibliography. Zhou Youguang and Zheng Linxi, both ardent advocates of writing reform, characterize Chinese writing by almost the same term as DeFrancis' "morpho-syllabic," but they do not characterize the Chinese script as simply phonetic. [15] Coulmas adopts the same term as that of DeFrancis, though he derives it not from him but from Chao Yuen Ren. Unlike DeFrancis, he emphasizes the mutual functions of semantic and phonetic elements in a majority of

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[15] Zhou uses the term "syllabic-logographic" to describe the phonetic and semantic elements in the Chinese script. (personal communication: 08/11/1993) Zheng Linxi uses the term "word-syllabic." (1992:46-48)

Chinese characters. He states:

> As distinguishing elements the *classifiers (radicals)*
> are indispensable. Thus the Chinese writing system is
> best described as a "*morpheme-syllable* writing system"
> in which classifiers and phonetics serve *mutually
> diacritical functions*: each determines the exact
> nature of the other which is only hinted at by the
> respective element itself. (Coulmas 1989:107, emphasis
> mine)

Hong Chengyu, in a recent article entitled "Radicals Play a Primary Role in the Development of Chinese Characters," emphasizes the fact that most newly created characters belong to the semantic-phonetic type, in which a radical is added to an independent phonetic character. More important, this phonetic character of the new character usually has a meaning in itself and can help provide clues for the broad meaning of the new character in which it forms a part. (Hong 1992:18-21) For most opponents to writing reform, much to DeFrancis' irritation, they still prefer the term "ideographic" to characterize the Chinese script.

Two more examples can reveal even writing reformers' ambivalence about the semantic nature of Chinese characters. Zhou Youguang, a noted linguist and persistent writing reformer who is advisor to the State Commission on Language Work, wrote an article in 1983 to introduce T. K. Ann's five-volume English work Cracking the Chinese Puzzles. In the article, Zhou praised Chinese characters for having a "super function" to connect the

past with the present (of Chinese culture). (Zhou 1983) [16] Lyu Shuxiang, a prominent linguist and language professor and long-standing supporter of writing reform, wrote a very favorable preface for a book which told etymological stories about 60-odd Chinese characters and expressions from historical and cultural perspectives. He appreciated every story in the book and highly recommended it to readers. (Cao 1992: Preface) However, he has been an unremitting advocate for a phonetic writing system to replace Chinese characters.

All the above instances have shown that both supporters of and opponents to writing reform and people who are neutral on this issue alike all attach importance to the semantic aspect of Chinese characters. At least they, particularly writing reformers, did not turn a blind eye to one of the aspects of the Chinese script and did not throw the baby out with the bath water as did DeFrancis.

To sum up, the linguistic aspect of writing reform is not insignificant as some reformers have assumed. It involves both theoretical and practical problems. If the problems can be discussed, researched, and tested with concrete measures, it would seem that the cultural aspect of writing reform is not as clear-cut as the linguistic factor. It is generally recognized

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[16] Zhou's praise for the book and Chinese characters became a counter-attack on the part of reform opponents. But his positive review of the book does not necessarily indicate a negation of his Lationization ideal but a revelation of his ambivalence about the Chinese script.

that there is a conservative tendency in writing systems. This is where linguistic and cultural issues become intermingled and make writing reform an extremely complex issue. The next chapter will discuss the cultural implications of writing reform, which is one of the most intensely and passionately disputed areas in every debate in the history of writing reform.

Chapter 4

Contemporary Debate on Writing Reform: Cultural Implications

In a sense, the subject of this chapter is a natural extension of the argument about the relationship between speech and writing discussed in the preceding chapter. For the reformers, writing is merely a kind of tool to record speech. Therefore, when the tool is found incompatible with speech, it should be and can be changed. However, some reform opponents who reject or accept the definition of writing as a form to represent speech tend to equate writing with culture. This chapter will examine the arguments of both sides on the relationship between language and culture from the perspective of the Whorfian Hypothesis.

The Application of the Whorfian Hypothesis

The Whorfian Hypothesis or the Sapir-Whorfian Hypothesis has become a classic topic in any academic discussions about language, culture, and thought. It maintains that a person is guided by his or her language in perceiving the world. People who speak different languages experience different social realities and therefore different worldviews. This hypothesis has provoked considerable interest and dispute among linguists,

anthropologists, psychologists, and other academics. [1] While many Western scholars have rejected the deterministic element in the hypothesis, some tend to endorse the hypothesis as a whole.

Many authors have acknowledged that Whorf's views were developed from those of his predecessors Edward Sapir and Franz Boas in the United States and Wilhelm von Humboldt and Johann Herder and even earlier philosophers in Europe. (Bolinger 1975:241; Cooper and Spolsky 1991:12-16) But Whorf "was the most successful in dramatizing it." (Bolinger 1975:241) Most of Whorf's research findings were concerned with and were derived from speech due to the fact that the Indian languages he studied did not have written forms. Nevertheless, Whorf did conduct limited research on the Mayan script (DeFrancis 1989:123) and investigated industrial accidents involving "empty" or "full" gasoline drums in relation to people's reaction to the written signs. (Carroll 1956:135-136) It is reasonable to assume that his views about language apply to writing as well. Moreover, in the case of the debate on writing reform in China, reformers and most reform opponents agree with the definition of writing as a device to record languages, thus it is appropriate to apply the

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[1] For example, discussions of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis were held in New York in 1952 at the International Symposium of Anthropology. In 1953, twenty distinguished anthropologists, linguists, philosophers, and psychologists met in Chicago to re-evaluate the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in the rapidly expanding area of research. Since then numerous conferences on this subject have been conducted and voluminous books and reseach papers have been published. A recent research project on this subject is reflected in a book, The Influence of Language on Culture and Thought-- Essays in Honour of Joshua Fishman, 1991.

hypothesis to the analysis of the debate.

The term "culture" requires definition. Amid numerous definitions the anthropologist Edward B. Tylor's will serve the present purposes. He defined culture as "the way of life of a people, the sum of their learned behaviour patterns, attitudes and material things." (in Hissey 1988:36) This definition fits the definition of its Chinese equivalent as well as the common-sense notion as in "Chinese culture" or "American culture."

In the debate on Chinese writing reform viewed from the perspective of the Whorfian hypothesis, the advocates and supporters of writing reform can be designated as "universalists," and the opponents to writing reform can be referred to as "culturalists." While the universalists tend to reject the hypothesis, the culturalists tend to endorse it.

The Universalist Perspective

The advocates and supporters of writing reform do not see language as culture but as a medium to convey culture. They regard Chinese characters as a tool to record Chinese speech. Since they are a tool, simplicity and convenience should be the criterion to judge them. (Gao 1992:25-26; Xing 1992:2-3) DeFrancis, who is a universalist in favor of writing reform, is critical of the Whorfian hypothesis. He further states his views in his 1989 book based on a discussion about writing in general and the Chinese writing system in particular. He made a severe

critique of some authors who "argue that Chinese think less abstractly than do Westerners because of differences in the languages involved". (1989:242) He argued specifically about the Chinese script as follows:

> All written languages (like all spoken languages) also have the potential of being used to express any and all thought, but here too there may be differences in efficiency. Chinese characters, for example, are extremely clumsy and time-consuming when it comes to indexing written materials, and there can be little doubt that in many other ways they retard Chinese progress. This complex character script falls far short of the efficiency of alphabetic systems, which is one reason why Pinyin is being used more and more for alphabetic classification even of materials written in characters. (1989:243)

As we can see, though adopting a universalist view as against the culturalist view of the Whorfian hypothesis, DeFrancis does assert that Chinese characters as a script do a poorer job than alphabetic systems. The Language Reform Association of the Chinese Institutions of Higher Learning, which emerged as a collective advocate for reform in 1981, explained their views about the relationship between writing and culture in their Association's founding announcement. In a sense, this declaration and DeFrancis' assertion echo each other in their rejection of reform opponents' views about the relationship between writing and culture along the line of the Whorfian hypothesis:

> Writing is not equivalent to culture, it is only a means of conveying culture. We value the traditional culture, and we therefore also value the Chinese characters that convey traditional culture. But we value even more highly the creation of a modern culture of the present and the future, the creation of

a Chinese Pinyin orthography suited to **conveying**
modern culture...The two kinds of writing will **coexist**
and will both be used, each having its **own place**, each
being used to its utmost advantage. (in **DeFrancis**
1984:202)

In response to the fear that Pinyin writing could cause a
break with the past and national disunity, Wu Yuzhang, the first
Chairman of the former Committee on Script Reform, contended
that the character-based writing system had left a majority of
people illiterate and ignorant of their culture. If literary
texts and materials could be printed in the Pinyin orthograpy,
the vast majority of people would for the first time have access
to their heritage as a more literate people. In this way the
cultural heritage could be passed down from generation to
generation. (in DeFrancis 1984:198)

The Culturalist Perspective

Those intellectuals who opposed writing reform assert that
the Chinese script is itself an important part of Chinese
culture and is therefore more than a mere conveyor of culture.
T. K. Ann,
author of the five-volume English book <u>Cracking the Chinese
Puzzles</u>, has contended that Chinese characters are the "root of
Chinese traditional culture," the "fifth invention of China,"
and "will play an important role in the twenty-first century."
(in Yuan Xiaoyuan 1990:3)

By emphasizing an inseparable relationship between the

Chinese script and Chinese culture, Ann and his like-minded colleagues in mainland China adopt a culturalist perspective and view language and culture in the Whorfian sense. The following discussion is mainly based on his 1987 book <u>A Collection of Articles on Chinese Characters</u>.

Ann, a successful Hong Kong businessman with a keen interest in philology, spent four years writing the five-volume book to explain the meanings of 5,888 Chinese characters for foreign adult learners. One of the reasons for such a grand effort is that many people, especially foreigners, find Chinese characters are too difficult to learn and it takes one too long to learn before one can read a Chinese newspaper. Ann hoped to find a "rational shortcut" for learners of Chinese characters to achieve desirable results in a fairly short period of time.

He provided this "rational shortcut" by analyzing each character's structures and unfolding the intentions and deliberations of character creators. In other words, people will not find the characters difficult to learn if they master the general rules of character structures and understand the cultural connotations contained in the graphic symbols. He characterized his method as "a philosophizing and conceptualizing approach and from an etymological perspective." (Ann 1987:28)

Specifically, he classified 170 radicals (out of the 240 regularly collected) which represented twelve general semantic categories which were still relevant and basic even to a modern

society. The twelve categories are: 1) human beings and their relationships; 2) human body parts and functions; 3) nature; 4) housing and transport; 5) animals; 6) farming products; 7) handicrafts and containers for daily use; 8) tools and weapons; 9) movements; 10) situations; 11) colors and size; 12) ruler and feelings of the ruled. (1987:4)

By using the above twelve radicals, Ann drew a general picture of Chinese ancestors in ancient times. Take the paragraph in which most radicals in Category 1 are used for example. While independent characters are placed in the square bracket with Mandarin pronunciation, radicals (if there there is any) which are derived from them are listed in the parentheses next to them.

> At that time, the "human" [人 , rén] (亻) society had already achieved the "plowing" [耒 , lěi] (耒) [2] skills and knowledge. He had known the importance of "field" [田 , tián]. He had been able to use his "tongue" [舌 , shé] and "teeth" [齿 / 齒 chǐ] to pronounce "sound" [音 , yīn] (曰). He had been able to use "language" [言 , yán] (讠) [3] to express his will. He had also known that "hands" [手, shǒu] (扌) and "mouth" [口 , kǒu] were useful tools and could impose his influence or will on other people's "body" [身 , shēn]. He thought it was his "heart" [心, xīn] (忄 / 忄 / 心) [4] that was guiding his behavior, for he could feel his heart beating which made him able to distinguish "wrongness" [非 , fēi]. (p. 5, my translation)

Ann also realized that Chinese characters have the merit of

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[2] The evolution of the phonetic 耒 from the character 耒 is my addition to this text.

[3] The evolution of the radical 讠 from the character 言 is my addition to this text.

[4] The radical 忄 is my addition to this text.

constructing meaning by way of internal connotation and external extension in their formation. They are the crystalization of the experience of Chinese ancestors in early times; they were not created without reason. The formation of characters may involve either principle or both principles. An example of the internal connotation is the unsimplified character 竊 / 窃 (qiè, "to steal"). It consists of four parts: 穴 ("home"), 釆 (a combination of 禾 and 米 which both mean "rice"), 内 ("scoop"), and 冈 ("the back sides of a mule"). All these concepts put together, the character tells a story as follows: the rice in a family home was stolen by someone using a scoop; when the family members arrived home, what they could see was only the back sides of the thief's mule. (p. 12)

An example which involves both principles of internal connotation and external extension is the unsimplified character 喬 / 乔 (qiáo, tall). The top part of this character is the phonetic 夭 (yāo) which indicates a partial pronunciation for the character 喬 and the bottom part is the semantic 咼 which means tall (gāo). [5] Therefore, the character 喬 itself is a phonetic-semantic combination. By external extension of adding a radical to the character 喬 , almost every newly formed character has the meaning of being "tall" or "lofty" derived from 喬 . For example, the radical 木 (mù, wood or tree) is added

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[5] I am grateful to Professor Jan Walls, senior supervisor of this thesis, for clarifying this point. Ann did not point out the function of the top part 夭 is phonetic; instead, he suggested it has something to do with the character 天 (tiān, sky).

to form the character 橋 (qiáo, bridge); the radical 車/车 (chē, vehicle) is added to form the character 轎 (jiào, sedan chair); the radical 馬 (mǎ, horse) is added to form the character 驕 (jiāo, proud). (p. 11-12) As far as the pronunciation is concerned, the original character provides completely identical pronunciation for the new character 橋 , but only partially identical pronunciation for the new characters 轎 and 驕 . [6]

From the above examples, Ann argues that if Latinizaton or even phonetization based on Chinese characters is adopted, the merit of Chinese characters in indicating meaning through visual images and pronunciation will be lost, not to mention the cultural connotations in characters. More importantly, zi (character which may represent a morpheme or a word in different contexts), an important feature of Chinese writing, will also be lost. Compared to an ordinary English dictionary which contains at least 200,000 entries, the total number of Chinese characters amounts to only 11,500 in the <u>Modern Chinese Dictionary</u>, a dictionary of practical use. But the total number of characters includes a great many obsolete forms which are never used to write modern Chinese. In modern written texts, 3,000 characters can cover 99 percent of the total characters used. The reason for the small number of frequently used characters is that this number of Chinese zi is very useful and active in forming either new characters or words. (p. 17)

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[6] This part is my own explanation.

Ann can understand several foreign languages, including English, Spanish, Japanese, German, and French. This yields him an advantage in doing comparative study of languages. Based on his extensive study and comparison, he has identified the basic difference between Chinese writing and Western alphabetic writing systems. In sum, this difference can be shown in the following formula:

Western writing: letters = pronunciation $\neq$ meaning

Chinese writing: characters$\approx$pronunciation$\approx$meaning (p. 11)

A great part of Ann's efforts are directed at challenging the dominant thinking on Latinization of the Chinese script in Chinese linguistic circles. Between 1983 and 1986, he published a large number of articles in the press in Hong Kong, calling for rethinking and research on Chinese characters.

Ann met Yuan Xiaoyuan in 1985 and was invited to be the honorary chairman for the then Society for Research on the Modernization of Chinese Characters. Since then his articles on Chinese characters have been introduced and published in the press in mainland China, especially in <u>Chinese Character Culture</u>. Although some Chinese scholars hailed him as "a contemporary Xu Shen" (the lexicographer of <u>Shuōwén Jiězì</u>), not all of his explanations of the 5,888 characters are convincing-- some of them appear amusing but far-fetched. His statement that "all the phonetic symbols can indicate meaning for the compound characters of which they are a part" cannot apply to many

situations. For instance, the compound character 沐 (mù, to bathe) cited in Chapter 1 is an example in which the phonetic part is completely used for its sound value, so is the phonetic 马 (mǎ, horse) in compound characters 妈 (mā, mother) and 骂 (mà, to revile). Moreover, although his method of analyzing characters is interesting and helpful in learning some cultural aspects and the structural formation of characters, it may appear impractical to most learners who regard the script as merely a means of achieving something else not as an end in itself.

Yuan Xiaoyuan's pivotal role

Yuan is the decisive figure in the debate over writing reform. She admitted that her thinking about Chinese characters had gone through a positive-negative-positive process. She used to believe in Chinese Latinization. It was her study of Western languages and teaching Chinese in the United States that made her reflect on the unique characteristics of the Chinese language and writing and concluded that it was neither necessary nor possible to Latinize the Chinese script. However, it is necessary to briefly mention here that she also devised a Chinese phonetic scheme, with phonetic and semantic symbols derived from Chinese characters. She did this in the conviction that the traditional script was flawed and difficult to learn. The implications of her efforts will be discussed in the

conclusion.

Yuan claimed that during her job as a translator at the United Nations she confirmed the belief that both spoken and written Chinese had the most precious merit of being terse and precise. One piece of evidence for this was that the Chinese dictionaries and documents were always the thinnest as compared to those in five other U.N. working languages--English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Arabic. [7]

Yuan returned to China to promote her script reform scheme in the late 1970s and founded the former Society for Research on the Modernization of Chinese Characters in 1980 (hereafter the Society). To promote its cause world-wide, in 1990, the Society's name was changed to the Beijing International Association for Research on Chinese Characters (hereafter the Association). Between June 1988 and May 1989, Yuan and her assistant Xu Dejiang published a series of ten articles on the scientific nature of both spoken and written Chinese in the Communist Party's newspaper-- the People's Daily (overseas edition). The titles are suggestive of their major arguments against writing reform: 1) The Superiority of the Chinese Tonal System; 2) The Chinese Semantic Monosyllable Is a Merit; 3) Chinese Word-Formation Is Rational and Flexible; 4) One Word with Multiple Parts of Speech Is an Advantage; 5) On the Superiority of Strict Chinese Word Order; 6) Having No

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[7] This is a frequent comment made by Yuan and also quoted by others, so no exact source is given to it in this case.

Morphological Changes Is a Merit for Chinese; 7) **Chinese Ideographic Writing System Is Cosmopolitan-Oriented; 8) (Chinese Characters** Can Encourage Imagination and) Imagination **Is the** Mother of All Invention; 9) The Square Form of Chinese Characters Is Valuable; 10) Chinese Characters--the Fifth Great Invention of China. [8]

By illuminating the above special features of spoken and written Chinese, Yuan and her assistant attempted to refute almost every criticism directed at Chinese by both Western and Chinese scholars. In other words, they attempted to overthrow both theoretical and practical foundations for writing reform.

Furthermore, Yuan maintains that Chinese characters are not only a major tool for spreading Chinese culture but also an important part of Chinese culture. She speaks highly of the cohesive power of Chinese characters to unite the whole Chinese nation. [9] Viewing the script as the foundation of Chinese

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[8] The purpose of listing these views is to show how the opponents to writing reform view the Chinese language and writing system. A judgement on these views demands extensive study and comparison of both Chinese and Western languages, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The ten titles in Pinyin are as follows: 1) Hanyu shengdiao de youyuexing; 2) Hanyu yiyi danyinjie benzhi de gaomiao; 3) Fuyulixing de linghuo de cengceng zuhe gouci; 4) Yi ci duo xing shi youdian; 5) Cixu yange de changchu; 6) Hanyu gui zai wu xingtai; 7) Xieyi wenzi de guojixing zui qiang; 8) Lianxiang shi yiqie faming zhi mu; 9) "Fangkuai" shi baobei; 10) Zhongguo de di-wu da faming.

[9] One may find it not difficult to understand Yuan's extremely positive attitude toward the Chinese script and culture if one has some ideas about her family background and her experience in Western countries. Born into a distinguished scholar's family, she went to Paris to study when she was young. She was sent to India on a diplomatic mission by the Nationalist government in the 1940s.

culture, she regrets that people on the two sides of the Taiwan
Strait are using different orthographies (Mainland China has
used a simplifed version since the mid-1950s while Taiwan uses
the pre-1949 version). To remedy this situation and to promote
the unification of China, she has advocated "recognizing complex
characters while writing simplified characters" (shí fán xiě
jiǎn). (1989:4-5) She explains her reason for advocating this
idea.

> To inherit and carry forward Chinese culture with a
> long history, one cannot afford not to know the
> complex characters...Since 1956, the simplified
> characters have amounted to more than 2,000 in China,
> but outside China is a world of complexcharacters...At
> a time of opening totheoutside world, this (the
> simplified characters) is not beneficial to widening
> international exchange and peacefully unifying the two
> sides of the Taiwan Strait. Nowadays the people under
> the age of forty years old in mainland China basically
> cannot read the books and newspapers publishedbefore
> 1956. How can this help transmit the excellent
> traditional culture! (1990:3, my translation)

By connecting even the forms of writing with culture,
Yuan's views about the reliance of culture on language reflect
the Whorfian hypothesis. However, her perception about the
relationship between Chinese writing and culture is most clearly
revealed in the following straightforward statement:

> there is no unified (Chinese) culture if there is no
> unified Chinese script; there is no unified China if
> there is no unified (Chinese) culture. (1989:5, my

She later settled in the United States. It is a generally
acknowledged fact that overseas Chinese have a strong attachment to
the Chinese script and culture. Cultured in a traditional scholar's
family at a young age, she has developed a profound interest in and
love for Chinese calligraphy and poetry.

translation) [10]

She had put forth this guideline as early as 1980 **when she** founded the Society. (1989:5) She later revealed that this assumption also inspired the change of the title of the Association's journal from the former Script and Culture to Chinese Character Culture in 1989. (1990b:55)

Shen Xiaolong and Cultural Linguistics in China

Like Yuan Xiaoyuan, Shen Xiaolong, a young theoretician of the newly developed area of cultural linguistics, adopts a Whorfian approach toward the relationship between language and culture. Shen has joined Yuan, Ann and their colleagues in the battle against writing reformers who advocate Latinization.

Since the mid-1980s, cultural linguistics has developed into an influential branch of linguistics in China. A large number of young scholars started to examine linguistics from a cultural perspective. Shen Xiaolong is one of the most active and productive scholars. He has written scores of books and research papers in the field in the past few years. One of his books, Chinese Sentence Pattern Culture, which systematically examined the sentence patterns in selected ancient works, won the first prize given by the First Annual Academic Prize of the

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[10] Yuan's remark indicates a sense of Han Chinese "big nation" chauvinism and ignores the languages and scripts of minority nationalities in China.

Chinese Cultural Linguistics Association in 1990. He also won a second academic prize sponsored by Yuan's Association in the same year for his "special contribution to establishing the science of Chinese philology with Chinese characteristics."

In his 1992 book A Cultural Interpretation of Linguistics, he systematically introduced the humanities (as opposed to scientific) approach to linguistics in the West, including the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. In the postscript of the book, he explained the background of the development of cultural linguistics in China.

> Modern Chinese linguistics became a discipline at the beginning of this century. But it adopted a scientific approach as its objective due to the influence of the thinking on saving China through science at that time. There are two results from this. The first one is a break with native cultural tradition (including philological tradition), completely abandoning the quintessence of the humanities tradition in Chinese philological research. The second result is a whole-sale absorption of the science approach but a complete neglect of the humanities approach in Western linguistics... However, the development of Chinese modern linguistics in the past century has shown that, because of the comparatively stronger humanities spirit of the Chinese language as compared to Western languages, it is impossible for Chinese linguistics to establish its methodology on the basis not of its traditional philology, but of Western linguistics as a science. (1992:363, my translation)

He adopts the Whorfian view that a person's language reflects his or her worldview. "Language controls the thought and cultural psychology of human beings." "Language is the basic condition for culture's emergence, language determines culture." (Dai 1992:23) He attempts to seek the link between the ideographic nature of Chinese characters with spoken Chinese and

with the Chinese way of thinking.

For example, he asserts that Chinese art attaches importance to the expression of its meaning but not to its form; the Chinese language does not depend on morphological changes for semantic information but depends on the structural arrangement and combination of words or phrases. Similarly, Chinese characters do not change their form to express different meanings but rely on the semantic information they themselves contain and on textual contexts to indicate meaning. (1989:20-21)

By illuminating examples such as the above, Shen has challenged the reformers for ignoring the interrelations between the Chinese script and spoken Chinese and the Chinese way of thinking. He demands that writing reformers engage in cultural introspection on Chinese Latinization. (1989:20-21)

Other scholars against writing reform have also attempted to identify the similarity between Chinese characters and the Chinese way of thinking. Zhang Shoukang, the late language professor of Beijing Normal College echoed Yuan Xiaoyuan's argument that Chinese characters are part of Chinese culture. "The relationship between them is that of part and whole." The formation of characters can reveal the history of culture. For example, the fact that many derogatory characters or words have the component of 女 (nǚ, female) indicate the low social status

and contempt for women in feudal society. (Zhang 1991:26) [11]

Zhang also pointed out that Chinese characters' **square-form** made up of balanced parts had something to do with the Chinese love for equilibrium in form. Chinese cities designed and arranged in square form, quadrangle courtyard houses, and square tables for eight people are a few examples of the manifestation of the relationship between the characters and cultural traits. (1991:26)

In summary, opponents to writing reform, from T. K. Ann to Yuan Xiaoyuan to Shen Xiaolong, all emphasize the inseparability of Chinese characters from Chinese culture. Even some Western scholars agree with this point. Bernhard Karlgren, the well-known Swedish Sinologist made the following relevant statement which has been quoted over and over again by those opposed as well as those in favor of writing reform:

> In the peculiar relation between the spoken and the written language in China, and above all in the nature of the latter as being a language that can be understood by the eye but not the ear alone, we have the explanation of the strange fact that the peculiar Chinese script is indispensable.... The Chinese script is so wonderfully well adapted to the linguistic conditions of China that it is indispensable; the day the Chinese discard it they will surrender the very foundation of their culture. (in DeFrancis 1984:199)

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[11] Some of these derogatory characters or words are: 奴 (nú, slave), 奸 / 姦 (jiān, wicked), 嫉妒 (jídù, jealous), 妖 (yāo, demon), 娼妓 (chāngjì, prostitute). But there are also a great many "complimentary" characters or words which contain this female component, such as 好 (hǎo, good), 媛 (yuàn, beautiful maid), 㤭 / 嬌 (jiāo, referring to beauty in women, children, flowers, etc.) This "complimentary" category of characters or words merits critical attention, for mostly they refer to a woman's physical beauty and therefore a user of such biased language may regard her as an object other than a person.

Pinyin as Major Target under Attack

Among the three reform tasks in the 1950s, the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (Pinyin) appears to be the one attacked most severely by opponents to writing reform, while Putonghua is the least attacked, with simplification of Chinese characters between the two. During the recent debate, the Pinyin (Latinization) issue is still the most controversial area of dispute. It is a cultural issue in the sense that it is foreign in form. In the case of Putonghua, though it is imposed on a fairly large segment of society, it has not caused much open controversy and opposition--partly because it is of Chinese origin and partly because it is a more politically sensitive subject.

From Chapter 2 we can see that Latinization or the Latinization Movement in its broad sense started in 1906 with Zhu Wenxiong's alphabetic writing based on the dialect spoken in the province of Jiangsu. He suggested that it was better to adopt the alphabet (Latin alphabet) which is used all over the world rather than create a new alphabet for Chinese. (Zhou 1979:38) This idea has been upheld since then by later writing reformers and attacked by their opponents up to present.

After the creation of Guoyeu Romatzyh (National Language Romanization) in 1926, Latinization became the mainstream direction in writing reform. It was followed by the Latinized New Writing which was the peak for Latinization as a popular

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movement. And the last one to follow was Pinyin, approved by the Chinese government in 1958 as the official phonetic system to annotate Chinese characters. The identical feature of the above phases of development was emotionally intense debates over the cultural aspect of the issue. To the universalists, the Latin alphabet is just like any other invention in the world such as Arabic numerals and Western cars and can be used for its utility value. To the culturalists, the alphabet represents foreign culture and to replace Chinese writing with the alphabet means to replace Chinese culture with foreign culture.

The Pinyin system was based on the previous Latinized schemes. It has gained praise from many Western linguists for its technical expertise. (Coulmas 1989:246; DeFrancis 1984:264). At one point DeFrancis even speaks of the "superiority of Pinyin orthography over English." (1984:283) The Pinyin system has been formally adopted by the United Nations for writing Chinese personal and place names, thus ending the chaotic situation in which these were transcribed differently by a variety of Romanized systems developed since the sixteenth century. [12]

The use of Pinyin has been expanded to some extent since it was approved by the Chinese government. For example, it is taught as a compulsory part of language curriculum at the elementary level. The characters of textbooks and dictionaries

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[12] The Pinyin system is only used for personal and place names in mainland China. The "chaotic" situation still exists in Chinese communities outside China. This is obvious in the Romanized transcription of personal names of overseas Chinese in different parts of the world.

are annotated with Pinyin. Most reference books such as encyclopedia use Pinyin for alphabetical indexing. Some overseas reporters of the official New China News Agency write news reports in Pinyin and transmit them to the headquarters in Beijing. Names for streets, post offices, railway stations and other public places are supposed to have Pinyin beside the characters. Book titles and names of industrial and commercial products are supplemented with Pinyin labelling.

The dispute between writing reformers and anti-reformers over Pinyin lies in its form and function. While some opponents totally reject Pinyin, most agree that it is a useful tool to study Chinese characters and Putonghua. However, all the anti-reformers oppose the reformers' present "digraphia" idea ("two scripts," shuāng wénzì), which suggests that Pinyin be elevated to the position of an official script to be used in parallel with Hanzi. It seems this compromise from replacing the characters to "digraphia" did not help much in the universalists' endeavor, partly due to the opposition and resistence from the culturalists.

Cultural Influence of Overseas Chinese

Another cultural dimension of the writing reform debate is reflected in the influence of Chinese outside China on the arguments about and direction of the debate. In the first place, the decisive figure Yuan Xiaoyuan was an expatriate from the

United States when she founded the former Society for Research on the Modernization of Chinese Characters in 1980. Another co-founder Lu Suixian, is an Australian citizen of Chinese origin. T. K. Ann, the well-known Hong Kong businessman and intellectual started to write articles as early as the late 1970s to counteract the Latinization trend, the mainstream linguistic theory and practice in mainland China. After Yuan Xiaoyuan invited him to become an honorary director for the Society in 1985, he became even more active in defending Chinese characters and negating Pinyin as a potential script competitor. Many overseas Chinese scholars are essay contributors to the Society's journal <u>Chinese Character Culture</u>, sharing the anti-reformers' views.

The culturalists, a term to label Yuan and her colleagues, have developed close contact with their counterparts in Taiwan. In August 1991, in the Great Hall of the People, Yuan's organization co-sponsored a symposium on Chinese characters with a Taiwan organization. According to a participant from the mainland, the passion was high; a few people from Taiwan could not hold back their tears when talking about the simplified characters in mainland China, and especially about the mainstream theory and practice of Latinization of the Chinese script. [13] At the same time, computer experts from both sides of the Taiwan Strait have developed and are developing contacts in

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[13] I was informed about this event by Zhao Shouhui, a Chinese lecturer at the People's University, who participated in the symposium.

discussing identical input codes for Chinese characters.

The tradition of Chinese education in overseas Chinese communities has also influenced the arguments of those in opposition to Latinization. Chinese characters have long been regarded as an important element of cultural identity for people of Chinese origin. Chinese education was initiated as part of efforts to inherit Chinese traditional culture. Take the Chinese community in Canada for example. The first Chinese school was established in 1880 in Victoria, British Columbia. (Yee 1984:11) Since then, especially in recent years, private Chinese schools have mushroomed across Canada. Nowadays, children of Chinese origin going to an after-school Chinese class is a common phenomenon, especially in big cities like Vancouver and Toronto where large number of Chinese immigrants concentrate.

In Canada, the teaching of the Chinese language has also been introduced into the public school system in recent years. B.C. public schools started to offer Mandarin Chinese as a second language in 1986 at both secondary and elementary levels. Other countries such as France, the United States and Australia have also introduced Chinese into their public school systems. In the past few years, learning Chinese has become even more popular outside China, partly in the wake of the economic growth in the Asian Pacific-Rim region where Chinese is either the only writing system or partial writing system. During the current debate on writing reform, a common argument is that since so many overseas Chinese and even non-Chinese are keen on learning

both spoken and written Chinese, there is no reason why the original homeland of Chinese characters should replace them with a foreign writing system. This is consistent with the prominent Chinese-American linguist Chao Yuen Ren's advice on the problem of Chinese children in America acquiring and retaining a knowledge of Chinese.

> The Chinese language is a major language of the three or four cultures of the world...If you do not (learn), other American citizens, of non-Chinese origins, will, as the growing number of students in the department of Oriental studies in the universities shows. (Chao 1976:231)

Chapter 5

Writing Reform and National Development

The preceding two chapters have focused on the arguments regarding linguistic and cultural aspects of writing reform, the two most intensely disputed areas in the contemporary debate on writing reform. This chapter will focus on other factors such as politics, education, economy and technology which are other aspects of the debate.

The Political Dimension

In Chapter 3 Gelb's theory on the three-phase development of writing from word-syllabic to syllabic to alphabetic is mentioned. According to him, the reason that Chinese writing did not develop beyond the word-syllabic stage

> does not lie solely in the conservative attachment of a people for their own writing. It is rather the protection of vested interests of a special caste,...political (China), that frequently may have been responsible for maintaining a difficult and obsolete form of writing, making thus its general use by the people impossible. (1963:165)

He goes on to elaborate:

> The almost unbelievable development of logography in the Chinese writing is a well known phenomenon. Due to its marginal geographic position in the Old World, China was not affected by foreign invasions to the extent that the Near Eastern areas were. For that reason, the evolution of the Chinese writing progressed through thousands of years undisturbed by foreign influences, resulting finally in a type of writing which perfectly suited the needs of a small bureaucratic clique, but was totally inaccessible to

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90 percent of the population. (1963:203)

Lu Xun, the influential writer and thinker on the literary scene of the 1930s, also attempted to explain the relation between the script and politics and men of letters.

> For the masses, writing in our country, besides being socially and economically restricting, is also extremely difficult... Those men of letters hope exactly so. If writing were simplified, everyone would be able to read. If this were the case, writing would lose its dignity, and they too would lose their dignity." (1974a:28-29, my translation)

Lyu Shuxiang, a prominent linguist and professor, republished in 1984 an article of forty years ago in the Committee's journal, Writing Reform (the present Language Planning). Entitled "A Comparison of the Chinese Writing System and Phonetic Writing Systems," the article states:

> It is a perfect match in the sense that Chinese characters serve the classical style of writing while phonetic writing systems serve vernacular style of writing...Put briefly, it is two sides of modernization: Chinese characters plus classical writing style matches feudal society plus bureaucratic politics, while phonetic writing systems plus vernacular writing style match industrialized societies plus democratic politics. (Lyu Shuxiang 1984)

Xu Dejiang, a leading figure of the Association charged Lyu for republishing the article at a wrong time because China was not what it was forty years ago. He also challenged Lu's thinking on the class nature of the script. (1989:57)

Writing reform has become an inseparable component of China's socio-political discourse over the past century. The Literary Revolution prior to and during the May Fourth Movement of 1919 succeeded in the transition from a classical Chinese

writing style to a vernacular writing style. A minority of intellectuals did not confine themselves to opposing the classical literary style but also questioned and challenged the traditional script itself. During the 1930s and 1940s, popularizing the Latinized New Writing became a political struggle between the Nationalists and the Communists. Qu Qiubai, a leading Communist in devising and promoting the New Writing was killed by the Nationalists, partly because of his role in the popular Latinization movement.

In the early 1950s, the new Chinese government initiated writing reform under the name of raising people's cultural levels to suit the needs of building a new socialist country. The political force in favour of writing reform was so strong that some intellectuals were forced to conform to the theory and practice of reform. [14] Some were even labelled as "rightists" and were persecuted. (Duan 1990:7) [15] Compared to the political atmosphere in the 1950s, the current debate is much freer and more relaxed. However, politics has by no means left writing reform alone but influenced it in a more subtle and ambiguous way.

In December 1985 the government changed the name of the

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[14] The prominent linguist Wang Li and the noted historian Jian Bozan had to make a self-criticism for their dissident views on writing reform.

[15] Duan cited the example of Chen Mengjia who was one of the members on the former Committee on Script Reform. Opposed to writing reform in the 1950s, he was labelled as a "rightist" and sent to a labour reform camp. He died before he was rehabilitated.

former Committee on Script Reform to the State Commission on Language and Script Work (hereafter the Commission). A national conference on language and writing work was held in 1986, at which the official policy of the Communist Party and the government was announced; it has remained effective. One of the most important features was that the policy did not mention the ultimate direction toward Chinese phonetization. The conference emphasized that what the late Premier Zhou Enlai stated in his well-known 1958 report regarding the future of Chinese characters was still a meaningful guidance for today. Zhou spoke of Chinese characters:

> We all agree that as a written record they have made immortal contributions to history. As to whether or not they will remain permanently unchanged, whether they will change on the basis of their original forms, or whether they will be replaced by a phonetic script--Latin letters or other phonetic scripts--we need not draw a hasty conclusion. Any language is, however, subject to change, as evidenced by the changes of the characters in the past...As to what scheme will be adopted, it is too early to hazard. On the question of the future of Chinese writing, there may be various views. We can bring them out for discussion and debate. (Zhou 1958:27-28)

Just as vague and indefinite as Zhou's statements, the new policy stated that "writing reform work should be pushed forward." The wording was so ambiguous that both reformers and anti-reformers attempted to interpret on their own. During the current debate it seems that the anti-reformers are on the winning side, because they have gained support from a large number of government officials and influential scholars who hold important positions.

Interestingly enough, as a non-governmental organization, the Association tends to heed the Party line more than the official Commission. Xu Dejiang, a leading figure of the Association, openly states that his research on Chinese characters and linguistics was guided by Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung Thought. (Xu 1991:24-27) In an editorial of <u>Chinese Character Culture</u>, Liu Bin, director of the Commission, was charged for acting against the guidelines set in a speech on language and script work by the Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin in mid-December, 1992. (<u>Chinese Character Culture</u> 1993:1-9) The Association also sponsored a symposium in January 1993 on Jiang's speech, attended by more than forty experts and scholars.

The relationship between Chinese characters and patriotism and politics on the part of anti-reformers is clearly revealed in the current debate, although a leading figure would not admit it and instead insisted on the "scientific" nature of Chinese characters. (Xu Dejiang, personal communication 18/08/1993) Moreover, a small introductory pamphlet of the Association summarizes its banner spirit as "science, patriotism and contribution."

The intricate relation of writing reform to culture and politics can be illustrated by the Association's attitudes toward "River Elegy," a popular but controversial television series produced by a group of Chinese intellectuals prior to the 1989 political upheavals in China. The series adopted a critical

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approach towards several important images symbolic of Chinese culture, which included the dragon, the Great Wall and the Yellow River. Its ideas influenced the theoretical perspective of the students and intellectuals in the democracy movement. After the military crackdown on June 4, the major script writers and producers had to flee the country to avoid persecution. While people in support of writing reform thought "River Elegy" did not go far enough to include Chinese characters as an object for criticism and reflection, (Li Yehong 1990:62; DeFrancis 1992), anti-reformers criticised it for its cultural nihilism. (Yuan 1989b:8-12) <u>Chinese Character Culture</u> refuted Latinization as "an expression of complete Westernization in the sphere of language and script work." (1989:4)

The official Commission did exert some influence on a few matters. For example, the overseas edition of <u>People's Daily</u> was changed from a complex character version to a simplified character version in July 1992, after seven years of being printed in the former style. The major reason for the change was that some scholars affiliated with the Commission were concerned about the consistency in the country's language policy of having simplified characters as its only official script. Another reason was that those who follow mainland China's use of simplified characters in countries like Singapore felt confused and negative about China's language policy.

Another example is that the Association's television series "The Miraculous Chinese Characters" was prevented from being

shown to the public, to the great surprise of the Association members. Because the Commission denied that it was involved in the administrative order to stop the show, its cancellation remains a mystery. However, the Commission's views of the series were very critical, which were reflected in a formal memorandum sent to the Association. It criticised the series for mystifying and exaggerating Chinese characters. It is reasonable to assume that the Commission was involved in the event and that there was disagreement on this issue among the higher levels of the Party and government leadership.

Both sides accuse each other of going against the government's language policy. In the case of the Association, its advocating "recognizing complex characters while writing simplified characters" was identified as acting against the policy by undermining the legitimate status of simplified characters and by encouraging the public to use and abuse complex characters. In the case of the Commission, its practice of expanding the use of Pinyin was identified as going against the official policy by promulgating the illegitimate status of Pinyin as a script. The Commission was also charged with responsibility for the lack of competency of students who participated in an experiment involving use of Pinyin not only as an annotating tool but as an auxiliary writing system.

Educational, Economic and Technological Dimensions

The reason that these three aspects are grouped together is that Chinese writing reformers and Western authors in support of reform, as will be noted in the following pages, all argue that there is a causal relationship between the script and these factors. Lu Zhuangzhang, the Chinese pioneer who created the first alphabetical script, made a remark which is worth quoting in full so that the cause-effect thinking can be fully understood. His thinking and even his words used to express this kind of thinking are typical not only of his contemporary writing reformers but also of his followers beyond his generation.

> I say that the wealth and strength of a country depend on science. The growth of science depends on everyone--men and women, young and old--having a love of learning and a knowledge of theory. Their ability to have a love of learning and a knowledge of theory depends on using a phonetic system of writing; then, once the alphabet and spelling have been mastered, everything can be read by oneself without a teacher. It depends on speech and writing being the same, then what is read by the mouth will be understood by the mind. It also depends on having a simple script; then the script will be easy to learn and easy to write. This will save more than ten years' time. If all this time is applied to the study of mathematics, the natural sciences, chemistry, all sorts of practical studies. How can there be any fear that our country will not be rich and strong? (in DeFrancis 1950:34-35)

Gelb, whose work on the history of writing was discussed in relation to the linguistic aspect in Chapter 3, was critical of the Chinese script in relation to national development. In a

question posed as if it were addressed to opponents of Chinese writing reform, he asked: "What shall we say about the opinion of those scholars and laymen who consider the Chinese writing as the best in the world and will not even listen to any suggestions to replace the Chinese word-syllabic writing with an alphabetic system?" (1963:238) He went on to argue as if he were participating in the current debate on behalf of reformers.

> Nobody but a selfish and narrow-minded person could defend the Chinese writing on the basis of its alleged merits and neglect to observe that as a result of the difficulties of the Chinese system 90 percent of the population remain illiterate. Which is more valuable: a system, which is adequate for 10 percent of the population or a system which is accessible to everybody? And what is more important: to keep the present writing and continue with the 10 per cent clique running the country or to reform the writing into a simple system and have 100 percent of the population sharing in the progress of the country? (1963:238) [16] √

Education as a Battlefield

A reform-minded scholar who is a Chinese script expert argues that the difficult script should bear some blame for 300 million illiterates in China. (Chen 1986:39) Another reform-minded scholar points out: "Although our country has been working hard to eliminate illiteracy, it still has the most

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[16] In his criticism of the difficulty and inaccessibility of the Chinese script, Gelb went extreme in suggesting that a country's script may be "accessible to everyone" and a country's progress may be shared by "100 percent of its population." Obviously in today's world not a single country have realized his ideal.

illiterates in the world. This definitely has something to do with Chinese characters which are difficult to learn and use." (Zhang 1992:29)

A census conducted by the Chinese government in 1982 indicated that 23 percent of the population were illiterate. The Chinese criterion for literacy is that peasants in rural areas can recognize 1,500 characters and workers in towns and cities, 2,000 characters. This definition of literacy stands in contrast to the one defined by DeFrancis as "the ability to accomplish such relatively elementary tasks as corresponding about family matters and reading newspapers and instructions in various matters." (1984:205) [17] He thus asserts:

> If they (the Chinese) maintain the quintessentially Chinese system of characters as the exclusive means of writing, it seems certain that many if not most of the people will be doomed to perpetual illiteracy and that China's modernization will be seriously impeded." (1984:287)

Writing reformers argue that an obvious disadvantage of the character-based system is reflected in the elementary education. (Zhou 1979:196). When a child goes to school, he or she has already mastered a great deal of vocabulary and can express whatever he or she wants in spoken form. However, the script constitutes an obstacle to his or her reading and writing. The

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[17] DeFrancis' definition of literacy appears to be more reasonable because he emphasizes the ability both to read and to write. The Chinese definition of literacy only emphasizes the ability to "recognize" not to "write" Chinese characters. The ability to recognize a certain number of characters can only make a person to "receive" information but not to "produce" information. A person who lack the ability in the latter aspect cannot become literate in the full sense of literacy.

traditional way of teaching is to limit the **number of characters** in the first few grades and concentrate on these **characters. The** child does not start to read extensively and to **write** compositions until he or she has learned enough characters. The number of characters learned in this slow process limits his or her knowledge-horizons and his or her ability to express himself or herself in written form. This is not constructive to creative thinking.

Therefore, writing reformers advocate that Pinyin be fully used to assist pupils in reading and writing. In 1982, they started to implement the method, called *zhùyīn shízì, tíqián dúxiě* (recognizing characters annotated with Pinyin and moving up faster toward reading and writing). This method aims at enlarging pupils' vocabulary through extensive reading of character texts annotated with Pinyin, widening their horizons, developing their creative thinking, and at the same time learning characters. This method ensures that pupils can use Pinyin to replace the characters which they do not know in writing and can continue to write without being impeded by the difficulty of mastering the characters. The experiment with this method has spread to a large number of elementary schools in 29 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. Reformers claim that pupils who participated in the experiment have developed an overall ability in both spoken and written form. (Tong and Zhang 1992:1-4)

However, this method and experiment have been severely

attacked by opponents to writing reform. They charge **reformers** with "wasting pupils' golden time on the **dull 26 letters,**" imposing burdens on pupils to learn the difficult **rules of** spelling, and causing then to make frequent mistakes in character writing. (Yuan 1992:19). Yuan Xiaoyuan points out that "this method is only a means of promoting the 'two scripts' (Hanzi and Pinyin), which is against the government policy that Hanzi is the only legitimate script." (Yuan 1992:22)

In their experiment the anti-reformers do not use Pinyin to teach children and adult illiterates to read and write; they use a more traditional approach, that is, concentrating intensively on character study during a specific period of time. This method is used in a dozen anti-illiteracy projects, guided by T .K. Ann's theory on Hanzi, especially his book <u>A Thousand Modern Chinese Character Text</u>. A newspaper article reported that "a wonder has appeared that after 20 days of intensive training, the illiterates and semi-illiterates in the countryside are able to read newspapers and documents, understanding advertisements, and writing notes." (Tu and Wu 1992)

It is an interesting coincidence that both reformers and anti-reformers base their arguments on their observations of various countries' experiences involving script, education, economy and technology. However, they approach the issue from different angles. Therefore, every argument is rebutted by a counterargument. While reformers point out that there is a correlation between alphabetical writing systems and prosperity

in the world, anti-reformers come up with the opposite examples of India and Brazil, where the literacy rate and the standards of living are very low, though alphabetic scripts are used. While the former maintain that China's underdevelopment has something to do with the difficult script, the latter bring up examples of Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, where Hanzi are used either as a full or partial system of writing but all of the three have achieved high levels of development in terms of education and economy. In Taiwan, Chinese characters are used, even in the unsimplified version. Therefore, anti-reformers argue that it is lack of educational opportunity, not the Chinese writing system that should be blamed for China's high illiteracy rates and underdevelopment. The impact of the Taiwan case on writing reform is mentioned in Chapter 4 and will not be repeated here. The following is a brief introduction to the writing systems in Japan and South Korea and their influence on the writing reform debate in China. During the debate, a frequent argument made by culturalists is that Chinese people have no reason to despise and abandon Chinese characters because the two countries are still using them in their writing systems. Singapore and Hong Kong are also frequently mentioned to support their argument. But this discussion will focus on Japan and South Korea because relatively speaking they are more influential.

The Influence of Japan and South Korea

Japan started to borrow the Chinese writing system to write Japanese in the fifth century. The syllabic kana system, which was derived from Chinese characters, was developed in the eighth century. But it did not become a part of official script until 500 hundred years later. (Zhou 1992a:34) While it was possible to write Japanese with the 47 syllabic symbols only, the normal practice was the combined use of kana and Chinese characters (called kanji in Japanese). The ratio between kana symbols and kanji is 5 to 3 in current publications (DeFrancis 1984:114). A list of 1,945 kanji was issued in 1981 as a guideline for common use in society and for the nine years of compulsory education. There were once movements which advocated abolishing kanji in favor of a purely kana or Romaji (Romanized Japanese) writing system, however the reform voice was too low to be heard. (Zhou 1992b:135-141).

Korea started to borrow the Chinese script in the second century. In 1446, King Sejong promulgated the Hangul alphabetic writing system, but it did not spread widely until the 19th century. Once this happened, literacy rates grew rapidly. Even an annual holiday called "Hangul Day" was created in 1926, which is celebrated on October 9 to commemorate the anniversary of King Sejong's announcement of Hangul's creation in 1446. Since its independence in 1948, North Korea has completely abandoned

the Chinese characters and exclusively employed Hangul, [18] **while**
South Korea has continued to use a mixed **script of Hangul and**
Chinese characters, though the proportion of the latter is very
low. The official education policy in South Korea regulates that
1,800 Chinese characters must be taught from secondary school to
high school. However, the government has stipulated in law that
all official documents must be written in Hangul only and that
Chinese characters can be used only if necessary. Since 1975,
the exclusive use of Hangul in school textbooks has been
official government policy. There has been an academic debate
over whether Hangul should be used exclusively and whether
Chinese characters should be taught in elementary school.
However, the recent debate has involved the business community
in Korea, mostly due to the increasing trade relations with
China. (Kim 1994)

Reformers pay attention to the slow process of kana and
Hangul becoming the respective formal scripts in both Japan and
Korea. They also pay special attention to the fact that in both
countries, the ratio between kanji and kana and between Chinese
characters and Hangul is decreasing (the ratio between kanji and
kana is only 1 to 3). (Liu 1993:42-43) Moreover, they point out
the fact that both North Korea and Vietnam abolished Chinese
characters and adopted Hangul and the Latinized Quoc Ngu
respectively, thus greatly raising their literacy rates. (Liu

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[18] It is reported that since 1968 North Korea has restored the
teaching of Chinese characters from the first grade of secondary
school. (Nan Guangyou 1991:56)

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1993:42-43) Another fact is that the vote card written with Romaji has been proclaimed to be valid by the Supreme Court in Japan since 1920. In addition, kana and Romaji are widely used in telegrams, telex, and computer input. Based on all this, an ardent writing reformer asserts that it is the obvious trend that the Chinese character culture circle is shrinking rather than enlarging as anti-reformers have claimed. He writes:

> Like us Chinese in using computers, the Japanese have carried the burden of using the codes for inputting Chinese characters and failed to work as efficiently as work with a phonetic script...In the information age which has been evolving out of the culture of the alphabetic writing systems, Chinese characters sensibly giving way to alphabetic writing systems is a progress worth celebrating. On the way to the information age, the quicker a nation unload the heavy burden of Hanzi, the more benefits it will gain. With the heavy burden of Hanzi on one's back and the shackles of the codes for inputting Hanzi on one's feet, one cannot get on the super highway to modernization. (Liu 1993:43, my translation)

The author concludes that the efficiency of scripts are closely related to the speed of modernization. He calls for the use of the "two scripts"--Hanzi and Pinyin, and a full use of Pinyin in order to catch up with the times. He considers it to be a worrisome matter for those "who are blindly intoxicated with the 'wonder' of Hanzi." (Liu 1993:43)

Opponents to writing reform strike back by emphasizing the merits of Hanzi and developing close contacts with scholars from both Japan and Korea in their fight to defend Chinese characters. The articles of some Japanese and Korean scholars are often carried in the journal <u>Chinese Character Culture</u>. The

meetings and correspondence between Chinese scholars and their Japanese and Korean counterparts are frequent. In 1992, they set up an organization temporarily called "The Society for Invigorating Chinese Characters World-Wide."

The development and progress in Chinese computerization in recent years have also supported the culturalists' arguments. Qian Weichang, a scientist and vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, has been actively involved in the development of Chinese computer technology over the past fourteen years. As one of the honorary chairmen of Yuan Xiaoyuan's Association, he has also been very active in the Association's activities. He admits that the reason that he has become involved in the study of Chinese characters is that he felt greatly disturbed by what foreign computer experts said to him about Chinese characters and computers. At an international conference in 1979, some foreigners at the conference openly stated that Hanzi would affect China's modernization and China should change to alphabetic writing because Hanzi could not be entered into the computer. He was so offended that he was determined to find ways to computerize Chinese. He set up the Chinese Information Society in 1980 and at present 500,000 people are involved in developing Chinese computer technology. As a result China has developed more than 500 schemes for inputting Chinese characters. He claims that the average number of characters inputted per minute reaches 200, some schemes are capable of inputting 400 to 500 characters per minute, which is

much faster than English. (Qian 1990:11)

In the final analysis, the arguments and counter-arguments above involve the question of modernization. This is not surprising if we recall that script reform is also called the language modernization movement by reformers, which was marked by the creation of the first Chinese alphabetic writing system by Lu Zhuangzhang in 1892. In a short article in memory of the centenary of the language modernization movement, the prominent linguist Lyu Shuxiang contends:

> In my opinion, language modernization consists of two aspects. One aspect is the replacement of the classical Chinese written style by the vernacular written style, which started from the May 4th Movement and was quickly accomplished... *The other aspect is the replacement of Hanzi by the Pinyin alphabetical writing*. This goal is difficult to realize in a short time; *the major reason for this is that Putonghua has not been popularized*. (1992:37, my emphasis)

From Chapter 2 we can see that some pioneers of writing reform, such as Zhu Wenxiong, Liu Menyang, Qian Xuantong, Qu Qiubai, and even Lu Xun, all identify modernization with the Latin alphabet. While others only mean to adopt Latin letters to write Mandarin and other forms of Chinese speech for the purposes of raising mass literacy, Qian Xuantong includes the question of culture by stating that "The so-called Western culture is actually the culture of the modern world, not the private property of Westerners." (in Zhou 1979:41). Compared to their predecessors, the contemporary reformers also advocate adopting Pinyin but do not go as far as the pioneers who advocated creating scripts for different dialects. In fact,

unlike Lyu Shuxiang, most reformers do not openly mention the reform goal is to replace Hanzi with Pinyin. Instead, they endorse the idea of "digraphia" (shuāng wénzì) which suggests the parallel use of both Hanzi and Pinyin. A reformer even claims that it is imperative that this idea be adopted. (Liu 1992:5)

However, this idea has encountered considerable opposition from anti-reformers, as is shown in political and educational spheres. It is worth mentioning here that anti-reformers also had a sense of urgency when they gathered to form the then Society for Research on Modernization of Chinese Characters. The Foreword in the first issue of the Society's journal, Script and Culture, states:

> The modernization of Hanzi is extremely necessary for the country's great cause in modernization. The rapidly developed technology has demanded that scripts be concise and precise. Although Hanzi have the quality of being both concise and precise, *they are not systematically phonetic*. They have gone through more than 2,000 years of change in their structures, sounds and meaning since the Han Dynasty. (As a result), *they have become complicated and unsystematic, causing difficulty in learning and remembering them. In addition, the total number of characters is many*. Therefore, the *old* way of *only simplifying a few strokes* in old characters *cannot make them adapt to new times*. (p. 1, my translation and emphasis)

Then, with the same sense of urgency and the same perception of the causal relationship between script and modernization, The Foreword concludes:

> The simplicity or complexity of a script is very crucial to the advance of culture, education, science and technology and to the speed of development in these aspects. If (our) script is backward and

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inflexible, the Four Modernizations will be impeded.
(p. 1, my translation)

Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 have both briefly mentioned Yuan Xiaoyuan's idea and scheme of reforming the Chinese script, which is based on the square form of Hanzi but with consistent phonetic principles. Obviously, the statement in The Foreword was in line with what Yuan was aiming to achieve. However, in a matter of a few years's time, the critical position of anti-reformers about Chinese characters changed dramatically into one of firmly defending the traditional writing system. Still, the change in their position cannot completely cover how critical they once were of Chinese characters and may somehow suggest to which direction they perceive writing reform will take in the future. The conclusion will include some observations and speculations of the present writer.

Conclusion

This thesis is an updated and comprehensive study of the century-old writing reform in China. It focuses on the more recent debate in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Throughout the thesis, I have attempted to illustrate that reforming the Chinese writing system is an extremely complicated, sensitive, and controversial issue.

In Chapter 1, I have provided a linguistic background which introduces the subject from a reformer's perspective. I have drawn a linguistic sketch of both spoken and written Chinese with consideration of the issues most closely related to writing reform, such as the diversity of the Chinese linguistic situation and the uniformity of the Chinese script, the relationship between speech and writing, and between the Chinese concept of zi and ci as compared to the Western concept.

Chapter 2 has traced writing reform and its historical context over the past century. It has highlighted the continuity as well as change between the historical and contemporary events. This chapter has laid a foundation for understanding the more recent debate.

In Chapter 3, I have examined the linguistic complications in the contemporary debate. I have explained why the reform has come to a crossroads from a linguistic aspect and identified the role linguistics has played in this dilemma. This chapter focuses on the relationship between speech and writing, and

concludes that most of the controversy results from a **different** understanding of the two aspects **and of** which **one is more** important than the other. In this chapter I made a critique of DeFrancis' neglect of the semantic aspect of the Chinese writing system.

Chapter 4 analyzes the cultural aspect of the debate, which is much more intensely and emotionally debated. It investigates the relationship between writing and culture from the perspective of the Whorfian hypothesis. It has reached the conclusion that reformers tend to reject the theory while anti-reformers tend to endorse it. I have demonstrated that the cultural implications for writing reform have contributed to the reformers' dilemma. I have also demonstrated that overseas Chinese have exerted influence on writing reform and the debate over it.

Chapter 5 looks at the arguments of both sides on writing reform and national development in terms of the former's relation to politics, education, economy and technology. This chapter places the debate in an international context in which China might be comparable to other countries in terms of writing reform.

In the remainder of this conclusion, I will present some observations and assessment based on the study of the debate.

Firstly, the contemporary debate (which is still going on) is a continuation of historical events over the past century, mainly involving one side in favour of a Latinized script and

the other side in favour of Chinese characters. **It is a reaction** to the mainstream notion in Chinese linguistic **circles that the** Chinese script will proceed towards the direction of phonetization, which has been taken by most systems of writing in the world.

Secondly, anti-reformers have good reasons to say that Chinese characters have advantages over Pinyin spelling in representing spoken Chinese. Because of a shortage of meaningful Chinese syllables, characters carry more information with their unique audio-visual quality created by the writing system's overwhelming majority--the semantic-phonetic type characters. However, it is debatable to claim superiority over other writing systems in the world, not only in terms of academic research but also in terms of ethics. In addition, the anti-reformers' position on complex characters seems to be too elitist, forgetting that the general tendency in the evolution of the Chinese script is from complexity to simplicity.

Thirdly, both sides maintain that economy is the major factor in deciding if a certain country's language and writing can spread widely in the world. Reformers hope economic development could help spread Putonghua and in turn this will help establish a unified script based on Pinyin. For anti-reformers, the claim that "Chinese speech and writing will play an important role in the 21st century" is based on the prediction that the 21st century belongs to the Asia Pacific-Rim Region, the promising centre of economic development by that

time. As China and quite a few countries all use different forms of Chinese speech and Chinese characters as full or partial systems of writing, this language and its script will be in great demand.

Fourthly, Chapter 2 mentions Lu Xun's idea that people in those mutually unintelligible dialect areas achieve literacy first in the Latinized script based on local speech, before achieving literacy in the Latinized script based on the Northern dialect for nation-wide communication. DeFrancis maintains that Lu Xun's views of reform are "the most efficient means of achieving universal literacy." (1984:280) He feels regret that Lu Xun's ideas about writing reform remain taboo. My updated research shows that writing reformers remain silent on his ideas and advocate a Pinyin script based on Putonghua. However, anti-reformers touch this issue without mentioning Lu Xun, mostly as a warning against linguistic division and national disunity. The following remark made by T. K. Ann is representative of their thinking.

> The Western alphabets also evolved from pictographs in the history of their development. But they became phonetic later, resulting in a division of Europe into a dozen big or small countries with different orthographies. If China had taken this route, it would have become countries called Jiangsu, or Guàngdong, etc. The pronunciation of Hanzi cannot be unified due to the diversity of Chinese dialects. How can we set up an extra hurdle in the form of our script? (Ann 1987:221, my translation)

The lack of reformers' opinions on Lu Xun's ideas partly indicates that his linguistic pluralism or decentralization is not only unpopular among anti-reformers but also undesirable

among reformers. The reason for this is that it suggests a sort of European situation in which vernacular languages accompany the independence of small nation states after big empires collapse. At present, most reformers advocate adopting a policy of two scripts--Hanzi and Pinyin, and the latter one is to write Putonghua or Mandarin, not to write different dialects.

Fifthly, much evidence indicates that even anti-reformers feel the need to improve the Chinese script in its unsystematic phonetic function and complicated strokes. For example, it was because Yuan Xiaoyuan realized the unsatisfactory aspects of Chinese characters that she designed her phonetic script based on Chinese characters, but the script appeared to be a totally different system from the character-based system. She went to China in the early 1970s to promote her scheme and was even well-received by the then Premier Zhou Enlai. [19] According to her, Zhou encouraged her efforts and introduced her to two prominent linguists to hold discussions. She even conducted an experiment at a kindergarten in Beijing which was publicized in the press. Her idea of improving Chinese characters also gained a popular response from the public at that time. The reason why she abandoned the scheme is partly political because Pinyin has been established as an auxiliary system to Hanzi for almost forty years. However, in a 1992 article she even disclosed that

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[19] A partial reason for Zhou's warm reception of Yuan in the 1970s might be that she was daughter-in-law of a then high-ranking Nationalist officer. At that time, China's relations with both Taiwan and the United States had not improved.

she was still doing the same kind of research on a phonetic Chinese script based on national (character) form. (1992:24)

T. K. Ann has also made some suggestions to simplify the script. For example, he suggests that 的 (de, an auxiliary word) be simplified into 勺 , because it is a very commonly used character. (1987:225) He even boldly suggests that the same syllables which are used as a phonetic for different characters be pronounced the same instead of differently. For instance, the phonetic 非 (fēi) are pronounced differently in 罪 (zuì, crime), 悲 (bēi, sorrow), 排 (pái, row). He suggests that all the characters with the phonetic 非 be pronounced fēi. In this way learners will be relieved of the burden of remembering different pronunciations. (1987:84)

All this indicates that even anti-reformers agree that Chinese characters do have defects and need improvement. At present the major difference between reformers and anti-reformers lies in the fact that the former embraces the "digraphia" approach with Pinyin as one of the two official scripts. They argue that this will give people an alternative to Hanzi to become literate. However, anti-reformers totally oppose the "digraphia" approach. Some of them would prefer to keep the basic square form of characters and the semantic radicals, just like Yuan's scheme, if a reform is expected. Their differences result from their different views regarding the relationship between speech and writing and the relationship between language and culture. As a result, writing reform China is in a dilemma:

to maintain the character-based script will be disadvantageous to mass literacy and national development, as writing reformers have maintained; to adopt Pinyin appears to be neither linguistically nor culturally appropriate, as anti-reformers have argued.

This dilemma in language planning parallels that of political and economic planning. While the latter is being developed on Western models and the outcome is uncertain, the former remains even more unpredictable. In a global village where Westernization seems to have taken over in so many developing countries, China needs to find an alternative to Westernization in developmental planning as a whole, including language planning, if the nation is to maintain a sense of cultural identity.

At present there may be one way to resolve the dilemma for a while, that is, the Chinese government could allow the two scripts to be simultaneously used on a trial basis in a "special zone" where the Pinyin script would be tolerated and accommodated. [20] The result of this experiment could be further monitored, debated, and researched.

Finally, an ambivalent and uncertain feeling about Chinese characters seems to affect those Western scholars who have tried to avoid a Eurocentric approach toward non-Western writing systems. Coulmas, whose work is mentioned in Chapter 3, is very

[20] I am grateful to Professor Jan Walls for suggesting this imaginative and insightful idea.

sensitive and even defensive of the Chinese script in his counter-argument against scholars like DeFrancis. He has also recognized some merits inherited in the script. Still, with economics in his mind (1992), he explains why Pinyin has failed to replace Hanzi so far and predicts two possibilities about the future of Chinese characters.

> One is that the grindstones of the Principle of Least Effort turn slowly but unfailingly, that not enough time has passed for Hanyu Pinyin to compete successfully with Hanzi, but that eventually the principle will prevail in this regard too, and the latter will be abolished in favor of the former. The other is that other factors interfere with the Principle of Least Effort not temporarily, but as rival principles of the human condition. (1991:232)

However, many ordinary Chinese feel not only ambivalent about Hanzi but also indifferent to Pinyin. Thirteen years ago, Sun Zhongjun, a worker from a paper mill in Jilin Province wrote to Yuan Xiaoyuan's journal <u>The Script and Culture</u> to encourage the experiment with her phonetic script based on Chinese characters.

> Pinyin as a foreign system is not practical (for China) to promote because people have no feeling for it. But the Chinese characters we are using now are difficult indeed and they must be reformed; no one can estimate how much they have cost the wisdom and energy of our nation. (Sun 1981:75)

Sun was one of approximately 1,000 people from all walks of life across the country who wrote letters of congratulations between 1980 and 1981 on the founding of the Society of Research on Modernization of Chinese Characters in 1980. His view was published in the journal, together with other ideas of fifty-two

people. Compared to people in the early 1980s, people in the 1990s have become cynical regarding the affairs of the country. But the ideas about writing reform expressed at that time may be suggestive of current and future thinking on this issue. In recent years the Chinese government as well as citizens as a whole have placed priority exclusively on the economy and will be unlikely to devote attention to writing reform.

In the long term, in view of the conservative nature of writing and the complex intermingling of linguistic and non-linguistic factors, writing reform will remain an academic debate rather than a practical concern. I believe an insightful comment made by the American linguist Dwight Bolinger regarding writing reform in general also applies to the Chinese situation either in the past, present, or future. I thus use his comment to conclude this thesis:

> If the past is any guide to the future, it will be events exterior to language that will lead to new experiments in writing, not efforts deliberately directed toward reform except as they may be part of more sweeping economic or political changes. (1975:498)

APPENDIX 1

A linguistic map of China. (source: DeFrancis 1984:34)
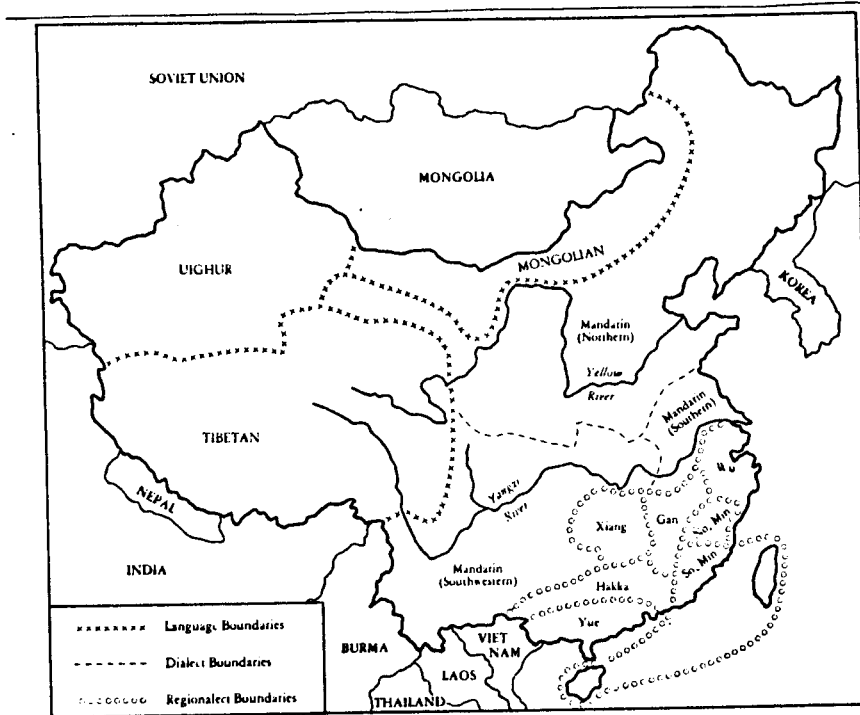
Dialect (regionalect) statistics. (source: DeFrancis 1984:58)

Linguistic Division	Speakers
Northern (Putonghua, Mandarin)	715 million (71.5%)
Jiangsu-Zhejiang (Wu)	85 million (8.5%)
Cantonese (Yue)	50 million (5.0%)
Hunan (Xiang)	48 million (4.8%)
Hakka	37 million (3.7%)
Southern Min	28 million (2.8%)
Jiangxi (Gan)	24 million (2.4%)
Northern Min	13 million (1.3%)

北 京 語 音 表

Table of the Speech Sounds of Peking Dialect

	a	o	e	ê	-i	er	ai	ei	ao	ou	an	en	ang	eng	ong	i	ia	iao	ie	iou	ian	in	iang	ing	iong	u	ua	uo	uai	uei	uan	uen	uang	ueng	ü	üe	üan	ün
∅	a	o	e	ê		er	ai		ao	ou	an	en	ang	eng		yi	ya	yao	ye	you	yan	yin	yang	ying	yong	wu	wa	wo	wai	wei	wan	wen	wang	weng	yu	yue	yuan	yun
b	ba	bo					bai	bei	bao		ban	ben	bang	beng		bi		biao	bie		bian	bin		bing		bu												
p	pa	po					pai	pei	pao	pou	pan	pen	pang	peng		pi		piao	pie		pian	pin		ping		pu												
m	ma	mo					mai	mei	mao	mou	man	men	mang	meng		mi		miao	mie	miu	mian	min		ming		mu												
f	fa	fo						fei		fou	fan	fen	fang	feng												fu												
d	da		de				dai	dei	dao	dou	dan		dang	deng	dong	di		diao	die	diu	dian			ding		du		duo		dui	duan	dun						
t	ta		te				tai		tao	tou	tan		tang	teng	tong	ti		tiao	tie		tian			ting		tu		tuo		tui	tuan	tun						
n	na		ne				nai	nei	nao		nan	nen	nang	neng	nong	ni		niao	nie	niu	nian	nin	niang	ning		nu		nuo			nuan				nü	nüe		
l	la		le				lai	lei	lao	lou	lan		lang	leng	long	li	lia	liao	lie	liu	lian	lin	liang	ling		lu		luo			luan	lun			lü	lüe		
z	za		ze		zi		zai	zei	zao	zou	zan	zen	zang	zeng	zong											zu		zuo		zui	zuan	zun						
c	ca		ce		ci		cai		cao	cou	can	cen	cang	ceng	cong											cu		cuo		cui	cuan	cun						
s	sa		se		si		sai		sao	sou	san	sen	sang	seng	song											su		suo		sui	suan	sun						
zh	zha		zhe		zhi		zhai	zhei	zhao	zhou	zhan	zhen	zhang	zheng	zhong											zhu	zhua	zhuo	zhuai	zhui	zhuan	zhun	zhuang					
ch	cha		che		chi		chai		chao	chou	chan	chen	chang	cheng	chong											chu	chua	chuo	chuai	chui	chuan	chun	chuang					
sh	sha		she		shi		shai	shei	shao	shou	shan	shen	shang	sheng												shu	shua	shuo	shuai	shui	shuan	shun	shuang					
r			re		ri				rao	rou	ran	ren	rang	reng	rong											ru	rua	ruo		rui	ruan	run						
j																ji	jia	jiao	jie	jiu	jian	jin	jiang	jing	jiong										ju	jue	juan	jun
q																qi	qia	qiao	qie	qiu	qian	qin	qiang	qing	qiong										qu	que	quan	qun
x																xi	xia	xiao	xie	xiu	xian	xin	xiang	xing	xiong										xu	xue	xuan	xun
g	ga		ge				gai	gei	gao	gou	gan	gen	gang	geng	gong											gu	gua	guo	guai	gui	guan	gun	guang					
k	ka		ke				kai	kei	kao	kou	kan	ken	kang	keng	kong											ku	kua	kuo	kuai	kui	kuan	kun	kuang					
h	ha		he				hai	hei	hao	hou	han	hen	hang	heng	hong											hu	hua	huo	huai	hui	huan	hun	huang					

Pinyin	Zhuyin Fuhao	Guoyeu Romatzyh	Yale	Wade-Giles
b	ㄅ	b	b	p
p	ㄆ	p	p	p'
m	ㄇ	m	m	m
f	ㄈ	f	f	f
d	ㄉ	d	d	t
t	ㄊ	t	t	t'
n	ㄋ	n	n	n
l	ㄌ	l	l	l
g	ㄍ	g	g	k
k	ㄎ	k	k	k'
h	ㄏ	h	h	h
j	ㄐ	j(i)	j	chi
q	ㄑ	ch(i)	chi	ch'i
x	ㄒ	sh(i)	sy	hs
zh	ㄓ	j	j	ch
ch	ㄔ	ch	ch	ch'
sh	ㄕ	sh	sh	sh
r	ㄖ	r	r	j
z	ㄗ	tz	dz	ts
c	ㄘ	ts	ts	ts'
s	ㄙ	s	s	s
i	ㄧ	i	i	i
u	ㄨ	u	u	u
ü	ㄩ	iu	iu	ü
a	ㄚ	a	a	a
o	ㄛ	o	o	o
●	ㄜ	e	e	e
e	ㄝ	e	e	e
ai	ㄞ	ai	ai	ai
ei	ㄟ	ei	ei	ei
ao	ㄠ	au	au	ao
ou	ㄡ	ou	ou	ou
an	ㄢ	an	an	an
en	ㄣ	en	en	en
ang	ㄤ	ang	ang	ang
eng	ㄥ	eng	eng	eng
er	ㄦ	er	er	erh

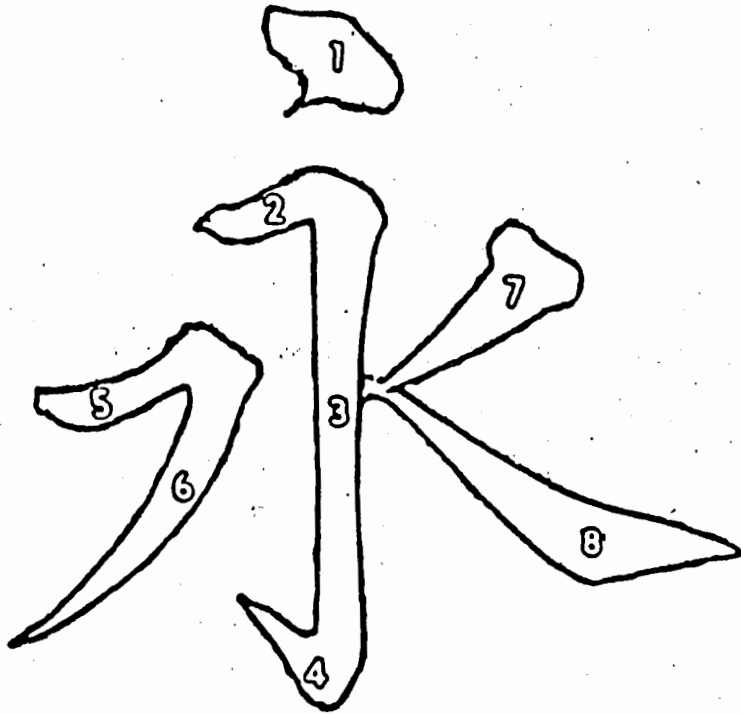# APPENDIX 4

A sample of Oracle Bone Inscriptions. (source: DeFrancis 1984:23)

The eight basic strokes in the character 永 (yǒng, forever). The pronunciations of the stroke names (from right to left) are diǎn, hénghuà, shùhuà, gōu, yǎnghéng, piě, duǎnpiě, nà. (source: Language Services Branch, Ministry of Education, Victoria, Canada, <u>Mandarin Chinese Curriculum Guide</u>, 1987:42)

基本點畫的認識

永字八法

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
捺	短撇	撇	仰橫	鈎	豎畫	橫畫	點
㇏	ノ	ノ	一	亅	丨	一	丶

The evolution of Hanzi: the two characters lái (to come) and mǎ (horse) in different styles. (source: DeFrancis 1984:83)

	Shang	Great Seal	Small Seal	Scribal	Regular	Simplified
lái						
mǎ						

Chinese calligraphy. The sentence Jīn shēng Lìshuǐ (Gold can be found in Lishui) is often used for practising calligraphy, because it contains both very simple and complex characters. The five columns illustrate five styles of writing in order of increasing cursivity (from left to right: small seal, scribal, regular, running and cursive. (source: Coulmas 1989:96)

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