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The Prospects for Chinese Writing Reform

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The Prospects for Chinese Writing Reform

by

John DeFrancis

This article seeks to assess the prospects for Chinese *wenzi gaige* or *wengai* 'writing reform' by tracing the course of two closely related phenomena, namely *digraphia*[1] (in the case of Chinese, the concurrent coexistence of two scripts—characters and some sort of alphabetic writing—for the same spoken language), and *biliteracy* (literacy in both systems of writing as the natural concomitant of digraphia).

Leaving aside the many instances of biliteracy in Chinese evidenced by the extensive production, fostered primarily by missionaries, of alphabetically-based material in Mandarin, Cantonese, and other topolects, the first examples of biliteracy that I can document in some detail are those that resulted from the creation and promotion, starting in the late 1920s, of Latinxua 'Latinization' or Sin Wenz 'New Writing' for the 100,000 or so Chinese in the Soviet Union. Among the first to become involved in this cultural innovation, which was inspired by Lenin's pronouncement that "Latinization is the great revolution of the East," was the young Qu Qiubai, a special correspondent for one of China's leading newspapers who later became a prominent Communist intellectual and Party functionary. Qu was later joined by Soviet linguists who specialized in Chinese. Together they created an alphabetic script that was taken up by a number of scholars, presumably knowledgeable in both characters and the New Writing, who produced an impressive quantity of Latinxua material that included textbooks and reading matter such

as newspapers, narrative poems by Pushkin, Tolstoy's short story "The Prisoner of the Caucasus," and the full text of the new Stalin constitution. Thus, Chinese illiterates in the difficult character script, who needed only a few weeks of instruction to master the simple alphabetic script, were provided with reading matter that introduced the riches of Russian culture to them. (See Exhibit 1.)

Particularly worthy of note is the spread of interest in the New Writing among the largely illiterate Dungans, descendants of northwest Chinese Muslims, who, after a failed rebellion in the 1870s, fled into then-Russian Central Asia and settled in what later became Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In the 1950s, the Latin alphabet that had initially been adopted as the basis of the Dungan writing system was abandoned in favor of a Cyrillic script. The two scripts formed the basis for an extensive literary output that includes poetry, history, journalism, and other aspects of the still-flourishing Dungan culture.[2]

When knowledge of the new alphabetic writing system for Chinese seeped into China, it was enthusiastically taken up by the left-wing movement throughout the country, more or less clandestinely in Guomindang-controlled areas, but quite openly in Yan'an. Especially noteworthy is the support it received from such prominent figures as Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Lu Xun, Cai Yuanpei, Guo Moruo, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, and many others. In 1936, Mao told the American journalist Edgar Snow:

> In order to hasten the liquidation of illiteracy here we have begun experimenting with Hsin Wen Tzu—Latinized Chinese. It is now used in our Party school, in the Red Academy, in the Red Army, and in a special section of the Red China Daily News. 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 rich and efficient 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.* We are now widely using Latinization and if we stay here for three years the problem will be solved.[3] (Snow's emphasis).

Thanks to such high-level support, the Border Region Government gave legal status to the New Writing by legislating for it equal validity with the traditional character script in petitions, reports, correspondence, and other areas. It also decreed that the most important of the laws and public announcements should henceforth also be published in the Latinized script.

In the course of the promotion of the New Writing throughout the country, a number of scholars emerged as biliterates who used their knowledge of spoken and written Chinese to prepare material in Latinization for the new literates in the alphabetic script. The scholars who produced the extensive literature in the New Writing are largely unknown and their output is for the most part unavailable, but my own notes list more than a dozen publications that include *The Story of Ah Q* and *Diary of a Madman* by Lu Xun and an English work entitled *A Dog of Flanders*, by Louise de la Ramé.[4]

In addition to this considerable output in Mandarin Chinese, there were also adaptations of the New Writing to Cantonese, Hakka, and other topolects. The New Writing was also taken up by Chinese in the United States, Europe, Malaysia, the Pacific Islands, and what is now Vietnam.

The Shanghai International Settlement became an especially strong center of Latinxua activity after the expanded Japanese attack that started in 1937. A horde of refugees fled into the settlement, where they were herded into a number of refugee camps. Among the patriotic Chinese groups that sought to minister to the needs of these unfortunates was the Shanghai Sin Wenz Study Society, which in 1938 sent a delegation to seek the help of the Chinese commissioner of education in the settlement, Dr. Chen Heqin, a graduate of Teachers College in Columbia University who is of special interest to me as the author of a frequency study of 4,719 characters that became my bible in the course of compiling the reading texts in my series of textbooks.[5] Dr. Chen became an enthusiastic supporter of the New Writing and labored mightily to promote the system. Among his many activities was the production of Latinxua biographies of Lincoln, Franklin, Edison, Watt, Ford, Chaplin, and other notable Westerners, and the promotion of a weekly called *New Students*, the first volume of which consisted solely of contributions by the graduates of literacy classes in the refugee camps in Shanghai.

The flourishing activities summarized above came to an abrupt halt after the

all-out Japanese onslaught that followed the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. In Shanghai, the invaders arrested Ni Haishu, the leading historian of the Sin Wenz movement. They also dissolved the Shanghai Sin Wenz Study Society and suppressed the journal *Newspaper of the Masses* and other publications in the new script. The increasingly difficult wartime situation also led to the suspension of work in the Guomindang-controlled areas and even in Yan'an. Yet, though the Latinxua movement was brought to a halt, it was not viewed as permanently ended. In 1944, Xu Teli, the Communist commissioner of education in Yan'an, said: "We hope to reintroduce the New Writing in a unified, democratic China."[6]

In the civil war that followed Japan's defeat, as Ni Haishu's minutely detailed chronology[7] attests, activities in support of the New Writing were quickly revived. There was, however, no immediate pronouncement from the new government that was established on October 1, 1949, and in February 1950 Liu Shaoqi informed two fellow advocates of writing reform that "As yet no plan has been decided for reform of Chinese writing."[8]

Four months later, Mao Zedong dropped a bombshell when he informed Wu Yuzhang, a strong supporter of the New Writing who was head of the Association for Chinese Writing Reform, that the reform "should not be divorced from reality or make a break with the past."[9] The reality that Mao had in mind doubtless included what Zhou Enlai later told a former French education minister: "All those who had received an education, and whose services we absolutely needed to expand education, were firmly attached to the ideograms [*sic*]. They were already so numerous, and we had so many things to upset, that we have put off the reform until later."[10]

Mao's new directive included the following specific points: (1) developing a new alphabetic scheme that was "national in form," (2) promoting Putonghua as the exclusive national standard, and (3) placing primary emphasis on simplification of characters.[11]

What Mao had in mind by a "national in form" script, and why (besides the reason advanced by Zhou Enlai) he adopted this new orientation, have been made plain by Peter Hessler, a writer for *The New Yorker*, in a report of his interview with Zhou Youguang, a leading figure in the writing reform movement. Hessler wrote that in Zhou's recollection, when Mao met Stalin during his six-week visit in late 1949 and early 1950,

he explained to the Soviet dictator that one of the issues facing China was writing reform, and asked Stalin what his advice would be on this matter. Stalin replied: "You're a great country, and you should have your own Chinese alphabet (*zimu*). You shouldn't simply use the Latin alphabet."[12]

In China, the public response to Mao's new emphasis on a "national in form" alphabetic system was the submission of something like 1,700 schemes of various kinds. After considerable deliberation, the Committee on Chinese Writing Reform presented for Mao's consideration six alternate schemes. Four were based on Chinese characters, one on the Cyrillic alphabet, and one on the Latin alphabet. Mao did not like any of the schemes that were "national in form." In 1956 he finally accepted the one based on the Latin alphabet. The government, after further deliberation leading to a final draft, in January 1958 officially promulgated the now well-known Pinyin system.[13]

In his public statements, Mao said that Pinyin would have only a secondary role and that the primary emphasis would be on simplification of characters. But in later remarks made to restricted audiences he emphasized that this was only a temporary concession to reality and that he still held to the view, expressed in 1956 in a letter to an old schoolmate, that "some day in the future we must inevitably carry out a basic reform."[14] The following year he reiterated his support for alphabetic writing in a speech delivered at a meeting of the Communist Central Committee on "The Problem of the Intellectuals."[15] And in 1973, three years before his death, he repeated his objection to Chinese characters in an exchange involving himself, Henry Kissinger, and Zhou Enlai, which I present here in full:

> Chairman Mao: Chinese language is not bad, but the Chinese characters are not good.
>
> Prime Minister Zhou: They are very difficult to learn.
>
> Chairman Mao: And there are many contradictions between the oral and written language because the oral language is monosyllabic while the written language develops from symbols. We do not use an alphabet.
>
> Dr. Kissinger: There are some attempts to use an alphabet, I am told.
>
> Prime Minister Zhou: First we must standardize the oral language.[16]

The reality that forced Mao to give way in the 1950s and that still prevents Pinyin from having a primary role was made plain by Wang Li, the PRC's foremost linguist, who supported the basic reform of the Chinese writing system. Wang—himself, of course, a member of the elite group he criticized—said opposition "comes primarily from intellectuals, especially from high level intellectuals."[17]

Opposition to the writing reform pervades the people as a whole and has become most strongly embedded in all levels of government. This official opposition marks a crucial difference between the pre-1950 and post-1950 reform movement. Before 1950, one can say, the many intellectuals who supported writing reform included a sub-group that controlled the government. After 1950, a different sub-group, which included a Mao Zedong now resigned to temporarily setting Pinyin aside, came into control of the government. It opposed the reform and managed to repress it, thanks to the split among non-official intellectuals, some of whom, as mentioned above, rallied in support of the reform in the late 1940s and the early 1950s but were suppressed thereafter.

This suppression even extends to past support of the reform. When I visited the Lu Xun Museum in Beijing in 1982, I noted a lot of trivia about his career but found nothing about his support for writing reform, which Guo Moruo said was the greatest thing in Lu Xun's life, even greater than *The Story of Ah Q*.[18] Especially obscured is the fact that reformers, despite their occasional strident talk of getting rid of characters, never advocated the overnight abandonment of the traditional script, as had occurred in Turkey with the transition from the Arabic script to one based on Latin letters.[19] The most that they ever realistically hoped for was the creation of a system which they called *shuangwenzhi* 'two script system', or 'digraphia,' with the two systems coexisting into the indefinite future.

At present we can say that there are three groups of intellectuals addressing the issue of writing reform: (1) a relatively small but all-powerful group of intellectuals opposed to reform who control the government, (2) an undoubtedly large majority of intellectuals who (together with ordinary people as a whole) likewise oppose the reform, and (3) an indeterminate number of reformers who, though largely silenced, still, as we shall see, favor the reform. Of the three groups, I consider the first group, the intellectuals

who control the government, to be by far the most important because they hold the decisive power to block attempts to reform the Chinese system of writing.

While reformers have largely given up any expectation of receiving help from the general run of intellectuals, most of whom, like the public at large, are hung up on a xenophobic nationalism, a few diehards have come to the opinion that new developments will, over a long period of time, inexorably push Chinese writing in the direction of digraphia and the eventual complete ascendancy of Pinyin, regardless of the opposition of what may be the vast majority of intellectuals.

The rest of this article is devoted to enumerating and expounding on some of these developments.

(1) New *bushou*

The basic prerequisite for a desire to reform the Chinese system of writing is dissatisfaction with the traditional character script. Someone who fills this requirement, though only to a minimal degree, is the artist Jiao Yingqi, who in 2003 expressed the view that “the basic composite elements of Chinese characters are increasingly archaic, inflexible, and poorly equipped for the 21st century.” The “basic components” that Jiao was unhappy about are the *bushou* ‘radicals’ or *pianpangr* ‘radical components of characters’, which, in the traditional character system still used in Taiwan, number 214 but have been reduced to 189 in the PRC. He complained that these radicals comprised “archaic representation” of concepts such as tree, soil, metal, etc., and that they should be updated by creating new radicals for new concepts such as computer, electron, DNA and so on.[20]

Jiao’s proposal to put a band-aid on the traditional script represents a timid approach to a seriously problematic script that others have attacked with more vision and courage.

(2) Hu D

A somewhat greater level of dissatisfaction with the traditional script, and certainly a much greater level of vision and courage, can be seen in the attempt of the pseudonymous Hu Yufeng to seek a more unconventional solution to the character problem. In defiance of traditional practice, he sought to give his newborn son a given name based not on the conventional script but on the Latin alphabet; he wanted to name

his son Hu D (胡 D).

The father defended his choice of this unconventional name by asserting: “I gave my son this name in the hope that he would be able to create and innovate when he grew up. Moreover, this name is out of the ordinary and easy to remember and note down.” In further justification of his unorthodox naming, Mr. Hu cited the precedent of Lu Xun’s “Ah Q.”

The hospital where the prospective Hu D was born refused to issue a birth certificate with this name, and sought the support of the local Bureau of Public Safety. This powerful government agency put its official stamp of approval on the refusal to allow the father to give his son the given name of the letter D. Although the father gave in, he was not completely cowed by the failure to achieve his aim. “When I find out laws and regulations to support the original name,” he said, “I will apply to have it revised.”[21]

This whole episode can be viewed as a conflict between two unevenly matched protagonists: on the one hand, an ordinary (and yet extraordinary) citizen, filled with dreams of creativity and imbued with an indomitable spirit, and on the other hand, a hidebound and all-powerful government that refused permission to extend this use of Pinyin, despite the fact that in 1958 it officially designated Pinyin as the “standard for alphabetic spelling of modern Chinese,”[22] and has permitted its use in street names, shop signs, and other commercial uses. (But note how displaying the street name Zhongshan Street rather than Zhongshan Lu subtly conveys the message that Pinyin is something foreign, for foreigners.) There can hardly be a better illustration of the thesis I expounded earlier that intellectuals who are part of officialdom are the decisive power blocking writing reform.

But a perhaps even more significant aspect of this episode is the father’s heretical equation of the ability to create and innovate with the use of the Latin alphabet as represented by the one of its letters, D.[23] This linking brings to mind the controversial contention by William C. Hannas that Chinese character writing inhibits creative thought, in contrast to the ability of alphabetic writing to stimulate such thought, with the result that countries whose writing systems are based on characters lack the ability to innovate and make revolutionary breakthroughs in science and so have to resort to copying and pirating technologies created in the West.[24]

(3) Z.T.

The *Zhuyin Shizi, Tiqian Duxie* 'Phonetically Annotated Recognition Promotes Earlier Reading and Writing' experiment came into being in 1982 in the northeast province of Heilongjiang when a group of innovative reformers sought to improve instruction at the elementary level by the creative application of Pinyin. Until then, the common classroom practice was to teach children to combine the basic sounds of Chinese to form whole syllables, such as *b* + *i* = *bi* 'pen', *b* + *ao* = *bao* 'newspaper', *b* + *i* + *ao* = *biao* 'watch'.[25] The reformers stressed starting with whole syllables and progressing to multiple syllables to create words. Much effort was expended on firmly establishing the concept of word and the connectedness between Pinyin and meanings. Special attention was paid to the basic problem of *fenci lianxie* 'dividing (text) by words and writing (syllables) connectedly'. Reading matter entirely in Pinyin was a major part of the program.

The teaching of reading comprised three steps. The first was the introduction of Pinyin-only reading matter. The second was Pinyin mixed with characters. The third was material entirely in characters except for an occasional transcription for difficult terms.

We should take careful note that a major feature of the new approach was to make sure that multisyllabic words were presented as such, and not as separate syllabic components. In contrast to the Z.T. approach, in a fifth-grade PRC textbook the word *houzi* 'monkey' is presented with *hou* at the end of one line (without hyphen) and *zi* at the beginning of the next line.[26] This is comparable to writing *friend ship* and *teach er* in English.

In the experimental program, reading and writing were closely integrated, as indeed were all four skills. Children were encouraged to write using only Pinyin in the initial stage, and thereafter were free to use Pinyin in place of characters that they did not know how to write.

The authors of the detailed report on the Z.T. experiment that I have cited stressed that it was not simply a reform in the teaching of characters, but represented a completely new pedagogical approach whose success was obvious after only one year of instruction.[27]

The impressive results of the Z.T. experiment were confirmed when it moved

south, eventually being taken up by scattered reformers throughout most of the country, as recounted by Professor John S. Rohsenow of the University of Illinois at Chicago in his detailed and insightful study.[28]

Rohsenow starts his study of the movement after its spread south by emphasizing the all-important difference between the old and the new approaches:

> In contrast to the standard curriculum, under which children were only taught Hanyu Pinyin Romanization for the first two *months* purely as a phonetic notational device for the pronunciation of Chinese characters, under this "*Zhu Ti*" experimental curriculum, children are encouraged to develop their reading and writing skills in standard Mandarin Chinese using Hanyu Pinyin Romanization for the first *two years*. [Rohsenow's emphasis]

Rohsenow further expands on the details of the Z.T. experiment, both in Heilongjiang and after its spread to every province and autonomous region in the PRC. Of special interest are his notes on further examples of the astounding success of the program, of which I mention only three: (1) In a 1988 writing competition, of the 4,091 students who took part, three Z.T. students received first prizes and four received second prizes. None of the non-Z.T. students won prizes. (2) Of the same 4,091 students, 6.61 percent of Z.T. students recommended for admission to "key middle schools" were accepted, whereas only 2.15 percent of the non-Z.T. students were accepted. (3) In a countrywide graduation competition based on the sixth-grade curriculum, a Z.T. fifth-year class had a pass rate of 100 percent compared to a sixth grade pass rate of 88.89 percent.

The well-documented success of the Z.T. approach prompted some people to have second thoughts about their opposition to the novel program. Rohsenow reports that:

> at the outset, many parents objected to having their children put in the experimental class, in which they would be taught to read and write in Hanyu Pinyin for the entire first year, rather than studying it only for the first six weeks and using it purely as a notational device thereafter, as in the standard curriculum. The teachers of these classes, all of whom were

> volunteers, noted with amusement that after the first year, when the final scores came out, many of the same parents came back to demand that their children now be allowed to transfer into the Z.T. experimental classes.[29]

Even more important than the winning over of many parents to support of Z.T. in the elementary schools is the complex of motivations and aims that underlay the promotion of the experiment in the first place. The seemingly unanimous public stance of the reformers is that they simply seek to improve language teaching in the elementary school curriculum. But there is muted evidence that at least some of the volunteers in the Z.T. program saw the experiment as exerting a much more significant role. As Rohsenow, on the basis of his interviews with Z.T. teachers and students in seven schools, puts it (p. 30, note 9):

> While the proponents of the Z.T. method maintain (officially) that Hanyu Pinyin here serves simply as a transformational device to help Chinese children in their mastery of learning to read and write in Chinese and is *not* intended to replace Chinese characters, some privately agree with DeFrancis (1984) that as China modernizes, that [*sic*] a situation of 'digraphia' may eventually develop between the two writing systems. [Rohsenow's emphasis]

While I would have preferred that Rohsenow cited the Chinese emphasis on *shuangwenzhi* 'two script system' or Mao Dun's more graphic 'walking on two legs' rather than my second-hand term *digraphia*, the teachers' comments indicate that some privately agreed and perhaps even hoped that the culture of digraphia would eventually emerge. The extent of desire for a much more significant role for the Z.T. program on the part of those involved in the experiment, perhaps including not just teachers and researchers but also some students and parents affected by it, is impossible to gauge in view of the obvious hostility of the public at large, and especially of Chinese officialdom, to many important details of the Pinyin system. Despite a windy self-congratulatory claim made in 2003 of "having adopted proactive measures to actively promote the Chinese system,"[30] the government, either from ignorance of technical details or from a conscious fear that a Pinyin system improved by syllable-linking and Pinyin-only reading

matter might escape its control, has continually interfered in attempts to make essential improvements in the use of the alphabetic script.

This is made crystal clear in an episode involving the generous offer of Victor Mair and his wife, Zhang Liqing, to underwrite the entire cost of publication of material to be distributed free of charge as extracurricular reading matter for children enrolled in the Z.T. program. The Ministry of Education initially refused to recommend publication of the material, claiming that because it made use of word division and syllable joining no one would buy the book. This is an obviously spurious concern since the books would be available for free. Only the Mairs' determined insistence enabled them to overcome the government's attempt to block this essential improvement.

Professor Mair has thrown further light on this joust with the government by relating to me that Wang Jun, one of the foremost advocates of writing reform, on several occasions told him that in the initial stage of Pinyin use, the government allowed the joining of syllables, but later, out of fear that such usage might lead to Pinyin developing into a workable orthography, insisted on the division of words into their constituent syllables.[31]

It is unlikely that any PRC scholars would have had the temerity to challenge the government so insistently in a matter like this, and even more unlikely that the government would have given way to them. The reformers have to be circumspect in promoting their new program.

(4) PCs

Even without a loosening of the reins there is a great deal of related activity going on that has mushroomed since the advent of personal computers (PCs). Initially there was considerable disagreement on how to adapt this new device to handling Chinese, specifically Chinese characters. A host of solutions were advanced. I shall discuss only three of them.

The State Education Commission recommended that children learn an inputting system called *Renzhima* 'Cognitive Coding' that required memorizing the idiosyncratic dissection of characters into over 300 components and inputting their corresponding letter codes. For example, the character for *shu*4 'tree' is input by typing MYC for the three components of the character, namely *mu*4 'wood', *you*4 'again', and *cun*4 'inch'. This

recommendation was bluntly criticized in an article entitled "How to Diffuse Computers. The State Education Commission Has Taken the Wrong Direction."[32]

Another scheme based on the strokes of characters was called *Wubi* 'Five Strokes'. The scheme breaks down characters into five basic strokes (falling left, falling right, horizontal, vertical, and hook) that are typed in the order in which they would be written by hand. The system is used mostly for copy-typing text and is virtually impossible to use for text-typing since the latter involves thinking while typing. The scheme is too complex to summarize briefly and so I refer interested readers to a six-page description available through Wikipedia.[33]

A third approach was based on the use of Pinyin to bring up characters. There are quite a few programs of this kind that differ in detail, but are basically quite similar. I shall limit my discussion of this approach to my favorite program, *Wenlin software for learning Chinese*,[34] which is part of my general handling of characters on computer but has proved especially useful in the compilation of our ABC dictionaries because of its exceptional versatility.

One starts by typing on a conventional keyboard the letters that comprise the Pinyin transcription of, to begin with, a single character, using the numbers 1–4 to indicate the tone of the syllable. Choosing "Convert" from the Edit menu brings up a screen showing up to nine characters of the same pronunciation at a time, among which one selects the desired character. If the desired character is not among the nine, one can bring up additional groups of nine characters until the one desired appears on the screen. For two-syllable terms one simply types the syllables together, with or without tone numbers, e.g., *lianxi*, for which the screen in this case presents four choices, and *lian*2*xi*1, for which the screen produces only one choice.

Examples of the many different ways of handling characters on computer include using shortcuts like *zho* or *z* to evoke the character for *zhong* 'middle', and *zhongg*, *zguo*, or *zg* for Zhongguo 'China'. The handling of more than two syllables also has many different solutions.

Of the three systems described above, the *Renzhima* scheme advocated by the State Education Commission never got off the ground. The *Wubi* system is preferred by professional inputters but is rejected by ordinary users, who object to having to spend the

three or four months that it takes to master the system. A good survey article states that 97 percent of PC users in China prefer Pinyin,[35] which is preferred not only for composing notes, articles, and even books, but is widely used as the instrument of choice in producing e-mails in the traditional script. It is estimated that there are some 200 million PCs in China, half of which have access to the Internet.[36]

A widely noted accompaniment of Pinyin's dominant role in PC usage is the decline in the ability of Pinyin inputters to write Chinese characters. This decline naturally accompanies the failure day after day to use pen or brush for the stroke-by-stroke composition of characters. It applies especially to complicated characters but is by no means limited to them. Worry about this development is widespread among supporters of the character system but is most prominent among devotees of calligraphy, who bemoan the decline in this traditional pinnacle of Chinese culture. The loss is not limited to the area of writing but extends to reading as well. As Hannas notes, "As writing skills deteriorate from lack of practice, so does recognition.[37]

There is another aspect of the Pinyin versus characters debate that I think is worthy of note. This is the terminology of "writing characters." In contrast to the traditional use of brush or pen in actually hand-writing characters, with computers keys are pressed to activate letters that in combination make it possible to produce characters. While we might loosely still refer to this procedure as "writing characters," I think it might be useful to make the distinction that Chinese write using pen or brush but they "write" (in quotation marks) when they use computers to produce characters.

(5) Mobile phones

Extensive though the use of Pinyin in PCs is, it is exceeded by its use in mobile phones. There are an estimated 300 million Chinese who own mobile phones and, apart from using them as ordinary phones for voice conversation, have made them the most used means of exchanging short text messages. Young people are especially attracted to this means of communication, a fact which has important implications for the future, for many of them go on to become proficient users of PCs.

The instrument that makes such exchange possible, like its counterpart the American cell phone, is an impressive product of modern technology. The phone that I have examined measures a mere 1 ½" by 3 ¾". On the front side, the top 2" is occupied

by a screen that is reserved to show characters and pictures. The bottom 1 ¾" comprise a keypad. The instrument is held in the palm of the hand with the thumb on top, where it is used to actuate the keys.

The mobile phone keypad is quite different from the PC QWERTY keyboard. Its main component is the block of numerals plus letters, as follows:

1	2ABC	3DEF
4GHI	5JKL	6MNO
7PQRS	8TUV	9WXYZ
	0	

This keypad can be used to produce numbers, letters, Pinyin text, or characters. The young Chinese friends who have described the use of the gadgets to me insist that they never send or receive Pinyin-only text, and that only users with limited knowledge of Chinese would ever do so.

To illustrate how the system works, let’s start with a simple example using an early but still widely used version of the program called *Hanzi Pinxie* ‘Chinese Character Pinyin Writing’. Take the keyboard item 6MNO. In the numbers mode, press the key once to produce 6. In another mode press the key once for M, twice for N, three times for O. To produce *wo* ‘I’, press 9 once and 6 three times and select the desired character among those displayed on the screen in order of frequency.

An updated version of the inputting program simplifies the task. To produce *wo* one presses the keys 9 and 6 and the screen displays the syllables *wo yo zo* together with the characters of which the Pinyin is the complete or partial transcription. Then one selects the desired character in the same manner as just noted.

To produce combinations of characters, such the two in *Zhongguo* ‘China’, is not as tedious as one might expect, for there are various ways in which the device is programmed to produce the term by shortcuts, such as ZHONG or ZHON or ZHO or simply Z.

Some additional notes: The letter V stands for umlaut U. There is no distinction between caps and lower case. Tones are not indicated, nor is space between words. There are many other details that are governed by other keys on the pad and by shortcuts such as those just noted.

It is important to note that although the sender uses Pinyin to compose the message, the receiver gets it only in characters.

I think that these sketchy notes cover the basic features of mobile phones, though they hardly begin to do justice to the complexity of the system and the way in which many features of spoken Chinese and written Pinyin, such as tones and spacing, are successfully bypassed.

(6) Biliteracies

Note the plural. The first example is the quite limited biliteracy that accompanied the Latinization movement of the 1930s and early 1940s. Chen Heqin is the most outstanding representative of this group, which may have been augmented by new literates in the New Writing, especially in the Soviet Union. But we can do little more than guess at the number of such biliterates. My own admittedly little-supported guess is that the total number may never have exceeded a few thousand. In any case, with the demise of the Latinization movement in China after little more than a decade, they left no lasting influence.

The case is quite different when we come to biliteracy that involves Pinyin. Beginning with the official introduction of Pinyin in 1958, there were a few scholars who used their knowledge of Mandarin (in addition to their command of characters) to prepare material in the alphabetic script. In line with the limited role that the government has permitted for Pinyin, most of what was published was confined to teaching materials—textbooks and a small amount of supplementary reading such as *Yuyan Wenzi Bao* ‘Language and Writing Journal’, a four-page weekly half of which consisted of character-only material and another half of blocks of characters and their equivalent blocks of Pinyin.

The Z.T. experiment, the highpoint of pedagogical emphasis on Pinyin, also represented the highpoint of schoolroom biliteracy. Apart from the Z.T. teachers, who of course were in full command of both scripts, the pupils themselves can be considered as exhibiting a sort of partial biliteracy. In his seminal article on the Z.T. experiment, Rohsenow remarks regarding the first-graders’ progress that “after a few weeks they were able to read and write (phonetically) anything they can say.”[38]

Surely, such total ability must be considered as total literacy in Pinyin. That it

may not have lasted beyond the children's classroom attendance is the fault of the educational system, not of the children, as is most clearly illustrated in the case of Mao Dun's granddaughter. On finishing first grade she was able to correspond in Pinyin with her mother, who had been sent to the countryside, but owing to lack of instruction from the second grade on she lost her literacy in Pinyin. Mao Dun was understandably incensed at an educational system that turned first-grade literates into second-grade illiterates.

It is unclear how much literacy in Pinyin the Z.T. students were able to retain after graduating from the program. Their literacy in characters also varied over time, from initial zero to ultimate full command. But whether it was much or little, temporary or permanent, these students must be considered as being partial, if not complete, biliterates. Their teachers were of course complete biliterates.

Biliteracy among ordinary users of PCs is also difficult to assess. There are examples in which text is not only composed in Pinyin but is left in that form without bothering to take the additional step of converting it into characters. A case in point is Exhibit 3. It involves an exchange between Professor Victor H. Mair of the University of Pennsylvania and Professor Su Peicheng of Peking University.[39] My colleague Professor Cynthia Ning has also mentioned to me that she often corresponds via e-mail entirely in Pinyin with colleagues in China "because characters do not transmit reliably and are troublesome to produce."[40] Nor is this limited to exchanges between correspondents in China and those in the West. Professor Ning notes that there are anecdotal accounts of PRC users corresponding with each other entirely in Pinyin. This suggests to me that there are some, perhaps many, computer users who are complete biliterates.

The same may be true of some of those who communicate with each other via text messaging on mobile phones. Typically, to expand on my previous notes, both sender and receiver using Pinyin as the input method see only Chinese characters. There is no reading of Pinyin text. Clearly, both sender and receiver of such texts are at least partially biliterate since they can both send messages using Pinyin and read replies expressed in characters. But they do not engage in composing a visible text in Pinyin or reading text in this form. Thus, there is the curious anomaly that a lot is being "written" using Pinyin yet there is little to read in Pinyin. There may be some question about the competence of

these biliterates to handwrite what they want to express, which they don’t bother to do since they can use Pinyin to “write” characters. Perhaps, however, their only real problem may be in actually reading text in Pinyin.

That there may be a question in this area is due to the simple fact that there is virtuously nothing for them to read. Thanks largely to government opposition, Pinyin reading matter was not given an important role among advanced students in the Z.T. program, and it continues to be unavailable today as fears of basic writing reform continue to block the production of the kind of literature that had earlier shown such a promising future during the brief period when Latinization was widely taken up by Chinese intellectuals. Yet in the long run, government attempts to restrict the use of Pinyin are likely to prove ineffectual. More and more PC and mobile phone users are taking the road of exchanging messages either entirely in Pinyin or occasional intermittent writing in Pinyin (e.g., DD for *didi* ‘younger brother’) and even in bits of English (e.g., GF for ‘girlfriend), which is likely to increase considerably with the growing craze for the study and use of English in both its standard and corrupted form, as represented in one extreme by deliberate as well as unintended Chinglish. Young people especially will doubtless continue to evade strict control in chat rooms, log cites, bulletin boards, and other innovative means of expression. It is estimated that over a trillion messages will be sent in 2006 via mobile phones, which have become “a widely used medium for protest organization and information dissemination.”[41]

(7) Promotion of Mandarin.

When the new writing reform policy was announced in 1958, Zhou Enlai was given the task of explaining the change in policy. He announced that, after simplification of characters, “Our second task is that of spreading the use of the standard vernacular.”[42] Much effort has been expended in the PRC to making Mandarin the official common language that will function as a unifying force for the 1.3 billion people who speak a great variety of topolects and minority languages. Television has become the most powerful tool in this countrywide campaign, for all officially sanctioned Chinese programming, apart from a small amount in Cantonese, is in Standard Mandarin, and most Chinese, even peasants, have access to TV. PCs and mobile phones are accessory means for spreading Pinyin, the officially approved system for the alphabetic writing of

the officially approved Standard Mandarin.

In assessing the prospects for the PRC's attainment of the prerequisite for writing reform mentioned by Zhou Enlai, it may be helpful to glance at Taiwan's attempt to promote Mandarin in an island that had hardly any native speakers of that language to begin with. In less than a generation, the Mandarin-speaking Guomindang remnants and their followers who fled the civil war on the mainland succeeded in making their language the exclusive universal language for a population whose native language background has been estimated as 70 percent Southern Min, 17 percent Hakka, 2 percent aboriginal languages, and 11 percent speakers of Mandarin or some other form of language spoken on the mainland.[43]

That the PRC is achieving great success in promoting standard Mandarin at the expense of the topolects is indicated by the following comments of an observant Western correspondent:

> Since earlier this year, a growing number of public figures have been voicing alarm at the prospect that Shanghainese is in decline. In the face of an onslaught from Putonghua, some even reckon their language could be heading the way of Latin or Ancient Greek....
>
> Dialects [*sic*] from across China are disappearing, squeezed out by the relentless spread of the official language from Beijing....
>
> Shanghainese is starting to disappear from its last refuge, the home....
>
> "The decline and disappearance of dialects [*sic*] is a necessary part of progress. To achieve a unified country and harmonious society, we have to have a common language," says Zhang Bin, a veteran member of the Shanghai City Language Working Committee, which is responsible for implementing central government policy. [44]

Since Shanghainese is the most widely spoken topolect other than Mandarin, apart from Cantonese, which is somewhat more able to hold its own, the remaining topolects and some of the smaller minority languages seem doomed to extinction.

Zhang Shiping, vice director of the education ministry's language planning

department, in early 2006 stated that "more than half of China's 1.3 billion people can now speak Mandarin," by which he obviously means Putonghua 'Common Speech' or Standard Mandarin, as some two-thirds of the population speaks some form of Mandarin. This is an accomplishment which he considered "a key success." And he adds: "I would say a 50 or 60 per cent penetration rate is the best we'll ever achieve. China is too big, and has too many poor areas to get to 100 per cent. That will never happen."[45]

In short, China is close to achieving the success in promoting Putonghua that Zhou Enlai advanced as the prerequisite for the transition to alphabetic writing.

(8) Prospects

It is clear that from the 1930s to the present, some intellectuals—many in the Latinization period—have supported the reform. It is also clear that many, very likely most, oppose it. The most significant opposition, as noted earlier, comes from those intellectuals who control the government. Professor Su Peicheng, who is a strong supporter of Pinyin, has expressed the opinion that "To advance the work of language modernization, it is not possible to do without the government's leadership and promotion."[46] I agree with Professor Su, but would modify his statement to include the possibility of a more passive hands-off role.

More specifically, I think there are three possible scenarios for the future of Chinese writing, in all of which the government plays a major role.

In the first, and at present apparently the least likely scenario, the government abandons its hostility to an expanded role for Pinyin and instead fosters a climate of digraphia and biliteracy in which those who can do so become literate in both characters and Pinyin, and those who cannot are at least literate in Pinyin. This is essentially a reversion to the Latinization movement of the 1930s and 1940s, when Mao Zedong and other high Communist Party officials like Xu Teli, the commissioner of education in Yan'an, lent their prestigious support to the New Writing. Such a change within the governing bureaucracy would in all likelihood result in an explosion of activity that might end in Pinyin ascendancy in use over characters in less than a generation.

In the second scenario the government adopts a policy of benign indifference that involves abandoning its hostility toward Pinyin but without actively supporting it, leaving it up to the rival protagonists of the two systems to contest for supremacy among

themselves. This is likely to result in a somewhat longer struggle.

In the third scenario the government continues its present policy of repression, resulting in a much more protracted struggle (though surely not as long as the fascinating parallel struggle between Latin and Italian in Italy, where it took 500 [!] years after Dante's start in 1292 for academics, the last holdouts, to finally abandon their long resistance and start using Italian in university lectures).[47] In this long struggle, PCs and mobile phones and other innovations still to come will undoubtedly allow more and more advocates of writing reform to escape the stranglehold of officialdom, to the point where (in a century or so?) characters are finally relegated to the status of Latin in the West.

My own view is that this is actually the least likely scenario, the most probable one being that the Chinese pragmatism that has manifested itself so strongly in economics will extend further into writing, and that, perhaps sooner rather than later, given the success of the promotion of Mandarin, some influential Party bureaucrats will finally arrive at the conclusion that the "some day in the future" anticipated by Mao has arrived, and that wholehearted Party support should now be unleashed for his anticipated "basic reform."

In any case it is basically all a matter of time. And the decisive factor that will seal the ultimate fate of Chinese characters is the new reality, noted by a perceptive observer, that "the PC is mightier than the Pen."[48]

The Author

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I would like to thank the following friends and colleagues for their various contributions to the writing of this paper: Chuck DeFrancis, Guo Congbin, Victor H. Mair, Jerry Manis, Cynthia Ning, Steve O’Harrow, George Simpson, Mark Swofford, Daniel Tschudi, Nick Thorner, and Wen Haiming.

Notes

1. This is my rendition of the Chinese expression *shuangwenzhi*. I have been incorrectly credited with coining the term *digraphia*, which I indeed thought I had created as a parallel in writing to Charles Ferguson’s *diglossia* in speech. I first submitted my manuscript entitled “Digraphia” to *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, which informed me that they had already published an article by Ian R. Dole with this title in 26 (1980): 5–13. Dole’s article was a general survey of the subject but said little about the situation in Asia; my article was largely devoted to that area. I submitted it to *Word*, which accepted it for publication in 35: (1984) 59–66.

As to the application of the two terms to the Chinese situation, I consider diglossia to be manifested by standard spoken Mandarin as the H (High) variety and the topolects (Cantonese, Hakka, etc.) and the dialects of Mandarin as the L (Low) variety At present digraphia is manifested by character Mandarin as the H variety and Pinyin Mandarin as the L variety.

For informative discussions of digraphia as applied to China, see the two articles by Su Peicheng and John S. Rohsenow in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 150 (2001): 109–140.

2. Svetlana Rimsky-Korsakoff, “Soviet Dungan: The Chinese Language of Central Asia,” *Monumenta Serica* 26 (1967): 352-421. The author notes (p. 363, note 24) that, although tones are not indicated in printed material, they are taught in schools.

3. *Red Star Over China*, (First Revised and Enlarged Edition, New York: Grove Press, 1938, 1944), p.446.

4. The English novelist Louise (de la) Ramé(e) (1839–1908), better known by her pseudonym "Ouida," was the prolific author of intensely popular novels and children's stories that included *A Dog of Flanders* (1882), which "has gained a permanent place in juvenile literature." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ouida)

5. For more on Chen's frequency study of Chinese characters, see *Selected Works of George A. Kennedy* (New Haven: Far Eastern Publications, 1964), and the prefaces to my reading texts in the series *Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced Chinese* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966–1967).

6. My principal source of information about the New Writing is my *Nationalism and Language Reform in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950). I should like to correct two errors in this book. The first is my support for non-indication of tones in published material. I erred in being persuaded by the success of the extensive Latinxua publication without tone indication. I now feel that tone indication should be available as part of any alphabetic scheme for Chinese, and, though it can be dispensed with, as both Exhibits 1 and 3 show, in text based on ordinary spoken language, it is essential in dictionaries and academic writing generally.

My second error occurred in misreading the name Hu Yuzhi as Hu Shizhi, the courtesy name for Hu Shi, and then citing my incorrect note three times, on pp. 112, 120, 123, where I credit the latter with views on Latinization that actually belong to the former.

7. Ni Haishu, *Ladinghua xin wenzi yundong biannian jishi* (2 vols. Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1979).

8. John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), p. 256.

9. Ibid., p. 257.

10. Ibid., p. 258.

11. Ibid., p. 259.

12. Note Hessler's e-mail phrasing "Your own Chinese alphabet *zimu*" (in his e-mail of 12 April 2002 to me and to Professor John S. Rohsenow of the University of

Illinois at Chicago). This is more precise than the mention of "your own Chinese form of writing," which he reports from his interview with Zhou Youguang in his article "Oracle Bones: A Wandering Poet, a Mysterious Suicide, and the Battle over the Alphabet" (*The New Yorker*, 16 & 24 Feb. 2004), p. 126, and in his book *Oracle Bones: A Journey Between China's Past and Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 262. The basic fact of Stalin's intervention is corroborated in the memoirs of Mao's personal secretary, Hu Qiaomu: *Hu Qiaomu Huiyi Mao Zedong* (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1994), p. 23.

13. DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language*, p. 262.

14. DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language*, p. 295.

15. DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language*, p. 263.

16. William Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts* (New York: The New Press, 1998), p. 97.

17. Wang Li, *Yuwen yu Xinxi* 1(1980): 4.

18. DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language*, p. 4.

19. Ureal Heyd, *Language Reform in Modern Turkey* (Jerusalem, 1954).

20. Jiao Yingqi's views appeared in the inaugural issue of the online monthly magazine called *China Now*, which is assumed to have been published online in July or August 2003. I am indebted to Daniel Tschudi for this reference.

21. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-11/05/content_3734142.htm. My thanks to Mark Swofford for this item.

22. John DeFrancis, ed., *ABC Chinese-English Dictionary* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), pp. 835 and 845.

23. But why this particular letter? Could its selection have been motivated to invoke the famous Mr. D, i.e., Democracy, one of the major demands of the May Fourth movement?

24. William C. Hannas, *The Writing on the Wall* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

25. While the traditional approach of introducing Pinyin syllables by combining their components may be justified from the viewpoint of linguistic science, it may not be pedagogically appropriate for children who already know all the basic 400 or so syllables in spoken form. In any case, the Z.T. practice can claim greater success as part of a totally

new pedagogical approach, as noted below.

26. Yuan Weizi, *Wunian zhi Xiaoxue Keben YUWEN di-san ci* (Hubei: Renmin Jiaoxue Chubanshe, 1988).

27. Ding Yicheng, Li Nan, and Bao Quan’en, “Zhuyin Shizi, Tiqian Duxie,” *Yuwen Xiandaihua* 8 (1985): 134–148. Reprinted from *Wenzi Gaige Jianbao*, 17 Sept. 1983. Further references to this basic study are contained in the Rohsenow article mentioned in the next note.

28. John S. Rohsenow, “The ‘Z.T.’ Experiment in the PRC,” *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association*. 31, 3 (1996): 33-44. I rely mainly on this important study for further notes on the experiment.

29. It is worth noting that the lesson provided by the innovative Z.T. policy giving Pinyin a primary role at the outset of the instructional program, which resulted in Chinese students learning characters faster than students in programs introducing characters from the beginning, has been largely unnoticed by teachers of Chinese in American classrooms. However, apparently independently, Ping Xu and Teresa Jen have created an innovative program based on a philosophy that has some similarity to that of the Z.T. program. And an anonymous beginner in Chinese, more perceptive than his hidebound Chinese native teachers and unhappy at having character quizzes before oral examinations, prepared for himself a dialogue that was first based on Pinyin before converting to Chinese characters. But infatuation with characters still pervades American classrooms and holds back essential improvement in instruction.

30. “RMRB ‘Commentator’ Urges Vigorous Promotion of Pinyin,” *Beijing Remin Ribao* (Internet Version—WWW in Chinese 26 [Nov. 2003], p. 2). I am indebted to Victor Mair for this reference (e-mail of 7 Dec. 2003).

31. Victor Mair, e-mails of 21 Nov. 2005 and 28 Nov. 2005 and conversation of 19 Dec. 2005.

32. Wei Zhisheng, “Diannao ruhe puji: Jiaowei zoucuole fangxiang,” *Yuwen yu Xinxi* 3 (1995): 1–2.

33. See also Li Yueqin “Geren kan Zhongwen xinxi chuli,” *Yuwen Jianshe Tongxun* 40 (1993): 68–72.

34. See www.wenlin.com.

35. See note 48.

36. Thanks to Daniel Tschudi for his e-mail of 5 Dec. 2005 forwarding figures from Professor Yang Guobin of Barnard College, Columbia University.

37. Hannas, William C., *Asia's Orthographic Dilemma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), p. 271 and p. 314 note 5.

38. Rohsenow, p. 33.

39. Mair e-mail of 10 Nov. 2005 to me.

40. Ning e-mail of 19 Dec. 2005 to me. Hannas also notes that PC inputters of Chinese text are likely to ask "why go through the trouble to convert it?" *Asia's Orthographic Dilemma* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 276.

41. *China Rights Forum* 4 (2005): p. 7.

42. Peter J. Seybolt and Gregory Kuei-ke Chiang, eds., *Language Reform in China: Documents and Commentary* (White Plains, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1978), pp. 232–233.

43. *Taiwan Journal*, 21 Nov. 2003, p. 7. An erudite and insightful study of the linguistic changes in Taiwan that is also useful in considering the problem in the PRC is Victor H. Mair, "How to Forget Your Mother Tongue and Remember Your National Language," www.pinyin.info/readings/mair/taiwanese.html.

44. Steven Ribet, "Mind Your Language," *The Standard-China's Business Newspaper*, 19 Nov. 2005. My thanks to Victor Mair for this item.

45. World News on Stuff.co.nz. 20 Jan. 2006. My thanks to Mark Swofford for this item.

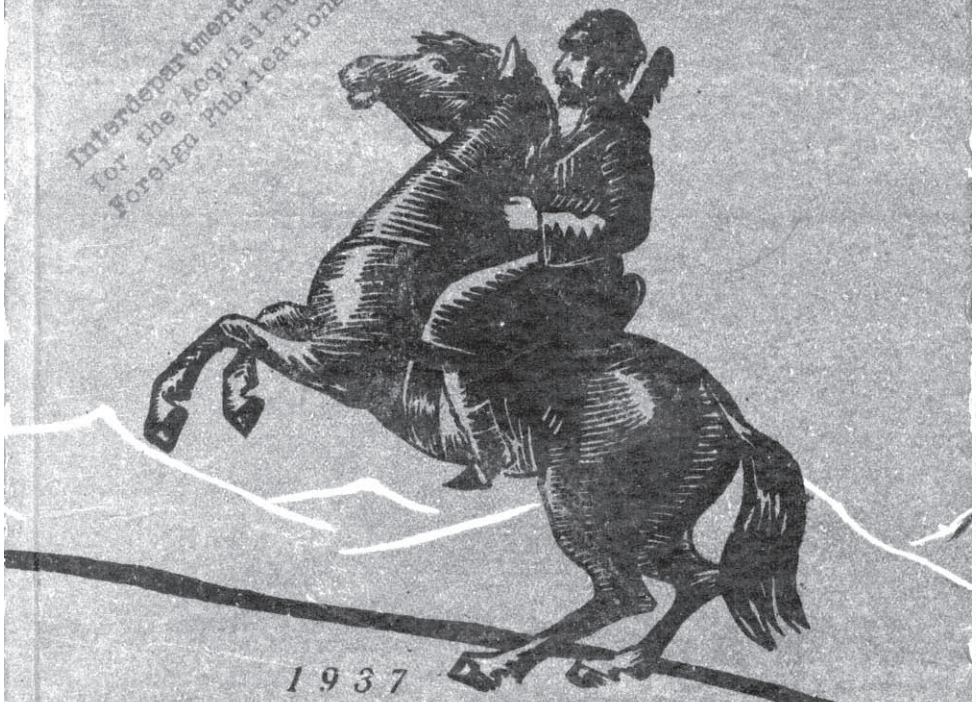
46. Su Peicheng: "'Jiuci Dazhu' duhou," *Yuwen yu Xinxi* 2 (1995): 23.

47. John DeFrancis, "China's Literary Renaissance: A Reassessment," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 17, 4 (1985): 52–63.

48. Jennifer 8. [*sic*] Lee, "Where the PC Is Mightier Than the Pen: In China, Computer Use Erodes Traditional Handwriting, Stirring a Cultural Debate," *New York Times*, 1 Feb. 2001.

L. N. Tolstoi

KAWKAZDI FULU



1937
Yandung Guogiachubanbu

KAWKAZDI FULU

I

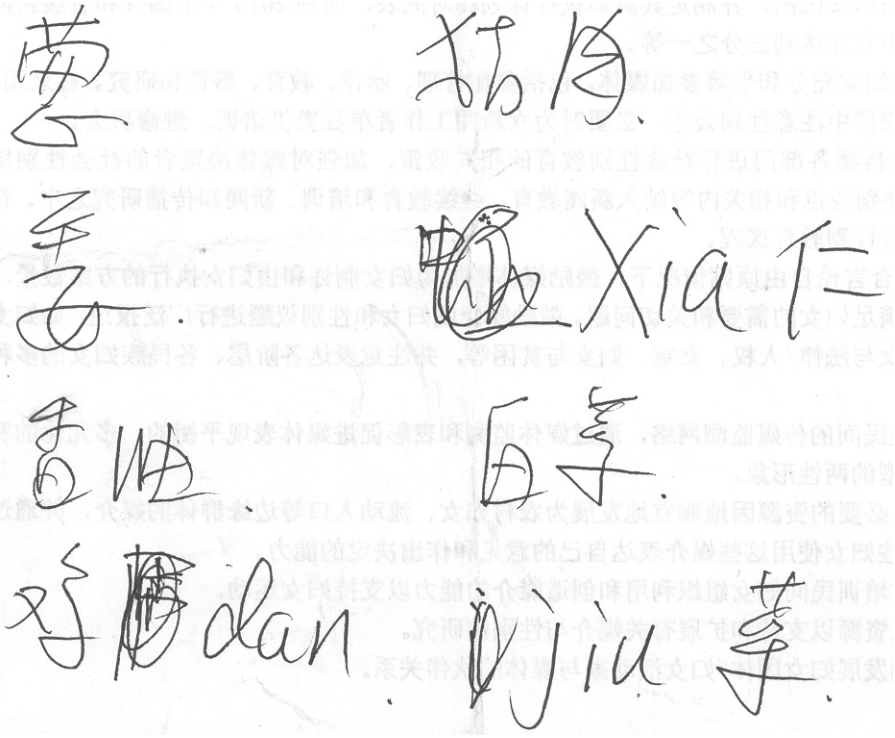
Iou igo shaoje zai Kawkaz dang gynguan. Tadi mingz giao Rhilin. Iou ic cung giali gilailiao gei tadi ifung sin. Sh tadi mucin — laotaipo sie gei tadi: „Wo iging laoliao, panwang zai wo s ician, kandegian wodi cin'aidi rz imian. Xuigia lai gei wo sungzhung-ba; ba wo anmai ixou, rhang tianje baoju ni zaai ky nali dangchai-ba. Wo xuan gei ni zhaozholiao sifur: iu cungming, iu xianxui, xuan iou giachan. Ni rhosh xui aishang taa, iexy, ziu koji xo taa giexun, bingcie yng-jyan liuzai giali-ba".

Rhilin siangliao izhen: „Laotaipo shzai iging shuairhokilailiao, iexy, bu neng zaai kangian taa imian. Xuigia ky; rhosh sifur xianxui, ziu giexun".

Ta ky dao tuanzhang nali gaoliao gia, xo tungshmn gaoliao bie, nachu 4 tung shaoziu gei tadi bingsh cxing, ziu shoushkilailiao.

Zhe shxou zai Kawkaz fashengliao zhansh. Ulun sh baitian, ulun sh iewan, rhenmn zai daoshang du bu neng xingzou. Chabudo zhjao sh rhenxo igo oguorhen cung chengbao zoukai xozhe yanfang kydi, tatarrhen ziu ba ta shas xozhesh fulu dao shanli ky. Tungchang

Exhibit 1
Tolstoy's The Prisoner of the Caucasus translated into Latinxua by Ting Shan and Siao [Xiao] San and published in Khabarovsk in 1937 by the Far East Publishing Office.



葱 *cōng ‘scallion’*

姜 *jiāng ‘ginger’*

香油 *xiāngyóu ‘sesame oil’*

鸡蛋 *jīdàn ‘egg’*

猪肉 *zhūròu ‘pork’*

虾仁 *xiārén ‘shrimp meat’*

白菜 *báicài ‘Chinese cabbage’*

韭菜 *jiǔcài ‘chives’*

Exhibit 2

Shopping list of ingredients for *jiǎozi* ‘dumplings’ written February 15, 2006, by a PRC social science researcher on a visit to my colleague Cynthia Ning, who kindly passed it on to me. I have added the printed equivalent of the list. Note that three of the thirteen different characters are rendered in Pinyin.

Dajia,

San-si nian yiqian, wo weile zai Beijing zhaokai de Pinyin Fang'an Guoji Yantao Hui xiele yi pian jiaozuo "Poqie xuyao gezhonggeyang de pinyin duwu." Shijishang, zhei pian lunwen you liang ge hen buyiyang de gaozi, yi ge shi wo ziji yuanlai xie de, lingwai yi ge shi Liqing jiayi daliang de xiugai. Liang ge gaozi dou jigei Beida Zhongwen Xi de Geng Zhensheng xiansheng. Bu zhidao weishenme, lian yi ge dou meiyou deng zai huiyi de lunwenji shang. Houlai, Su Peicheng xiansheng shuo guonei yuanyi zai shenme bie de shu li chuban. You guole liang nian er meiyou renhe xiaoxi. Xianzai de qingkuang zenmeyang?

Zhu
Jiankang kuaile!

Mei Weiheng

* * *

Mei Weiheng jiaoshou:

11yue10ri de dianziyoujian shoudao. Nin de lunwen <Poqie Xuyao Gezhonggeyang de Zhuyin duwu> yijing fabiao zai Beijing Youyibinguan juxing de huiyi de lunwenji limian. Shuming shi <Yuwen Xiandaihua he Hanyu Pinyin Fang'an>, Beijing Yuwen chubanshe 2004nian2yue chuban. Zhang Liqing nvshi de wenzhang <A Few Suggestions for Hanyu Pinyin Orthography> ye fabiao zai tong yiben shunei. Shifen duibuqi, meiyou jishi he nin lianxi, songshang yangshu. Qing gaozhi ruhe ba shu songshang.

Duibuqi!

Su Peicheng

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