

# Language, Literacy, and Nationalism: A Comparative Study of Vietnam and Taiwan

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Both Vietnam and Taiwan adopted the Han character (*Hanji*) as the official writing system prior to the twentieth century, and were introduced to the romanized writings by Western missionaries in the seventeenth century. In Vietnam, romanization has finally replaced the Hanji and became *Chu Quoc Ngu*, the official national orthography in 1945. However, the use of romanization in Taiwan is still limited to church activities. Although many Taiwanese language promoters have attempted to promote romanized writing, Hanji is still the dominant orthography in the contemporary Taiwanese society. This paper examines the developments and influences of romanization in the traditional Hanji dominant Taiwanese and Vietnamese societies. Both internal and external factors have contributed to the different outcomes of romanization in these two countries. Internal factors include the general public's demands for literacy and anti-feudal hierarchy; external factors include the political relationships between these countries and the origin of Hanji (i.e. China).

## Introduction

Hanji (Han character) cultural areas, such as Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and China, used Han characters and the classical Han writing<sup>1</sup> (*wenyan* 文言文) before the twentieth century. However, there were great changes before the advent of the twentieth century. In Vietnam, Han characters and its derivative characters, *Chu Nom* (字喃), which had been adopted as writing systems for more than a thousand years in Vietnam, were officially replaced by the romanized *Chu Quoc Ngu* In 1945, the year of the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. The *Chu Quoc Ngu* was developed on the basis of romanized Vietnamese writing, which was originally developed by missionaries in the seventeenth century. In Korea, Han characters were finally replaced by *Hangul* (諺文) after World War II. *Hangul*, the Korean phonemic writing system, was originally designed and promulgated by King *Sejong* in 1446. In Japan, the

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

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

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

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

### **Socio-cultural Background in the Hanji Sphere**

The Chinese attitude toward their neighbors and foreigners can exactly be expressed by an old Chinese philosophy, the Five Clothes System (五服制). The Chinese emperor set up a world outlook: the capital is great, civilized, and the central point of the world. Further, the emperor used the capital as the center of a circle, to draw five circles per 500 kilometers of radius. The farther from the central capital, the more barbaric. Chinese people call the barbarians from the east as ‘*Dong-yi*’ (東夷), barbarians from the south as ‘*Nan-man*’ (南蠻), barbarians from west as ‘*Xi-rong*’ (西戎), and barbarians from the north as ‘*Bei-di*’ (北狄). All the words are different animal names. In addition, the Chinese emperor usually demanded his neighbors to pay tributes every year and forced them to recognize the emperor’s suzerainty and become a vassal country (藩屬國) under China. In this way, Vietnam, Korea and Taiwan had been directly dominated by China for long periods. Later on they were no longer under direct domination, they became China’s vassal countries until modern times. Although Japan wasn’t under China’s direct domination, due to China’s powerful regimes during the times of Han and Tang dynasties, China was the model of learning for Japan.

China’s main influences on these countries include: 1) The adoption<sup>2</sup> of Han characters and classical Han writing to write Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese. 2) Imported Buddhism, Confucianism, the civil service examination (or imperial examination system 科舉制度) and the government official system. According to the Han characters and the imperial examination system, the books of Confucius and Mencius were accorded the status of classics among scholars and mandarins who assisted the emperor or king in governing his people. Everyone who desired to become a scholar or mandarin had to learn to use Hanji and read these classics and pass the imperial

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<sup>2</sup> The influence of Han characters on China’s neighbors was reflected on the early historical books, which were the first annals written and compiled in classical Han by their governments to record their early history. They are “古事記” (712 A. D.) and “日本書紀” (720 A. D.) in Japan, “三國史記” (1145 A. D.) in Korea, and “大越史記” (1253 A. D.) in Vietnam.

examination, unless he had a close relationship with the emperor. However, the classics were not only difficult to read (i.e., Hanji), but also hard to understand (i.e., the texts), because the texts were written in classical Han writing instead of colloquial speech (*Baihua* 白話). In other words, because most of the people were farmers who labored in the fields all day long, they had little interest in learning Hanji and classical writing. As a consequence, a noble class and a peasant class were formed and the classes strengthened the feudal society. This complication of Hanji could be well expressed with the old Taiwanese saying, “*Hanji na thak e-bat, chhui-chhiu to phah si-kat* 漢字若讀會 bat, 嘴鬚就打死結.” It means that you can’t understand all the Han characters even if you studied until you could tie your beard into a knot. In short, the demand for widespread literacy was the advising factor pushing reform of writing systems. Or another saying, “*Si-su Ngou-keng Thak Thau-thau, M-bat Ku Pih Chau* 四書五經讀透透, m-bat 龜鼈竈,” which means you still can not distinguish the characters of tortoise, turtle, and cooking stove even if you have studied all of the classics.

Writing in Hanji was considered morphosyllabic writing (DeFrancis 1990:88). The primary problem of the morphosyllabic writing is a higher number of characters inventory and its inefficiency<sup>3</sup> for writing. Consequently, writing in Han character become a burden of its learner, and may cause some further problems as Chen pointed out “to a large responsible for the country's high illiteracy and low efficiency, and hence an impediment to the process of modernization” (Chen 1994:367).

In contrast to the internal factor of social demand of literacy, the external factor was the political interaction between China and those countries. Historically, the Chinese people had the dominant status in Han sphere prior to the twentieth century. Consequently, the reform of written language against classical Han writing would be considered a violation of the Chinese Empire. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Western

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

colonialism came to the Han cultural areas. As a result, China was no longer able to dominate these areas. She was even unable to defend herself from the Western invasions. On the other hand, the rise of modern nationalism against the Western colonialism in these areas, forced those people to consider their national transitions from a feudal society to a modern society. To achieve this purpose, considering a writing reform to reduce the population of illiterate people became an important job. In addition, the nationalism against colonialism also caused Vietnam, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan to reconsider their relationships with China. That is to say, they had to maintain the vassal relationship with China or become a politically and culturally independent country. Under the influence of literacy and independence, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan were successful in the great changes from Han character to *Chu Quoc Ngu*, *Hangul*, and *Kana*. However, in China, although there were many proposed orthographic designs since the late period of the nineteenth century, such as *Qie-yin-zi* (切音字), *Quan-hua Zi-mu* (官話字母), and Latinization, Han characters have been only successfully simplified so far. The pattern of writing reforms in Asia is the same as Gelb mentioned in his famous book about the world's writing reforms, “in all cases it was the foreigners who were not afraid to break away from sacred traditions and were thus able to introduce reforms which led to new and revolutionary developments”(Gelb 1952: 196).

### **History of Domination by Foreign Powers in Vietnam**

After the first Chinese emperor *Shih Huang Ti* (秦始皇), who built the Great Wall, annexed six countries (221 B. C.), *Shih Huang Ti* continued to suppress South of Mountain (嶺南, present southern China). In 207 B. C., *Trieu Da* (趙佗), a Chinese general who commanded the *Kwantung* and *Kwangsi* provinces of present China, brought the Red River Delta under his jurisdiction and built up an autonomous state called *Nam Viet* (南越). In 111 B. C., the Chinese emperor of the *Han* dynasty, *Han Wu Ti* (漢武帝), sent his forces against *Nam Viet* and annexed *Nam Viet* under the direct domination of



China until 938. In 939, Nam Viet<sup>4</sup> separated from China at the moment of the fall of the powerful *Tang* dynasty (唐朝), and then became an independent monarchy, which refers to the present Vietnam (cf. Chavan 1987; Hodgkin 1981; Holmgren 19??; SarDesai 1992; Tran 1992).

Although the Vietnamese established their own independent monarchy, Vietnamese had to recognize the suzerainty of Chinese empire to exchange a later millennium of freedom until the late nineteenth century (SarDesai 1992:19). As SarDesai (1992:21) describes “despite strong political hostility toward the Chinese, the Vietnamese rulers deliberately set their nation on a course of sinicization.” China's influence on Vietnam was never dismissed even though Vietnam had achieved a monarchical status. For example, during the early feudal period of Vietnam, *Ly* and *Tran* dynasties (1010 A.D.-1428 A.D.), the Vietnamese government established a Confucian Temple of Literature and the Han-Lin Academy for study in Confucianism<sup>5</sup>, and imported many systems including civil service examination and hierarchical bureaucracy from China (SarDesai 1992:21). Consequently, Chinese classics such as Four Classical Books (四書) and Five Canonical Books (五經) became the textbooks and orthodox for the Vietnamese scholars and officials (Nguyen 19??:2; cf. Pham 1980). In short, although Vietnam was not under China's direct domination in the second millennium, there was also great influence on Vietnam from China, as the late Vietnamese historian, Tran Trong Kim (1882-1953) described (Tran 1992:2):

No matter adult or child, the Vietnamese only learned Chinese history instead of Vietnamese history when they went to school. They had to obtain materials from Chinese literature when they wrote poems or articles and they never mentioned their own country, Vietnam. Besides, Vietnamese always looked down on their own history and thought that it's not useful to know Vietnamese history. This was because the Vietnamese did not have their own

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<sup>4</sup> I keep using the term *Nam Viet* for readers' convenience, although its name changed over different periods. See Hodgkin (1981:349) for names given to Vietnam at different periods of history.

<sup>5</sup> For details of Confucianism in Vietnam, see Nguyen 1979.

Vietnamese language, the Vietnamese had to learn knowledge by other people's language and other people's characters.

Beyond Chinese domination, Vietnamese faced the French imperial power since 1862, in which year Vietnam ceded three provinces of Cochin China to France, until the end of First Indochina War in 1954 (cf. Hodgkin 1981; SarDesai 1992; McLeod 1991).

In the end of the fifteenth century, due to new technology which made west European traveling by sea easier, and the discovery and control of new sea routes, the European such as the Portuguese, the Dutch and the Spanish, gradually appeared in South China Sea for trading, religious mission, or colonization. Before French imperial power entered Vietnam, there had been some missionary activities there. For example, in 1624 a French missionary named *Alexandre de Rhodes*, who was usually referred to as the inventor of *Quoc-ngu*, a method of writing the Vietnamese language in roman scripts instead of the traditional Han characters, arrived in Vietnam beginning his mission there for about four decades. In many colonized countries, missionary activities resulted in some conflicts between missionaries and local people, and there was no exception in Vietnam. Due to religious conflicts, there was a marked increase in hostility toward the Catholics and foreign influences. Consequently, large scale persecution of converters and missionaries began in the 1820s under Emperor *Minh Mang* (SarDesai 1992:32). Religious conflicts became an excuse of the French to invade Vietnam and finally win the conquest of Vietnam.

### **Modern Nationalist Movement in Vietnam**

In many colonies, intellectuals usually have different thoughts on the relationship between locals and immigrants, i.e. they may choose to collaborate, to resist, or to retreat. It was no exception in the case of Vietnam. The Vietnamese mandarin class in the transition of nineteenth century to the twentieth century was divided by SarDesai (1992:44) into three groups: 1) those who had collaborated with the French, 2) those who retreated to the villages in a kind of passive noncooperation, and 3) those who battled to

bring new meaning and ethnic salvation to their country. Prior to the twentieth century, many Vietnamese mandarins were under the illusion that Vietnamese would maintain cultural and spiritual independence even though they had lost their land and political control to French. But a new generation of mandarins was aware of the pervasive educational and cultural impact of colonial rule, thus they devoted themselves to nationalist movement.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the Vietnamese nationalist movement gradually flourished. SarDesai (1992:46-47) attributes the result to two primary reasons. First, the result of French education. Although it was a colonial education, it provided Vietnamese a chance to gain knowledge and ideas such as nationalism, democracy and nation-state. Second, the early twentieth century was the rise of nationalism. More than 100,000 Vietnamese soldiers and workers in France had experienced nationalism during World War I (1914-1918). Besides, the pronouncement of right of self-determination of nations (1918) by the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, had inspired the nationalist movement.

On September 2, 1945, the Vietnamese communist leader, Ho Chi Minh, declared the birth of Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. However, the new Republic was not soon recognized by any country, and it caused the First Indochina War (1946-1954), in which the French power attempted to suppress the independence of Vietnam. Finally, the French power failed to maintain control of Vietnam, but Vietnam was divided into two zones until the end of the Second Indochina War (1964-1975), which expelled all alien forces including the United States. Consequently, the Vietnamese eventually established their own reunited independent country, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (cf. Chavan 1987; Hodgkin 1981; SarDesai 1992).

### **Linguistic Tradition and Modern Language Movement in Vietnam**

Hanzi was first employed in the writing system of Vietnam. Later on Chu Nom occurred in the tenth century, and romanized Vietnamese in the seventeenth century. The



relation between languages and political status since 111 B.C. in Vietnam is shown in

**Table 1:**

**Table 1. Relation between languages and political status in Vietnam.**

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

\*Based on John DeFrancis 1977.

*Nom*, also called *Chu Nom* (字字 字喃 or 字喃), means southern writing or southern orthography in contrast to *Chu Han* (字漢), Han writing or Han characters, or *Chu Nho* (字儒), the writing of Confucian scholars (DeFrancis 1977:26-28). *Chu Nom* was created gradually after the classical Han writing was introduced to Vietnam. The Vietnamese found that it was not easy to use Hanji to express their colloquial speech. Therefore, they modified Hanji to develop *Nom* characters. It is estimated that the full development of *Chu Nom* came after the Vietnamese achieved independence from China in the tenth century (DeFrancis 1977:21). Although the Vietnamese created their own *Chu Nom*, it was generally regarded as a vulgar writing, which refers to the low language in digraphia (cf. Dale 1980; DeFrancis 1984). Consequently, it neither achieved the same prestige as Han characters, nor replaced the classical Han writing. This consequence reflects the facts in psychological and orthographic aspects. First, from the social-psychological perspective, classical Han writing in Han characters is considered the orthodox by the Vietnamese since it has been adopted as the official writing system in administration and examination for over a thousand years. Moreover, any attempts to use orthography other than Han characters was regarded as hostile to the great China. For example, *Ho Quy Ly* was captured to China because he proposed to replace the Han characters with *Chu Nom* during his short-lived rule (1400-1407)(DeFrancis 1977:32). Second, from the

perspective of orthography, Chu Nom was still difficult for the masses to learn to read and write. Sometimes, Chu Nom was even more difficult and complicated than Han characters because Chu Nom often combined two Han characters, one which expressed the meaning and another which expressed the pronunciation, to form a new Chu Nom. For example, they combined “字” with “字” to form a new Nom character “字字,” and combined “字” with “南” to form “字南.” The complication of Chu Nom reflects the consequence that Chu Nom was not widespread even under the promotion of Vietnamese rulers such as Ho Quy Ly (cf. DeFrancis 1977:20-48; Nguyen 1984).

In the early part of the seventeenth century, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, and French missionaries gradually came to preach in Vietnam. To get their ideas across to the local people, it was recognized by missionaries that knowledge of the spoken Vietnamese was essential. Romanized writing was thus devised to assist missionaries to acquire the Vietnamese language. It is apparent that the Vietnamese romanization resulted from collective efforts, with the influences of diverse backgrounds of missionaries (Thompson 1987:54-55). Among the variants of Vietnamese romanization, Alexandre de Rhodes is usually referred to as the person who provided the first systematic work of Vietnamese romanization (DeFrancis 1977:54). In 1624, the French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes arrived in central Vietnam. He used Roman scripts as a writing system to describe the Vietnamese language and then he published the first Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin dictionary, *Dictionarium Annamiticum, Lusitanum et Latinum*, and a Vietnamese catechism *Cathechismus* in 1651. De Rhodes' romanized system with some later changes became the foundation of present Quoc Ngu, the national writing system of Vietnam (cf. Do 1972; DeFrancis 1977:48-66; Thompson 1987:52-77)

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

century. DeFrancis (1977:64) has pointed out that most missionaries “looked upon it [romanization] chiefly as a tool in working with the Vietnamese language and were not greatly concerned with urging its use in other areas.” Moreover, even if people outside the Catholic community wanted to learn the romanization, they were afraid of being treated as Catholic or collaborators with foreign missionaries since there were conflicts between local people and foreign missionaries. Consequently, there was no wide usage outside the Catholic community (DeFrancis 1977:61). Second, it was the reflection of people's psychological preference of the Han character since Han character has reached the orthodox status since the Ly dynasty. This phenomenon of preference is especially true to the traditional scholars and officials. For example, it was reported that Confucian schools, which are essential access to acquisition of Han writing and Chinese classics, continued to exist and attract students as late as the first decade or two of the twentieth century (DeFrancis 1977:124).

Since French colonization was involved in the colonial history of Vietnam, what role have the French (1861-1945) played in the orthographic transition of the Vietnamese language? First of all, the French had weakened or even replaced the role played by the Chinese in Vietnam. In the nineteenth century, China was losing her dominance of Asia since the Opium war in 1842. In addition, Japan's successful Westernization, shown in such wars as her victories over China in 1895 and over Tsarist Russia in 1904-1905, had impressed the Vietnamese. The appearance of the French power in Indochina<sup>6</sup> enforced the Vietnamese people to experience the new political power from Western society, and further reconsidering their relationship with the traditional feudal China. Second, French's antagonism toward Chinese had strengthened the promotion of the romanized system. Their hostile attitudes toward Chinese was summed up in a letter of 15 January 1866 by a French administrator, Paulin Vial, who held the position of *Directeur du*

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<sup>6</sup> Indochina includes present Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

*Cabinet du Gouverneur de la Cochinchine* “From the first days it was recognized that the Chinese language was a barrier between us and the natives...; it is the only one which can bring close to us the Annamites of the colony by inculcating in them the principles of European civilization and isolating them from the hostile influence of our neighbors” (quoted in DeFrancis 1977:77). Thus, the actions taken by the French colonialists included termination of the traditional civil service examination, and promotion of the romanized Vietnamese, which was regarded as a closer connection to French since both French and Romanized Vietnamese were using roman scripts. Nevertheless, the eventual goal of the colonialists was to replace Vietnamese with French after the Vietnamese acquired the romanized system (DeFrancis 1977:131).

Although the French colonialists and collaborationists had promoted romanized Vietnamese for decades by the twentieth century, it received only a slow growth (DeFrancis 1977:69). In contrast, romanized system reached a rapid growth under the promotion of the Vietnamese nationalists when they launched their modern nationalist movement in the early twentieth century (DeFrancis 1977:159). Romanized *Quoc Ngu* or the National Language was promoted by nationalists in the example of *Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc*<sup>7</sup>. In 1907 Vietnamese nationalists established Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc (東京義塾), Tokin Free School, a private school to teach students Western ideas, science, and to train students as well-promoters of Vietnamese nationalist movement. One of the significant features of Tokin Free School was promotion of Quoc Ngu. As Marr (1971:167) stated, the teachers at Tokin Free School showed “a new willingness to employ quoc-ngu when introducing outside ideas or techniques, and they urged each student to use the romanized script subsequently as a device for passing on modern knowledge to hundreds of their less literate countrymen.”

Although Quoc Ngu had spread out rapidly in the early part of the twentieth

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<sup>7</sup> For details, see Marr (1971:156-184).

century, it does not mean that Quoc Ngu had replaced Chinese or French. Spoken Vietnamese and Quoc Ngu were still subordinated to French and Chinese until the establishment of Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in 1945. The contemptuous attitudes of the Vietnamese language could be well shown by a Vietnamese politician, *Ho Duy Kien*, who referred to the Vietnamese language as a “patois” similar to those found in Gascogne, Brittany, Normandy, or Provence, during an otherwise routine Cochinchina Colonial Council discussion on primary education in 1931. Furthermore, Ho even concluded that it is going to take Vietnamese more than five hundred years to improve their “patois” to the level of French and Chinese (Marr 1981:136).

A few days after Ho Chi Minh declared the establishment of Democratic Republic of Viet Nam on September 2, 1945, Ho soon issued a decree to promote Quoc Ngu and Vietnamese on September 8 (DeFrancis 1977:239). Meanwhile, Ho Chi Minh launched an “Appeal to Fight Illiteracy” in October as follows (Ho, 1994:64-65):

Citizens of Viet Nam!

Formerly, when they ruled over our country, the French colonialists carried out a policy of obscurantism. They limited the number of schools; they did not want us to get an education so that they could deceive and exploit us all the more easily.

Ninety-five percent of the total population received no schooling, which means that nearly all Vietnamese were illiterate. How could we have progressed in such conditions?

Now that we have won back independence, one of the most urgent tasks at present is to raise the people's cultural level.

The Government has decided that before a year has passed, every Vietnamese will have learnt *quoc ngu*, the national romanized script. A Popular Education Department has been set up to that effect.

People of Viet Nam!

If you want to safeguard national independence, if you want our nation to grow strong and our country prosperous, every one of you must know his rights and duties. He must possess knowledge so as to be able to participate in the building of the country. First of all he must learn to read and write *quoc ngu*.

Let the literates teach the illiterates; let them take part in mass education.

Let the illiterates study hard. The husband will teach his wife, the elder brother his junior, the children their parents, the master his servants; the rich will open classes for illiterates in their own houses.



The women should study even harder for up to now many obstacles have stood in their way. It is high time now for them to catch up with the men and be worthy of their status of citizens with full electoral rights.

I hope that young people of both sexes will eagerly participate in this work.

The number of people who acquired to read and write Quoc Ngu after the achievement of independence was reported by Le Thanh Khoi (quoted in DeFrancis 1977:240) to have risen from 20 percent in the year 1945 to 70 percent in 1953. Similar statistics were reported by Huang as follows:

**Table 2. Numbers of literate in Vietnam.**

Year	Numbers of Literate	Percentage of Total Population
1945	2,520,678	14%
1946	4,680,000	27%
1947	6,880,000	39%
1948	9,680,000	55%
1949	11,580,000	66%
1950	12,000,000	68%
1953	14,000,000	79%

\*Percentage was calculated based on the data of Huang (1953:20).

How could Vietnam successfully replace Han characters and Chu Nom with romanized Quoc Ngu? Hannas (1997:88-92) stated twelve factors, and concluded that “the compelling factor behind this success is that Vietnam never had a top-down, coordinated, state-backed movement to effect the reform” (1997:84). Although it is true that bottom-up grass root movement played an important role in Vietnam's orthographic transition, I would attribute the consequence to two crucial factors: 1) external factor of political interaction between Vietnam and China in the international situation of the first half of the twentieth century, and 2) internal factor of social demand for literacy. These two crucial points can apply to the case of Taiwanese romanization, and explain why romanized system has not achieved popular and official status in Taiwan.

The external factor involves the complexity of international situation in the 1940s,

as Hodgkin (1981:288) stated that the Vietnamese “faced with a varying combination of partly competing, partly collaborating imperialisms, French, Japanese, British and American, with *Kuomintang* China.” At that time, Vietnam was considered an important base to attack southern China<sup>8</sup> when Japan's invasion of China became more apparent and aggressive since the 1930s (Hodgkin 1981:288). The Japanese military eventually entered Vietnam and sharing with French the control of Vietnam in the early 1940s. From the perspective of China, suppression against Japan's military activities in Vietnam was desired. However, in the viewpoint of the French, they were afraid that China would take over Vietnam again if Chinese troops entered Vietnam on the excuse of suppression against Japanese forces (Jiang 1971:181). For the Vietnamese people, how to maintain their national identity and achieve national independence from the imperialisms were considered priority by their leaders such as Ho Chi Minh. Ho's Chinese strategy was to keep Chinese forces away from Vietnam, and minimize the possibility of Chinese comeback in the Indochina. Politically speaking, Ho refused Chinese army entering Vietnam (Jiang 1971:107) as well as instigating anti-Chinese movement (Jiang 1971:228-240); Culturally, romanized Vietnamese was considered a distinctive feature of cultural boundary between Vietnam and China. These considerations have impelled Ho in favor of romanization rather than Han characters which are used in China.

The internal factor of social demand for literacy is understandable. Since Ho Chi Minh claimed that 95 percent of Vietnam's total population were illiterates, it was important to equip the people with primary education, which was considered essential to modernization in order to fight against imperialisms. Thus, the efficient and easily learned romanization was the best choice for literacy in contrast to the complexity of Han characters. In addition, it is more aggressive for illiterates to accept a new writing system

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<sup>8</sup> In the view point of Japan, domination of Vietnam and its northern trade-route was essential for effective control of southern China since the *Tonkin* Railway from *Haiphong* to *Yunnan* was vital source of supplies for *Kuomintang* China (Hodgkin:288).

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

### **History of Domination by Foreign Powers in Taiwan**

In 1624 the Dutch occupied Taiwan and established the first alien regime in Taiwan. Roman scripts were then introduced to Taiwan by the Dutch. In 1661 *Koxinga* (國姓爺 or 鄭成功), a remnant force of the former Chinese *Ming* dynasty, failed to fight against the new *Qing* dynasty, and therefore he retreated to Taiwan. Koxinga expelled the Dutch and established a sinitic regime in Taiwan as a base to fight back to Mainland China. Confucianism and civil service examination were thus imposed to Taiwan since Koxinga's regime until the early twentieth century. The Koxinga regime was later annexed by the Chinese Qing dynasty in 1683. Two centuries later, the sovereignty of Taiwan was transferred from China to Japan because of the Sino-Japan war in 1895. At the end of World War II, Japanese forces surrendered to the Allied Forces. *Chiang Kai-shek*, the leader of the Chinese Nationalist (KMT or Kuomintang) took over Taiwan on behalf of the Allied Powers under General Order No.1 of September 2, 1945 (Peng 1995:60-61). Meanwhile, Chiang Kai-shek was fighting against the Chinese Communist Party in Mainland China. In 1949, Chiang's troops were completely defeated and then pursued by the Chinese Communists. At that time, Taiwan's national status was supposed to be dealt with by a peace treaty among the fighting nations. However, because of Chiang's defeat in China, Chiang decided to occupy Taiwan as a base under the excuse that, “Taiwan was traditionally part of China,” and from there fight back to Mainland China (Kerr 1992; Peng 1995; Su 1980; Ong 1993). Consequently, Chiang's political

regime Republic of China<sup>9</sup> (R.O.C) was renewed in Taiwan and has remained there since 1949.

In comparison of Taiwanese and Vietnamese histories, although both of them were dominated by alien forces, there were distinctive differences which explain why the Taiwanese did not establish an independent country at the end of World War II as Vietnamese did. First of all, the Taiwanese have never established their own independent state. In fact, the idea of establishing a modern nation-state did not come to mind of the Taiwanese people until 1947,<sup>10</sup> when the February 28 Massacre happened (Ng 1994:202). The concept of nation, as Anderson defines, is an “imagined political community” (Anderson 1983:6). It indicates that nations are invented rather than naturally born. Thus, having collective historical experience is quite important for the members of a group to restore their collective memory and thus take further actions to achieve their collective objects. For example, many revolts during Qing's occupation of Taiwan had to gather masses by restoring their historical experience of “Anti-Qing and restore the Ming dynasty”(反清復明). By the end of the nineteenth century, the memory that the Taiwanese had was the proposed renaissance of the Ming, which refers to an alien historic Chinese dynasty rather than a localized modern Taiwanese nation-state. It indicates that creation of Taiwanese nation is not long enough to become mature. Second, the re-occupation of Taiwan since 1945 by the Chinese is the crucial point explaining why Taiwanese do not form their own nation-state so far. Would Vietnam become independent if it was under the control of China at the end of World War II ? During the occupation of Taiwan, the Chinese ROC regime reconstructed the Chinese identity of the Taiwanese people in the way which will be detailed in the following sections.

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<sup>9</sup> Republic of China was formerly the official name of the Chinese government (1912-1949) in China, but was replaced by the People's Republic of China (P.R.C) in 1949.

<sup>10</sup> The exact date for the origin of Taiwanese independence movement may vary from scholar to scholar. But, the February 28 Massacre of 1947, in which over twenty thousand of Taiwanese people were killed by Chiang's troops (Kerr 1992:303), is usually considered the origin of current Taiwanese independence movement (Ng 1994).

## Modern Nationalist Movement in Taiwan

Generally speaking, Taiwan was an indigenous society before the Dutch occupation in the early seventeenth century. There was only tribal awareness and no consciousness of being “Taiwanese.”

After vast Han immigration, Taiwan became an immigrant society. In the early period of immigration, most of those immigrants just proposed to live in Taiwan provisionally, and they identified themselves with their original clans in southeast China (Tan 1994:140-141). However, during the course of the Qing Dynasty, Taiwan moved from an immigrant society to a native society through the process of indigenization (Tan 1994:92). That means that the immigrants to Taiwan began to settle down and to distinguish themselves from people who lived in China. Therefore, there is an old Taiwanese saying that “*Tngsoann-kheh*<sup>11</sup>, *tui-poann soeh*<sup>12</sup>.” It means that you shouldn't believe Chinese too much while you are doing business with them. In short, the late of Qing dynasty era was the origin of a pro-Taiwanese nation in terms of Su (Su 1992: 196-200).

Owing to modernization and capitalization during the Japanese occupation, the earlier pro-Taiwanese identity has advanced to Taiwanese nationhood (Su 1992: 220). Those immigrant identities, once attached to the place of their ancestors such as “*Chiang-chiu* people,” and “*Choan-chiu* people,” have been replaced by a developing sense of being a “*Taioan-lang*” (literally Taiwanese people, in contrast to the Japanese). Thereafter, “*Taioan-lang*” was widely used by the people all over Taiwan.

The strong Taiwanese identity<sup>13</sup> during the Japanese era could be well illustrated by the following organizations, which made the Taiwanese nationalist movement flourish

<sup>11</sup> The Han people who already settled down on Taiwan called themselves “*Pun-te-lang*” (本地人 local people), in contrast to “*Tngsoann-lang*” (唐山人 Mainland China people) who lived in China (Su 1992: 196-200). “*kheh*” means a guest or a traveler. “*Tngsoann-kheh*” means travelers from Mainland China.

<sup>12</sup> 唐山客, 對半說 You should discount the words of the Chinese people.

<sup>13</sup> The Taiwanese identity in the Japanese era is much more on the ground of Taiwanese vs. Japanese, rather than Taiwanese vs. Chinese.



in the 1920s. For example, the guidelines of *Sin-Bin Hoe* (新民會 New People Association), which was established in 1920, mentioned: “To push the political reform in Taiwan in order to improve the happiness of Taiwanese.<sup>14</sup>” (Ong 1988: 44-49).

Moreover, the declarations (1925) of the Association of Taiwanese Academic Studies (東京台灣學術研究會), which was also organized by some overseas Taiwanese students in Tokyo included (Ong 1988: 91-92):

“To support the liberation of Taiwan!” (支持台灣的解放運動)

“To obtain the freedom to speak Taiwanese!” (獲得使用台灣話的自由)

“Taiwan independence forever and ever!” (台灣獨立萬歲)

After the identification as a Taiwanese<sup>15</sup> nation during the era of the Japanese occupation, came an era of confused identity (i.e., Taiwanese consciousness versus Chinese consciousness). This was mainly caused by the new immigrants<sup>16</sup> who came into Taiwan along with Chiang around 1949. Nowadays, most new immigrants still identify themselves as Chinese. In addition, the KMT's sinicization of Taiwan also played an important role in the construction of Chinese national identity.

Since the awareness of being a Taiwanese was a threat to the Chinese KMT regime, the KMT regime proposed to “brain wash” Taiwanese through the national education system and the mass media (Ong 1993: 70-71). As a result, many Taiwanese, especially the younger generations, came to identify themselves as Chinese. According to

<sup>14</sup> “為增進台灣人的幸福，進行台灣統治的改革運動” (Ong 1988: 44-49).

<sup>15</sup> Even though some people might identify themselves as Japanese during the *Hong-bin-hoa* movement (皇民化運動 movement of being the glorious people of the Japanese Empire), most people still regarded Taiwanese as a different nation from Japanese. For example, the Japanese awarded so-called "National Language Family" (國語家庭) to selected Taiwanese who were qualified to be Japanese. The qualified people were only 0.9% of total population of Taiwan in 1942 (Huang 1993: 94).

<sup>16</sup> More than one million (Huang 1993: 25) soldiers and refugees, who currently make up 13% of Taiwan's population, came to Taiwan along with the KMT regime around 1949, while the Mainland China was under the control of Chinese Communist Party. They were called “*Goa-seng-lang*” (外省人 Mainlanders or people from other provinces) by native Taiwanese. According to Hu-chhing Ong (1993), 54% of Mainlanders identified themselves as Chinese, only 7.3% identified themselves as Taiwanese, the rest are neutral. In other words, most of those Mainlanders still identify themselves as Chinese nowadays.

Ong's survey (1993), the percentage of Chinese identity among Taiwanese (excluding Mainlanders here) age 50-59 is 9.3%, for those age 40-49, it is 18.3%, for those age 30-39 is 20.5%, and for those age 20-29 is 30.5%.

In short, the people of Taiwan today remain divided in the view of themselves and where they should go politically. Their diversity of national identity has affected not only political issues regarding Taiwan's national status, but also cultural issues, such as Taiwanese writing and Taiwanese literature, which are the main concerns of the contemporary Taiwanese language movement.

### **Linguistic Tradition and Modern Language Movement in Taiwan**

The first written language in Taiwan was the so-called *Sinkang* Manuscripts (新港文書), a romanized system to write the vernacular of indigenous Siraya tribes during Dutch occupation of Taiwan in the seventeenth century. Thereafter, the classical Han writing was adopted as an official language by government, and *Koa-a-chheh* was treated as the popular writing for the public during the Koxinga and the Qing occupations. In addition to those two written forms, other romanized systems have been developed to write Taiwanese<sup>17</sup> and Hakka languages since the nineteenth century. After Taiwan became a part of Japan (1895-1945), Japanese writing became the official written language in Taiwan. After World War II, Mandarin Chinese became the orthodox of writing under Chiang Kai-shek's occupation of Taiwan. The relation between language and political status in Taiwan was shown in **Table 3**.

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<sup>17</sup> Taiwanese is also called Taigi, Tai-yu, Holoee, Southern Min, or Min-nan. The broad definition of Taiwanese includes all the indigenous languages, Hakfa, and Holoee. Occasionally, Taiwanese refers to Holoee only. Holoee speakers account for 73.3% of Taiwan's population, Hakfa 12%, indigenous 1.7%, and Mandarin speakers who came to Taiwan with KMT account 13% (Huang 1993:21).

**Table 3. Relation between language and political status in Taiwan.**

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

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

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

Romanization was first introduced to Taiwan by the Dutch missionary in the seventeenth century. As Campbell (1903) described, “ they [i.e., Dutch] not only carried on a profitable trade, but made successful efforts in educating and Christianising the natives.” The natives around Sinkang<sup>18</sup> were first taught Christianity through the learning of the romanization<sup>19</sup> of Sinkang dialect, which are extinct today. There were some textbooks and testaments written in romanized Sinkang, such as the *The Gospel of St. Matthew in Formosan Sinkang Dialect and Dutch (Het Heylige Euangelium Matthei en Jonannis Ofte Hagnau Ka D'llig Matiktik, Ka na Sasoulat ti Mattheus, ti Johannes*

<sup>18</sup> Sinkang (新港), also spelled in Sinkan, was the place opposite to the Tayouan where the Dutch had settled in 1624. The present location is Sin-chhi of Tainan county (新市, 台南縣).

<sup>19</sup> After Koxinga drove the Dutch out from Taiwan, that roman scripts were still used by those plain tribes for a period. It is said that those aborigines continued to use the romanization for over a century-and-a-half after the Dutch had left Taiwan (Naojiro Murakami: 1933).

*appa. Overgefet inde Formosaansche tale, voor de Inwoonders van Soulang, Mattau, Sinckan, Bacloan, Tavokan, en Tevorang.*), which was translated by Daniel Gravius in 1661 (Campbell 1888; Lai 1990: 121-123).

After Koxinga drove out the Dutch, classical Han writing was adopted as the official writing, and it was succeeded by the following Qing dynasty. Although classical Han writing was adopted as official writing, the Koa-a-chheh<sup>20</sup> (literally, song books) was the popular writing among the common people. I refer this popular writing to Koa-a-chheh or *Koa-a-ji* (literally, the characters of song book) because many traditional song books were written in this system.

In Koa-a-chheh writing, each sentence was composed of either five or seven characters. These characters were derived from Han characters. In general, people chose characters from an available inventory of characters or created new characters.<sup>21</sup> The choice of characters could vary from writer to writer. In other words, different writers could choose different characters to express the same word. There are three main principles while choosing from available characters:

First, the same etymon is written with the same Han characters. For example “想” (*siunn*: think) in the Koa-a-chheh sentence “蚊仔想著足怨切” (*bang-a siunn tioh chiok oan-chheh*: the mosquito was very sad while he thought about that). Second, the meaning of a character was ignored; only the sound was attended to. For example, “足” (pronounced as *chiok*) was supposed to be the meaning of “foot” in classical Han writing, however, it means “very” (*chiok*) in the Koa-a-chheh sentence above. Third, the pronunciation of a character was ignored, and its meaning borrowed to express the same meaning in different languages. For example, the meaning of “蚊” was borrowed to express “mosquito” (*bang*) in Taiwanese.

<sup>20</sup> For more details regarding koa-a-chheh, see Ong (1993: 169-215).

<sup>21</sup> For instance, “勿,” which means “no,” was combined with “會,” which means “able,” to represent the new character “勿會,” which means “unable” in Taiwanese.



In 1865, the first religious mission after the Dutch, was settled in present *Tailam* city (台南), by missionary James L. Maxwell and his assistants (Hsu 1995: 6-8; Lai 1990).

Before missionaries arrived in Taiwan, there were already several missionary activities in southeast China. They had started developing romanization of Southern Min<sup>22</sup> and Hakka. For instance, the first textbook for learning the romanization of the Amoy<sup>23</sup> dialect, *Amoy Spelling Book*<sup>24</sup> was published by John Van Nest Talmage<sup>25</sup> in 1852 in Amoy. The first *New Testament*<sup>26</sup> in romanized Amoy was published in 1873, and the first *Old Testament*<sup>27</sup> in 1884. In addition, there were several dictionaries, such as the *Chinese-English Dictionary of the Vernacular or Spoken Language of Amoy, with the Principal Variations of the Chang-chew and Chin-chew Dialects*,<sup>28</sup> by Rev. Carstairs Douglas in 1873. The currently most popular romanized dictionary in Taiwan, *E-mng-im Sin Ji-tian*<sup>29</sup> edited by Rev. William Campbell, was first published in Taiwan by Taiwan Church Press in 1913 (Lai 1990).

That romanization was called *Poe-oe-ji* (白話字) in Taiwan. It means the script of vernacular speech in contrast to the complicated Han characters of *wenyan*. If Sinkang writing represents the first foreign missionary activities in Taiwan, then the development of *Peh-oe-ji* reveals the comeback of missionary influences after the Dutch withdrawal from Taiwan. The wide use of *Poe-oe-ji* in Taiwan was promoted by the missionary Reverend Thomas Barclay while he published monthly *Tai-oan-hu-sia<sup>n</sup> Kau-hoe-po*<sup>30</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Southern Min is usually referred to as the origin of modern Taiwanese language (現代台語).

<sup>23</sup> Amoy was a dialect of Southern Min, and was regarded as mixed Chiang-chiu and Choan-chiu dialects. The Amoy dialect was usually chosen by missionaries as a standard for Southern Min.

<sup>24</sup> *Tngoe hoan ji chho hak* 《唐話番字初學》.

<sup>25</sup> John van Nest Talmage was named 打馬字, 1819-1892.

<sup>26</sup> *Lan e Kiu-chu Ia-so Ki-tok e Sin-iok* 《咱的救主耶穌基督的新約》

<sup>27</sup> *Ku-iok e Seng Keng* 《舊約的聖經》

<sup>28</sup> 俗稱《廈英大辭典》; See “Introduction to Douglas' Amoy-English dictionary,” by Ui-jin Ang 1993.

<sup>29</sup> *A Dictionary of the Amoy Vernacular Spoken throughout the Prefectures of Chin-chiu, Chiang-chiu and Formosa* 《廈門音新字典》 There have been fourteen editions by 1987.

<sup>30</sup> 《台灣府城教會報》Taiwan Prefectural City Church News has changed its title several times, and the recent title (1988) is *Taioan Kau-hoe Kong-po* (台灣教會公報 Taiwan Church News). It was published



(Taiwan Prefectural City Church News) in July 1885. In addition to publications related to Christianity, there were some other publications written in Peh-oe-ji, such as *Pit Soan e Chho' Hak* (Fundamental Mathematics) by Ui-lim Ge in 1897, *Lai Goa Kho Khan-ho'-hak*<sup>31</sup> (The Principles and Practice of Nursing) by G. Gushue-Taylor in 1917, and the novel *Chhut Si-Soa*<sup>32</sup> (Line between Life and Death) by Khe-phoan Te<sup>n</sup> (鄭溪泮) in 1926. Besides, recently there were a series of novels translated from world literatures into Peh-oe-ji by the members of “5% *Tai-ek Ke-oe*<sup>33</sup>” (5% Project of Translation in Taiwanese) since 1996.

In short, the Peh-oe-ji was the ground of romanization of modern Taiwanese colloquial writing. Even though there were several different romanizations for writing Taiwanese, many of them were derived from Peh-oe-ji. Besides, the use of Peh-oe-ji and its derivations were more popular than other systems of romanization in contemporary Taiwanese literature.

Language movement in Taiwan can be divided into two periods. The first period refers to the movement of colloquial writing (白話文運動) in 1920s and 1930s. The second one refers to the contemporary Taibun movement (台文運動) since the 1980s (Chiung 1999:37-49).

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

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in Peh-oe-ji until 1970, and then switched to Mandarin Chinese (Lai 1990: 17-19).

<sup>31</sup> 《內外科看護學》

<sup>32</sup> 《出死線》

<sup>33</sup> Five Percent 台譯計劃. In November of 1995, some Taiwanese youths who were concerned about the writing of Taiwanese decided to deal with the Taiwanese modernization and loanwords through translation from foreign language into Taiwanese. The organization 5% Project of Translation in Taiwanese was then established on February 24, 1996. Its members have to contribute 5% of their income every month to the 5% fund. The first volume includes 7 books. They are Lear Ong, Kui-a Be-chhia, Mi-hun-chhiu<sup>n</sup> e Kui-a, Hoa-hak-phin e Hian-ki, Thi<sup>n</sup>-kng Cheng e Loan-ai Ko'-su, Pu-ho'-lang e Lek-su, and Opera Lai e Mo'-sin-a, were published by Tai-leh (台笠) press in November 1996.

writing. Some examples are *Teng-chhong Ng's* (黃呈聰 1922) “Essay on the Mission of Vernacular Writing,<sup>34</sup>” and *Tiau-khim Ng's* (黃朝琴 1922) “Issue of Reforming the Classical Han writing.<sup>35</sup>” In general, the movement of colloquial writing from the 1920s to the 1930s centered on two points. First, they intended to reform the complicated classical Han writing and then develop a new writing form, which was based on the colloquial speech. Second, they attempted to create a new literature which was based on the new colloquial writing, instead of the old literature which was based on the classical Han writing. (Ou 1985, Iap 1993; Phenn 1992; Lim 1993; Lim 1996; Tiunn 1993).

Regarding the claim of reforming classical Han writing, it quickly and successfully aroused a sympathetic echo from the public. However, it raised another controversy. What language should be the base of colloquial writing? Japanese, Mandarin, or Taiwanese? At that time, Taiwan was under the control of Japan, and the modern Japanese writing was taught through the national education system. It seemed that Japanese writing was the best choice, if considering the economic factors. However, Japanese was not the vernacular of the Taiwanese people. Most of the people still used Taiwan languages in their daily life. Therefore, people such as *Chioh-hui Ng* (黃石輝 1930) and *Chhiu-seng Koeh* (郭秋生 1931), published “Why not Promote Homeland Literature?,<sup>36</sup>” and “A Proposal for Constructing the Taiwanese Language.<sup>37</sup>” They advocated that Taiwanese people should use colloquial Taiwanese to write poems, fiction, and so on. In other words, they asserted that the new literature should be written in Taiwanese. In addition to Taiwanese, Mandarin was also proposed by some people such as *Ngou-kun Tiunn* (張我軍), who had studied in China. Because Tiunn thought that Taiwanese vernacular was too vulgar to become a literate language, he advocated using

<sup>34</sup> <論普及白話文的新使命>, 發表 ti 《台灣》第 4 年第 1 號

<sup>35</sup> <漢文改革論> 發表 ti 《台灣》

<sup>36</sup> <怎樣不提倡鄉土文學> 發表 ti 《伍人報》

<sup>37</sup> <建設台灣話文一提案> 發表 ti 《台灣新聞》

Mandarin<sup>38</sup> as the literate language to create this new literature.

As a consequence, the so-called New Literature developed in the 1920s was generally written in the colloquial speech of Japanese, Taiwanese, and Mandarin. Although Japanese writing was the only official written language, writings in colloquial Taiwanese or Mandarin, which primarily used Hanji (these were so-called *Hanbun* 漢文) were still allowed in some particular newspapers and magazines until 1937, the year the Japanese started to attack China. In order to win the war against China, Japan promoted the *Hong-bin-hoa*<sup>39</sup> movement in Taiwan, which strongly forced Taiwanese to identify themselves as Japanese, and then fight for the Japanese against the Chinese. During the Hong-bin-hoa movement, Han writing, which was the symbol of a connection between Taiwanese and Chinese, was then prohibited by Japan. The movement of colloquial writing since 1920s was therefore ended in 1937.

Although the colloquial writing movement successfully converted the traditional classical Han writing to modern colloquial writing, Hanji still was the dominant orthography. There were only a few colloquial writing promoters such as *Poe-hoe Chhoa* (蔡培火), who pointed out that colloquial writing in Hanji was still a heavy burden for most Taiwanese. He therefore advocated using Taiwanese romanization to liberate the illiterate. He pointed out the relationship between new Taiwan and roman scripts as follows (Chhoa 1925:14-15):

Pun-to lang long-kiong u sa<sup>n</sup>-pah lak-chap-ban lang, kin-kin chiah chha-put-to ji-chap-ban lang u hak-bun, kiam m-si chin chio mah? Che si sim-mih goan-in neh? Chit hang, si lan ka-ti be-hiau khoa<sup>n</sup> hak-bun tang; chit hang, si siat-hoat e lang bo u chap-hun e seng-sim. Iau koh chit hang, chiu-si

<sup>38</sup> Under the Japanese occupation, most of the Taiwanese spoke either Taiwanese or Japanese. Only a few who had studied abroad in China were able to speak in Mandarin. The key point that someone proposed to promote Mandarin writing as the new writing system was because Mandarin was written in Han characters. People would be able to guess the meanings from Han characters, even though Mandarin was not the vernacular of the Taiwanese people. Besides, modern colloquial writing of Mandarin had been promoted since the movement of May 4, 1919 (五四運動) in China. Those promoters asserted that it would be better for Taiwan to follow China's writing reform.

<sup>39</sup> 皇民化運動: Movement of being the glorious people of the Japanese Empire.

beh oh hak-bun e bun-ji gian-gu thai kan-ke hui-siong oh-tit oh.

We Taiwanese have 3.6 millions of population, but only two hundred thousand of them are literate. Isn't it too few? What are the reasons? One is that we think little of literacy; another reason is that the ruler is not sincere to promote education; and the third is that the orthography [i.e., Hanji] and language are too difficult to learn literacy.

However, although romanization is much more efficient than Hanji, romanized Taiwanese is not widely accepted by people in Taiwan. Writing in roman script is regarded as the low language in digraphia.<sup>40</sup> There are three crucial points for this phenomenon:

First, people's preference for Han characters is caused by their internalized socialization. Because Han characters have been adopted as the official orthography for two thousand years, being able to master Han characters well is a symbol of scholarship in the Han cultural areas. Writing in scripts other than Han characters may be regarded as childish writing. For example, when *Tai-oan-hu-sia*<sup>n</sup> *Kau-hoe-po*, the first Taiwanese newspaper in romanization, was published in 1885, Rev. Thomas Barclay exhorted readers of the newspaper not to “look down at Peh-pe-ji; do not regard it as a childish writing” (Barclay 1885).

Second, misunderstanding of the nature and function of Han characters has enforced people's preference for Hanji. Many people believe that Hanji are ideally suited for the Han language family, which includes the Taiwanese language; they believe that Taiwanese cannot be expressed well without Hanji because Hanji are logographs and each character expresses a distinctive semantic function. In addition, many people believe Lian Heng's (1987) claim that “there are no Taiwanese words which do not have corresponding characters.” However, scholars such as Cheng (1989) have pointed out that not all Taiwanese words have corresponding Han characters. According to Cheng (1989: 332), approximately 5% of the Taiwanese morphemes have no appropriate Han

<sup>40</sup> cf. Tiu<sup>n</sup> 1998; Dale 1980; DeFrancis 1984.

characters, and they account for as much as 15% of the total number of characters in a written Taiwanese text. Regarding the structure of Hanji, DeFrancis (1996:40) has pointed out that Han characters are “primarily sound-based and only secondarily semantically oriented.” In DeFrancis’ opinion, it is a myth to regard Han characters as logographic. He even concludes that “the inefficiency of the system stems precisely from its clumsy method of sound representation and the added complication of an even more clumsy system of semantic determinatives” (DeFrancis 1996:40). If Han characters are logographs, the process involved in reading them should be different from phonological or phonetic writings. However, research conducted by Tzeng et al. has pointed out that “the phonological effect in the reading of the Chinese characters is real and its nature seems to be similar to that generated in an alphabetic script” (Tzeng et al. 1992:128). Their research reveals that the reading process of Han characters is similar to that for phonetic writing. In short, there is no evidence to support the view that the Han characters are logographs.

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

The second period of Taiwanese language movement refers to the “*Taibun* movement” from the mid-1980s to the present 2000. It reveals the upsurge in promoting standardization for Taiwanese languages, and the promotion of *Taigi* literature.<sup>41</sup> *Taibun*, on the grounds of its characters, means modern Taiwanese writing or *Taigi* writing. It was

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<sup>41</sup> The term “*Taigi* literature” (台語文學) is to specify the literature in Taiwanese language(s). It refers to literature works written in native languages such as Holoee and Hakfa. Occasionally, it refers to works in Holoee only.



created in contrast to *Zhongwen* (中文), which means modern Mandarin Chinese writing.

As the colloquial writing movement became allied with the political movement in the 1920s, the Taibun movement also occurred along with the rise of the native political activities against the foreign KMT regime in the middle of 1980s. Generally speaking, the Taibun movement consists of two dimensions: the linguistic and the literature dimensions. From the linguistic dimension, vernacular education and standardization of written Taiwanese are the two primary goals of Taibun promoters. From the perspective of literature, the Taibun movement attempts to link to the issue of Taiwanese writing, which occurred during the colloquial writing movement in the early period of the twentieth century, and then establish Taigi literature. For example, Yam Poetry Society<sup>42</sup> was established by some Taiwanese writers in May 1991. They claimed that their objectives were “to create the Taiwanese literature in the native Taiwanese languages,<sup>43</sup>” and “to achieve the standardization and literaturization of Taigi<sup>44</sup>” (Lim 1996:97-99).

Under the colonial rule of KMT, not only was vernacular writing suppressed,<sup>45</sup> but even literary works about the Taiwan society, which were written in Mandarin Chinese by native Taiwanese writers were not recognized as Taiwan Literature.<sup>46</sup> They were belittled as so-called “Literature of Home Villages.<sup>47</sup>” In other words, literature in Taiwan was treated as a branch of China Literature,<sup>48</sup> i.e., it was regarded as the frontier literature within the larger frame of China Literature. Thereafter, in the 1980s, as soon as

<sup>42</sup> *Han-chi Si-sia* 蕃薯詩社.

<sup>43</sup> 用台灣本土語言創造正統的台灣文學.

<sup>44</sup> 追求台語文字化與文學化.

<sup>45</sup> Vernacular writing was denounced as “Dialect Literature” (方言文學) and then rebelled by the majority of Mandarin Chinese writers before 1980s. Only a few writers such as *Chong-goan Lim* (林宗源) and *Hiong-iong* (向陽) dared to take the risk of writing in vernacular (Lim 1996: 16-21).

<sup>46</sup> The term “Taiwan Literature” is used to translate the term “台灣文學.” It occurred in the so-called Debates on Literature of Home Village in the late 1970s. “Taiwan Literature” indicates the national status instead of regional literature under the national frame of China. “Taiwan Literature” was adopted here instead of Taiwanese literature, because “Taiwanese literature” may refer to “literature in Taiwanese languages.”

<sup>47</sup> This term is from the so-called Debates on Literature of Home Villages (鄉土文學論戰) in the second half of 1970s. For details, see Phenn, 1992, and Iap, 1993.

<sup>48</sup> China Literature was adopted instead of Chinese literature is in contrast to Taiwan Literature.

the rise of the native political movement and the debates on Taiwanese consciousness versus Chinese consciousness were becoming more common, more and more Taiwanese people started to recognize the national status of Taiwan Literature. In other words, the derogatory term “Literature of Home Villages” was replaced by glorious Taiwan Literature, which exhibits equality with China Literature. Consequently, Taiwan Literature acquired the national status it deserved in the 1980s (cf. Phenn 1992; Iap 1993; Tiunn 1993).

After Taiwan Literature achieved national status, people paid more attention to the relationship between Taigi literature and Taiwan Literature. Taibun writers, such as *Chong-goan Lim*, claimed that Taiwan Literature must be written in Taiwanese. Lim mentioned, as follows (Lim 1984:18-21):

今仔日台灣文壇為何猶未寫出不朽的精采的作品，除了一寡因素之外，就是作家忽視母語，輕視母語，... 一個無自信的人，怎有才調寫出不朽的精采的作品，結果也只好乖乖做文化的屬民，文學的奴隸。所以今仔日的作家，著愛重新整合創新台語，按呢，才有才調寫出現時現地醞釀佇心靈中的世界。

Why does immortal work still not occur in the literature of Taiwan? There are some factors, one is that our writers ignored and looked down our own mother tongue because they were not confident of their vernacular. How could a writer without any confidence create an immortal work? Consequently, they had to subordinate themselves to Chinese culture and become the slaves of Chinese literature. So, today, we Taiwanese writers have to devote ourselves to literary works in Taigi. Then, we will be able to describe our world in our mind.

台灣文學就是愛用台語來寫...台灣文學就是台灣人用台灣人的母語寫的文學...台語文學就是台灣文學。(Lim 1990)

Taiwan Literature must be written in Taigi...Taiwan Literature is the literature written in the mother tongue of Taiwanese people...Taiwan Literature is Taigi literature.

We could say that Taiwanese languages are regarded as important components of Taiwan Literature by Taibun writers. Therefore, they asserted that Taiwan Literature must be based on Taiwanese languages. Moreover, some writers, such as *Chong-goan Lim* and

*Iong-bin Lim*, claimed that Taigi literature is the essence of Taiwan Literature; only Taigi literature can well represent the literature of Taiwan. Indeed, in normal cases, the fact that national literatures were written in their vernacular languages is not at all surprising. For instance, the Japanese language is the main literary language in Japan, and Japanese writing represents the essence of Japan literature. The situation is the same as Vietnamese in Vietnam, Korean in Korea, English in Britain, American English in the United States, and French in France. However, it seems that the vernacular writings in Taiwan do not have such fortune as they have in Vietnam and other independent nations. While “Taigi literature represents Taiwan Literature” was the claim, some Mandarin writers, such as *Kiau Li*<sup>49</sup> (李喬 1991) and *Sui-kim Phenn*<sup>50</sup> (彭瑞金 1991) argued that language is not an important component of literature. They asserted that literary works in any language could be Taiwan Literature. In other words, both Li and Phenn recognized the legitimate status of Mandarin writing for the literature of Taiwan.

In short, the contemporary Taibun movement since the 1980s reflects Taiwan's socio-political complexity and its colonial background. In terms of nationalism<sup>51</sup> and nationism,<sup>52</sup> it reveals the controversial relationship among Chinese nationalism-nationism,<sup>53</sup> Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwanese nationism as illustrated in **Figure 1**.

<sup>49</sup> See “A wide road of language: some thought on Taiwanese languages,” (寬廣的語言大道--對台灣語文的思考) 9/29/1991, Independence Evening Post (自立晚報).

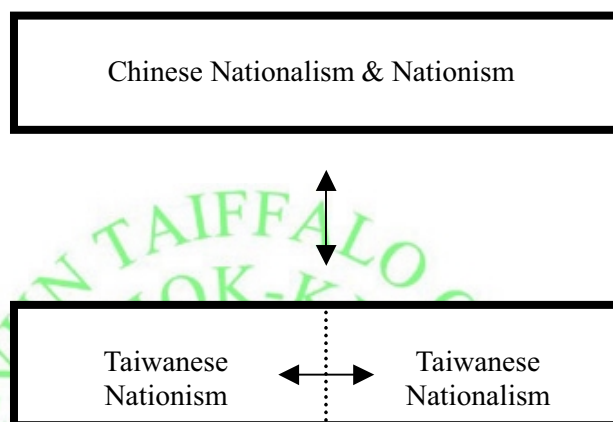
<sup>50</sup> See “Please don't kindle the language bomb,” (請勿點燃語言炸彈) 10/07/1991, and “Language, writing, and literature,” (語、文、文學) 10/27/1991, Independence Evening Post (自立晚報).

<sup>51</sup> Fishman (1968:41) defines nationalism as the “process of transformation from fragmentary and tradition-bound ethnicity to unifying and ideologized nationality.” The role of language in nationalism is that it serves as link with the glorious past and with authenticity. A language is not only a vehicle for the history of a nationality, but a part of history itself (Fasold 1984:3).

<sup>52</sup> Fishman (1968:42) describes nationism as “wherever politico-geographic momentum and consideration are in advance of sociocultural momentum and consideration.” The role of language in nationism is that whatever language does the job best is the best choice (Fasold 1984:3). In other words, language in nationism plays a more instrumental role. For example, considering government administration and education, a language or languages which do the job best must be chosen.

<sup>53</sup> At the beginning of Chinese KMT's occupation of Taiwan, Chinese nationalists could have different opinions from Chinese nationalists. However, later on when the use of Mandarin by people in Taiwan had dramatically increased, the objects of Chinese nationalism and Chinese nationism have become the same. That is to keep using Mandarin since it has dominated educational and governmental functions in Taiwan. Therefore, I do not distinguish Chinese nationalism from Chinese nationism here.

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



In the dimension of nationalism and nationism, it reveals the political tensions between Chinese and Taiwanese. Chinese nationalism can be inherited from the internal Chinese KMT and as well as external People's Republic of China. The strong conflicts between KMT's Chinese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism were overt in the anti-KMT movement<sup>54</sup> in the second half of the 1980s and the entire 1990s. The conflicts between PRC Chinese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism started in the late 1980s<sup>55</sup> and reached the climax in 1999 when the former president Teng-hui Lee claimed that Taiwan and China hold “special state to state” relationship. In the dimension of Taiwanese, it shows the expanding tension between Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwanese nationism. Many politicians and intellectuals who lead socio-political

<sup>54</sup> In this paper, I consider 1986, when the first native opposition party Democratic Progressive Party was born, the beginning of anti-KMT movement though its origin can be traced back to the 1970s. KMT lost its ruling status in the 2000 presidential election; therefore, 2000 was considered the end of the anti-KMT movement.

<sup>55</sup> For example, Iu-choan Chhoa (蔡有全), Cho-tek Khou (許曹德), and Lam-iong Tenn (鄭南榕) claimed the independence of Taiwan to the public in 1987.

movement, such as *Hong-Beng Tan* (陳芳明), *Sui-kim Phenn* (彭瑞金) and *Chhun-Beng Ng* (黃春明), do not value Taibun movement as a necessary step even though they identify themselves as Taiwanese rather than Chinese. In their ideology, they disapprove with KMT's strict national language policy; however, they have come to the stage to accept the results of the national language policy. In other words, they recognize the legitimate status of the colonial language, i.e. Mandarin Chinese as the official language since it has been widespread in Taiwan after more than fifty years of promotion. However, it is criticized by Taiwanese nationalists that the Taiwanese nationalists have ignored the threat of Chinese nationalism from China. From the perspective of Taiwanese nationalism, Taiwanese language is not only a communication medium, but also a part of history and spirit of Taiwan. Moreover, it is considered a national defense against Chinese nationalism of the PRC and the ROC. In short, whether or not Taiwanese people are willing to accept or shift to Taibun deeply depends on people's national identity and their attitudes toward a new orthography.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the developments and influences of romanization in the traditional Hanji dominant Vietnamese and Taiwanese societies. The different outcomes of romanization in Vietnam and Taiwan reveal two important aspects regarding their orthographic transitions. They are 1) internal factors, which include the general public's demands for literacy and anti-feudal hierarchy, and 2) external factors, which include the political relationships between Vietnam, Taiwan and China.

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



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

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

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