

興 興  
 零 零  
 觀 觀  
 凡 凡  
 無 無  
 惡 惡  
 惡 惡  
 圓 圓  
 元 元  
 陸 陸  
 陸 陸

不別字形的改作  
 地方絕對不可  
 漢字應用規則  
 凡用必須注意不啻生意義上錯誤



# Sound, Meaning, Shape

The Phonologist  
 Wei Jianguo (1901-1980)  
 between Language Study  
 and Language Planning

Mariana Münning

何以本書不稱「中國發音學」而叫做「漢字聲韻學」呢？  
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韻學不過是語言學的一部分，基本  
 關係至切，也就無法劃清界限。因  
 此，組織和聲音。依著一定的組織  
 憑了「一定的聲音」工具，才能  
 法學的對象，後者是「聲韻學」的內容。  
 音學原理是世界公同的。現在說  
 敘述的「中國發音學」。





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Mariana Münning

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The Phonologist Wei Jiangong (1901–1980) between  
Language Study and Language Planning



ORCID®

Mariana Münning  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0417-8397>

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# List of Abbreviations

BWNU	Beijing Women's Normal University (Beijing nǚzi shifan daxue 北京女子師範大學)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party (Zhongguo gongchandang 中國共產黨)
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
KMT	Kuomintang (Guomindang 國民黨)
MC	Middle Chinese
OC	Old Chinese
PRC	People's Republic of China (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo 中華人民共和國)
ROC	Republic of China (Zhonghua Minguo 中華民國)
USA	United States of America



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Perkuhn, Oliver Schulz, Dr. Verena Körber and Marco Bertarini. My parents have supported me incomparably throughout.

All sorts of mistakes or inaccuracies in this text are entirely my own responsibility.

# Notes on Romanization and Chinese Characters

This thesis uses Hanyu Pinyin 汉语拼音 romanization. Given names are capitalized. Pinyin words and monograph titles are set in italics, unless they represent a given name or a name of an institution. In the transcription of institutions, only the first word is capitalized. Compound words are written together. Pinyin article titles are not italicized. Long quotes are not transcribed.

Emphases and loanwords as technical terms are also printed in italics.

International Phonetic Alphabet IPA is employed if a given pronunciation differs from that of Modern Standard Chinese or if other transcriptions are ambiguous. IPA transcriptions are written in square brackets [ ].

Taiwanese Hokkien is transcribed using to the Taiwanese Romanization System (Tâi-uân Bân-lâm-gí Lô-má-jī Phing-im Hong-àn 臺灣閩南語羅馬字拼音方案).

For Japanese, the Hepburn romanization is employed; for Korean, the McCune–Reischauer romanization is used. Both are italicized unless they represent a given name.

In some sources and certain given names other transcriptions are used; in that case I adopt or include the sources' transcription and abide by the respective person's choice to romanize their given name. Many transcriptions from Republican times are in Zhuyin fuhao 注音符號 (formerly Zhuyin zimu 注音字母), also known as Bopomofo, or in Gwoyue Romatzyh [*guoyu luomazi*] 國語羅馬字. In the latter case, italics are also used.

The use of traditional or simplified characters are determined by their sources. Note that sources dating from periods where simplified characters were already in use may contain traditional characters. Sources from the period between both script simplifications (1956–1965) use a mixed orthography.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The first half of the 20th century can be regarded as a formative phase for the Chinese language and linguistics. Elisabeth Kaske describes in her *Politics of Language in Chinese Education*, how especially the defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) led to an identity crisis of China’s elites and how their wish to modernize the country in general and the Chinese language and script in particular spurred intense debates and discussions.<sup>1</sup> Ideas ranging from the introduction of alphabetic spelling, to the promotion of vernacular literature, and even the abolition of Chinese altogether were formulated around the turn of the century.<sup>2</sup> Veritable language planning with an impact on the average Chinese speaker’s everyday life only happened afterwards. Kaske ends her discussion of the language discourse in 1919, when the first officially institutionalized language planning committee was established.

The focus of my dissertation is the period that followed this *identity crisis*. I would like to call this period a *period of consolidation*, in which definite policies were formulated and carried out. The language discourse that began in the heads of the intellectuals was gradually transformed into facts for the speakers. The two most important of these facts were a promotion of the national language (*guoyu* 國語) during the Republican period (1912–1949) and the reform of the Chinese script in the early People’s Republic of China (PRC). While my focus is the promotion of the national language (and especially on Wei Jiangong’s role in it), Wei’s discussion and publication of the “New China dictionary” *Xinhua zidian* 新華字典 is also discussed. While this dictionary may not be an official act of language planning, its *de facto* prominent role elevates it to that level.

---

1 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (Sinica Leidensia 82), Leiden: Brill, 2008, 77.

2 Important landmarks in the discourse about language comprise the following: The call for an alphabetic spelling of Chinese by Lu Zhuangzhang 盧懋章 (1854–1928) in the late 19th century. Then, the call for a vernacular literature was made in the 1910s by Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) to promote a literary revolution. Furthermore, the abolition of Chinese and introduction of Esperanto was discussed by Wu Zihui 吳稚暉 (Wu Jingheng 吳敬恆, 1865–1953) during the early years of the 20th century.

In addition to these reform endeavors, the intellectuals were exposed to Western knowledge and Western languages on a large scale. Chinese and Western traditions of language study met and merged; many linguists were trained in the West.<sup>3</sup> Modern linguistics as a discipline emerged in China, and traditional scholarship was questioned and perceived truths re-examined.<sup>4</sup>

Language planning and language research were intertwined: Planning was carried out on the basis of research. However, the opposite was also true: research was guided by the aims of language reforms. I see concepts of language, which is the idea of language and of all related aspects, as the nexus between research and reforms, which represent the descriptive and the prescriptive dimension, and also between the discourse, which takes place in the sphere of ideas, and the material world (i.e. tangible effects). This is why they are the focus of my research.

The linguist Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功 (1901–1980) was involved in all of these fields: linguistic research, language planning and the development of linguistics and adjacent disciplines.<sup>5</sup> His scholarship was vast, covering dialect phonetics, the reconstruction of Middle Chinese (MC), and Dunhuang 敦煌 Studies; this thesis cannot address all of his activities. In language planning, Wei Jiāngōng was involved in the promotion of *guoyu* as national language on the Mainland and in Taiwan, and in the script reform. He was also the chief editor of the first edition of the “New China dictionary” *Xinhua zidian*, published in 1953, which can be considered a language planning measure due to its vast impact to the present day.

This thesis focuses on Wei Jiāngōng’s activities in language planning and how they were connected to his academic research. His concepts of language are the connecting points between the world of politics and the world of scholarship. I will demonstrate that he saw language as a tool for communication. This tool was always subjected to natural changes, and it could be altered to suit its purpose. While language itself consisted of orally produced sounds, writing was just a graphic expression of these sounds. These concepts will be explained and contextualized in this thesis. Using Wei Jiāngōng, his life and work as a case study, this thesis attempts to demonstrate that language planning and script reform were not arbitrary political decisions but were founded on the convictions of scholars that I call concepts. These concepts were also influenced by the scholars’ worldviews: we can speak of a mutual dependency between scholarship and worldview, connected through concepts.

---

3 The most prominent example was Yuen Ren Chao (Zhao Yuanren 趙元任, 1892–1982). He was not only a linguist but also a mathematician, musician and translator, “polymath and polyglot”. He obtained degrees from Cornell University (1914), Harvard (1918) and contributed both to the introduction of Western scientific methods into China and to the field of linguistics in general. See La Polla, Randy, “Chao, Y.R. [Zhào Yuánrèn] 趙元任 (1892-1982)”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 1, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 352–356, see 352-53.

4 For example, the “Doubting Antiquity School” (*yigu pai* 疑古派) that includes Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980) will be covered.

5 The establishment of “Classical document studies” *Gudian wenxian zhuanye* 古典文獻專業 in 1959 is attributed to him. See Chien Tuo 錢拓 [Qian Tuo], “Wei Jiāngōng yinxue shuping” 魏建功音學述評 [Review of Wei Jiāngōng’s phonological scholarship], PhD dissertation, Furen daxue 輔仁大學, 2013, 350.

The structure of this book is based on the three fields of Chinese philology where Wei Jiāngōng was active; the language planning measures can also be attributed to these fields. The structure has been arranged to match the chronology of Wei's activities. Part I, "sound", discusses the question of a standard pronunciation, using the approach from phonology. Part II, "meaning" addresses the question of semantic units in a dictionary using the semantics approach. Part III, "shape" is preoccupied with the graphic form of the Chinese characters, therefore representing Wei's activities in the field of graphemics.<sup>6</sup> A conclusion summarizes the findings of all three parts.

## 1.1 Theories and Methods

This thesis is a historical work. It aims to present a few historical aspects of Chinese linguistics and language planning through the life and work of Wei Jiāngōng.

Wei Jiāngōng is a suitable case study. He played a major role in five major events in language planning. He was a part of the "national language movement" (*guoyu yundong* 國語運動) in the Republic of China (ROC); he was head of the Taiwan Committee for the Promotion of the National Language (Taiwan sheng tuixing weiyuanhui 臺灣省國語推行委員會); he led the compilation of the "New China dictionary" (*Xinhua zidian*), and he participated in the script reform and in the promotion of Hanyu Pinyin in the People's Republic. While not an explicit language planning measure, the *Xinhua zidian* can still be regarded as an act of language planning due to its immense impact on the Chinese speaking world.

Furthermore, Wei Jiāngōng is a key connector in a network of influential linguists. At Peking University (Beijing daxue 北京大學, Beida), he studied with Qian Xuāntōng 錢玄同 (1887–1939), Li Jīnxi 黎錦熙 (1890–1978), Gu Jiēgāng 顧颉剛 and Lu Xūn 魯迅 (given name: Zhou Shùrén 周樹人, 1881–1936), and continued to work with Qian and Li afterwards. Colleagues during his PRC career include Ma Xūlún 馬敘倫 (1885–1970) and Wáng Lì 王力 (1900–1986). Wei Jiāngōng was a member of the majority of committees that had a major impact on language reforms in the 20th century. He was deeply involved in the discourse about language and script reform during that time, partly due to his work in the commit-

6 The canonical sequence of the three disciplines of traditional Chinese philology (*xiaoxue* 小學, minor studies) is shape (*xíng* 形), sound (*yīn* 音), and meaning (*yì* 義). Each of these are objects of the respective traditional disciplines graphemics (*wenzixue* 文字學, also paleography, study of the script, also encompassing investigations into the meaning of the characters and their components), phonology (*yinyunxue* 音韻學 or *shengyunxue* 聲韻學, study of the initials and rhymes) and [historical] semantics (*xunguxue* 訓詁學, also study of the commentaries to the Classics), respectively. The term "minor studies" *xiaoxue* implies that these are mere auxiliary sciences to facilitate the exegesis of the philosophical canon. Quirin summarizes along the lines of Benjamin Elman and Albert Feuerwerker how the "evidential" (*kaozheng* 考證) scholarship of the 18th century separated philology from philosophy, which can be said to have helped the modernization of China. In this fashion, it has both indigenous and Western origins. Quirin, Michael, "Benjamin A. Elman: From Philosophy to Philology: of Change in Late Imperial China. Harvard Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1984 [Review]", in: *Monumenta Serica* 37 (1986–1987), 355–359, see 355.

tees, partly due to his participation in the discussion via magazine articles, letter exchanges, or his position as university teacher.

Although much of his views on language reform may be based on his teachers' views and findings, many of these teachers did not participate in the implementation of their ideas. Wei Jianguo occupies a unique position between conceptualization and implementation. The same can be said for his career that begun during Republican times that extended well into the Communist era. The regime change is reflected in his endeavors as a language planner. The question of standard language and the issue of script reform can be discussed using his example. These characteristics and the fact that he has not been studied before in Western scholarship make Wei Jianguo a fitting and rewarding case study.

Chinese language planning has sometimes been regarded either as forceful political decisions interfering with natural language development, or as a big step towards modernization, albeit purely politically decided and implemented. While a large-scale, ambitious project such as Chinese language planning is never realized without a political goal or political backing, the scientific dimension is often neglected. I would like to offer a slightly different view and stress that the language planners felt they were acting according to the principles of science. Decisions were made after more or less extensive research.

I will explain the complex interplay between language policy and linguistic research, using concepts of language as pivotal point between the two. The former represents the real world and society with all its practical constraints, the latter representing the world of discourse that exist in the participant's heads and manifested by their writings. These two realms interact with each other and are mutually dependent. This perspective is new, since it attempts to take into account not only history and linguistics but also the protagonists' *understanding* of language. This is required for understanding the motivations behind these decisions.

With the premise of Wei Jianguo as an agent in the discourse about language in China, I focus on the period from 1920 to 1965. While this discourse took place in the heads and texts of the agents, i.e., the world of ideas and the non-material world, its goal was nonetheless very material: language and script reform. I consider the language discourse, which started approximately in the late 19th century, as a search for the possibility of *realization* of material reforms. The lengthy discussions between the intellectuals, which includes the formulation of some of the most outrageous ideas, slowly led to decisions that could be implemented in the material world.

At the core of these discussions were concepts of language. They include the concept (German: 'Begriff') of what language *is*, but also secondary issues and concepts, such as script, pronunciation, language kinship, and the role of language in society. While it sometimes seemed as if the debates were only about aesthetics or likes or dislikes, I would like to point out that concepts of language were the focus of these debates. It is obvious that I am indebted to conceptual history as a theory. Kai Vogelsang has summarized the history and relevance of conceptual history for sinology in *Oriens Extremus* vol. 51. While I do not



offer a complete conceptual history or historical semantics of any of the terms mentioned in this work, I instead try to adopt an approach similar to that of Otto Brunner (1898–1982) and will interpret my sources with concepts and terminology derived from them to avoid projecting my own concepts onto them.<sup>7</sup>

Particularly in the history of linguistics, this approach is not without challenge. Many scientific concepts were developed during the 20th century, and others have existed for centuries but their content has shifted. I try to take all these variables into account when I translate and analyze Wei Jianguong's and his contemporaries' writings.

A thorough analysis and careful translation of key texts and terminology forms the basis of this work. They are framed with the necessary historical context. However, as Wei Jianguong has hardly been mentioned in Western language sources at all, some historiographic description provides a more encompassing picture of his life and role.

As mentioned above, concepts constitute the nexus between the non-material (i.e. the intellectual world) and the material world, and that the discourse circulates around concepts of language until these concepts are so close to the material world that the related language planning measures<sup>8</sup> can be implemented. There are two other pairs of dimensions in which the concepts manifest themselves or from which they are influenced.

One pair of poles are the two fields of linguistics and politics. In an abstract way, they could also be called description and prescription. Linguistic science describes language as a phenomenon, while language policy prescribes the language or script that should be employed or the characteristics they should have. These two poles can also be seen as input (linguistic description) and output (language policies) of the discourse. The discourse is fueled with input from the material world, not only scientific research or empirical study. In addition to language research, we need to consider other input from the material world, such as political debates and historical events.

The other pair of the equation could be named scientific conviction and political worldview. How do the two belief systems of a scientist who also is a political agent interact? If a linguist is nationalist or communist, is his view of language influenced by his political ideology? Does he live in an autocratic regime and has to frame his views according to the political rhetoric of the regime? Is he even forced to find certain evidence that legitimizes the rulers to secure his status or even his life? Is linguistic research mere instrument for the legitimization of politics (language planning)? Or is political ideology crucial to the individual in order to give one's own studies of language importance and meaning?

This dissertation argues that all of this is the case and that there is a complicated interplay between concepts and agents that lead to the language reforms of

7 Brunner's approach is summarized in: Vogelsang, Kai, "Conceptual History: A Short Introduction", in: *Oriens Extremus* 51 (2012), 9–24, see 9.

8 Language planning is usually divided in the two fields: corpus planning and status planning. Bußmann, Hadumod, "Sprachplanung", in: *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008, 657–58, see 657.

the 20th century. The example of Wei Jiāngōng will shed light on the language discourse in the Republic as well as the People's Republic; his utilitarian concept of language enabled him to participate in language planning in both regimes.

## 1.2 Sources and Secondary Literature

Wei Jiāngōng's texts are the key primary sources in this dissertation. The most comprehensive bibliography of his works<sup>9</sup> was published in 1996 as an appendix to his "chronological biography" (*Wei Jiāngōng niānpǔ* 魏建功年谱).<sup>10</sup> The *niānpǔ* itself already presents the texts of Wei Jiāngōng published in the respective year. The bibliography then lists these texts by topics, already mentioning the "Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng" (*Wei Jiāngōng Wénjī* 魏建功文集)<sup>11</sup> as forthcoming. These were published in 2001 and represent the majority of Wei Jiāngōng's texts. A comparison between the "*Wei Jiāngōng yizhu mulu*" and the *Wénjī*, however, sheds light on the lecture notes of Wei Jiāngōng that were not published. One lecture note was found in Wei Jiāngōng's manuscripts, preserved by his family.<sup>12</sup> Wherever possible, the original publication or manuscript was consulted. One article from 1959 is included in Seybolt and Chiang's collection of translated primary sources.<sup>13</sup>

Wei Jiāngōng's family preserved many of his manuscripts, documents and books that were in his possession. More than 10,000 volumes were donated to the College of Humanities of the Huazhong University of Science of Technology (Huazhong ligōng daxue Renwēnxuéyuan 华中理工大学人文学院) in Wuhan Wuhan, which established a "Wei Jiāngōng library" (*Wei Jiāngōng cāngshùshì* 魏建功藏书室).<sup>14</sup> In the family residence in Beijing, the family preserved another several thousand volumes of books and an estimated 15,000 pages of manuscripts and documents. While I attempted to include as many of them in this study, this material still awaits proper, systematic study. A large number of these documents can be attributed to the 1950s and the script reform. In addition to the full or fragmented articles by Wei Jiāngōng, the manuscripts also include notes, drafts, and articles that he consulted (from Wei's script reform activities, for example).

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- 9 Anonymous, "Wei Jiāngōng yizhu mulu" 魏建功遗著目录 [Catalog of writings bequeathed by Wei Jiāngōng], in: *Wénjiao ziliao* 文教资料 [Data of culture and education] 05 (1996), 24–34.
- 10 Cao Da 曹达, "Wei Jiāngōng niānpǔ" 魏建功年谱 [Chronological biography of Wei Jiāngōng], in: *Wénjiao ziliao* 文教资料 [Data of Culture and Education] 05 (1996), 3–23.
- 11 Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇 (ed.), *Wei Jiāngōng wénjī* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng] (4 vols.), Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001.
- 12 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Hanzi shēngyǔnxué" 汉字声韵学 [Phonology of Chinese characters], Beijing, family possession, 1935 (?), lecture notes from his lecture at Furen University (Furen Daxue 辅仁大学).
- 13 Wei Jiāngōng, "From the "National Language" Movement to Standardization of the Chinese Language", in: *Language Reform in China*, ed. by Seybolt, Peter J., and Gregory Kuei-ke Chiang, New York: Sharpe, 1978, 288–299.
- 14 Chen Xingeng 陈歆耕, "Bei lishi yanchen zhebi de Wei Jiāngōng" 被历史烟尘遮蔽的魏建功 [Wei Jiāngōng, withdrawn from our sight by the smoke of history], in: *Zhonghua dushu bao* 中华读书报 [China Reading Weekly] (Aug. 24, 2016), 7.

Wei Jiāngōng and other intellectuals involved in language reform were tremendously productive. I include primary sources of other linguists in my study that heavily influenced Wei Jiāngōng and the language discourse. In some cases, particularly during the Republican era, the articles form a veritable network of inter-references. To represent as much of the discourse as possible, I have included as many different articles as possible. However, since this study concentrates on Wei Jiāngōng's concepts of language in connection to language planning, it does not present an exhaustive study of all possibly relevant texts.

In terms of secondary literature, Cao Da's *nianpu* and Ma Si's biography "Master of a generation – Wei Jiāngōng" (*Yidai zongshi – Wei Jiāngōng* 一代宗师——魏建功)<sup>15</sup> were particularly illuminating. Articles about Wei Jiāngōng that I have studied are divided into two main fields: Articles of remembrance (from Wei's children,<sup>16</sup> other linguists, students) and specialized studies about a distinct field of activity of Wei Jiāngōng. All of them are in Chinese. In Western literature, Wei Jiāngōng is hardly mentioned. If he is, he is mentioned only briefly, such as in Diana Xiaoqing Lin's *Peking University: Chinese Scholarship and Intellectuals, 1898–1937*.<sup>17</sup>

Literature about language planning in general, however, is much richer. This field includes both Chinese and Western works. Chinese literature includes an important material from active language reformers, such as Li Jinxi<sup>18</sup> and Zhou Youguang 周有光 (1906–2017).<sup>19</sup> Since these reformers were part of the language discourse and reforms, their texts do not only serve as secondary literature but also as primary sources.

In terms of Western literature, I assign the most important place to Elisabeth Kaske's *Politics of Language*. This work includes a very extensive selection of primary and secondary material and addresses all topics important for language reform until 1919.<sup>20</sup> Helmut Martin's study of Chinese Language Planning (*Chinesische Sprachplanung*) that mainly focuses on the PRC era also includes theoretical considerations about language planning, comparisons with other countries and their language policies, the history of language planning in China starting in the 16th century, and covers the time period until 1977.<sup>21</sup> Dorothea Wippermann's

15 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* 一代宗师魏建功 [A great master of a generation: Wei Jiāngōng], Beijing 北京: Wenhua yishu chubanshe 文化艺术出版社, 2007.

16 Wei Nai 魏乃, Wei Zhi 魏至 and Wei Chong 魏重, "Wei Jiāngōng xiānshēng zhuānlüè" 魏建功先生传略 [Short biography of Wei Jiāngōng], in: *Wenjiao ziliao* 文教资料 [Data of culture and education] 4 (1996).

17 Lin, Xiaoqing Diana, *Peking University: Chinese Scholarship and Intellectuals 1898–1937* (SUNY series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture), New York: State University of New York Press, 2005.

18 Li Jinxi 黎锦熙, *Guoyu yundong shigang* 國語運動史綱 [History of the national language movement], vol. 2 (*Minguo congshu* 民國叢書 52), Shanghai 上海: Shanghai shudian 上海書店, 1990.

19 Zhou Youguang 周有光 [translated by Zhang Liqing 张立青], *Zhongguo yuwen de shidai yanjin* 中国语文的时代演进 / *The Historical Evolution of Chinese Languages and Scripts* (Pathways to Advanced Skills 8), Columbus, Ohio: National East Asian Languages Resource Center, Ohio State University, 2003.

20 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008).

21 Martin, Helmut, *Chinesische Sprachplanung* (Schriftenreihe des Landesinstituts für Arabische, Chinesische und Japanische Sprache Nordrhein-Westfalen 9), Bochum: Studienverlag Brockmeyer, 1982.

work *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin zimu* discusses not only the promulgation of the Zhuyin transcription but also all the important policies concerning the national language in Republican times.<sup>22</sup> In addition to these, DeFrancis' standard work *Nationalism and Language Reform* must be mentioned.<sup>23</sup> Newer approaches have seen the light of day, such as Yurou Zhong's *Chinese Grammatology* that finally demonstrates how we can read the renunciation of the replacement of the characters by phonetic writing as act of self-assertion.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from language planning, the other important topic discussed in Western literature is the history of language and linguistics. Mårten Söderblom Saarela's dissertation has been rather helpful, since he thoroughly discusses and defines many language phenomena from the Qing 清 dynasty (1644–1912) important to the 20th century.<sup>25</sup> In the field of phonology, William Baxter and Laurent Sagart's *Old Chinese – A New Reconstruction* provides valuable English definitions of Chinese technical terms.<sup>26</sup> The same is the case for Jerry Norman's *Chinese*.<sup>27</sup> The recently published *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, edited by Rynt Sybesma and his team,<sup>28</sup> has achieved a milestone as an extensively consulted handbook.

The technical terminology of language study is a main challenge in discussing the history of Chinese linguistics, given that the vocabulary of the first half of the 20th century was dynamic. New concepts were introduced from Western linguistics, neologisms were coined, and concepts of "traditional" Chinese linguistics dating back to at least two millennia were reexamined. This book attempts to remain as close as possible to Wei Jiāngōng's original texts and strives to provide accurate translations and explanations.

This study has two goals, in contrast to the literature described above. The first is that language planning is examined more from a linguistic point of view rather than a political one. The role of language study, in particular traditional Chinese philology, in language planning is the main focus. The second is not to make any value judgement about the language and script policies or practices in

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22 Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949*, Bochum: Studienverlag Brockmeyer, 1985.

23 De Francis, John, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

24 Zhong, Yurou, *Chinese Grammatology: Script Revolution and Literary Modernity, 1916–1958*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2019, 7.

25 Söderblom Saarela, Mårten, "Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)", PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2015.

26 Baxter, William H., and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese – A New Reconstruction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. It must be stated that the book has faced severe and substantial criticism: Harbsmeier, Christoph, "Irrefutable Conjectures: A Review of William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese. A New Reconstruction*", in: *Monumenta Serica* 64 (2016), 445–504. Hill, Nathan W., "Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction", in: *Archiv Orientalní* 85 (2017), 135–140. Sarostin, George, "William H. Baxter, Laurent Sagart. Old Chinese. A New Reconstruction", in: *Journal of Language Relationship* 13.4 (2015), 383–389.

27 Norman, Jerry, *Chinese*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

28 Sybesma, Rint, et al. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics* (5 vols.), Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017.

China. As an example, Helmut Martin implies that not introducing an alphabet was some sort of failure.<sup>29</sup> My approach attempts to acknowledge the rights of Chinese speakers to determine the fate of their own language and script on their own terms.

### 1.3 The Protagonist: Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功

This dissertation does not offer a complete biography of Wei Jiāngōng. However, a few things should be said about his life. I have also had the honor of composing an encyclopedia article about him that contains additional information.<sup>30</sup> The two most important sources for his biography are the *nianpu*<sup>31</sup> and the biography.<sup>32</sup>

Wei Jiāngōng was born on November 7, 1901, in Xichang 西場, which is today part of Hai'an 海岸, Nantong 南通, Jiangsu 江蘇 province. When Wei Jiāngōng was born, it was part of Rugao 如皋.<sup>33</sup> The location of Rugao<sup>34</sup> in China can be seen on the map on figure 1 on page 28. His father was Wei Jinfan 魏晉藩 (courtesy name: Wei Yanghou 魏錫侯), and his mother was Zhong Yankang 仲延康. Wei Jiāngōng was the oldest son and had four brothers and one sister.

His family owned a grocery store and had comparatively high living standards for the time. His paternal grandfather, Wei Lin 魏霖 (1858–1916, courtesy name: Wei Weinong 魏慰農) attained the *xiucai* 秀才 degree in the imperial examinations and already began educating Wei Jiāngōng before he entered primary school in 1906. This primary school in Xichang was established by his grandfather himself, Wei Weinong, together with others.

When Wei Jiāngōng turned one, his parents arranged an engagement with the daughter of a certain Li Baoji 李堡吉. As a teenager, he named his conditions for agreeing to such a marriage: his wife should be educated and not have bound feet. As it turned out, Li Baoji's daughter did not match these criteria. Wei wrote an open letter (which he published in 1925) to his parents dissolving this

29 Martin, Helmut, *Chinesische Sprachplanung* (1982), 81, 84, 95.

30 Munning, Mariana, “Wèi Jiāngōng 魏建功 (1901-1980)”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 508–512.

31 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996).

32 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007).

33 Material about Wei Jiāngōng can be found in the Municipal Archive of Rugao. Rugao shaped Wei Jiāngōng's linguistic identity: he composed a manuscript on the Rugao dialect where he discussed its six tones (with a tonal spelling similar to Gwoyue Romatzyh). See: Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Rugao fangyan suibi” 如皋方言隨筆 [Informal essay about the Rugao dialect], Beijing, family possession, [Year unknown, probably Republican period].

34 The location of Rugao can also be seen online on Google Maps: [www.google.com/maps/place/Rugao](http://www.google.com/maps/place/Rugao).

35 Illustration by Susann Henker using a modified version of the image “China blank map grey” ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China\\_blank\\_map\\_grey.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:China_blank_map_grey.svg)), CC-BY-SA-4.0.

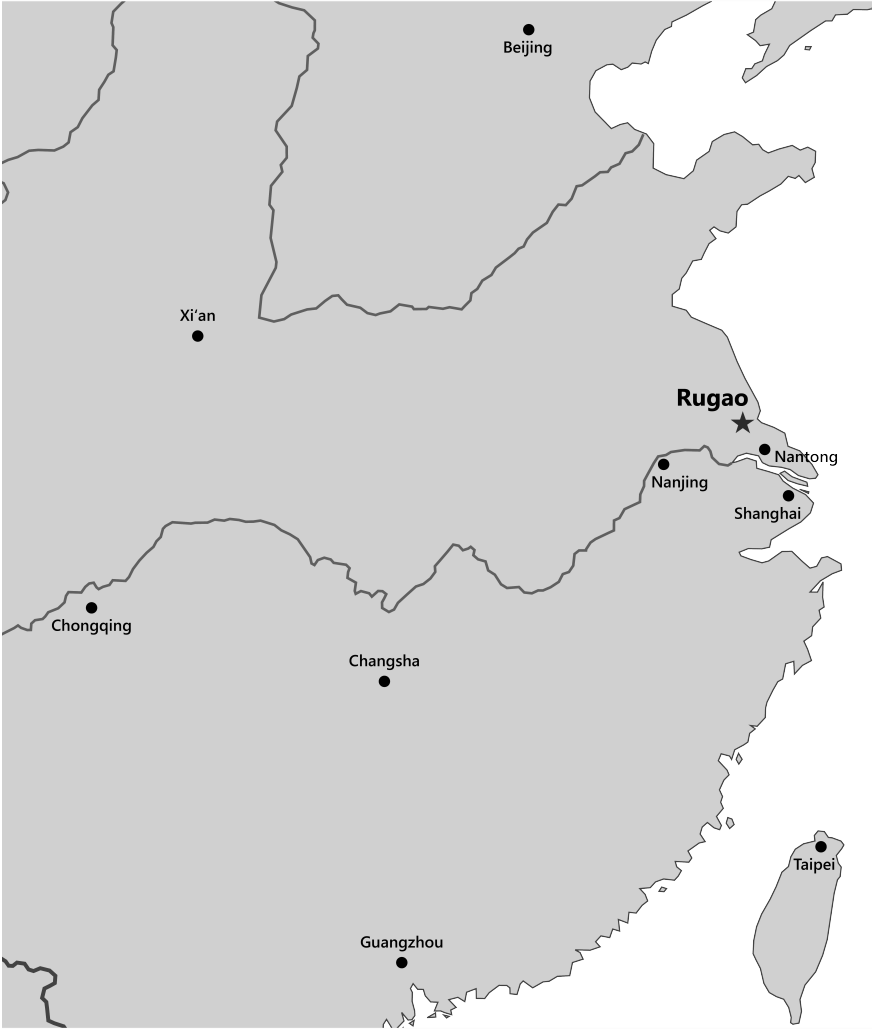


Figure 1: The location of Rugao 如皋 in China.<sup>35</sup>

marriage promise.<sup>36</sup> Wei Jiāngōng would marry another woman, Wang Bīshū 王碧書 (1905–84) in 1928.

At the age of 13, in 1914, Wei Jiāngōng entered Middle School No. 7 of Nantong County (Nantong xian li di qi zhongxue 南通縣立第七中學), one of the two predecessors of the later Nantong Middle School, famous for its Western-influenced, modernized curricula. Wei experienced a severe lung disease at least twice in his life: the first time he fell ill from it in 1918, preventing him from entering Peking University (Beijing daxue 北京大學). In 1919, one year later, he succeeded in the entrance exams again, and after starting to study English, he switched his major to Chinese.

From then on, his career was tied to linguistics and philology, especially phonology, language planning and to Peking University as an institution. Some of his teachers were Qian Xuāntōng, Lǐ Jīnxi, Zhōu Zuōrén 周作人 (1885–1967), Lǜ Xūn and Liú Fù 劉復 (or Liú Bānnóng 劉半農, 1891–1934). Wei Jiāngōng was to hold many teaching positions and professorships: he obtained an associate professorship at Peking University in 1931 and a full professorship in 1937. He also served as dean of the Chinese department and as deputy headmaster.

However, he did not stay in Beijing the entire time. He spent a year in Seoul to teach Chinese (1927–1928) and spent the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) at the Southwestern United University (Xinan lianhe daxue 西南聯合大學) in Sichuan 四川. Starting in 1928, he was a member of the Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language (Guoyu tongyi choubuihui 國語統一籌備會), reestablished as Committee for the Promotion of the National Language (Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui 國語推行委員會) in 1935.<sup>37</sup> In 1946, he arrived in Taiwan to promote the national language; he also helped to transform the Japanese-established university in Taibei 臺北 (also Taipei) into National Taiwan University. While he returned to Beijing and Peking University in 1948, his peers, such as Tai Jìngnóng 台靜農 (1902–1990) and He Róng 何容 (1903–1990), remained in Taiwan.

In the People's Republic of China (PRC, established 1949), Wei Jiāngōng was involved in script reform. He also completed his personal project, the “New China dictionary” (*Xinhua zidian*), as chief compiler, which was first published in 1953. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), he was criticized and detained, partly because of a dispute with Lǜ Xūn in the 1920s that will be discussed in section 3.1.3 on page 59. He died in Beijing on February 28, 1980.

Wei Jiāngōng earned the most scholarly recognition in the field of phonology. “Research on the ancient sound system” (*Guinyinxi yanjiu* 古音系研究, 1935, based

36 It is printed with the readers' reactions to it. Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Wei Jiāngōng xuāngāo jiēchū yūnyuē!” 魏建功宣告解除婚約! [Wei Jiāngōng proclaims the renouncement of his engagement!], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiāochūn 叶笑春, Róng Wénmín 戎文敏, Zhōu Fāng 周方 and Mǎ Zhēnxíng 馬鎮, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 416–28.

37 [Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui 國語推行委員會], “Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui guicheng ji weiyuanhui mingdan” 國語推行委員會規程及委員名單 [Regulations of the Committee for the promotion of the national language and committee member name list], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 8.84 (1935), 183–205.

on his lectures)<sup>38</sup> is often referred to as his masterpiece. His further research included graphemics, dialectology and folklore. He was acquainted with traditional Chinese philological methods as well as “modern” linguistic methods developed in the West. This study argues that his research heavily influenced his endeavors in language planning.

## 1.4 Findings

In this work, the following three claims will be upheld:

1. Language planning was implemented based on the existing language situation. On the one hand, this meant legitimizing the status quo. On the other hand, it meant legitimizing change either by constructing its historical legacy or by overemphasizing its perceived tradition.
2. Language planning was based on traditional Chinese scholarship and also used traditional Chinese scholarship.
3. Wei Jianguo’s language concept stayed the same, even if it was phrased differently in the different regimes: the People’s Republic of China vs. the Republic of China.

These claims are investigated in the context of the above-mentioned consolidation after the identity crisis described by Kaske. The question or problem was already formulated, but the answer to it, the exact outline, scope and content of the language policies were not clear. At first, the discourse on a unified national pronunciation resulted in the “old national pronunciation” (*lao guoyin* 老國音), which was not practical. Here, the fact that the Chinese speakers are split up in a considerable number of mutually unintelligible dialects plays an important role. Critics called it “blue-green Mandarin” (*lan-qing guanhua* 藍青官話) and it was not successfully implemented. This old pronunciation as a mix of several dialects was perceived as a constructed language: when the “new national pronunciation” (*xin guoyin* 新國音) modeled on the Beijing dialect was promulgated, Li Jinxi felt compelled to state clearly that “the common language is not at all artificial” (*gonggong de yuyan bing bu shi renzao de* 公共的語言並不是人造的).<sup>39</sup> The old national pronunciation was not the only unsuccessful language planning measure. Other incidents where the discourse did not achieve concrete material results were the script reform attempts of 1935 and 1977. The successful implementation of language planning schemes that involved Wei Jianguo illustrate how the concepts from the discourse needed to be feasible enough so that language planning measures could be accepted in the material world.

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38 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guyinxi yanjiu” 古音系研究 [Research on the ancient sound system], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 1, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 1–331.

39 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, “Quanguo guoyu yundong dahui xuanyan” 全國國語運動大會宣言 [Declaration of the countrywide national language movement assembly], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 29 (1925), 1–7, see 3.



While the reality on the ground can be characterized through the language situation, many non-linguistic factors influenced the implementation of language reforms. Drawing examples from many different languages, Daniel Bunčić demonstrated that the success of writing reforms are also heavily affected by sociological and political factors and especially by their timing.<sup>40</sup> A low literacy rate may facilitate the adoption of a reformed script, since there would be less opposition from people who already know how to write. This was surely the case with the implementation of the simplified characters (*jiantizi* 简体字 or *jianhuazi* 简化字). As this dissertation will demonstrate, the timing in China's case was characterized by frequent political turmoil during the Republican era, leading to a slow implementation of language reforms. The beginning of the PRC then can be seen as a time of radical political and linguistic change: *putonghua* (普通话 / 普通話, lit. "common speech") was promulgated as the standard language and the script was reformed. It is quite likely that both low literacy rate and the political new start, along with the establishment of new institutions, also helped. In contrast, the "Second round of simplified Chinese characters (Draft)" (第二次汉字简化方案 (草案))<sup>41</sup> of 1977 was not implemented successfully as it probably came at a less favorable time: immediately after the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) ended.

In this dissertation, my three claims can be sustained by the following facts:

Claim 1: A Beijing-based *guoyu* is, as one local variety of the Northern Mandarin dialect family, indeed a natural language. It goes back to the pronunciation of the "central plains" (*Zhongyuan* 中原) which were a *de facto koiné* since Yuan 元 times (1271–1368). However, the language planners who argued in favor of a Northern Mandarin standard language over-emphasized this fact. As well, they deliberately downplayed the role of a more eclectic pronunciation standard that was used by the scholar-officials over centuries; this standard used the Nanjing 南京 variety as the phonetic point of reference. Wei Jiangong skillfully used certain evidence and ignored the other in order to legitimize his agenda. Moreover, simplified characters were by no means a new invention, but the majority of them already existed as non-standard shorthand forms.

Claim 2: Historical phonology formed the scholarly basis and tool for legitimization for *guoyu* as well as simplified characters. Traditional teaching and reference material, such as rhyme books, were used. For example, the *Yinyun chanwei* 音韻闡微 (1726) was used in the Conference for the unification of reading pronunciations (*Duyin tongyi hui* 讀音同一會, 1913), and the *Zhonghua xinyun* 中華新韻 (1941) Wei Jiangong compiled to promulgate the new national pronunciation was arranged like a traditional rhyme book (in the *Zhongyuan yinyun* 中

40 Bunčić, Daniel, "Factors Influencing the Success and Failure of Writing Reforms", in: *Studi Slavistici* 14 (2017), 21–46.

41 Spaar, Wilfried, "Die Diskussion um den 'Entwurf zur zweiten Schriftreform'", in: *Zielsprache Chinesisch. Beiträge zur Sprachbeschreibung und -Unterrichtung*, ed. by Kubin, Wolfgang, Bonn: Hermann Kessler Verlag für Sprachmethodik, 1986, 155–175.

原音韵 tradition, not the *Qieyun* 切韻 tradition).<sup>42</sup> The newly established phono-semantic compound characters (*xingshengzi* 形聲字) in the script reform were in some ways similar to the creation of characters millennia ago: a semantic and a phonetic component were combined to create a character. The historic phonetic nature of that script was re-established through creating new characters with a traditional method.

Claim 3: Wei Jiāngōng's concept of language sees language as a tool for the communication via sounds; the script only represents these sounds. Therefore, language must be employable as tool. If it is not understood, it makes no sense as language. While the same is the case for the script, the script comes second and is a mere visual representation of the sounds. As a result, the script must also observe its duty of faithfully representing the spoken word; otherwise, it is useless.

As already pointed out in section 1.1 on page 21, examining the language (and script) discourse through Wei Jiāngōng's eyes on the basis of his texts will show that he is a suitable case study to examine language planning in China in the 20th century.

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<sup>42</sup> The *Qieyun* predates the *Zhongyuan yinyun* and is structured according to the tones. The *Zhongyuan yinyun*, in contrast, is the first rhyme book to have the rhymes as organizing category of the highest order, which are then divided into tones. More explanations follow in section 4.1.2 on page 104.

Part I

Sound (*yin* 音)



## Chapter 2

# The Standard Language

What is the historical linguistic background that preceded Wei Jiangong's activity? What existing concepts of standard language could he rely on? How can his activities be seen in a greater context? This chapter provides general information before we begin discussing Wei's own writings and concepts.

### 2.1 General Development

Recent scholarship has questioned some widespread views on the Chinese language situation of the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, Shang Wei deconstructed the diglossic opposition of classical and vernacular languages presented by the May Fourth language reformers.<sup>1</sup> Simmons doubted that the Beijing dialect was always the reference point for the standard language. He pointed out that a mixed standard still enjoyed popularity until the 1940s in the form of Latinxua Sinwenz. In the Qing dynasty, the *koiné* of the imperial officials was based on the Mandarin dialects of the Jiangnan 江南 region.<sup>2</sup> While all the technical terms and details will be discussed below, I will describe a few general developments in seven steps. In this way, I can set the scene for Wei Jiangong and his colleagues' construction of Northern Mandarin as a standard language.

The first step is the nation-building project and the need to make China competitive in a modern world. Language is seen as a key criterion for national unity, which is jeopardized by many centrifugal forces in the late Qing and the Republican era. This would include wars, the warlords, supporters of a federation, and the ethnic pluralism. The perceived lack of both a standard language and a phonetic script was seen as an impediment for achieving modernity or even the cause

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1 Shang, Wei, "Writing and Speech: Rethinking the Issue of Vernaculars in Early Modern China", in: *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000–1919*, ed. by Elman, Benjamin A., Leiden: Brill, 2014, 254–301.

2 Simmons, Richard VanNess, "Whence Came Mandarin? Qing Guānhuà, the Běijīng Dialect, and the National Language Standard in Early Republican China", in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 137 (2017), 63–88, see 65.

for China's looming annihilation. These issues can be seen as "imported" from the West: modernity, nationalism, or the prejudice that Chinese is somehow unfit for modern times.

The second step is the *baihua* 白話 vernacular literature project. As outlined by Jeffrey Weng, the intellectuals involved envisaged a new kind of society where "all the nation's people would have access to the new official language".<sup>3</sup> This democratic concept of language as universally understandable, however, yielded only a written and not an actual spoken standard. This is where Wei Jianguo enters the language discussion.

The third step is Mandarin (*guanhua* 官話), itself a challenging term: it denotes not only several distinct language varieties but also Modern Standard Chinese.<sup>4</sup> The term itself shows its constructed legacy as the language of the officials (*guan* 官), the Mandarins. That Mandarin was a supra-regional standard language and evidence of this in the form of rhyme books and foreign language glossaries make Mandarin seem like the ideal solution. Yet, this standard was only loosely defined, and it is unclear if it was really a spoken *koiné* of all people or just a *lingua franca* of the small group of scholar-officials. Furthermore, as Coblin already argues, the standard shifted from a southern to a northern pronunciation,<sup>5</sup> and Simmons has pointed to the example of the 1805 *Lishi yinjian* 李氏音鑑 (Mr. Li's discriminating appraisal of pronunciations) that a mixed phonology of several Mandarin dialects might have been rather widespread.<sup>6</sup>

The fourth step is the introduction of the Beijing dialect as the standard.<sup>7</sup> Step three and four should be examined synchronously, since the concept of Mandarin played the main role as a legitimizing argument for the Beijing dialect. While the linguists and language reformers saw the potential of the Beijing dialect as one of many Mandarin varieties with many native speakers and several mutually intelligible sister dialects, their argument went rather directly from the old, eclectic *guoyu* to the Beijing dialect, and Mandarin as a legitimizing link gained preva-

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3 Weng, Jeffrey, "What is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language Standardization in Early Republican China", in: *The Journal of Asian Studies* 77.3 (2018), 611–633, see 611.

4 On the different dimensions of "Mandarin", such as a local variety, a dialect family, a common language of the scholar-officials and standard language, see: Sanders, Robert M., "The Four Languages of 'Mandarin'", in: *Sino-Platonic Papers* 4 (1987), 1–14. and below. On the differences between the standard language in the PRC and in Taiwan, see: Klöter, Henning, "Tāiwān/PRC Divide and the Linguistic Consequences", in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 4, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 260–263.

5 Coblin, W. South, "A Brief History of Mandarin", in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120.4 (2000), 537–552.

6 Simmons, Richard VanNess, "Whence Came Mandarin? Qīng Guānhuà, the Běijīng Dialect, and the National Language Standard in Early Republican China" (2017), 64, 68ff.

7 To be exact, even before the introduction of the pronunciation of a Beijing-pronunciation-based Mandarin as official standard language, reformers like Wang Zhao 王照 (1859–1933) saw the Beijing dialect as standard Mandarin pronunciation. Wang Zhao proposed a transcription for the Beijing pronunciation called "Mandarin syllabary" *Guanhua* [hesheng] *zimu* 官話 [合聲] 字母. Cf. Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 132–134. For a table of Wang's characters see Zhou Youguang 周有光, *Hanzi gaige gailun* 漢字改革概論 [Introduction to the reform of the Chinese characters], Aomen 澳門: Erya she 爾雅社, 1978, 59. and for Wang's adventurous biography, see De Francis, John, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China* (1957), 40ff.

lence in their legitimization reasoning afterwards. The advocacy of the Beijing dialect, however, proved rather difficult: the Republic was subject to all kinds of centrifugal forces and political unrest, and many intellectuals still harbored disdain for the Manchu rulers, who were associated with their capital, Beijing. Some of these intellectuals were actually southerners, and the Beijing dialect was a foreign tongue to them.

This leads us to step five: providing the Beijing dialect with historical legitimacy. Wei Jiāngōng's main activities in language planning can be subsumed under this step. He and the other linguists constructed a historical legitimacy for the Beijing dialect and argued why only Beijing Mandarin is a feasible national standard language. They use tradition and traditional methods to legitimize Beijing Mandarin, such as presenting its historical pedigree. At the same time, they used modern linguistics for legitimization by demonstrating its suitability as a standard.

Step six is the implementation of the Beijing-based standard with a notable number of traditional tools. A successful implementation in turn provided the language reform endeavors with additional legitimacy, as I demonstrate in the Chapter on Taiwan.

The seventh and last step is the change of rhetoric in the PRC: While at its core, *putonghua* is the same language as *guoyu*, the legitimization strategies had to be cleansed of all Republican-era nationalist rhetoric and fully integrated into the Marxist narrative of class struggle. This not only provided legitimacy for the PRC language policies but also delegitimized the ROC.

## 2.2 Background

The main part of this dissertation deals with Wei Jiāngōng's involvement in the planning of the “national language” *guoyu* 國語. At the time, *guoyu* referred to the standard language of the Republic of China (ROC) and is still the name of the standard language in Taiwan. Wei Jiāngōng was involved in its planning and promotion during the Republican era on the Chinese Mainland and in Taiwan from 1946 to 1948. His activities during his stay in Taiwan will be discussed in the next chapter. While the Republic of China in Taiwan still refers to their standard language as *guoyu*, Wei Jiāngōng returned to the Mainland in 1948 and continued living in the People's Republic of China, where the standard language was to be called *putonghua* (common speech).

The establishment of *guoyu*, however, was neither fast nor easy. During its long history as an empire, China was in a state of diglossia: the educated elite expressed themselves in the prestigious classical literary language *wenyan* 文言, while the spoken language of the rest of the population was divided into many dialects.<sup>8</sup> To understand each other, the scholar-officials, who were usually in

<sup>8</sup> According to Ferguson, the prestigious language variety is usually referred to as “High” = H, the less prestigious regiolects as “Low” = L. Ferguson, Charles A., “Diglossia”, in: *Word* 15 (1959), 325–40. The extent of diglossia as a suitable description for the Chinese language landscape is disputed;

positions far away from their hometowns, reportedly spoke “Mandarin” *guanhua* 官話” as a sort of *koiné*.<sup>10</sup> I use the term *koiné* instead of *lingua franca*. The former refers to one supra-regional language variety that is part of the main language in a given speaker community, while the latter can also denote a language that is not related at all to the prevalent languages and is a third language used by two speakers of mutually unintelligible languages to communicate.

This is just a coarse, broad-brush description of the Chinese language situation before the 20th century that excludes many important details. However, it would be helpful to explain why China faced the “language question” (*questione della lingua*)<sup>11</sup> at the turn of the century and debated it extensively during the New Culture Movement.

As early as 1898, Qiu Tingliang 裘廷梁 (1856–1943) expressed the view that the fact that the European nations each used their own vernacular dialect in writing and no longer relied on Latin or Greek enabled their entire populace to become educated and dominate the world.<sup>12</sup> He coined the euphemism “plain speech” (*baihua*) to refer to the vernacular that was formerly called “vulgar speech” (*suhua* 俗話) in his 1898 article “Baihua is the root of modernization” (Lun Baihua wei weixin zhi ben 論白話為微信之本).<sup>13</sup> Shocked by the might of the Western powers and rapidly modernizing Japan, previously regarded as a tributary state of Chinese empires, Chinese intellectuals also wanted to modernize quickly and find an answer to the question of national language. In particular, the victory of Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) was seen as an outcome of the general education system that was recently implemented. Therefore, Chinese reformers wanted to introduce mass education to strengthen China and its position in the world. They began to debate if and how the Chinese language could serve such an education system.<sup>14</sup>

Shortly after the establishment of the Republic of China (Zhonghua minguo 民國) in 1913, the Conference for the unification of reading pronunciations (Duyin tongyi weiyuanhui 讀音統一委員會) convened and decided that an amalgam of

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it may be more accurate to speak of different styles. Cf. Vetrov, Viatcheslav, “Zur Dekonstruktion des Un/Gesunden in philologischen Taxonomien: Westlich-chinesischer Renaissance-Diskurs”, in: *Oriens extremus* 51 (2012), 231–268. Rosner, Erhard, *Schriftsprache: Studien zur Diglossie des modernen Chinesisch* (Chinathemen 74), Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1993. Sun Dejin 孙德金, *Xiandai shumian Hanyu zhong de wenyan yufa chengfen yanjiu* 现代书面汉语中的文言语法成分研究 [Research of the *wenyan* grammatical components in modern written Chinese], Beijing 北京: Shangwu yinshuguan 商务印书馆, 2012.

9 Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) / London 5: Harvard University Press, 2018, 25.

10 An explanation and discussion of the term as well as scholarship and the development of *koinés* is covered by Siegel, Jeff, “Koinés and koineization”, in: *Language in Society*, 14.3 (1985), 357–378.

11 The *questione della lingua* was a topic in Italy during the Renaissance. See: Hall Jr., Robert A., “The Significance of the Italian ‘Questione della Lingua’”, in: *Studies in Philology* 39.1 (1942), 1–10.

12 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 77.

13 Qiu Tingliang 裘廷梁, “Lun Baihua wei weixin zhi ben” 論白話為維新之本 [Baihua is the root of modernization], in: *Zhongguo guanyin baihuabao* 中國官音白話報 [China Mandarin pronunciation vernacular journal] 20 (1898), 1–4. Qiu’s article is discussed by Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 106.

14 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 77.



the pronunciation habits of many dialects should be the standard. While school curricula gradually included more and more of the national language (first the written standard *guowen* 國文, then, the spoken standard, *guoyu*), this heterogeneous pronunciation faced criticism. This first national pronunciation standard came to be known as “old national pronunciation” *lao guoyin* (or blue-green Mandarin, see 4.1.1, page 99). In the 1920s then, it was replaced by the “new national pronunciation” *xin guoyin*, which was modeled on the Beijing dialect. While this decision is similar to the *questione della lingua* in that the issue was solved by adopting the Chinese equivalent of Tuscan, namely the Beijing dialect as one of the many Chinese dialects, it was actually, as perceived by Wei Jiangong, a little bit more than that: the Beijing-based *guoyu* also incorporates, according to Wei Jiangong and other linguists, a certain history as court language and as a *koiné*.

Using the example of Wei Jiangong’s writings, this dissertation will demonstrate that the Beijing dialect was constructed as an inevitable standard language. Wei argued that Beijing not only served as the political center of the last three dynasties but also as the linguistic center with a long-standing pronunciation standard. The Beijing dialect is framed by Wei Jiangong as the representative form of the Mandarin dialect group and a product of the city’s melting-pot nature. He argued that the Beijing dialect provided the pronunciation standard for a Chinese *koiné* spoken among the scholar-officials: Mandarin, *guanhua*. However, it remains to be seen which exact kind of pronunciation standard was intended by that. More detailed explanations are provided below.

The first intellectual movement for the vernacular was the so-called *baihuawen yundong* 白話文運動, the movement for a *written* vernacular language, led by the famous Hu Shi. But what about the actual *pronunciation*? This is exactly the question Wei Jiangong addresses in his capacity as historical phonologist and dialectologist. For Wei and the other participants of the national language movement (*guoyu yundong*), such as Li Jinxi, the following statement by Yuen Ren Chao (Zhao Yuanren) is true:

The phonological aspects of Mandarin have always been the main concern of those who have taken part in the unification of the language.<sup>15</sup>

Phonology (*yinyunxue* or *shengyunxue*; the study of sounds and rhymes, or the study of initials and rhymes) is one of the three main disciplines of the traditional Chinese philology, the “minor studies” *xiaoxue*. Wei Jiangong and his colleagues, well-versed in classical Chinese scholarship, and eager learners of scientific methods recently developed in the West, transformed this auxiliary science for the exegesis of the Confucian classics into a tool for modern-day language planning. Apart from the linguistic main aspect, nationalism and the struggle for universal education provided the political and social framework.

As stated in the introduction, in the beginning of the 20th century, the Chinese intellectuals found themselves in an identity crisis. Levenson described in his three-volume *Confucian China and its Modern Fate* how Confucianism as the

15 Chao, Yuen Ren, “Some Contrastive Aspects of the Chinese National Language Movement”, in: *Aspects of Chinese Sociolinguistics*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976, 97–106, see 101.

traditional Chinese frame of reference had eroded away. In the late 19th century, Confucianism was gradually no longer being practiced and had lost its influence on society as a result of the promotion of “Chinese learning as substance, Western learning for application” (*zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong* 中學為體，西學為用).<sup>16</sup> This was subsequently paired with the iconoclastic rejection of traditional Chinese beliefs.<sup>17</sup> Some modernizers, such as Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879–1942), went so far as to call for the suppression of everything that was considered impractical.<sup>18</sup>

An element perceived as impractical and an impediment to modernization, and therefore necessary universal education, was the Chinese language and script. They were even seen as inferior to those of the West. The new goal was a national standard language like any other full-fledged “nation”. This endeavor can be seen in connection with all the other pursuits of transforming the former Qing Empire into a modern nation-state.

Therefore, it is quite unsurprising that language planning endeavors during the Republican era are framed in nationalist narrative, which include the struggle for progress of China and raising the populace’s level of education. National cohesion and international competitiveness represent the master discourse. Also present, but in an increasingly subversive manner, was the socialist inspiration.<sup>19</sup> It was to gain the upper hand with the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949, and class struggle was established as master narrative of the simplification of the script, which I discuss in the last chapter.

Three interdependent levels can be distinguished in Wei Jianguong’s activities: description, standardization and promotion of *guoyu*. In less abstract terms, these activities consist of research, contestation and teaching, or more general, prescription. In these activities themselves, or in the texts about them, he presents his concepts of language and linguistics. They form the basis of this discussion and are always examined against a political background.

The following chapter 3 (page 51) describes Wei Jianguong’s journey from activist to language planner. He started as a Peking University student who took

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16 Levenson, Joseph R., *Confucian China and its Modern Fate – Volume Two: The Problem of Monarchical Decay*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, 114.

17 Levenson, Joseph R., *Confucian China and its Modern Fate – Volume One: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, xiii.

18 Levenson, Joseph R., *Confucian China and its Modern Fate – Volume One: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (1958), 125. While Chen and leftist circles in the 1920s and 30s did indeed see the old education as “poison left over from feudalism”, they also perceived the anti-traditional critiques of liberal intellectuals such as Hu Shi or Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940) as surrender to Western “cultural aggression” and imperialism. See Levenson, Joseph R., *Confucian China and its Modern Fate – Volume One: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (1958), 126, 141.

19 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 205. Yurou Zhong shows, how the Republicans of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang [Guomindang] 國民黨, KMT) and the Communists of the Chinese Communist Party (Zhongguo gongchandang 中國共產黨, CCP) pursued different alphabetic spelling schemes Zhong, Yurou, *Chinese Grammatology: Script Revolution and Literary Modernity, 1916–1958* (2019), 67ff. A further examination of the different political ideologies and especially the important role of anarchism and internationalism of the language reformers can be found in: Müller, Gotelind, *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001.

part in the New Culture Movement (*xin wenhua yundong* 新文化運動), and criticized traditional culture and the classical written language (*wenyan*). The young Wei Jiāngōng can be called “reformist” or even “revolutionary”: he rejected values that were passed down, advocating for changes in language, script and society. During the 1920s, 30s and 40s and in the course of this chapter, his promotion of *guoyu* became more and more institutionalized. This resulted in Wei Jiāngōng’s official appointment as leader of the Taiwan Committee for the Promotion of the National Language (Taiwan sheng Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui; described in Chapter 5.1 on page 139). Parallel to the growing level of institutionalization and the official legitimization of Wei Jiāngōng’s language planning efforts was a gradual shift from description to prescription. His normative approach, standing at the basis of language planning (which is telling people how they should speak) is founded on language description. In other words, he started with researching language, and his norms are based on his findings. This is also what I mean by language reforms being based on certain concepts of language and linguistics.

In more general terms, the following chapters discuss Wei Jiāngōng’s involvement in the *guoyu* movement as well as texts about *guoyu* in Mainland China. Following a chronological order, I will present his texts about *guoyu* within the historical context of the period from the 1920s to the 1950s. To explain Wei Jiāngōng’s mindset as a May Fourth student and a social activist with broad interest, I will outline some of his relevant activities as a student.

Wei Jiāngōng became involved in the national language movement (*guoyu yundong*) in his last year as a Peking University student. His first texts about *guoyu* that I was able to locate date from 1925, the year he started to work for the “National Language Weekly” (*Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊) magazine. We will see that he was a fierce fighter for *guoyu*. Wei Jiāngōng assumed his first official position as a member of the Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language (Guoyu tongyi choubuihui) in 1928 after spending a year in Korea to teach Chinese. He then dove deeply into what would later provide him with the most scholarly recognition: phonological reconstruction. Here, he gave the Beijing pronunciation a historical basis. He traced the modern standard language back to what is today often termed Old Mandarin. The question of the entering tone will be discussed, as well as the historical rhyme books that formed the basis of *guoyu*. Another subsection then presents Wei Jiāngōng’s involvement in the official pronunciation dictionary *Zhonghua xinyun* 中華新韻. Following this, Wei Jiāngōng’s teacher training will be covered. Didactics are an important foothold of the promotion of *guoyu*, playing a role in Wei Jiāngōng’s career as early as 1920. At this point, he was involved in teaching in evening schools. The first part of this *guoyu* chapter then ends with presenting the “Principles” of the *guoyu* movement.

## 2.3 The *Guoyu* 國語 Movement

The advocates of a national language (*guoyu*) of the 1920s were already well aware that they were part of a “movement”. While Wei Jiangong was a student at Peking University (1919–1925), some of his teachers were among the most important actors within the movement, especially Qian Xuantong and Li Jinxi. In addition to their awareness of their “movement”, they were also conscious that the “national language movement” (*guoyu yundong*) already looked back on a certain history. The term “national language movement” as well as the first account of the movement’s history, was first coined by Hu Shi in 1921.<sup>20</sup> In his speech, Hu Shi described how the movement started with the motivation to educate the uneducated by promoting vernacular journalism and a phonetic script, accompanied by growing institutionalization and publication of teaching material, until the intellectuals finally realized that they also needed to adopt *guoyu* as their own language and to create a “national language literature”. Finally, the “phase of a coordinated movement for the national language” was reached; “the vernacular language, the phonetic alphabet, national language textbooks, and a national language literature [...] were promoted in concert.”<sup>21</sup>

Ever since China’s perceived state of diglossia was first criticized as an impediment to the education of the people and progress of the nation, along with the “congruence of speech and writing” *yan wen yizhi* 言文一致 (Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲, 1848–1905) and the advocacy of script reform (Lu Zhuangzhang) in the late 19th century until the beginning of the 1920s, important changes already took place. In 1913, the Conference for the Unification of Reading Pronunciations (Duyin tongyi hui) was established; the Republic of China Association for the study of the national language (Zhonghua minguo guoyu yanjiuhui 中華民國國語研究會) was founded in 1916. In 1919, the Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language (Guoyu tongyi choubui hui) was created. In 1920, *guoyu* replaced the national literary language (*guowen* 國文) in the primary school curricula for grades 1 and 2.<sup>22</sup> Both terms, *guowen* as “national written language” (in the schools a “modernized and simplified classical style” was preferred)<sup>23</sup> and *guoyu*, were imported from Japan.<sup>24</sup>

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20 Hu Shi 胡適, “Guoyu yundong de lishi” 國語運動的歷史 [The history of the national language movement], in: *Jiaoyu zazhi* 教育雜誌 [Education magazine] 13.11 (1921), 8–9.

21 Hu Shi 胡適, “Guoyu yundong de lishi” (1921). English translations from Kaske, Elisabeth, “National Language Movement”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 139–144, see 140.

22 Kaske, Elisabeth, “National Language Movement” (2017), 141–142.

23 Kaske, Elisabeth, “Mandarin, Vernacular and National Language – China’s Emerging Concept of a National Language In the Early Twentieth Century”, in: *Mapping Meanings: The Field of New Learning in Late Qing China*, ed. by Lackner, Michael and Vittinghoff, Natascha, Leiden: Brill, 2004, 265–304, see 291.

24 *Kokubun* 國文 and *kokugo* 國語, see Kaske, Elisabeth, “Mandarin, Vernacular and National Language – China’s Emerging Concept of a National Language In the Early Twentieth Century” (2004), 286–287, 291.

### 2.3.1 *Baihua* 白話

The *guoyu* movement was preceded and influenced by the movement for a vernacular literature, or *baihua* movement, *baihuawen yundong* 白話文運動. Interestingly, while *baihua* is the better known movement, these two movements are notably interlinked in terms of aims, concepts and spokespersons. The term *baihua* (clear or plain speech) is complicated, since it has been used with several different meanings. Elisabeth Kaske defines it as follows in the *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*:

Báihuà 白話 (Vernacular Written Chinese)

*Báihuà* 白話, lit. ‘clear speech’ or ‘unadorned speech’ refers to Vernacular Chinese, a written language that is opposed to *wényán* 文言, lit. ‘literary speech’ or ‘ornate speech’, Literary Chinese or Classical Chinese. The term *báihuà* mainly denominates:

1. A non-standard vernacular style found in written sources from the Táng until the Qīng dynasty which is thought to have been closer to the spoken language than the dominant literary standard at the time (*wényán*). In this sense, the meaning of *báihuà* overlaps with ‘Early Modern Chinese’ (*Jīndài Hànyǔ* 近代漢語).
2. A written language close to the spoken language, also called *báihuàwén* 白話文, that has become the literary standard of modern Chinese since the May Fourth Movement of 1919. In this sense the term overlaps with ‘Modern Chinese’ (*Xiàndài Hànyǔ* 現代漢語).<sup>25</sup>

The fact that two possible definitions of *baihua* exist are proof that the term can be stretched to mean different things. Shang Wei demonstrated how May Fourth scholars defined it as “a written language based on the spoken language used by ‘the people (*renmin*)’” to promote their agenda of “progressive culture” with a “living language (*huo de yuyan*)”, opposed to the classical *wenyan* as “a dead language (*si de yuyan*)”. They projected this into their reading of pre-modern literature.<sup>26</sup>

Linguistically speaking, the literary vernacular is the written evidence we have from Early Modern Chinese. Many of the spoken language varieties forming the foundation of this written vernacular survived until today as “dialects”.<sup>27</sup> The dichotomy between *baihua* and *wenyan* is the invention of May Fourth intellectuals, such as Hu Shi, who learned about the decline of Latin and the rise of the different national languages in the Europe of the Renaissance. They identified Latin with *wenyan* and *baihua* (Written Early Modern Chinese) with languages such as Italian or French. In this fashion, *baihua* acquired the meaning of “vernacular” in addition to its original meaning, “plain speech”.<sup>28</sup> Promoting *baihua*

25 Kaske, Elisabeth, “Báihuà 白話 (Vernacular Written Chinese)”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 266–269, see 266.

26 Shang, Wei, “*Baihua*, *Guanhua*, *Fangyan* and the May Fourth Reading of *Rulin waishi*”, in: *Sino-Platonic Papers* 117 (2002), 1–10, see 2.

27 While the term “dialects” can be perceived as a pejorative term, no value judgement is intended from my side. Instead, Söderblom Saarela suggests the use of “varieties”. Söderblom Saarela, Márten, “Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)” (2015), 40.

28 Söderblom Saarela, Márten, “Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)” (2015), 49–50.

and creating a more accessible literature came to be known as the “Literary Revolution” or “Literary Renaissance”.<sup>29</sup>

The import of the European concept of the “vernacular” into the Chinese context was carried out by missionaries, beginning with Francisco Varo (1627–1687) and his *Arte de la lengua mandarina* (“Grammar of the Mandarin Language, 1703), where he uses the term “romance” to describe colloquial Chinese expressions and his own language, Castilian. Both are rendered as “vernacular” in the English translation by Coblin and Levi,<sup>30</sup> introducing us to Ibero-Romance language development and the rise of the European vernaculars.<sup>31</sup> Some aspects about Varo’s explanation are fascinating in the light of *baihua* research. He juggles with Spanish (i.e. the Castilian vernacular of the time) and Latin *without* imposing this dichotomy onto the Chinese language situation, where he attests three “modes of speaking”: 1. “high and elegant, [...] spoken in the way that it is written”, 2. “medium [...] understood by the great majority” and 3. “coarse and vulgar and is used to preach to women and to peasants”.<sup>32</sup> Varo leaves out the first mode: classical Chinese. Varo presents the “vernacular novels” *siào xuě* [*xiaoshuo*] 小說 as a corpus of the latter two modes (especially the second, since he equates it to Cicero and Virgil).<sup>33</sup> The second mode is used to communicate with the officials, the mandarins.<sup>34</sup> With these facts, we are already halfway to the May Fourth intellectuals’ definitions and to the next important language concept that will be described below: Mandarin as the language of the officials.

The influence of Western missionaries remained important. Carstairs Douglas (Du Jiade 杜嘉德, 1830–1877), a Presbyterian from Scotland,<sup>35</sup> identified “the regional [spoken] “languages” as “vernaculars” similar to the European national languages”. Douglas perceived the entire written language as “dead”, a view which was not accepted by the Chinese elites, but Qiu Tingliang “singled out classical Chinese as his target and went on to endorse the use of *baihua* writing

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29 Hu Shi, *The Chinese Renaissance*, New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1963, 48. This is a collection of Hu Shi’s lectures at University of Chicago during the summer of 1933 when he was appointed as a Haskell lecturer.

30 Coblin, W. South, and Joseph A. Levi, *Francisco Varo’s Grammar of the Mandarin Language (1703). An English Translation of ‘Arte de la Lengua Mandarina’*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000, 75, 79.

31 On Romance as vernacular and on the development of the term “romance” into the French (and later German) word for “novel”, see Lee, Christine S., “The Meanings of Romance: Rethinking Early Modern Fiction”, in: *Modern Philology* 112.2 (2014), 287–311. At a conceptual level, this interestingly can be linked to the *baihua* novels. The other interesting aspect connecting the Chinese and the Spanish situations is that the term “Romance” was first used to describe “new ways of writing” and not of speaking, see Valle, José del (ed.), “The prehistory of written Spanish and the thirteenth-century nationalist zeitgeist”, in: *A political history of Spanish. The making of a language*, ed. by Valle, José del, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 31–43, see 31.

32 Coblin, W. South, and Joseph A. Levi, *Francisco Varo’s Grammar of the Mandarin Language (1703)* (2000), 17–19.

33 Coblin, W. South, and Joseph A. Levi, *Francisco Varo’s Grammar of the Mandarin Language (1703)* (2000), 4–7.

34 Coblin, W. South, and Joseph A. Levi, *Francisco Varo’s Grammar of the Mandarin Language (1703)* (2000), 61, 191, 211.

35 Klöter, Henning, “Missionary Linguistics”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 41–46.

in light of the replacement of Latin by the European vernaculars”.<sup>36</sup> As Shang Wei has pointed out, however, introducing *baihua* instead of *wenyan* simply replaced one elitist form of *writing* with another, and the strict dichotomy between the two was essentially fabricated by the May Fourth reformers.<sup>37</sup> But the question of a national language addressed by Wei Jiangong and his peers remained: how should it be *pronounced*?

The May Fourth scholars added a spoken dimension to the written vernacular *baihua(wen)*. After all, it was a literary language that needed to be studied. The scholars connected it to *guanhua* (Mandarin = language of the officials), the *koiné* since Ming 明 times (1368–1644) that facilitated oral communication between the groups of the population that traveled. It was therefore “transregional” and “cosmopolitan”, rather different from the European vernaculars.<sup>38</sup> Their approach was also not far from that taken by Varo. This is how *baihua* as written vernacular came to be associated to a certain pronunciation. Concerning grammar and vocabulary, there was a considerable overlap with spoken Northern Vernacular.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.3.2 *Guanhua* 官話

The Chinese linguists, especially Wei Jiangong, named “Mandarin” *guanhua* 官話 as the direct predecessor of *baihua*, and claimed that it was based on the Beijing dialect. Their debate and their reasoning will be covered below. However, before I begin, I will outline the difficulties about this claim.

First of all, the English term “Mandarin” can mean different languages today. Robert Sanders provides a list:

1. Idealized Mandarin: Today’s standard language, *putonghua* in the PRC, *guoyu* in Taiwan.<sup>40</sup> Wei Jiangong was one of the linguists who participated in describing, constructing and legitimizing this idealized standard language.
2. Imperial Mandarin: Spoken by the scholar-officials of imperial China. Sanders admits that it cannot have been thoroughly standardized.<sup>41</sup> There is also a certain debate about its pronunciation during specific time periods. Since the concept of Imperial Mandarin fueled the legitimization strategies of Wei Jiangong and the linguists, this is an important question.
3. Geographical Mandarin: Nowadays known as “Mandarin dialects” (*guanhua fangyan* 官話方言), it is spoken by the majority of people in China. It is grouped together along phonetic features, ignoring lexical and syntac-

36 Shang, Wei, “Writing and Speech: Rethinking the Issue of Vernaculars in Early Modern China” (2014), 259. On Qiu, see also Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 77, 106ff.

37 Emphasis was placed on “writing” since original utterances were altered when written down in *baihua*. Shang, Wei, “Writing and Speech: Rethinking the Issue of Vernaculars in Early Modern China” (2014), 260, 284–285, *passim*.

38 Shang, Wei, “Writing and Speech: Rethinking the Issue of Vernaculars in Early Modern China” (2014), 260.

39 Söderblom Saarela, Mårten, “Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)” (2015), 50.

40 Sanders, Robert M., “The Four Languages of ‘Mandarin’” (1987), 2.

41 Sanders, Robert M., “The Four Languages of ‘Mandarin’” (1987), 5–6.

tical disparities.<sup>42</sup> As they are mostly spoken in the North, they can also be referred to as *beifang fangyan* 北方方言.<sup>43</sup> Wei Jianguo called the area *guoyu quyu* 國語區域 (see 4.2.1 on page 120).

4. Local Mandarin: the speech of a local community, such as Beijing (also the Beijing dialect will play an important role). Sanders emphasizes that there are native Mandarin speakers in places where the language has developed naturally, as opposed to those speakers, especially in the South, that were subject to language planning.<sup>44</sup>

The Western term “Mandarin” was coined by European missionaries and literally refers to its second meaning, the language spoken by the imperial scholar-officials. According to Victor H. Mair, it was adapted to English from the Portuguese word “mandarim”, which was influenced by “mandar”, “to command”, “to order”. Its origins are found in the Malay word *mantri*, which in turn was borrowed from Hindi-Urdu; it can be traced back to the Sanskrit word *mantrin*, “counsellor”. *Guanhua* can be understood not only as language of the officials but also as official language.<sup>45</sup> Wei Jianguo was to make this point as well.

So what did Mandarin sound like? As we will see in the course of this dissertation, Wei Jianguo and his peers legitimized a national language based on the Beijing dialect by claiming that Imperial Mandarin had already been modeled on it since the city became the capital. Coblin, Kaske and Simmons, however, pointed out that this is a stark simplification, if not a misconception. “Southern pronunciation” (*nanyin* 南音) modeled on Nanjing phonetics and encompassing five tones was the prestige pronunciation until the middle of the 19th century. Only after that did the “northern pronunciation” (*beiyin* 北音) with four tones slowly gain prestige. Variant literary readings (e.g. *shai* vs. *se* 色) that have survived until to the present day are derived from the southern pronunciation.<sup>46</sup> Simmons proposes that this shift of prestige did not only happen because of the location of the Qing court in Beijing but also due to Western and Japanese envoys coming to the capital to learn the local Mandarin variety.<sup>47</sup>

In the early 20th century, the Beijing pronunciation still did not gain enough prestige to be regarded as undisputed reference point for a standard Mandarin pronunciation. Many intellectuals were southerners, and the Qing court was perceived as an alien regime. Therefore, the first version of the “national pronunciation” (*guoyin* 國音) promulgated by the Conference for the unification of

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42 Sanders, Robert M., “The Four Languages of ‘Mandarin’” (1987), 6–7.

43 Coblin, W. South, “A Brief History of Mandarin” (2000), 537.

44 Sanders, Robert M., “The Four Languages of ‘Mandarin’” (1987), 9–10.

45 Mair, Victor H., “What is a Chinese ‘Dialect/Topolect’?”, in: *Sino-Platonic Papers* 29 (1991), 1–31, see 11–12.

46 Simmons, Richard VanNess, “Whence Came Mandarin? Qīng Guānhuà, the Běijīng Dialect, and the National Language Standard in Early Republican China” (2017), 66–67. Simmons’ discussion is based on Coblin and Kaske: Coblin, W. South, “A Brief History of Mandarin” (2000). Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008).

47 Simmons, Richard VanNess, “Chinese and Western understanding of China’s standard language in the late 19th century”, unpublished manuscript presented at the conference “Language Diversity in the Sinophone World: Policies, Effects and Tradition”, Göttingen University, June 12, 2015.



reading pronunciations (Duyin tongyi hui) was an amalgam of several dialects and rather close to that Nanjing Mandarin.

Gradually, due to the efforts of Li Jinxi in particular, the preference shifted towards the Beijing-based *guanhua* in the 1920s, and a “new national pronunciation” was promulgated (see below). Also Wei Jianguo assigned the prominent role to the Beijing pronunciation, such as in his article “Historical draft of Chinese phonology” (*Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang* 中國聲韻學史綱). He claimed that there are three systems (*san ge xitong* 三個系統) within the standard language (*biao zhun yu* 標準語):

1. 正則官話——北平音系
2. 藍青官話——南京音系
3. 變蛻官話——杭州音系<sup>48</sup>
1. Proper Mandarin — Beiping [= Beijing]<sup>49</sup> pronunciation system
2. Blue-green Mandarin — Nanjing pronunciation system
3. Variable Mandarin — Hangzhou pronunciation system<sup>50</sup>

This blue-green Mandarin is also the term that critics used to designate the “old national pronunciation” (*lao guoyin* 老國音). What is striking here is that by associating blue-green Mandarin with the Nanjing pronunciation system, Wei also associates the mix of regional pronunciations promulgated as the national pronunciation by the 1913 Conference for the unification of reading pronunciations (Duyin tongyi hui) with the Mandarin variety that served as *lingua franca* or *koiné* before Beijing or Northern Mandarin gained prevalence. In this fashion, Wei acknowledges the phonetic similarities of the two.<sup>51</sup>

The conceptual interdependency between northern dialects, Mandarin, and standard language (explicitly as “*guoyu*” and, in the PRC, “*putonghua*”) has also been summarized by the phonologist Zhu Jianing of Taiwan. He also stresses Li Jinxi’s role as advocate of the Beijing pronunciation.<sup>52</sup>

As I will describe below, Wei Jianguo also perceived the Beijing pronunciation as the most suitable for a standard, because of Beijing’s role as the capi-

48 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang*” 中國聲韻學史綱 [Historical draft of Chinese phonology], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 2, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 73–225, see 134–35.

49 During the Nanjing Decade (1927–1937), Nanjing was the capital of the Republic of China; Beijing was then called Beiping.

50 The Hangzhou dialect classification is indeed tricky, as it has characteristics of Mandarin and Wu 吳 dialects. See Simmons, Richard VanNess, *Chinese Dialect Classification. A comparative approach to Hargjou, Old Jintarn, and Common Northern Wu* (Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science 188), Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999, 1.

51 As Kaske demonstrates, this was also obvious to the participants of the conference. Quoting K. Hemeling, she states that by 1907, the Nanjing Mandarin variety was “no longer a serious rival for supremacy of that of Peking”. Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 415.

52 Zhu Jianing 竺家寧, *Shengyunxue* 聲韻學 [Phonology], Taipei 臺北: Wunan tushu chubanshe 五南圖書出版公司, 2012, 67–78.

tal, political center, and melting pot. According to Wei, the Beijing dialect was “koineized”: it mixed with other regional varieties.<sup>53</sup>

The view that accepting the Chinese culture is the only precondition to become a member of the Chinese empire and a subject of the emperor is also held by Wei Jianguo.<sup>54</sup> The definition of “Chinese” was not an ethnic one. Everyone who accepted the supremacy of the Chinese emperor (who was a Manchu during the Qing dynasty) could become part of his empire. The emperor had the claim of ruling over “all under heaven” *tianxia* 天下. This concept changed when China was confronted with the threat of the Western powers, who introduced a modern concept of “nation” and of “diplomacy”. These Western concepts were very different from the tributary system that shaped the exchange with foreigners in imperial times. What was formerly a Chinese empire had to transform itself into a “nation” and acquire the required features, such as a more or less homogenous national language. Homogeneity of the citizens’ language (as representative of their ethnicity) provided legitimization to a state with a determined border and clearly defined citizenship.<sup>55</sup>

All these concepts were used by Wei Jianguo and his contemporaries as legitimization for a national language, *guoyu*, that would exist in a written and in a spoken dimension and to realize the “congruence of language and writing” (*yan wen yizhi* 言文一致, sometimes also called *yan wen heyi* 言文合一).<sup>56</sup> Similar

- 53 Siegel summarizes that “the original *koiné* comprised features of several regional varieties, although it was based primarily on one of them. However, it was reduced and simplified in comparison.” This variety of Greek became the “lingua franca of the eastern Mediterranean during the Hellenistic and Roman periods”. Siegel, Jeff, “Koinés and koineization” (1985), 358. Since the term can be used for every “de-regionalized” variety that has established itself as the standard language within a system of different regional varieties, it more accurately describes the role of Mandarin in China, rather than *lingua franca*, which does not have to be a genetically related language. Cf. Bußmann, Hadumod, “Koiné”, in: *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008, 344–345. See also: Bußmann, Hadumod, “Lingua Franca”, in: *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008, 408–409.
- 54 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “‘Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” [‘國語運動在臺灣的意義’] 申解 [Thorough explanation of ‘The purpose of the national language movement in Taiwan’], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 306–16, see 306–7.
- 55 The challenges of nationalism for China merit much more discussion. For more information, see Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York: Verso, 2006. and Matten, Marc Andre, *Die Grenzen des Chinesischen: Nationale Identitätstiftung im China des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Veröffentlichungen des Ostasien-Instituts der Ruhr-Universität, Bochum 54), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz-Verlag, 2009.
- 56 Huang Zunxian introduced the concept in 1898 from Japan in his “Description of Japan” (*Ribenben guo zhi* 日本國志), see Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 91. For Wei Jianguo, the slogan meant not only overcoming the perceived state of diglossia but also making the script a more faithful representation of the spoken language, both of which should be standardized. See Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “‘Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 313–14. and Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Wenzi gaige wenti he zhengzifa (wenzi guifan) wenti” 文字改革問題和正字法 (文字規範) 問題 [The question of script reform and the question of making the characters correct (script planning)], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 612–638, see 614.

to *guoyu*, this slogan reached China from Japan.<sup>57</sup> However, when Wei Jiangong joined the *guoyu* movement in the 1920s, the movement was in crisis.

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57 Kaske, Elisabeth, “Mandarin, Vernacular and National Language – China’s Emerging Concept of a National Language In the Early Twentieth Century” (2004), 286–87.



## Chapter 3

# Wei Jianguo as linguist activist

How did Wei Jianguo first become involved in *guoyu*? What were his earliest texts on the matter? Who influenced him? How did he position himself within the New Culture Movement? Were his arguments in favor of *guoyu* connected with other concerns of the revolutionary intellectuals of that time? How did he argue against the classical language? This chapter introduces the young Wei Jianguo and his first experiences as teacher, journalist, student activist and vigorous spokesperson for a modern national language.

### 3.1 May Fourth Peking University Student

Wei Jianguo can be described as a May Fourth student. The May Fourth and the New Culture Movement (these two terms sometimes overlap) have been described elsewhere. Here, a concise overview of some main aspects will enable us to better understand Wei Jianguo's motivations, the period he lived in, and the events and debates that took place at his time.

The “May Fourth Movement” (*wu si yundong* 五四運動) 1919 as a specific incident has been described as “a student-led anti-imperialist reaction to China's mistreatment at the Versailles treaty negotiations”,<sup>1</sup> where the former German colony on the Shandong Peninsula was given to Japan. Levenson called its political dimension “a surge of feeling against the Japanese expropriators of Shantung province, etc., their World War allies, and their Chinese official creatures”, while describing the cultural dimension of it as a movement “against the temper and institutions of China, which had allegedly made her such easy, helpless game”.<sup>2</sup>

1 Schneider, Laurence A., *Ku Chieh-kang and China's New History: Nationalism and the Quest for Alternative Traditions*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971, 4.

2 Levenson, Joseph R., *Confucian China and its Modern Fate – Volume One: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (1958), 125.

Many of the participants (including Wei Jiangong) of this “New Culture Movement” (*xin wenhua yundong*), “a multifaceted attempt to find the internal sources of China’s weakness”,<sup>3</sup> advocated modernization in order to “save the nation” (*jiu guo* 救國). Internally, they criticized cultural traditions that were passed down, especially Confucianism and its emphasis on hierarchy, familial authority and “ritualized subordination”, wanting to replace it with science and democracy imported from the West.<sup>4</sup> This is also the reason why Schwarcz likens the movement to the European Enlightenment.

Hu Shi, himself involved in the New Culture Movement, terms it “The Chinese Renaissance”: he perceived not only the individual’s protest against and emancipation from traditional culture as a crucial part of it but also the promotion of “a new literature in the living language of the people” and the study of the cultural heritage “with the new methodology of modern historical criticism and research.”<sup>5</sup>

In view of the “totalistic iconoclasm” of New Culture intellectuals like Chen Duxiu,<sup>6</sup> the movement did of course spur opposition from cultural conservatives or traditionalists, who envisaged a more Chinese modernity closer to traditional values.<sup>7</sup> Zhang Shizhao 章士釗 (1881–1973) was a member of this group, and he will play a role in this dissertation. Some intellectuals were afraid that too much reform and doing away with all cultural tradition would lead to the extinction of China. They argued, for example, in favor of the classical language that the New Culture intellectuals wanted to do away with. Some tried to distill a “national essence” (*guocui* 國粹) from traditional culture that had to be preserved.<sup>8</sup>

This first part of the first chapter establishes Wei Jiangong as a New Culture Movement student<sup>9</sup> at Peking University in three main dimensions. The first dimension is the personal dimension, showing the people with whom he had personal ties as well as his perceived enemies. We will see that Wei Jiangong collaborated with some of the most important May Fourth intellectuals. He also cooperated with Qian Xuanton and Li Jinxi in the editorship of the magazine

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3 Schneider, Laurence A., *Ku Chieh-kang and China’s New History: Nationalism and the Quest for Alternative Traditions* (1971), 4.

4 Schwarcz, Vera, *The Chinese Enlightenment. Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, Berkeley / Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1986, 3–6.

5 Hu Shi, *The Chinese Renaissance* (1963), 44.

6 Lin, Yü-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979, 7–9.

7 Fung, Edmund S. K., *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity. Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 21–22.

8 Schneider, Laurence A., “National essence and the new intelligentsia”, in: *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, ed. by Furth, Charlotte, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1976, 57–89.

9 Wei Jiangong’s son Wei Zhi 魏至 also presents his father as a “May Fourth youth” (*wu si qingnian* 五四青年), see Wei Zhi 魏至, “Junzi yi guo xing yu de – Ji Wei Jiangong xiansheng de zhixue yu weiren” 君子以果行育德——记魏建功先生的治学与为人 [The gentleman cultivates virtue with resolute action – Remembering Wei Jiangong’s scholarship and conduct], in: *Xuelin wangshi* 学林往事 [Past events in the academic world], ed. by Zhang Shilin 张世林, Beijing 北京: Chao-Hua chubanshe 朝华出版社, 2000, 797–817, see 797.

*Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 (National Language Weekly)<sup>10</sup> and argued vehemently against the traditionalist Zhang Shizhao.

The second dimension is the conceptual dimension. The concept of language Wei Jianguo put forward during the early and mid 1920s (which he will more or less adhere to for the rest of his life) is representative of the views taken by the May Fourth reformists: language and script are subject to natural changes and therefore reformable.

The third dimension is the political dimension, also extending into social issues. He was preoccupied with social issues at the core of the New Culture Movement, such as the education of the people and of women. These three dimensions are intertwined and are evidenced in the most important intellectual battlegrounds of the time: magazines. I will frame these dimensions in the historical context and decisive events of Wei Jianguo's life. Many concepts and contacts that would prove crucial to Wei Jianguo's work as a linguist and language planner already appeared during his time as a student; these would pave the way for his later career.

Wei Jianguo's interest in language and script study was already awakened during his middle school years at Nantong shengli di qi zhongxue 南通省立第七中學 (Nantong provincial middle school no. 7, 1914–1918)<sup>11</sup> by teachers such as Miao Wengong 繆文功 (Minzhi 敏之, headmaster)<sup>12</sup> and Xu Yixuan 徐亦軒 (Ang 昂).<sup>13</sup> Wei recalled that Miao, teaching *guowen*, awakened his interest in

10 The title is actually printed in Zhuyin on the front page: ㄍㄨㄛˊㄩㄛˊㄓㄨㄛˊㄓㄨㄛˊ.

11 Nowadays, the school is known as Jiangsu Sheng Nantong zhongxue 江苏省南通中学 (Nantong High School). It was founded in 1906.

12 Miao was member of the Jiangsu educators association, which listed him as headmaster of Nantong provincial middle school no. 7 and as being 45 years (*sui* 歲) old. Jiangsu sheng jiaoyuhui 江苏省教育会 [Jiangsu province educators association] (ed.), *Jiangsu sheng jiaoyuhui nianjian* 江苏省教育会年鉴 [Yearbook of the Jiangsu province educators association], vol. 1: Jiangsu sheng jiaoyuhui 江苏省教育会, 1916, 52. He was therefore probably born in 1872. (On the age in current years, see Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2018), 168.) He authored several middle school language textbooks and morality textbooks. An advertisement for his “Middle school moral education textbook” *Zhongxue xiushen jiaokeshu* 中學修身教科書 can be found in a history textbook of 1908. The advertisement describes Miao Wengong as born in Dongtai 東臺 (northwest of Nantong in Jiangsu Province) and currently occupied in teachers' education in Tongzhou 通州 (now part of Nantong). The approach of his morality textbook is described as aiming at advancing or bettering social customs by neither denying the importance of the national essence (*guocui*) nor blindly collating together the best of existing textbooks. Zhang Qin 章歆, *Zhongxue Zhongguo lishi jiaokeshu* 中國歷史教科書 [Middle school Chinese history textbook], vol. 2, Shanghai 上海: Wenming shuju 文明書局, 1908. For example, one of his books begins with the historical Chinese (我國固有之倫理學說) and ends with the newly introduced ethics teachings (新輸入之倫理學說); with the latter he means newly formulated approaches in general, not strictly Western ideas. Miao Wengong 繆文功, *Zhonghua zhongxue xiushen jiaokeshu* 中華中學修身教科書 [Chinese middle school moral education textbook], vol. 4, Shanghai 上海: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1912. A photograph of Miao can be found in: Anonymous, “Jiangsu shengli di qi zhongxue xiaozhang Miao Minzhi xiansheng” 前江苏省立第七中学校校長繆敏之先生 [Miao Minzhi, principal of Jiangsu provincial middle school no. 7], in: *Jiangsu shengli Nantong zhongxue xiaokan* 江苏省立南通中学校刊 [Jiangsu provincial Nantong middle school school paper] ershiwu zhou jinian zhuanhao 二十五周年纪念专号 [special number on the 25th anniversary] (1934).

13 Wei Nai 魏乃, Wei Zhi 魏至 and Wei Chong 魏重, Short biography (1996), 3.

paleography and sources like the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 and the *Erya* 爾雅.<sup>14</sup> Xu, teaching him *guowen* in the senior years, deepened this philological interest of Wei by teaching more about the shape, sound and meaning (*xing yin yi* 形音義) of the characters.<sup>15</sup> Wei Jianguo entered Peking University in 1919, one year later than intended due to a severe lung disease, and first enrolled in the preparatory course for English. Starting in 1921, he became a student at Zhongguo yuyan wenxue xi 中國語言文學系 (Department of Chinese language and literature, often abbreviated Zhongwenxi).

His teachers at Peking University included some of the most prolific linguists of the time, such as Qian Xuanton, Shen Jianshi 沈兼士 (1887–1947), Ma Yuzao 馬裕藻 (courtesy name Youyu 幼魚, 1878–1945), Huang Kan 黃侃 (Ligang 李剛, 1886–1935), Zhu Xizu 朱希祖 (Yaoxian 邀先), Shen Yinmo 沈尹默 (1883–1971), Chen Hanzhang 陳漢章, Liu Wendian 劉文典 (Shuya 叔雅), Zhou Zuoren, Ma Heng 馬衡, Hu Shi, Wu Mei 吳梅, Lu Xun (who taught his famous “Brief history of Chinese fiction” *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略), and Liu Bannong (Liu Fu, still studying in France at the time Wei Jianguo enrolled).<sup>16</sup> Ma Yuzao and Zhu Xizu were members of the Duiyin tongyi hui.<sup>17</sup> The humanities at Peking University were dominated by the “three Shens and two Mas” (*san Shen er Ma* 三沈二馬), which were two groups of brothers from Zhejiang 浙江 and included, in addition to the above-mentioned Shens and Mas, also Shen Shiyuan 沈士遠 (1881–1955).<sup>18</sup>

During his studies at Peking University, Wei Jianguo became involved in a number of volunteer activities, such as the students executive committee (xuesheng ganshihui 學生幹事會). I would like to point out his involvement in several commoners’ education projects. The author of his *nianpu* claims that Wei was one of the young intellectuals who advocated “saving the nation with education” (*jiaoyu jiu guo* 教育救國).<sup>19</sup> This catchphrase could not be located in Wei Jianguo’s own writings, but it is safe to say that he did indeed assign an important

14 The books date from the 1st century CE and, at least partially, and from the Western Han (202 BCE–8 CE), respectively. More information follows below.

15 Wei describes in the preface of his *Guyinxi yanjiu* that they used this textbook in class: Zhang Zhichun 張之純 and Zhuang Qingxiang 庄庆祥, *Zhongxuexiao yong gongheguo jiaokeshu wenzi yuanliu* 中學校用共和國教科書文字源流 [Origin and development of the script, Republican textbook for middle schools], Shanghai 上海: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1914. Wei also claims that he studied Duan Yucai’s 段玉裁 (1735–1815) *Shuowen jiezi* commentary at the time. Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guyinxi yanjiu” (2001), 14.

16 Ma Si 馬嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jianguo* (2007), 22.

17 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, vol. 2, (1990), juan 卷 2, p. 51.

18 Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898–1929*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, 235–236. See also Zhou Zuoren 周作人, “San Shen er Ma” 三沈二馬 [Three Shens and two Mas], in: *Beida jiushi* 北大旧事 [Old matters of Peking University], ed. by Chen Pingyuan 陈平原 and Xia Xiaohong 夏晓虹, Beijing: Sanlian shudian 三聯書店, 1998. Ma Yuzao studied in Japan and was, apart from a university professor at different institutions, also a school inspector for the Zhejiang Department of Education. See Xu Youchun 徐友春 (ed.), “Ma Yuzao (1878–1945)” 馬裕藻 (1878–1945), in: *Minguo renwu da cidian* 民國人物大辭典 [Large biographical dictionary of Republican China], ed. by Xu Youchun 徐友春, Shijiazhuang 石家莊: Hebei renmin chubanshe 河北人民出版社, 2007, 714–15.

19 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 4.



role to education and the well-being of the nation. A motto he definitely did put forward was “saving the nation through scholarship” (*xueshu jiu guo* 學術救國).<sup>20</sup>

### 3.1.1 Commoners’ Education Projects

In 1920, Wei Jiāngōng began to teach at the Peking University Common People’s Night School (Beida pingmin yexiao 北大平民夜校, located at Jingshan dongjie 景山東街, the second campus of Peking University, Beida er yuan 北大二院). In 1921, he organized a “commoners education laboratory” *Pingmin jiaoyu shiyanshi* 平民教育實驗室 alongside some teachers of the commoners evening school, and participated in opening a second evening school at the other Peking University campus, Beiheyān Beida sanyuan 北河沿北大三院.<sup>21</sup>

The Peking University Common People’s Night School was founded in 1920 by the “Beijing University Commoners’ Education Lecture Society”<sup>22</sup> or “Beijing University Commoners’ Education Lecture Corps” (Beijing Daxue pingmin jiaoyu jiangyuantuan 北京大學平民教育講演團), which was established in March 1919 by the Marxist and Beijing University graduate Deng Zhongxia 鄧中夏 (1894–1933) and others.<sup>23</sup> The Night School was supported by Cai Yuanpei, and it echoed his view that intellectuals should contribute to the education of workers. The students were indeed workers who worked in factories during the day and attended the school in the evening. Its predecessor was a series of “itinerant Sunday street corner speeches that had been started in the spring of 1919. The first class formally graduated in 1922.”<sup>24</sup>

Wei taught a teacher training class for language and literature (*yuwen* 語文) in the Night School. In the summer of 1922, Wei Jiāngōng began participating in an education project in his hometown, the “Commoners’ society of Rugao” (Rugao pingminshe 如皋平民社). This society was founded by students from Rugao in Beijing and Nanjing and was said to have had up to 100 members. It declared its aim as “study science, promote the commoners’ education, attack the local tyrants and evil gentry and corruption.”<sup>25</sup> Wei Jiāngōng managed the society’s affairs after being elected secretary of the committee for general affairs (*zongwu weiyuanhui* 总务委员会). They published “The voice of the commoners” (*Pingmin sheng* 平民聲).<sup>26</sup>

20 This is the title of an article originally published in the magazine *Mengjin* 猛進 (Vigorous progress), vol. 27, on September 4, 1925: Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Xueshu jiu guo” 學術救國 [Saving the nation through scholarship], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 443–44, see 443.

21 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 18.

22 Schwarcz, Vera, *The Chinese Enlightenment* (1986), 130.

23 Kwan, Daniel Y. K., *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement. A Study of Deng Zhongxia (1894–1933)*, Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1997, 17.

24 Schwarcz, Vera, *The Chinese Enlightenment* (1986), 131.

25 “yanjiu xueshu, tuidong pingmin jiaoyu, daji tuhao lieshen he tanwu 研究学术, 推动平民教育, 打击土豪劣绅和贪污”, see Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 38.

26 Wei Jiāngōng also participated in political projects. He and other students from Jiangsu who were studying in Beijing at Peking University, Beijing Women’s Normal University (Beijing nüzi shifan

### 3.1.2 Folklore and Dialectology

In addition to educating commoners, Wei Jianguo was also involved in the research of folklore, folk culture and dialect linguistics.<sup>27</sup> In 1921, Wei Jianguo began working as an assistant for Gu Jiegang. Together with Gu, he worked on a classification of folk songs (*geyao fenlei* 歌謠分類).<sup>28</sup>

Gu Jiegang, together with Qian Xuanton, was the most important proponent of the “Doubting Antiquity School” (*yigu pai*) that questioned traditional doctrines and sought to approach historical sources with scientific objectivity.<sup>29</sup> Alongside Hu Shi, he is perceived as a founder of “national studies” or “national learning” *guoxue* 國學.<sup>30</sup> The key concepts were actually developed by the “National Essence clique” *guocui pai* 國粹派, a group perceived to be conservative, although their idea also was to achieve modernization based on this national essence. Gu Jiegang’s “thought constantly interacted” with this very “cultural conservatism”.<sup>31</sup> The role of conservatism will be explained below.

Gu Jiegang, Liu Fu (Liu Bannong), Shen Yinmo, Zhou Zuoren, Hu Shi, Chang Hui 常惠 (Chang Weijun 常維鈞, 1894–1985),<sup>32</sup> Qian Xuanton, Shen Jianshi,

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daxue 北京女子師範大學, BWNÜ) and other institutions, united in the “Jiangsu pure criticism society” (Jiangsu qingyi she 江蘇清議社). Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jianguo* (2007), 38. The term “pure criticism” (*qingyi*) goes back to Eastern Han dynasty (25–220) and refers to the practice of determining the worth of candidates for public office by assessing their characters in brief phrases. See: Tang Yiming 唐翼明, *Wei-jin wenxue yu xuanxue – Tang Yiming xueshu lunwenji* 魏晋文学与玄学 – 唐翼明学术论文集 [Literature and mysticism of the Wei and Jin – collected academic works of Tang Yiming], Wuhan 武汉: Changjiang wenyi chubanshe 长江文艺出版社, 1914, 159. See also: Williams, Nicholas Morrow, “The Metaphysical Lyric of the Six Dynasties”, in: *T’oung Pao* 98.1–3 (2012), 65–112, see 68. Alan Chan describes *qingyi* as “protest movement” of scholar-officials who criticized “alleged abuses of powerful palace eunuchs” (and translates *xuanxue* 玄學 as Neo-Daoism). Cf. Chan, Alan K.L., “Neo-Daoism”, in: *History of Chinese Philosophy* (Routledge History of World Philosophies 3), ed. by Mou, Bo, London / New York: Routledge, 303–323, see 304.

27 Wei Jianguo published many articles in the magazine “Folk songs” (*geyao* 歌謠) and was its editor from 1936 to 1937. Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 25.

28 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 4.

29 Richter, Ursula, *Zweifel am Altertum. Gu Jiegang und die Diskussion über Chinas alte Geschichte als Konsequenz der “Neuen Kulturbewegung” ca. 1915–1923* (Münchener Ostasiatische Studien 60), Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992, 182.

30 The term *guoxue* emerged in the early 1900s; its core denoted Chinese traditional studies or the study of Chinese (ancient) history and culture. Facing the fear of being overpowered by a seemingly more advanced Western culture, this branch of study also hoped that the studies of the past could lead China towards self-awareness and independence in the future. See Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2018), 68. and Schneider, Laurence A., *Ku Chieh-kang and China’s New History: Nationalism and the Quest for Alternative Traditions* (1971), 27. It hoped for a “revival of China’s intellectual heritage, comparable to the rediscovery of Greek thought in the European renaissance.” Kurtz, Joachim, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic*, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2011, 294.

31 Schneider also summarizes how the *guocui pai* begun with anti-Manchu nationalism and anti-monarchism before 1911, then “pseudo-monarchical restorationism”, then anti-Westernization during World War I and opposition to the New Culture movement. See Schneider, Laurence A., *Ku Chieh-kang and China’s New History: Nationalism and the Quest for Alternative Traditions* (1971), 33.

32 According to Gao, “one of the most active participants of the Folklore Movements, cf. Gao, Jie, “Promoting “Low Culture”: The Origins of the Modern Chinese Folklore Movement”, in: *Canadian Journal of History* 50.1 (2015), 3–29, see 13.

Wei Jianguo and others formed the “Modern Chinese Folklore Movement”.<sup>33</sup> It emerged in 1918 at Peking University and is seen as a “branch” of the New Culture Movement”. Its members hoped to “use their academic training to save the nation by rediscovering traditions and enlightening the common people”. Their concept of folklore encompassed “popular songs, stories, beliefs, and customs”.<sup>34</sup>

For Wei Jianguo and the other language standardizers in the Republican era, folksongs were seen as a repository of the vernacular. Furthermore, Gu Jiegang and others believed that folk literature and folksongs could best represent the spirit or the character of the nation, that it revealed the glory of the past and could be used to save the nation.<sup>35</sup>

Gu Jiegang had collected 100 songs of the Suzhou 蘇州 region, which belong to the Wu dialect<sup>36</sup> group. This “First collection of songs of Wu” (*Wu ge jia ji* 吳歌甲集) was studied by Wei Jianguo<sup>37</sup> and Qian Xuanton under Gu’s auspices, and they made an effort “isolating and systematizing the tones and rhymes in the dialect of Soochow, and thereby initiating a new era in the study of Chinese phonetics.”<sup>38</sup> This makes Wei Jianguo part of the folk literary movement led by Gu Jiegang. Its motto was phrased by Harriet Zurndorfer as “Back to the people”.<sup>39</sup> This motto can be seen in the context of Wei Jianguo’s life in two ways: a sociopolitical and in a linguistic dimension. The sociopolitical dimension was to provide education to all members of society, as seen in his commoners education projects. The linguistic dimension was to include formerly marginalized dialects and folk literature in academic research. The study of historical phonology in particular was stimulated by dialectology, as illustrated by the groundbreaking work of Bernhard Karlgren.<sup>40</sup>

33 Gao, Jie, *Saving the Nation Through Culture: The Folklore Movement in Republican China*, Vancouver / Toronto: UBC Press, 2019, 55.

34 Gao, Jie, *Saving the Nation Through Culture: The Folklore Movement in Republican China* (2019), 3.

35 Hung, Chang-tai, *Going to the people: Chinese intellectuals and folk literature, 1918–1937*, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard Univ. Press, 1985, 17. This connection to nationalism can also be detected at the example of the Grimm brothers in Germany, see Hung, Chang-tai, *Going to the people: Chinese intellectuals and folk literature, 1918–1937* (1985), 14. I am thankful to Frank Kouwenhoven for suggesting this important read to me.

36 On the Wu dialect, see: You Rujie, “Wú 吳 Dialects”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 602–607.

37 Wei Jianguo’s resulting publication is: Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Wu ge shengyunlei” 吳歌聲韻類 [The rhyme categories of the folk songs of Wu], in: *Beijing daxue yanjiusuo guoxuemen zhoukan* 北京大學研究所國學週刊 [Weekly review of the Institute of Sinology of Peking University] vols. 1, 2, 10, 11, 12, 13 (1925–26).

38 Ku Chieh-kang, *The Autobiography of a Chinese Historian. Being the Preface to a Symposium on Ancient Chinese History (Ku Shih Pien)* (Sinica Leidensia 1), Leiden: Brill, 1931, 145.

39 Zurndorfer, Harriet T., *China Bibliography. A Research Guide to Reference Works about China Past and Present*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995, 23.

40 Trachsel, Yves, and Wolfgang Behr, “Karlgren, Klas Bernhard Johannes (1889–1978)”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 2, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 485–592.

One important effect that folklore<sup>41</sup> and dialect research had on Wei Jiangong was his awareness around the relation between spoken language and script. As early as 1920, he wrote to Gu Jiegang asking about the dialect words<sup>42</sup> in these folk songs.<sup>43</sup> The question of the relation between spoken word and script will be discussed further in part III in section 7.1.1 on page 194.

Did Wei Jiangong's own dialect identity play any role for his academic research? The Rugao dialect is a Mandarin dialect, usually referred to as one kind of Jiang-Huai Mandarin (*Jiang-Huai guanhua* 江淮官话 or Lower Yangzi Mandarin, *Xiajiang guanhua* 下江官话). However, the Wu dialect border runs through the southeast of Rugao.<sup>44</sup> Wei Jiangong must therefore have been familiar with the Wu dialects from his personal life. "The northern Wu region and the Southern Mandarin region, comprising the Wu and Jiang-Hwai Mandarin border, are historically closely inter-linked."<sup>45</sup> The Rugao dialect has several features that most Mandarin dialects, especially the Beijing dialect, no longer have, such as the entering tone (with a glottal stop, in this case), or the velar nasal initial<sup>46</sup> [ŋ].<sup>47</sup> These phonetic features will play a role below in the discussion of the "old" and "new" national pronunciation.

This personal dialect identity and scholarly experience of Wei Jiangong contributed to his role of "legitimizer" of a Beijing-dialect-based *guoyu*. He was well-versed with many of the different pronunciations in China and their history. His Rugao dialect was still a Mandarin dialect: it was related to what would later become the standard for *guoyu*. At the same time, the Rugao dialect has also retained so many characteristics of historic features, such as the entering tone, that

41 On Wei Jiangong and folk literature, see: Duan Baolin 段宝林, "Wei Jiangong xiansheng yu minjian wenxue - Jinian Wei Jiangong xiansheng bai nian huadan" 魏建功先生与民间文学——纪念魏建功先生百年华诞 [Wei Jiangong and folk literature - Commemorating Wei Jiangong's One Hundred's birthday], in: *Xi-Bei Minzu Yanjiu* 西北民族研究 [N. W. Minorities Research] 2 (Total No. 33) (2002), 107-118.

42 I here decided to translate *zi* 字 as "word", because Wei Jiangong is preoccupied with spoken entities of meaning in an oral tradition.

43 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Guanyu geyao zhong zheng su zi wenti gei Gu Jiegang xiansheng de yi feng xin" 關於歌謠中正俗字問題給顧頔剛先生的一封信 [Letter to Mr Gu Jiegang about the question of standard- and non-standard-characters in folk songs], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集, ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 3, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 1-3.

44 Jiangsu sheng difang zhi bianzuan weihuanhui 江苏省地方志编纂委员会 [Jiangsu province local gazetteer compilation committee] (ed.), *Jiangsu sheng zhi. Fangyan zhi* 江苏省志. 方言志 [Jiangsu province gazettee. Dialect gazettee], Nanjing 南京: Nanjing daxue chubanshe 南京大学出版社, 1998, map.

45 Simmons uses the Gwuoeyu Romatzyh transcription. Simmons, Richard VanNess, *Chinese Dialect Classification. A comparative approach to Harngjou, Old Jintarn, and Common Northern Wu* (1999), ix.

46 Traditionally, the Chinese syllable (which is nearly always represented by one character) is analyzed in an initial and a final; the latter can be further analyzed into a medial and a rhyme, which again can be split into a nucleus and an ending. Walton, A. Ronald, *Tone, Segment, and Syllable in Chinese: A Polydimensional Approach to Surface Phonetic Structure*, Ithaca: China-Japan Program, Cornell Univ., 1983, 34. Example: q-[i-a-ng].

47 Jiangsu sheng difang zhi bianzuan weihuanhui 江苏省地方志编纂委员会 [Jiangsu province local gazetteer compilation committee] (ed.), *Jiangsu sheng zhi. Fangyan zhi* (1998), 91-93.

are otherwise only present in non-Mandarin dialects. In this fashion, he was able to find suitable explanations that would convince the southerners.

### 3.1.3 The Theater Debate

Wei Jianguo was also an active participant in discussions that were not directly related to language. I will outline his contacts with Lu Xun<sup>48</sup> to illustrate Wei Jianguo's personal connection to important intellectuals of the May Fourth period, as well as his many activities and interests. In addition, these contacts also show how the magazines of the May Fourth period were the battleground of the time. From 1920 on, the famous writer Lu Xun lectured at Peking University about the history of Chinese fiction.<sup>49</sup> In the academic year beginning in 1922, Wei Jianguo was a second year student at the Department of Chinese language and literature at Peking University (Zhongwenxi) and started to attend Lu Xun's class. By that time, he had already read and was deeply influenced by several of Lu Xun's short stories, such as the "Diary of a madman" (*Kuangren riji* 狂人日記) or "How to be a father today" (Women xianzai zenyang zuo fuqin 我們現在怎樣做父親).<sup>50</sup>

Another noteworthy person was in Beijing and teaching Esperanto<sup>51</sup> at Peking University at that time: the blind Ukrainian poet and Esperantist Vasili Yakovlevich Eroshenko.<sup>52</sup> He lived at Lu Xun's and his brother Zhou Zuoren's house, and Lu Xun supported him and helped to make him known by translating Eroshenko's writings, mostly from Japanese.<sup>53</sup> A rather unpleasant correspondence between Wei Jianguo and Lu Xun, who wrote on behalf of Eroshenko, began after Wei Jianguo and the Peking University experimental drama group (Beida xiju shiyanshe 北大戲劇實驗社) staged Tolstoy's<sup>54</sup> "The Power of

48 I have to note that while it is important to outline Wei Jianguo's network and involvement with society, Chinese secondary literature often over-emphasizes his contacts with the well-known historical figures to legitimize him as their topic. So does, for example, his biographer, see Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jianguo* (2007), 253ff.

49 The lecture notes were subsequently published and formed the basis for his book as "A Brief History of Chinese Fiction" (*Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略). Wang, John C. Y., "Lu Xun as a Scholar of Traditional Chinese Literature", in: *Lu Xun and His Legacy*, ed. by Lee, Leo Ou-Fan, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, 90–103, see 92–93.

50 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Yi sanshi niandai de Lu Xun xiansheng" 憶三十年代的魯迅先生 [Remembering the Lu Xun of the 30s], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Xenzheng 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 540–64, see 540, first published in *Wenyi bao* 文藝報 10, 1956.

51 Esperanto was seen by some intellectuals, especially among enthusiasts of anarchism, as a solution for China's language problems. See Müller, Gotelind, *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus* (2001). and Munning, Mariana, "Concepts of Language in the Debate on Esperanto in the Early Twentieth Century", in: *Orientierungen* 24.2 (2012), 1–21.

52 Vasilij Jakovlevich Eroshenko Василий Яковлевич Ерошенко (1890–1952). Wei Jianguo knew about Esperanto; intellectuals like Qian Xuantong, who would become his teacher shortly thereafter, debated its applicability as a world language or even as a substitute of Chinese. However, it seems Wei Jianguo himself stayed silent upon the matter of Esperanto.

53 Müller, Gotelind, *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus* (2001), 493–94.

54 Lev Nikolaevič Tolstoj Лев Николаевич Толстой, 1828–1910; Chinese: Tuorsitai 托爾斯泰.

Darkness” (Heian de shili 黑暗的勢力) at the 24th, accidentally labelled 25th anniversary of the university on December 17, 1922.<sup>55</sup> Eroshenko attended the performance, and he also attended the performance of the female students of the Womens’ College of Yenching University (Yanjing nüxiao 燕京女校), who played Shakespeare’s “Much ado about nothing” (Wu feng qi lang 無風起浪).<sup>56</sup> While the Peking University group comprised only male students, the Womens’ College group was made up entirely of female students. Peking University accepted the first female student Wang Lan 王蘭 in 1920, but it appears the experimental drama group did not contain women.<sup>57</sup>

Lu Xun translated Eroshenko’s reaction to these plays and it was published in the “Supplement to the Morning Post” *Chenbao fukan* 晨報附刊. Eroshenko put forward the opinion that despite its long history, China did not have good theater. From all civilized countries, China was the only one in which men and women could not play together on one stage. While a man having several wives was not considered immoral, men and women acting together on stage was. With regard to the performance of the Peking University students, Eroshenko brought forward several points of critique: they did not seem to really engage with the story or really know what, who and where they were playing, and their expressions of emotions seemed artificial.<sup>58</sup>

Wei Jianguo was very hurt. On January 7, 1923 he formulated the polemic and furious reply “Bu gan mangcong” 不敢盲從 ([I] don’t dare to follow blindly), in which he sarcastically thanked Eroshenko for lecturing him, and said that reading his text gave him so much pain that he even shed tears. He defended the state of theater in China by saying that the field has only just started to develop and had already made significant progress.<sup>59</sup> To counter the allegation of bad acting, Wei Jianguo pondered how a blind person would have been able to “see” (*kan* 看) that.<sup>60</sup> Published in *Chenbao fukan* on January 13, 1923, “Bu gan mangcong” was accompanied by a note of the editors saying that they were aware of the incorrect attitude of the author but still wanted to preserve the original wording and asked the reader for forgiveness.<sup>61</sup>

Wei Jianguo’s article spurred a reaction by Lu Xun, who made clear that he translated Eroshenko’s words and did not mix his own opinion into the arti-

55 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Yi sanshi niandai de Lu Xun xiansheng” (2001), 542.

56 Ailuo xianke 愛羅先珂 [Eroshenko; translated by Lu Xun], “Guan Beijing daxue xuesheng yanju he Yanjing nüxiao xuesheng yanju de ji” 觀北京大學學生演劇和燕京女校學生演劇的記 [Notes on watching the acting of the students of Peking University and of Yenching Womens’ College], in: *Chenbao fukan* 晨報附刊 [Supplement to the Morning Post] (1923), 2, see 2. Today, “Much ado about nothing” is usually translated as “Wu shi sheng fei 無事生非” in Chinese.

57 Ma Si 馬嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jianguo* (2007), 33.

58 Ailuo xianke 愛羅先珂 [Eroshenko; translated by Lu Xun], “Guan Beijing daxue xuesheng yanju he Yanjing nüxiao xuesheng yanju de ji” (1923), 2.

59 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Bu gan mangcong” 不敢盲從 [[I] don’t dare to follow blindly], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮興, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江蘇教育出版社, 2001, 391–95, see 391.

60 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Bu gan mangcong” (2001), 393.

61 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Bu gan mangcong” (2001), 395.

cle. Lu Xun criticized Wei Jiāngōng's sharp sarcasm, while agreeing that young people already fought so hard to improve the situation of theater and the arts vis à vis the traditional culture.<sup>62</sup> Several reactions of other figures, including Zhou Zuoren (who wrote about the circumstances of Eroshenko's blindness) and members of the Peking University experimental drama group, were published in *Chenbao fukan*. Whether or not it was possible for men and women to act on the same stage was hotly debated, too. Several articles, maybe even the entire debate, were reprinted in *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* vol. 5. Gotelind Müller mentions the hostile reactions of the students towards Eroshenko's views on Chinese theater as one of many clashes which eventually made Eroshenko leave Beijing. Eroshenko had the impression that many Chinese young men viewed women merely as objects of sexual pleasure.<sup>63</sup>

Although this particular debate about the theater performance ended quickly, it was to resurface again during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when the communists held Lu Xun in especially high esteem.<sup>64</sup> Wei Jiāngōng was accused of “opposing” (*fandui* 反对) Lu Xun and severely criticized,<sup>65</sup> and labeled as an “opponent [in a debate] of Lu Xun” (Lu Xun *de lundì* 鲁迅的论敌).<sup>66</sup> As early as in the 1950s, Wei Jiāngōng already explained his position and his polemic article by saying that he felt that criticizing men disguised as women but not women disguised as men was unjust. He also apologized for his discrimination against a blind person.<sup>67</sup> After Wei Jiāngōng's death, his son Wei Zhi authored an article in which he defended his father and said that he was young, full of vigor, and that the entire event was a misunderstanding.<sup>68</sup>

During and after the debate, Wei Jiāngōng continued to attend Lu Xun's class on Chinese fiction. Sun Fuyuan 孫伏園 (1894–1966)<sup>69</sup> introduced the two personally,<sup>70</sup> and Wei Jiāngōng was a guest in Lu Xun's house on several occasions.<sup>71</sup> Lu Xun then was involved in one of Wei Jiāngōng's education projects. In 1925, Wei Jiāngōng took part in setting up the middle school Liming zhongxue 黎明中學 in

62 Lu Xun 鲁迅, “Kanle Wei Jiāngōng jun de “Bu gan mangcong” de ji ju shengming” 看了魏建功君的《不敢盲從》以後的幾句聲明 [Some sentences of clarification after reading Wei Jiāngōng's “[I] don't dare to follow blindly”], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 399–401, see 399–400.

63 Müller, Gotelind, *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus* (2001), 496.

64 Leese, Daniel, *Die chinesische Kulturrevolution 1966-1976*, München: C. H. Beck, 2016, 90.

65 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 253.

66 Wei Zhi 魏至, “Junzi yi guo xing yu de – Ji Wei Jiāngōng xiansheng de zhixue yu weiren” (2000), 800.

67 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Yi sanshi niandai de Lu Xun xiansheng” (2001), 542.

68 Wei Zhi 魏至, “Junzi yi guo xing yu de – Ji Wei Jiāngōng xiansheng de zhixue yu weiren” (2000), 800.

69 Sun Fuyuan 孙伏园 was another New Culture Movement intellectual standing in for Europeanization, founding member of the New Tide society (Xinchao she 新潮社), editor of *Yusi* 語絲 (“Thread of talk”, discussed below in section 3.3.3 on page 92) and other magazines; see Schwarcz, Vera, *The Chinese Enlightenment* (1986), 121. Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898-1929* (2004), 233. and Fung, Edmund S. K., *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity* (2010), 38.

70 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 36.

71 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 60.

Beijing,<sup>72</sup> where he invited Lu Xun to teach, and Lu Xun did indeed teach there from September to December 1925.<sup>73</sup> Lu Xun was teaching at many institutions in Beijing at that time; the Beijing Women's Normal University (BWNU) will play a role in the debate outlined below that finally brings us to the question of the national language.

### 3.2 *Guoyu Zhoukan* 國語週刊 Fighting the “Tiger”

In 1925, Wei Jianguo published his first article about *guoyu* and formulated his core concepts about language. These times were difficult for the national language movement. The year 1925 was eventful and crucial for Wei Jianguo.

In 1925, before graduating from Peking University, Wei Jianguo was involved in editorial activities for the magazine *Guoyu zhoukan* (National Language Weekly). This weekly magazine was launched by Qian Xuantong and Li Jinxi in 1925.<sup>74</sup> The first volume was published in June 1925.<sup>75</sup> The duo were already publishing *Guoyu yuekan* 國語月刊 (National Language Monthly), in which they ad-

72 The address was Fengsheng hutong 豐盛胡同 in Beijing. The majority of its roughly 400 students came from the British-led Xinxueshuyuan 新學書院 in Tianjin (Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College) in the course of the anti-British and anti-foreign May Thirtieth movement (*wusa yundong* 五卅運動, 1925), see Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Yi sanshi niandai de Lu Xun xiansheng” (2001), 543. More on the *wusa yundong* can be found in footnote 87 on page 64. The 1926 overview of the school's regulations, personnel and teaching materials can be accessed online via the CrossAsia platform: Liming zhongxue jiaowuchu 黎明中学教务处, *Liming zhongxue gailan* 黎明中学概览 [Outline of Liming Middle School], Beijing: Liming zhongxue jiaowuchu 黎明中学教务处, 1926.

73 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jianguo* (2007), 61.

74 Wei Jianguo's *nianpu* states that the magazine was established in January, 1925. Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 6. Qian Xuantong's diary entry on June 9, 1925, states that he and Li Jinxi (Shaoqi 劭西) invited the following persons for dinner and announced to them that the “National language weekly” matter was completed: Shao Piaoping 邵飘萍 (1886–1926), Sun Fuyuan, Hu Shizhi 胡適之 (= Hu Shi), Su Yaozu 蘇耀祖, Li Xiaofeng 李小峰, and Xiao Jialin 萧家霖. See Qian Xuantong 钱玄同, *Qian Xuantong riji* 钱玄同日记 [Qian Xuantong's diary], vol. 2 (1923–1933), Beijing: Peking University Press, 2014, 642. Su Yaozu is listed as a member of the “Chinese education improving institute” (*Zhonghua jiaoyu gaijin she* 中華教育改進社) and part of the Committee for the teaching and study of *guoyu*” (*Guoyu jiaoxue weiyuanhui* 國語教學委員會 with Hu Shi (= Hu Shi), Li Jinxi and Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, 1900–1934; according to this list, he worked at the Beijing Changdian Normal University (Beijing Changdian shifandaxue 北京廠甸師範大學, now Beijing Normal University (Beijing shifandaxue 北京師範大學)). He contributed a *guoyu* dialogue to Wang Pu's 王璞 (disciple of Wang Zhao 王照, 1859–1933) textbook that is entirely transcribed in Zhuyin. See *Zhonghua jiaoyu gaijin she* 中華教育改進社 (ed.), *Zhonghua jiaoyu gaijin she tongshelu* 中華教育改進社同社錄 (民國十三年七月) [Membership list of the China Education Improving Institute], s.l. 1924, 93, 121. See also Wang Pu 王璞, *Wang Pu de guoyu huihua* 王璞的國語會話 [Wang Pu's national language conversations], Shanghai 上海: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1921, 53. Xiao Jialin was a companion of Wei's in several language planning endeavors and committees and also participated in the *Xinhua zidian*, as will be illustrated below. Xiao apparently also authored a textbook titled *Guoyu luomazi rumen* 國語羅馬字入門 (Introduction to Gwoyeu Romatzyh) in or around the year 1930, which I was unfortunately not yet able to locate. Gao Tianru 高天如, *Zhongguo xiandai yuyan jihua de lilun he shixian* 中国现代语言计划的理论和实践 [The theory and practice of modern Chinese language planning], Shanghai 上海: Fudan daxue chubanshe 复旦大学出版社, 1993, 154.

75 Qian Xuantong 钱玄同, “Fakanci” 發刊辭 [Editorial], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 1 (1925), 1–2.



vocated a “Chinese character revolution” (*hanzi geming* 漢字革命) in 1923<sup>76</sup> and in August of the same year, they published a “special number” on the “Chinese character reform” (*Hanzi gaige hao* 漢字改革號).<sup>77</sup> Although the question of a national standard language was intertwined with the question of script, everything related to the script will be discussed in part III beginning on page 193. Hence, Qian Xuantong was one of most influential teachers of Wei Jiangong, if not the most influential.<sup>78</sup> His teachings were formative for Wei’s concepts in phonology, as well as his career as a language planner. Qian also influenced Wei’s views on script reform.

### 3.2.1 Qian Xuantong’s Manifesto

This first volume of *Guoyu zhoukan* contained Qian Xuantong’s<sup>79</sup> editorial to “National language weekly”, dated June 12, 1925.<sup>80</sup> It was indeed written in *guoyu* or Modern Chinese. In the inaugural issue, he stated that he and Li Jinxi established this journal to talk about the national language and listed three points<sup>81</sup> to legitimize the national language movement (*guoyu yundong*).

First, he presented it as the “efficacious medicine” (*shengyao* 聖藥) to make “the Chinese nation rise from the dead” (*Zhonghua minzu qisi huisheng* 中華民族起死回生). Using *guoyu*, Chinese citizens would be able to communicate their innermost feelings (*qingsu* 情愫) to each other, education could be spread (or disseminated, popularized; *puji* 普及), and people could freely articulate their feelings and thoughts. Qian wrote that he and his fellow editors want to exter-

76 Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, “Hanzi geming!” 漢字革命! [Chinese character revolution], in: *Guoyu yuekan* 國語月刊 [National language monthly] 7.1 (1923), 5–25.

77 Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 149.

78 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiangong* (2007), 22.

79 More information about Qian Xuantong can be obtained in: Cao Shujing 曹述敬, *Qian Xuantong nianpu* 钱玄同年谱 [Chronological biography of Qian Xuantong], Jinan 济南: Qilu shushe 齐鲁书社, 1986. Zhou Zuoren describes how Qian’s views developed from “emulating antiquity” (*fugu* 復古), this translation stems from Richter, Ursula, “Historical Scepticism in the New Culture Era: Gu Jiegang and the ‘Debate on Ancient History’”, in: *Jindai Zhongguo shi yanjiu tongxun* 近代中國史研究通訊 [Newsletter for Modern Chinese History] 23, 355–388, see 360.) to “opposing emulating antiquity” (*fan fugu* 反復古) and how it also led him to start “doubting antiquity” (*yigu* 疑古, compare with Gu Jiegang). Since he realized that a lot of accepted evidence about ancient times must be doubted and that it was not possible to return to a prior state in history, paired with the political disappointment at Yuan Shikai’s 袁世凱 (1859–1916) restoration of monarchy, Qian wanted to do away with Confucian ethics and beliefs and abolish the Chinese script to achieve this. See: Zhou Zuoren 周作人, “Qian Xuantong de fugu yu fanfugu” 錢玄同的復古与反復古 [Qian Xuantong’s traditionalism and antitraditionalism], in: *Taobi chenlun: Mingren bixia de Zhou Zuoren, Zhou Zuoren bixia de mingren* 逃避沉沦: 名人笔下的周作人周作人笔下的名人 [Evading sinking: Famous persons write about Zhou Zuoren, Zhou Zuoren writes about famous persons], ed. by Liu Xuyuan 刘绪源: 1998, 366–383.

80 Also published in: Qian Xuantong 钱玄同, “*Guoyu zhoukan fakanci*” 《国語週刊》发刊辞 [‘National language weekly’ editorial], in: *Hanzi gaige yu guoyu yundong* 汉字改革与国语运动 [Chinese character reform and national language movement] (*Qian Xuantong wenji* 钱玄同文集 [Collected works of Qian Xuantong] 3), ed. by Liu Siyuan 刘思源, Feng Ying 冯英, Cui Shaoying 崔少英, Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe 中国人民大学出版社, 1999, 156–57.

81 They are enumerated in Zhuyin: ㄉㄤㄩㄛˊ.

minate (*pumie* 撲滅) the “conspiracy” (*yinmou* 陰謀) of restoring (*fubi* 復辟) the “classical Chinese prose” (*guwen* 古文<sup>82</sup> and the “school textbook for the literary language” (*Xuexiao de wenyan keben* 學校的文言課本).<sup>83</sup>

Second, Qian Xuantong proposed that the living language (*huo yuyan* 活語言) of the people should form the basis for a “new national language” (*xin guoyu* 新國語).

Third, he put forward a metaphor that might have reminded the reader of Lu Xun’s famous foreword to “Call to Arms” (*Nahan* 吶喊, 1922).<sup>84</sup> Whether or not the Chinese nation (*minzu* 民族) would persist or perish depended on the people’s (*minzhong* 民眾) awakening, and to awaken (*huanxing* 喚醒)<sup>85</sup> the people was the only mission of the intellectual class (*zhishi jieji weiyi zhi shiming* 知識階級唯一之使命).<sup>86</sup> Otherwise, he implied, China might be on the verge of a catastrophe (*huo zhi zhi wu ri* 禍至之無日) foreshadowed by the “imperialists” (*diguo zhuyizhe* 帝國主義者) England and Japan having “massacred our students and workers” (*tusha le zanmen de xuesheng he gongren* 屠殺了咱們的學生和工人) in reaction to the May Thirtieth Movement (*wusa yundong*).<sup>87</sup> While awakening the people is not an easy task, it could only be done by using the people’s living

82 While *guwen* can also refer to the old text school in contrast to the new text school, the classical written language is intended here.

83 He means Zhang Shizhao’s *Zhongdeng guowendian* 中等國文典. It is a grammar for the classical Chinese language and attempts a first definition of the concept “word” which I discuss in section 6.1.2 on page 167.

84 In the foreword, Lu Xun compares the situation of the Chinese people to the situation of people sleeping in an iron house, and they will sooner or later suffocate in it. The question he asks is if it would be better to let them sleep so that they do not become aware of their own inevitable death? Or would it be preferable to shout and wake them up so that they have the opportunity to find a way out? However, as escaping the iron house is unlikely, waking them up might just make them aware of their suffering and lead to an even more gruesome death. Lu Xun 魯迅, *Nahan* 吶喊 [Call to Arms], Beijing 北京: Renmin wenzue chubanshe 人民文學出版社, 1976, 6–7.

85 Other *guoyu* activists used the same rhetorical figure, such as Du Tongli 杜同力 (Zijin 子勁, 1898–1955), who felt that political reforms were not enough. He believed only universal education would wake the people up and lead to a thought renovation. Du Tongli 杜同力, “Gaige sixiang he huanxing minzhong de gongju” 改革思想和喚醒民眾的工具 [A tool to reform the thinking and wake up the people], in: *Guoyu zhouban* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 3 (1925), 4–7, see 4. Du graduated from the Chinese department of Beijing Normal University in 1925. He was to become active in the promotion of Gwoyeu Romatzyh and a supporter of (and during the PRC, actively involved in) the script reform. He would later also participate in the compilation of the *Xinhua zidian*. Li Ming 李明, “Du Zijin” 杜子勁, in: *Zhongguo xiandai yuyanxuejia* 中国现代语言学家 [Modern Chinese linguists], ed. by *Zhongguo yuyanxuejia bianxiezhu* 《中国语言学家》编写组 [Modern Chinese linguists’ compilation group], vol. 4, Shijiazhuang 石家庄: Hebei renmin chubanshe 河北人民出版社, 1985, 51–56.

86 Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, “Fakanci” (1925).

87 The May Thirtieth Movement was prompted by a strike in a Japanese-owned textile factory in Shanghai 上海 that began in February 1925, in the course of which a Japanese guard shot a Chinese worker on strike. This led to a large-scale demonstration on 30th May, whose participants made their way into the British concessions, where the British police opened fire and killed 10 people, many were wounded or arrested. Müller furthermore describes how the movement spurred nationwide indignation and was instrumentalized by the Communist Party: Müller, Gotelind, *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus* (2001), 529. Wei Jiangong also reacted to the *wusa yundong* in Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Jiuji bagong tongbao jinji choukuan banfa zhi jianyi” 救濟罷工同胞緊急籌款辦法之建議 [Proposal for finding a way to raise money to save our compatriots on strike], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集, ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春 and Rong Wenmin 戎文敏 and Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马

language and art (*huo yuyan he wenyi* 活語言和文藝). Hence, this language’s and art’s essence (*zhensui* 真髓) needed to be collected and studied (*souji kaocha* 搜集考察) to build a new popular art (*xin de minzhong wenyi* 新的民眾文藝).<sup>88</sup>

This legitimization strategy of Qian Xuantong can be seen as representative of what many intellectuals of that time thought. This chapter will demonstrate that Wei Jianguo picked up many of these aspects. They can be subsumed under the general epitome of nationalism, where one main argument is directed inwards and the other outwards. Inward-directed nationalism meant that all citizens should be included and equal, that all should have access to education and be able to participate in a discourse in a language that is understood by everyone in the national community. Popular means of expression became the focus of language description<sup>89</sup> with the intention to use them as a basis for prescription, i.e. language planning. This stood in stark contrast to the former elitist focus on the classical language modeled after ancient classical texts. Modernization, re-birth and a certain notion of progress is added to this “democratic” argument of a universal education. This which leads to the second argument, which is directed outwards and could be labeled the Darwinist perspective. It refers to the assertion of China vis-à-vis other countries and the ability to compete with them.<sup>90</sup>

Qian Xuantong continued his editorial by enumerating the contributors to *Guoyu zhoukan*: Wu Zhihui, Hu Shizhi (= Hu Shi), Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895–1976),<sup>91</sup> Zhou Kaiming 周凱明, Gu Jiegang, Wei Jianguo, Xiao Jialin, Du Tongli,

鎮, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 429–30. It was originally published in June 1925 in *Jingbao fukan* 京報副刊 84.

88 Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, “Fakanci” (1925).

89 The folk song research in which Wei Jianguo was also involved is described in section 3.1.2 on page 56.

90 Concepts of progress and evolution, especially from a social Darwinist viewpoint, were introduced in China in the late 19th century. They are discussed in section 7.1.2 on page 198. For a summary, see Yang Haiyan’s article, in which especially Yan Fu’s 嚴復 (1854–1921) important role as a translator is described: Yang, Haiyan, “Encountering Darwin and Creating Darwinism in China”, in: *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Darwin and Evolutionary Thought*, ed. by Ruse, Michael, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 252.

91 The scholar, writer, journalist, translator and linguist Lin Yutang was born to a Christian family in Zhangzhou 漳州, Fujian 福建 but eventually renounced Christianity. He studied at Harvard, in France, and in Leipzig, Germany, where he completed his PhD. Lin, Yü-t’ang, “Altchinesische Lautlehre”, PhD dissertation, Universität Leipzig, 1923. He was the first to propose tonal spelling, which was later realized in Gwoyueu Romatzyh (developed by Yuen Ren Chao). He also served as a secretary for Wu Zhihui, contributed to *Yusi* and other magazines and became a very productive author of English language books about China. Boorman, Howard L., “Lin Yü-t’ang”, in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, vol. 2, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 387–389.

Li Yu'an 李遇安,<sup>92</sup> Dong Weichuan 董渭川 (1901–1968),<sup>93</sup> Su Yaozu (the open enumeration ended with “.....”). He also mentioned Zhao Yuanren and Liu Ban-nong, who were abroad but expected to be back soon to contribute to the magazine.<sup>94</sup> Qian Xuantong encouraged anybody interested in *guoyu* to participate in the discussions about it and present their opinions. However he clearly and strongly rejected the “enemies” (*diren* 敵人) of the *guoyu* movement, namely those who opposed the vernacular (*baihua*) and wanted to maintain the classical language (*guwen* 古文).<sup>95</sup>

Who these “enemies” of the movement for a national language were and what “conspiracy” (see page 64) was meant will be explained in the sections 3.2.3 (page 69) and 3.2.4 (page 74). However, Wei Jiangong’s concept of language in that time period must first be described.

### 3.2.2 Wei Jiangong’s Concept of Language in 1925: Progress

Qian Xuantong’s fear that China might be annihilated was shared by many other intellectuals of that time, and Social Darwinism was a popular concept – not only in China. Qian and many thought that China needed to progress to survive. Wei Jiangong also believed in progress. However, he focused less on the Social Darwinist view and more on evolution itself. He created the concept that language and script were subjected to a progress-oriented evolution.

On June 26, Wei Jiangong wrote, and on August 26, 1925, he published “Arguing from the [general] tendency of the Chinese script that the Chinese characters – block characters – should be abolished” (Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi lun hanzi – fangkuaizi de yingai feichu 從中國文字的趨勢上論漢字——方塊字——的應該廢除) in *Guoyu zhoukan*, vol. 8.<sup>96</sup> As the title already suggests, this

92 Li Yu’an was a graduate of Beijing Normal University, teacher at the Pingmin yexiao 平民夜校 (Commoners night school, providing primary school education to adults), was employed at Zhongshan daxue 中山大學 (Sun Yat-sen University) in Guangdong 廣東. He was a frequent contributor to *Yusi*, a correspondent with Lu Xun and traveled to Europe. Li Yu’an 李遇安 [arranged by Wang Guiling 王桂玲], “Lu Xun xiansheng dui wo de jiaohui” 魯迅先生對我的教誨 [What Lu Xun taught me], in: *Wenyuan xieying* 文苑擷英 [Selected essence of the literary world], ed. by Beijing shi Zheng-Xie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 北京市政協文史資料委員會 [Beijing Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference committee for literature and history data], Beijing 北京: Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, 2000, 110–113.

93 Given name Dong Zhun 董準. He graduated from the Chinese department of Beijing Normal University in 1925, held several teaching positions and joined the KMT. In the PRC, Dong held several committee and university positions, but fell victim to the Anti-Rightist Campaign (*fan-you yundong* 反右運動), but was reinstated as vice president of Beijing Normal University afterwards. Shandong sheng Zou xian difangshizhi bianzuan weiyuanhui bangongshi 山東省鄒縣地方史志編纂委員會辦公室 [Shandong province Zou county local history gazetteer compilation committee bureau] (ed.), *Zou Xian jianzhi* 鄒縣簡志 [Zou County brief gazette] (*Zou xian difangshi congshu* 鄒縣地方史叢書 [Zou county local history series] 3): 1986, 371–372.

94 Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, “Fakanci” (1925), 1.

95 Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, “Fakanci” (1925), 2.

96 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi shang lun hanzi – fangkuaizi – de yingai feichu” 從中國文字的趨勢上論漢字——方塊字——的應該廢除 [Arguing from the [general] tendency of the Chinese script that the Chinese characters – block characters – should be abolished], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 8 (1925), 1–4.

article concerns script reform and will be discussed in detail in the according chapter. I will now identify Wei Jianguo's concepts of language and script at the core of his understanding of the role of language (written as well as spoken) for humanity. These were also decisive for his involvement in language planning throughout his life.

1. Humans can use symbols to express their will. These symbols include facial expression, gestures, utterances of all sort, and, of course, language.
2. When language finds a graphic expression, it is script, i.e. symbols with a certain shape. These shape-symbols are nothing but an equivalent of the oral expression. Script is the means to graphically record spoken language<sup>97</sup> In other words, it is a symbol of a symbol.
3. Symbols can be used in any way that is convenient: they can be altered to become simpler. The more symbols are used and altered, the more convenient they become.
4. Language and script evolve ceaselessly; preserving a specific form of language and script is obstructing natural evolution.
5. The Chinese script is already on its way to evolve into a phonetic script. While the earliest characters were pictographs, phono-semantic compound characters (*xingshengzi*) and subsequently loan characters (*jiajiezi* 假借字) arose and show this tendency.
6. A script reform, i.e. the abolition of the characters and the introduction of a phonetic script, would accelerate this natural, progressive development.<sup>98</sup>
7. A script reform would lead to a successful “thought revolution” (*sixiang geming* 思想革命) to attain freedom for the citizens. It would be a great step forward for the “people’s liberation movement” (Minzu jiefang yundong 民族解放運動).<sup>99</sup>

The core of Wei's language concept remained unchanged throughout his life. Wei Jianguo had a utilitarian concept of language: he saw it as a tool that facilitated communication between people. If this tool did not meet its ends, it can be reformed. Language referred to the uttered word; the script came second and was only a graphic representation of spoken language. The idea that these would change and that language symbols were arbitrarily agreed on by the speaker community already appeared in the early debates about a possible abolition of

97 Here, Wei comes pretty close to today's definition of script, compare Bussmann, Hadumod, “Writing (also script)”, in: *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, London / New York: Routledge, 1996, 1294.

98 Wei Jianguo would later advocate for the simplification of the characters, as will be explained in chapters 7 (page 193) and 8 (page 213) on the script reform.

99 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi lun hanzi (fangkuaizi) de yingai feichu” 從中國文字的趨勢上論漢字（方塊字）的應該廢除 [Arguing from the [general] tendency of the Chinese script that the Chinese characters (block characters) should be abolished], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 120–124. note the difference in punctuation between the *Guoyu zhoukan* and the *wenji* edition.

Chinese as a whole in the beginning of the 20th century and during the May Fourth period.<sup>100</sup>

This utilitarian concept can be juxtaposed with an idealistic concept put forward by conservatives and proponents of a “national essence”. They regarded the classical literary language as sacrosanct and the script as a key carrier of Chinese identity. Agents with these two different language concepts started a discourse already in early 20th century. One example is the debate about a possible introduction of Esperanto as official language.<sup>101</sup> Intellectuals with these two concurring mindsets were still debating in the 1920s, as will be demonstrated below.

### 3.2.3 The Adversary: The “Tiger” Zhang Shizhao

The debates of the New Culture Movement intellectuals needed an adversary. In journal articles and correspondences, in which they presented their iconoclastic ideas, they made reference to and then refuted others’ more traditional or disapproving opinions. If no opponent was to be found, they had to be made up, as Edmund S. K. Fung demonstrated at the example of the “radical” Qian Xuantong.<sup>102</sup> In 1919, he created an alter ego named Wang Yingxuan, “who attacked progressive thinkers in the voice of an old-style literatus.”<sup>103</sup> Qian’s friend Liu Bannong then took the role of arguing against this fictitious enemy. Quickly, others joined in, on both sides of the debate. Lin Shu 林紓 (1852–1924) readily stepped “into a discursive position already prepared for him and finds himself engaged in a losing battle on the enemy’s territory”.<sup>104</sup> Lin was “one of the last important prose writers in the Chinese classical style”. It was well-known fact that he was an outspoken opponent of the New Culture Movement and the new literature that it advocated.<sup>105</sup> The “debate escalated to the famous battle between the defenders of classical Chinese headed by Lin Shu and the *New Youth* [*Xin qingnian* 新青年] advocates of the modern vernacular language.”<sup>106</sup>

100 As was described in the beginning, the impression of a superior West, the reception of alphabetic scripts, and the study of Western linguistics led to the radical reorientation of language study and language planning. However, it could not be said that all newly formulated ideas were direct imports from abroad.

101 Müller, Gotelind, “Esperanto”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 2, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 192–194.

102 In his book, Fung divides the Chinese intellectuals in three groups: Liberals, radicals, conservatives. See Fung, Edmund S. K., *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity* (2010), 37–38.

103 Liu, Lydia H., *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995, 223.

104 Liu, Lydia H., *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (1995), 223.

105 Lin wrote open letters and articles to and about Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi and Cai Yuanpei, criticizing them for discarding the classical language. He felt that they were destroying the Confucian tradition, which would lead to disaster and not save China from foreign domination and decay. Lin Shu was also “the first major Chinese translator of Western fiction” (despite not reading any foreign language himself) and translated about 180 works, among which were Aesop’s Fables, works by Dickens, Dumas, Shakespeare, Cervantes and Balzac. Boorman, Howard L., “Lin Shu”, in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 382–386, see 382, 384.

106 Liu, Lydia H., *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (1995), 223.

For the *guoyu* movement, a discursive counterpart was just as crucial. However, there was no need to fabricate one. While the *guoyu* movement had already achieved important successes, such as establishing the Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language and introducing *guoyu* in the primary school curriculum, the late “Warlord Era” (1916–1928),<sup>107</sup> the year 1925 in particular, turned out to be very difficult for the promoters of a national language. Qian Xuantong, Wei Jiangong and their fellow campaigners had to defend their national language concepts against a powerful politician.

On April 14, 1925, Zhang Shizhao 章士釗 (1881–1973, style name: Xingyan 行嚴) was appointed minister of education by the provisional chief executive of the Republic of China, Duan Qirui 段祺瑞 (1865–1936).<sup>108</sup> At the time, Zhang Shizhao was disappointed by the failure of Western-style parliamentarianism and wanted to reintroduce traditional values and discipline the intellectuals and students.<sup>109</sup> He opposed the “congruence of speech and writing” (*yan wen yizhi*) and the “unification of the national language” (*guoyu tongyi* 國語統一).<sup>110</sup> He wanted to ban *guoyu* from the national curriculum and reintroduce the Confucian classics. Altogether, the *guoyu* movement suffered a blow; apart from very few activities, it was brought to a standstill. *Guoyu* was only revived in 1928 when China was reunited after the Northern Expedition.<sup>111</sup>

Who was Zhang Shizhao and why was he so hostile towards *guoyu* and *baihua*? Was he acting individually or did he have comrades-in-arms? And how do we know that he was the proclaimed enemy of the *guoyu* movement adherents? Zhang Shizhao was not only an influential political thinker, journalist and politician but also was someone who underwent a notable change of opinion.

As a young man living in the late Qing dynasty, Zhang Shizhao was an anti-Manchu revolutionary. He was even involved in assassination attempts in the early years of the 20th century. He was editor-in-chief of the magazine *Subao* 蘇報 (The Jiangsu Journal) and several other periodicals during his lifetime. Zhang Shizhao’s editorship of *Subao* in 1903 is especially noteworthy. He used the mag-

107 The Warlord Era is subject of considerable debate, since the designation of who is a “warlord” and when it actually began and ended are being discussed. It can be said that the central national government in Peking was unstable (see Sheridan, James E., “The warlord era: politics and militarism under the Peking government, 1916–28”, in: *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 12, Republican China, 1912–1949, Part 1*, ed. by Fairbank, John K., and Denis C. Twitchett, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 284–321, see 307.) and that “a number of individual military commanders exercise[d] autonomous political power by virtue of the actual or threatened use of the military force under their personal control”, see Mccord, Edward A., *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / Oxford: University of California Press, 4. Many thanks to Clemens Büttner for suggesting literature.

108 Ye, Bin, “Searching for the Self: Zhang Shizhao and Chinese Narratives (1903–1927)”, PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2009, 190.

109 Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 49.

110 Yu Jin’en 于锦恩, *Minguo zhuyin zimu zhengce shilun* 民国注音字母政策史论 [Historical discussion of the Zhuyin zimu policies during the Republic], Beijing 北京: Zhonghua shuju 中华书局, 2007, 40.

111 Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 49.

azine to publish articles against the Manchu rulers, together with important figures like Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (Taiyan 太炎, 1869–1936) and Wu Zhihui. The two Zhangs were close friends. Their anti-Qing-government articles in *Subao* led to persecution and imprisonment of Zhang Binglin. Wu Zhihui was suspected of selling Zhang Binglin out to the authorities.<sup>112</sup> Zhang Shizhao fled to Tokyo as a political refugee in 1905. Despite his revolutionary mindset, he refused to join the Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui 同盟會). In Japan, he began to systematically acquire Western learning, and from 1908 until 1912, he studied in Edinburgh and became an enthusiast for English Liberalism and the two-party-system.<sup>113</sup> Back in China after the end of the dynasty, Zhang still refused to join the Revolutionary Alliance (now renamed and fused with other organizations to form the “Nationalist Party” Kuomintang [Guomindang] 國民黨, KMT). However, at the personal invitation of Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孫中山, 1866–1925), he became chief editor of the Alliance’s official publication *Minli bao* 民立報 (The people’s stand) in 1912. In this newspaper, he published sharp criticism of the KMT politics.<sup>114</sup>

During the early republic, Zhang Shizhao was deeply involved in government activities, arguing in favor of a cabinet system and not a presidential system. Despite his and others’ efforts, Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916) adopted a presidential system, centralizing more and more power in his hands, finally proclaiming himself emperor. Zhang Shizhao took part in the Second Revolution against Yuan Shikai in 1913. In 1914, after the revolution’s failure, Zhang Shizhao fled to Tokyo, where in May he founded a monthly periodical *Jiayin* 甲寅 – *The Tiger*.<sup>115</sup> The characters *jiayin* 甲寅 of the sexagenary cycle of heavenly stems and earthly branches as well as “tiger” refer to the year 1914, the year of its founding. While Yuan Shikai tried to win Zhang Shizhao back to be part of the political leadership in Beijing, Zhang started to severely criticize Yuan’s dictatorship in the magazine and promulgated liberal ideas.<sup>116</sup> Apart from Zhang himself, important contributors to *Jiayin Monthly* were Gao Yihan 高一涵 (1884–1968), Zhou Gengsheng 周鯁生 (1889–1971), Yang Ruiliu 楊瑞六 (1885–1966), Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀 (1886–1973), Li Dazhao 李大釗 (1889–1927) and Chen Duxiu (1879–1942, Li and Chen founded the Chinese Communist Party, CCP, in 1921).

Ironically, considering Zhang Shizhao’s later hostility towards the *guoyu* movement, this first *Jiayin* monthly periodical played an important role for the reformist and revolutionary thought of the May Fourth Era in its first period

112 The case against Zhang Binglin and the fellow contributors to *Subao* (in)famously came to be known as the “*Subao* case” and was tried in 1903. Cf. Lust, J., “The “Su-Pao” Case: An Episode in the Early Chinese Nationalist Movement”, in: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 27.2 (1964), 408–429. Wang, Y. C., “The Su-Pao 蘇報 Case: A Study of Foreign Pressure, Intellectual Fermentation, and Dynastic Decline”, in: *Monumenta Serica* 24 (1965), 84–129.

113 Weston, Timothy B., “The Formation and Positioning of the New Culture Community, 1913–1917”, in: *Modern China* 24.3 (1998), 255–284, see 261.

114 See Weston, Timothy B., “The Formation and Positioning of the New Culture Community, 1913–1917” (1998), 261. and Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898–1929* (2004), 86.

115 Ye, Bin, “Searching for the Self: Zhang Shizhao and Chinese Narratives (1903–1927)” (2009), 138.

116 Ye, Bin, “Searching for the Self: Zhang Shizhao and Chinese Narratives (1903–1927)” (2009), 165.



of publication from 1914 to 1915. It might even be called formative for the New Culture Movement and assumed a role nearly as important as the famous “New Youth” (*Xin qingnian* 新青年 – *La Jeunesse*, established by Chen Duxiu in 1915).<sup>117</sup> It provided organizational and ideological preparation for the New Culture Movement and can be seen as its herald.<sup>118</sup> The monthly *Jiayin* has been called the “most influential political journal during the Yuan Shikai era”. Not only did many New Culture Movement participants have personal ties with the magazine, but it is also seen as antecedent of the Movement.<sup>119</sup>

When Yuan Shikai prohibited the publication of *The Tiger* in August 1915,<sup>120</sup> *Xin qingnian* filled that newly arisen void.<sup>121</sup> “The replacement on the intellectual scene of Zhang’s formerly dominant Tiger magazine with Chen Duxiu’s New Youth symbolizes for these scholars the shift in mainstream Chinese thought away from “political solutions” and toward literary and social reform, consciousness building, and socialism”.<sup>122</sup> The “literary reform” played a very strong role for Wei Jiangong and his Beida teacher generation.

After Yuan’s death in 1916, Zhang Shizhao re-entered politics and became a member of the senate.<sup>123</sup> In January 1917, Zhang revived his *Jiayin* publication the first time, this time as a daily newspaper. As a member of the parliament, Zhang Shizhao took part in important debates about the constitution. He employed the *Jiayin* paper as mouthpiece for constitutionalism, trying rather to reconcile the many voices in order to find a compromise. Simultaneously, Li Dazhao advocated Marxism in the very same journal. They clashed over whether China needed a reform or a revolution. This second version of *Jiayin* was short-lived: it was ordered to be shut down in June 1917 by the Qing loyalist Zhang Xun 張勳 (1854–1923).<sup>124</sup>

117 Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898-1929* (2004), 100.

118 Tong Longchao 童龙超 and Huang Xiurong 黄秀蓉, “‘Jiayin pai’ kaobian” “甲寅派” 考辨 [Study and differentiation of the “Jiayin school”], in: *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* 中国现代文学研究丛刊 [Chinese modern literature research series] 6 (2007), 148–155, see 144–45.

119 Weston, Timothy B., “The Formation and Positioning of the New Culture Community, 1913-1917” (1998), 255-256.

120 Tong Longchao 童龙超 and Huang Xiurong 黄秀蓉, “‘Jiayin pai’ kaobian” (2007), 145.

121 Merlino Palermo, Annamaria, “La rivista Xin Qingnian (Nuova Gioventù) nel maggio 1918”, in: *Cina* 16 (1980), 229–263, see 231.

122 Jenco, Leigh K., “‘Rule by man’ and ‘rule by law’ in early Republican China: contributions to a theoretical debate”, in: *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69.1 (2010), 181–203, see 192. Compare also Jenco, Leigh K., *Making the Political – Founding and Action in the Political Theory of Zhang Shizhao*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 88.

123 Ye, Bin, “Searching for the Self: Zhang Shizhao and Chinese Narratives (1903–1927)” (2009), 171.

124 Tong Longchao 童龙超 and Huang Xiurong 黄秀蓉, “‘Jiayin pai’ kaobian” (2007), 145. Guo counts the daily newspaper into the early publication phase. Cf. Guo Shuanglin 郭双林, “Qian-hou ‘Jiayin pai’ kao” 前后 “甲寅派” 考 [Study of the early and late “Jiayin school”], in: *Jindaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究 [Modern Chinese History Studies] 3 (2008).

In 1922, Hu Shi<sup>125</sup> coined the term *Jiayin pai* 甲寅派 (*Jiayin school*) to describe Zhang Shizhao and the other intellectuals involved.<sup>126</sup> His description, however, referred to this early *Jiayin pai*, the trailblazers for the New Culture Movement. While this early *Jiayin* “faction” or “school” (*pai*) had a progressive, modernist image, it was not iconoclastic and still sought to find compromise or “accommodation” (*tiaohe* 調和).<sup>127</sup> Leigh Jenco explains how Zhang Shizhao’s concept of *tiaohe* sought to manage the tensions not only between the different political parties, but also between the old and the new.<sup>128</sup>

But how could a trailblazer for the New Culture Movement become the adversary of the *guoyu* movement? It was not only Zhang Shizhao who gradually transformed himself from a revolutionary to a cultural conservative; it was also the people around him that made his outlook seem increasingly reactionary. While other intellectuals of the “early Jiayin school” 前甲寅派 favored vernacular journalism and joined the New Culture Movement, Zhang Shizhao became “one of the most outspoken opponents of the vernacularization of written Chinese, insisted on using Yan Fu’s antiquarian terminology and upheld a classicist ideal of terse stylistic economy.”<sup>129</sup> This became to be called “logical style”<sup>130</sup> and was very popular in the late 1910s.<sup>131</sup>

After Yuan Shikai’s death, political chaos prevailed. In the course of the controversy about entering World War I, President Li Yuanhong 黎元洪 (1864–1928) dismissed Prime Minister Duan Qirui, who was backed by the northern military leaders, and the Warlord Era began.<sup>132</sup> Zhang Shizhao increasingly began to perceive China’s crisis as a crisis of the Chinese character and morality. After the 1919 May Fourth student movement, he “began to doubt the suitability of Western-style representative government for China, which at that time was primarily a preindustrial agricultural nation.”<sup>133</sup> He believed that China as a non-industrialized country based on agriculture should have its own special political

125 Hu was also a personal friend of Zhang Shizhao. Cf. Zou Xiaozhan 邹小站, *Zhang Shizhao zhuan* 章士钊传 [Biography of Zhang Shizhao], Zhengzhou 郑州: Henan wenyi chubanshe 河南文艺出版社, 1999, 218.

126 Tong Longchao 童龙超 and Huang Xiurong 黄秀蓉, “‘Jiayin pai’ kaobian” (2007), 146–47.

127 Guo Shuanglin 郭双林, “Lun qianqi ‘Jiayin pai’ zhengzhi tiaohede de yihan ji sixiang laiyuan” 论前期“甲寅派”政治调和的意涵及思想来源 [On the Political Compromise Implication and Thought Origin of Early Jia Yin Faction], in: *Jinyang xuekan* 晋阳学刊 [Jinyang academic journal] 1 (2012), 94–104. Jenco translates *tiaohe* with “accommodation”. Jenco, Leigh K., *Making the Political – Founding and Action in the Political Theory of Zhang Shizhao* (2010), 243.

128 Jenco, Leigh K., *Making the Political – Founding and Action in the Political Theory of Zhang Shizhao* (2010), 243.

129 Kurtz, Joachim, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic* (2011), 351.

130 Kurtz, Joachim, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic* (2011), 351.

131 Kurtz also discusses Zhang Shizhao’s particular approach to translation: He favored employing phonemic loans and coined the term *luoji* 邏輯 for Logic. See Kurtz, Joachim, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic* (2011), 270–73.

132 Ye, Bin, “Searching for the Self: Zhang Shizhao and Chinese Narratives (1903–1927)” (2009), 181.

133 Jenco, Leigh K., *Making the Political – Founding and Action in the Political Theory of Zhang Shizhao* (2010), 36–37.

system.<sup>134</sup> Zhang advocated “rural self-rule” (*nongcun zizhi* 農村自治)<sup>135</sup> to integrate the social and economic reality of peasants as main constituent of the country into modernization schemes.<sup>136</sup> He also favored the Confucian idea of cultivating the self to manage the family and the state. A “national learning”, *guoxue*, based on a “national essence” *guocui* 國粹,<sup>137</sup> would be able to guide the way. What should this “essence” contain? To answer this question, Zhang Shizhao went back to an idea Zhang Binglin had given him in 1906: Language, institutions, and the deeds of men. The two Zhangs emphasized that the Chinese written with Chinese characters would always be the preferred means of expression for the Chinese, since the characters contained social and historical information.<sup>138</sup>

When Duan Qirui appointed Zhang Shizhao minister of education in April 1925, Zhang Shizhao was completely disillusioned by parliamentarism. That China was still in chaos more than ten years after the establishment of the Republic disenchanted him from Western style democracy. He doubted that it could be a universal model. Zhang Shizhao connected the question of constitution to the language question. When Zhang Shizhao revived his *Jiayin* magazine as a weekly newspaper on July 18, 1925, he wanted to preserve the classical language. In the editorial, he wrote:

文字須求雅馴，白話恕不刊布。<sup>139</sup>

Writing needs to seek elegance; *baihua* will surely not be published.

This attitude gave the *later Jiayin school* (*hou Jiayin pai* 後甲寅派) the image of conservatism. This is the “tiger minister” (a popular nickname for Zhang in 1925)<sup>140</sup> to whom Wei Jiangong was opposed. Two years earlier, Zhang voiced his criticism of the New Culture Movement.<sup>141</sup>

Li Jinxi also covered this episode in his “History of the national language movement” (*Guoyu yundong shigang* 國語運動史綱), an important source for

134 Ye, Bin, “Searching for the Self: Zhang Shizhao and Chinese Narratives (1903–1927)” (2009), 181.

135 Originally “rural reconstruction” (*xiangcun jianshe* 鄉村建設) as proposed most prominently by Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988). Jenco, Leigh K., *Making the Political – Founding and Action in the Political Theory of Zhang Shizhao* (2010), 37.

136 Jenco, Leigh K., *Making the Political – Founding and Action in the Political Theory of Zhang Shizhao* (2010), 37.

137 Like many important concepts of the time, “national essence” was first mentioned in Japan in the late 19th century. I have linked the debate between promulgators of “national essence” versus modernizers or westernizers to the debate about the introduction of Esperanto and the abolition of Chinese. See Munning, Mariana, “Concepts of Language in the Debate on Esperanto in the Early Twentieth Century” (2012), 10.

138 Ye, Bin, “Searching for the Self: Zhang Shizhao and Chinese Narratives (1903–1927)” (2009), 67–68.

139 This motto is quoted by Wei Jiangong and other adversaries of Zhang in order to refute it. Zhang Shizhao 章士釗, “Ben kan qishi yi” 本刊啟事一 [First notice of this magazine], in: *Jiayin* 甲寅 [*The Tiger*] 1.3 (1925), Inside front cover.

140 Tong Longchao 童龍超 and Huang Xiurong 黃秀蓉, “‘Jiayin pai’ kaobian” (2007), 145.

141 Zhang’s article was first published in *Xinwenbao* 新聞報 in 1923. Zhang published it again, adding a paragraph, on September 12th, 1925 in his *Jiayin* weekly magazine. Xingyan 行巖 [Zhang Shizhao 章士釗], “Ping xin wenhua yundong” 評新文化運動 [Criticizing the New Culture Movement], in: *Zhang Shizhao quanji* 章士釗全集 [Complete Works of Zhang Shizhao], ed. by Wang Junxi 王均熙, vol. 4, Shanghai 上海: Wenhui chubanshe 文匯出版社, 2000, 210–218, see 210.

the *guoyu* movement until the early 1930s. It includes first-hand accounts as well as official documents of the time. Apart from stating clearly that he and Qian Xuantong published *Guoyu zhoukan* in their own names and mentioning the contributors,<sup>142</sup> he referred to a certain “Tiger Attack” (*hu zhen* 虎陣), and described the one side promoting the “spoken” or “vernacular language” *kouyu* 口語, and the other advocating “classical prose” *guwen* 古文.<sup>143</sup>

### 3.2.4 Wei Jianguo Defending *Guoyu* 國語

Wei Jianguo’s first article explicitly dealing with *guoyu* was published on 30 August 1925 in *Guoyu zhoukan* and targets Zhang Shizhao as an adversary. It was entitled “Overthrow the stumbling blocks [literally: the tigers that block the way] of the national language movement” (Dadao *guoyu* yundong de lanlu-hu 打倒國語運動的攔路虎).<sup>144</sup> The metaphorical “road-blocking tiger” (*lanlu-hu*) is a pun referring to Zhang and his *The Tiger* (*Jiayin*) magazine. Wei Jianguo’s article is basically a polemic against *Jiayin*, evoking the tiger metaphor seven times.

Wei Jianguo was not the only one attacking a metaphorical tiger that obstructed the way. For example, Ye Shengtao 葉聖陶 (1894-1988)<sup>145</sup> wrote that young people who wanted to write a letter to their parents would “meet a tiger that blocked the road (*lanlu-hu*)”: namely, the literary language that the letter would have to use at that time. However, since it was completely different from the spoken language, ordinary people did not master it. Hence, a simple task as writing a letter to a close relation was impossible. To solve that problem, Ye Shengtao advocated replacing “composition” *zuowen* 作文 with “writing speech” *xiehua* 寫話 in the 1920s.<sup>146</sup>

In the article “Dadao *guoyu* yundong de lanlu-hu”, Wei Jianguo depicted the image of a tiger (*hu* 虎), which he described as “big worm” or “insect” (*dachong* 大蟲), that illegally occupied a place on top of a mountain and came down once a week to roar (*paoxiao* 咆哮) at “our national language movement” (*zanmen*

142 Li mentions, apart from himself, Qian Xuantong, Wei Jianguo, Xiao Jialin, Du Tongli, Bai Dizhou 白濂洲 (1900–1934, he was not mentioned in Qian’s editorial quoted on page 63), Su Yaozu, Dong Weichuan, Wu Jingheng (Wu Zhihui, also not mentioned by Qian), Hu Shizhi, Lin Yutang and Zhou Kaiming.

143 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, vol. 2, (1990), 135.

144 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Dadao *guoyu* yundong de lanlu-hu” 打倒國語運動的攔路虎 [Overthrow the tigers that block the way of the national language movement], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 433–34.

145 Ye Shengtao (given name Shaojun 紹鈞) was an important author, vernacular enthusiast, and educator. A key figure in publishing, he played an important role in the compilation of the *Xinhua zidian* and was an important figure for Wei Jianguo. In the PRC in 1954, he was appointed vice minister of education. Boorman, Howard L., “Yeh Sheng-t’ao”, in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, vol. 4, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 33–35.

146 Zhou Youguang 周有光 [translated by Zhang Liqing 张立青], *Zhongguo yuwen de shidai yanjin* (2003), 42–43.

*de guoyu yundong* 咱們的國語運動).<sup>147</sup> This tiger in an illegally obtained high position alluded to Zhang Shizhao as minister of education; this tiger came down once a week when the *Jiayin* magazine was published. The recently launched *Guoyu zhoukan*, also a weekly magazine, was a direct equivalent. Wei Jianguo was not the only one referring to *The Tiger* as *dachong*; Qian Xuanton also used this mocking name in his diary on August 2, 1925.<sup>148</sup>

In this first article about *guoyu*, Wei Jianguo quoted directly from the *Jiayin* magazine to disprove Zhang Shizhao’s statements against *guoyu*. Wei Jianguo’s concepts can be isolated by analyzing what he argues against: Zhang Shizhao’s critique against the *guoyu* movement and the general views of cultural conservatives. Wei Jianguo’s views, always “spiced” with mockery of Zhang Shizhao, can be summarized below:

1. disapproval of a mystified, moralistic and elitist concept of language, literature and script which is mere chicanery and just a hypocrite cover-up for misanthropy
2. communication and its tools should be inclusive; the spoken language should be the basis for the written language
3. *guoyu* is legitimized by classical scholarship
4. the *guoyu* movement is a heroic endeavor motivated and legitimized by the reception of Buddhism

Wei Jianguo’s deliberations according to these four items are:

1. Wei Jianguo summarized Zhang Shizhao’s attitude as “emptily hanging” (*kong gua* 空掛 / 挂)<sup>149</sup> the sign “*wen yi zai dao* 文以載道”, i.e. “literature as a vehicle for the Way”<sup>150</sup> or “Literature is a vehicle of moral principles”.<sup>151</sup> This was a well-known catchphrase coined by the Neo-Confucian Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073) in the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279), hotly debated in the early 20th century. Zhou Dunyi argued that works of literature should carry or convey the “Way” (*Dao* 道) in a Confucian, moral sense. In this mindset, literature was seen as having a moral and didactic function.<sup>152</sup> This view was influential at least until the 20th century. It should be noted that Zhou Dunyi stated that beautiful liter-

147 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Dadao guoyu yundong de lanlu-hu” (2001), 433.

148 Qian Xuanton 钱玄同, *Qian Xuanton riji*, vol. 2 (1923–1933), (2014), 649.

149 The trope of the emptiness of the classical language and of upholding it as a standard was established before Wei Jianguo. For example, Lin Xie 林澣 (Lin Baishui 林白水, 1874–1926) launched a vernacular journal in 1903 by stating that studied people speak empty words and write some empty texts. See: Anonymous [Lin Xie 林澣 (Lin Baishui 林白水)], “*Zhongguo baihuabao fakanci*” 中國白話報發刊辭 [Editorial of ‘Chinese vernacular journal’], in: *Zhongguo baihuabao* 中國白話報 [Chinese vernacular journal] 1 (1903), 1–15, see 2. See also: Kaske, Elisabeth, “Mandarin, Vernacular and National Language – China’s Emerging Concept of a National Language In the Early Twentieth Century” (2004), 279. The role of vernacular journals already in the late Qing cannot be underestimated, I direct the reader to Kaske’s article for further information.

150 Pollard, David E., *A Chinese Look at Literature. The Literary Values of Chou-Tso-jen in Relation to the Tradition*, London: C. Hurst & Co., 1973, 1.

151 Chan, Wing-tsit [translated and compiled], *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969, 476.

152 Pohl, Karl-Heinz, *Ästhetik und Literaturtheorie in China – Von der Tradition bis zur Moderne* (Geschichte der chinesischen Literatur 5), München: K. G. Saur, 2006, 10; 247.

ary expressions without any moral substance are a “defect”.<sup>153</sup> Juxtaposed to this concept of literature was the equally famous concept of “poetry expresses intent (will or meaning, or both) with words” *shi yan zhi* 詩言志.<sup>154</sup>

The May Fourth Scholars were advocates of a new literature. Zhou Zuoren argued against the moralistic *wen-yi-zai-dao*-theory of literature. Zhou Zuoren was of the opinion that “the distinguishing characteristic of literature should be that it should have no aim”.<sup>155</sup> He believed that literature as a “‘vehicle for the Way’ [...] was not literature”.<sup>156</sup> Instead, he favored an expressive literary theory that saw literature as “an uttering of feeling, free from any direction or control”.<sup>157</sup> Lin Yutang had this twofold concept of literature<sup>158</sup> and clearly rejected the “official tradition” of “*wen yi zai dao*” literature and preferred to see literature as expressing intention (*yan zhi* 言志).<sup>159</sup> And of course, also Qian Xuantong mocked Zhang’s *wen-yi-zai-dao*-attitude.<sup>160</sup> (It is to be noted that, as briefly mentioned above, the intellectual world was nevertheless usually quite impressed by Zhang Shizhao’s style.)

Wei Jiangong was neither a fiction author nor a literary critic. However, as a linguist, he was of course interested in literature, and it played an important role in his teaching and research. Additionally, Wei Jiangong did not address literature in a narrow sense but rather the written word in a broad sense.

Wei Jiangong criticized Zhang Shizhao for mystifying the script by writing that the script’s origins are unknown (*bu zhi suo chu* 不知所出). The utilitarian linguist Wei Jiangong was clearly against putting the tool script on a pedestal.

One article in the *Tiger* magazine especially enraged Wei Jiangong, namely Zhang Shizhao’s (using the pen name Gutong 孤桐)<sup>161</sup> reply to a letter to the editors by Liang Shuming<sup>162</sup> about Eastern and Western culture and philosophy.<sup>163</sup> Wei makes fun of Zhang Shizhao, who decries the vernacular as “disorderly” (“dis-

153 Chan, Wing-tsit [translated and compiled], *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (1969), 476.

154 Chow, Tse-Tsung, “Ancient Chinese Views on Literature, the Tao, and Their Relationship”, in: *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 1 (1979), 3–29, see 3.

155 Pollard, David E., *A Chinese Look at Literature* (1973), 2. Zhou, Zuoren 周作人, *Zhongguo xin wenxue de yuanliu* 中国新文学的源流 [The origins of China’s new literature], Shanghai 上海: Shanghai shudian 上海书店, 1988, 27.

156 Pollard, David E., *A Chinese Look at Literature* (1973), 1.

157 Pollard, David E., *A Chinese Look at Literature* (1973), 1.

158 Lee, Madalina Yuk-Ling, “The Intellectual Origins of Lin Yutang’s Cultural Internationalism, 1928–1938”, MA dissertation, University of Maryland, 2009, 88.

159 Müller, Gotelind, “Lin Yutang – Die Persönlichkeit im Spiegel des Werks”, in: *Drei Studien über Lin Yutang (1895–1976)* (Chinathemen 41), ed. by Martin, Helmut, and Lutz Bieg, Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1989, 5–144, see 42.

160 Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, “*Jiayin yu Shuihu*” 甲寅與水滸 [Jiayin and Water Margin], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 7, 98–100, see 98–100.

161 “Lonely phoenix tree”, see Ye, Bin, “Searching for the Self: Zhang Shizhao and Chinese Narratives (1903–1927)” (2009), 195.

162 Liang Shuming is usually labeled as “traditionalist” or “cultural conservative”, see Alitto, Guy, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, 6.

163 Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 and Gutong 孤桐 [= Zhang Shizhao], “Dong-Xi wenhua ji qi zhexue” 東西文化及其哲學 [The culture of the East and the West and their philosophy], in: *Jiayin* 甲寅 [The Tiger] 1.3 (1925), 18–19.

orderly words of the vernacular” *baihua wu ci* 白話蕪詞, literally: overgrown with weeds).

He quotes Zhang’s sentence:

“近年士習日非，文詞鄙俚，國家未滅，文字先亡”，“梁任公獻媚小生，從風而靡，天下病之”。<sup>164</sup>

“Nowadays, the scholars’ practice worsens day by day; their language and wording is vulgar. The country has not perished yet, and the characters first disappear. Liang Rengong [= Liang Qichao 梁啟超, 1873–1929] is a coquettish *xiaosheng*:<sup>165</sup> he goes along with any trend, and the world is sick of him.”

Interestingly, it seems that Wei Jianguo was not the only one offended by this sentence. The “alternative biography” (*biezhuan*) of Zhang Shizhao states that Shen Jianshi<sup>166</sup> read that very phrase to his students, shaking his head, showing that he found it ridiculous.<sup>167</sup> Hu Shi also quotes this passage.<sup>168</sup> In Hu Shi’s case, however, he was on friendly terms with Zhang Shizhao. The two challenged each other in writing.<sup>169</sup>

Wei asks the rhetorical question of how this “script” or “written language” (*wen* 文) of Zhang can “carry the way” (*zai dao*) if it is employed in a destructive way?<sup>170</sup> What Zhang Shizhao does, according to Wei, is to badmouth female students (把純潔的女學生家架詞誣枉，說得人格全無).<sup>171</sup> Wei Jianguo goes

164 The punctuation follows Wei Jianguo’s quote in Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Dadao guoyu yundong de lanlu-hu” (2001), 433. Wei quotes Zhang’s reply to Liang: Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 and Gutong 孤桐 [= Zhang Shizhao], “Dong-Xi wenhua ji qi zhexue” (1925), 19.

165 *Xiaosheng* 小生 can denote a Peking Opera character (*hangdang* 行當), usually a young, beardless and handsome intellectual. It can also refer to a young man (similar to *housheng* 後生) or can even be an insult for someone effeminate. See Huang Shang 黃裳, *Jiu xi xin tan* 旧戏新谈 [New talk on old-style drama], Beijing 北京: Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, 2003, 40ff. and Zhang Qi 張琦, *Beijingren he Shanghairen qutan* 北京人和上海人趣談 [Amusing remarks on Beijingers and Shanghaiers], Beijing 北京: Jincheng chubanshe 金城出版社, 2000, 97ff. I am very thankful to Wang Xiaoxin, Heidelberg, for her advice and literature recommendations on opera matters.

166 As mentioned above on page 54, Shen Jianshi was one of Wei Jianguo’s teachers and himself a student of Zhang Binglin. Shen Jianshi, Zhang Binglin and Shen’s older brother Shen Yinmo (with their third brother, they were the three Shens) studied in Japan. While his research interest covered graphemics (*wenzixue*) and semantics (*xunguxue*), he was also involved in anti-Manchu revolutionary activities. He held several academic positions at Peking University, Fu-Jen University (Furen daxue 輔仁大學), and others. See Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898-1929* (2004), 108, 111, 220. Ma Si 馬嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jianguo* (2007), 23. and Boorman, Howard L., “Shen Yin-mo”, in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 270–271, see 116.

167 Chen Shuliang 陳書良, *Jimo Qitong – Zhang Shizhao biezhuàn* 寂寞秋桐——章士釗別傳 [Lonely Qitong [autumn phoenix tree] – Supplementary biography of Zhang Shizhao], Changchun 長春: Changchun chubanshe 長春出版社, 1999, 85.

168 Shi Zhi 適之 [= Hu Shi 胡適], “Lao Zhang you fanpan le” 老章又反叛了 [Old Zhang has revolted again], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 12 (1925), 1–3, see 2.

169 Zhang Shizhao even wrote a *baihua* text dedicated to Hu on the back of a photograph of the two together after a dinner in Beijing in 1924. Shi Qie 士鍬, “Hu Shi yu Zhang Shizhao ‘fanchuan’” 胡適與章士釗“反串” [Hu Shi and Zhang Shizhao “swap roles”], in: *Jiang-Huai wenshi* 江淮文史 [Jiangsu and Anhui literature and history] (1993), 49. Also Hu’s text “Lao Zhang you fanpan le” must be interpreted in a slightly humorous way.

170 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Dadao guoyu yundong de lanlu-hu” (2001), 433.

171 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Dadao guoyu yundong de lanlu-hu” (2001), 433.

on a tirade, saying that the quality of student education is deteriorating because of Zhang's ban on all student movements (*xuesheng yundong* 學生運動). This is an allusion to the events taking place at the Women's Normal University. Wei's reaction to them will be discussed further in the following section beginning on page 82.

Wei Jianguo and other iconoclast intellectuals believed that Zhang's insistence on classical language is chicanery, that Zhang merely wants to show off his writing skills and that he twists both words and the law. Wei plays on the fact that Zhang Shizhao was indeed not only an essayist, but had also studied law. Wei characterizes Zhang's actions as "perverting law by lexical chicanery" or "engaging in word-mongering" (*wuwennongmo* 舞文弄墨).<sup>172</sup> Others satirized Zhang's formalism by calling him a member of a school of "stilted archaisms" (*zhi-hu-zhe-ye*-*pai* "之乎者也"派).<sup>173</sup> Wei expresses his rage with a rhetorical question, addressing not only Zhang's writing style but also his qualities as a jurist:

刀筆吏誣捏之詞，佞幸臣獻媚之語，那些東西算得雅嗎！算得文嗎！<sup>174</sup>  
How can these words of a "pettifogger"<sup>175</sup> fabricating accusations and co-  
quettish words of a court favorite be counted as "elegant" or "cultivated"!

Since it first appeared in the late 19th century, the language question was not only tied to an urge for national survival, but also to realize "a new social order".<sup>176</sup> Wei Jianguo's view reflects well that of Qiu Tingliang, the man who introduced the term *baihua* as a euphemism of what was formerly known as "vulgar

172 This idiom or tetragram (*chengyu* 成語, characterized by four characters) can have positive or negative connotations. I want to interpret it in a more positive way, since it describes Zhang Shizhao as someone who finds pleasure in using his literary skills. In a more negative way, it can denote either that Zhang is merely juggling around with words without attaining true literary quality, or that he is even deliberately twisting phrases and thus acting like a shyster. Cf. Liu Aifu 刘爱服 and Liu Dechao 刘德超 (ed.), *Han-Ying shuang jie changyong chengyu cidian* 汉英双解常用成语词典 [A Dictionary of Commonly Used Chinese Idioms with English Translation], Beijing 北京: Shanguo yinshuguan 商务印书馆, 2007, 672.

173 *Zhi-hu-zhe-ye* 之乎者也 is an enumeration of four commonly used particles in the classical language to mock an expression as overly finicky or archaic. Chen Shuliang 陈书良, *Jimo Qitong - Zhang Shizhao biezhu* (1999), 84.

174 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Dadao guoyu yundong de lanlu-hu" (2001), 434.

175 The term *daobili* 刀筆吏 also denotes a minor official who draws up indictments. It goes back to Chunqiu 春秋 (777-476 BCE) and Zhanguo 戰國 (Warring States, 475-221 BCE) times, when mistakes on bamboo slips had to be corrected by carving the faulty character off and writing it anew. Hence, a knife (*dao* 刀) and a brush (*bi* 筆) were needed and were important tools for a scholar or official. Furthermore, legal assistants who were familiar with the law were able to twist it with surgical precision, thus acquiring this nickname. Guo Canjin 郭灿金 and Zhang Zhaopeng 张召鹏, *Zhongguoren zui yi wujie de wenshi changshi* 中国人最易误解的文史常识 [Common knowledge from literature and history that the Chinese most easily misunderstand], Beijing 北京: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe 中国书籍出版社, 2006, 57-58. In the Qing era, the term came to denote "literary hacks who specialized in drawing up legal documents for a fee", which, at the example of Fujian Province in the 18th century, led the common people to waste their money in court. Macauley, Melissa A., "Civil and Uncivil Disputes in Southeast Coastal China, 1723-1820", in: *Civil Law in Qing and Republican China*, ed. by Bernhardt, Kathryn, and C. C. Huang Philip, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994, 85-121, see 91.

176 Weng, Jeffrey, "What is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language Standardization in Early Republican China" (2018), 612.



speech” *suhua* 俗話.<sup>177</sup> Qiu was of the opinion that *baihua* could save society from the “evil influence” of the literary language. In his eyes, the classical language simply consisted of superficial beauty, authors mimicking each others’ styles and skills. Under this “excessive ornamentation” only vulgarity was to be found, and the “antiquity-loving gentlemen” would be “disgraced” if it was removed.<sup>178</sup> Weng argues along these lines that the “promulgation of a national standard language in the early twentieth century [...] represented an attempt to extend educational meritocracy from small segment of elites to all of society.”<sup>179</sup>

2. Wei Jianguo upholds the spoken language. In contrast to Zhang’s praise of the classical language, Wei is of the opinion that this “elegance” / “refinement” (*wenya* 文雅) that Zhang strives for<sup>180</sup> can only be obtained or represented by what real people (*zhenzheng ren* 真正人) actually say with their mouths. He emphasizes “speech” *hua* 話 in contrast to “writing” *wen*:

只有說真正人嘴裏講的“話”，寫真正人心裏要說的“話”，才配得上說“文雅”，才有“文雅”的意味。<sup>181</sup>

Only the “speech” that real people say with their mouths and writing the “speech” that real people feel with their hearts deserve to be called “refined”. It is only then it achieves the meaning “refined”.

3. The transcription Zhuyin zimu 注音字母 was an important part of the *guoyu* movement at the time. While Zhang Shizhao neither found it useful nor took the time to learn it, Wei Jianguo reminded him that it was actually based on the phonetic spelling scheme invented by his own “brother” Zhang Binglin (*wu xiong Taiyan* 吾兄太炎). Zhang Binglin developed phonetic symbols following the *Qieyun*-principle: initials *niuwen* 紐文 and finals *yunwen* 韻文.<sup>182</sup> For Wei, it was important to refute prejudices against the language reforms and enhance their standings. He tried to show that they are based on thorough philological research. Wei himself, just like the two Zhangs, was of course also trained in traditional Chinese philology. He was outraged: how can Zhang Shizhao even dare to speak of “*guoxue*” (national learning) if he did not know that Zhuyin zimu came out

177 The term *su* 俗 (vulgar, popular) will play a role in Wei Jianguo’s legitimization of *guoyu* in Taiwan and of the simplified characters in the PRC.

178 Qiu Tingliang, “Lun baihua wei weixin zhi ben”, after: Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 106–7.

179 Weng, Jeffrey, “What is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language Standardization in Early Republican China” (2018), 612.

180 Zhang Shizhao 章士釗, “Ben kan qishi yi” 本刊啟事一 [First notice of this magazine], in: *Jiayin* 甲寅 [*The Tiger*] 1.3 (1925), Inside front cover.

181 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Dadao guoyu yundong de lanlu-hu” (2001), 434.

182 Some of the symbols already look similar to Zhuyin. He presents the symbols for the initials and finals according to the categories of the *Tangyun* 唐韻. See: [Zhang] Taiyan 太炎, “Bo Zhongguo yong wanguoxinyu shuo” 駁中國用萬國新語說 [Against the introduction of Esperanto in China], in: *Minbao* 民報 [People’s paper] 21 (1908), 49–72. Zhang Binglin proposed this spelling scheme in the framework of his debate with Wu Zhihui, Cai Yuanpei, Hua Nanguai 華南圭 (1875–1961) and others about the question of Chinese language reforms and a potential replacement of Chinese with Esperanto. Cf. Munning, Mariana, “Concepts of Language in the Debate on Esperanto in the Early Twentieth Century” (2012).

of “*xiaoxue*” (philology, lit. minor studies) that again is a part of “*jingxue*” 經學 (study of the Confucian classics)?<sup>183</sup>

Wei Jiangong’s view that much of the newly developed Zhyuin zimu is actually based on traditional philological scholarship is well reflected and validated by secondary literature, especially Wippermann’s *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu*. She confirms that 15 of the 39 symbols were taken directly from Zhang Binglin’s draft.<sup>184</sup> Zhang presented this draft in the first debate about the introduction of Esperanto in 1908. It is conceptualized like the handed down *fanqie* 反切 spelling, in which the pronunciation of a character is indicated with two other characters, the first with the same initial, the second with the same final. Zhang’s innovation was to employ much simpler signs, also based on historical conventions to annotate the characters’ pronunciation.<sup>185</sup>

4. In addition to the philological legitimization of the *guoyu* movement, Wei Jiangong draws an interesting parallel between “our” *guoyu* movement and the Ming dynasty vernacular novel *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西遊記).<sup>186</sup> He calls the *guoyu* movement a “journey” (*xingcheng* 行程) in which suddenly a tiger appeared. He uses Buddhist rhetoric to sanction the national language movement and compares it to the travels of the monk Xuanzang 玄奘 to obtain the scriptures (*Tang Seng qu jing* 唐僧取經). The hardship and suffering (*mo nan* 磨難) that the movement suffers from is actually the suffering in Buddhism that brings out the ‘Dharma’ power (*fali* 法力), and that the monkey Sun Xingzhe 孫行者 (= Sun Wukong 孫悟空) is the one who protected Xuanzang, enabling him to bring the sacred scriptures to China. Wei Jiangong wishes that the comrades (*tongzhimen* 同志們) will protect the “knowledge acquired from a master” (*shi chuan* 師傳), which is *guoyu*. He evokes *guoyu* as something that will save the world. We can also see here that the image of going westwards to receive knowledge is a metaphor for the New Culture Movement, in which a lot of Western ideas are absorbed.

By alluding to *Xiyouji*, a Buddhist vernacular novel, Wei Jiangong implicitly alludes to how the import of Buddhism into China from India helped the development of the written vernacular. Mair describes how not only the Buddhist transformative texts (*bianwen* 變文) and *yulu* 語錄 from the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907) were written in a form of vernacular language,<sup>187</sup> but also how a whole

183 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Dadao guoyu yundong de lanlu-hu” (2001), 433.

184 Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 18.

185 Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 14.

186 *Xiyouji* is usually attributed to Wu Cheng’en 吳承恩 (ca. 1500–1582). Its earliest attested publication can be dated to 1592. See Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) / London: Harvard University Press, 2013, 413.

187 Mair also points out the mixing and borrowing that took place between the Literary and Vernacular Sinitic (LS and VS) which means that clear-cut distinctions cannot always be made. However, he states that Buddhist texts are characterized by polysyllabic words and a distinct grammar. Mair, Victor H., “Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages”, in: *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53.3 (1994), 707–751, see 709.

new approach to language and linguistics,<sup>188</sup> and new social values accompanied the texts. Buddhism encompassed a non-hierarchical, more egalitarian social vision, which made its institutions even subversive in a hierarchy-oriented Chinese society infused with Confucian values. All this led to a greater focus on the spoken language and to an increase of the written rendering of the vernacular. Lu Xun, in his “Brief history of Chinese Fiction” (as has already been stated, Wei Jiangong attended his lectures), also emphasizes the connection between the influx of Buddhism with the rise of popular stories, especially ghost stories.<sup>189</sup> Lu also acknowledges vernacular Buddhist writings of the Tang dynasty and extensively studied *Xiyouji*.<sup>190</sup>

Referring to another vernacular novel, Wei asks who could be the hero, just like Wu Erlang 武二郎 from *Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳),<sup>191</sup> who beats the ferocious tiger (*menghu* 猛虎) that threatens the *guoyu* movement. Wei Jiangong concludes with calling for Qian Xuantong to ask the “old general” (*lao jiang* 老將) Wu Zhihui to come forward to beat the tiger with his bare hands.<sup>192</sup>

Why did Wei Jiangong call for Wu Zhihui as the “old” or “veteran” “general” to beat the tiger? First of all, Wei borrows the image of a tiger-slaying, staff-swinging heroic “traveller” or “pilgrim” (*Xingzhe* 行者) from both *Shuihu zhuan* (Wu Song) and *Xiyouji* (Sun Wukong). Then, *jiang* 將 refers to the 108 *jiang* of *Shuihu zhuan*: They are 108 rebel heroes that are actually personified astral demons.<sup>193</sup> As a third aspect, Wu Zhihui can indeed be called a “veteran” of the language reform movement, since he was one of the first to advocate a radical Chinese language reform.<sup>194</sup> Lastly, there must have been personal animosities between Zhang Shizhao and Wu Zhihui: in the “*Subao* case”, Wu may have sold

- 188 It gave rise to the development of *fanqie* “pseudospelling”, the *dengyun* 等韻 classification methods of rhymes and the *sanshiliu zimu* 三十六字母 quasi-letters of Shouwen 守溫 (Buddhist monk of the late Tang dynasty). See Mair, Victor H., “Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages” (1994), 718. Mair also refers to the much earlier collection of articles by Watters of which several discuss the Indian and Buddhist influence on the Chinese language; especially: Watters, T., “The Influence of Buddhism on the Chinese Language”, in: Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1889, 379–496.
- 189 Lu Hsun [Lu Xun; translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladis Yang], *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1976, 61, *passim*.
- 190 Lu Xun also argues that Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism are interwoven in *Xiyouji*; Lu Hsun [Lu Xun; translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladis Yang], *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* (1976), 210.
- 191 The earliest extant dated edition is from 1589, some parts of which have been dated to 1550. *Water Margin* is conventionally attributed to Shi Nai’an 施耐庵. See Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 413. Wu Erlang means “Wu the Second” and the character’s actual name is Wu Song 武松.
- 192 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Dadao guoyu yundong de lanlu-hu” (2001), 434.
- 193 Liu, Peng, “‘Conceal my Body so that I can Protect the State’: The Making of the Mysterious Woman in Daoism and *Water Margin*”, in: *Ming Studies* 74 (2016), 48–71. Meulenbeld, Mark, “Vernacular ‘Fiction’ and Celestial Script: A Daoist Manual for the Use of *Water Margin*”, in: *Religions* 10.518 (2019). Many thanks to Stanley Setiawan and Zhang Bosen for sharing their expertise.
- 194 On a later occasion, Wei calls Wu “veteran of the *guoyu* movement” (with a different term: *guoyu yundong yuanlao* 國語運動元老), see: Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu tongxun shuduan” 國語通訊書端 [National language news editorial], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 304–5, see 304. Wu is also known as one of the “four elder statesmen” of the KMT. Boorman, Howard L., “Wu Chih-hui”,

Zhang Shizhao's close friend Zhang Binglin to the authorities to protect his own freedom (see above).<sup>195</sup>

The *guoyu* movement suffered a blow in that time period. Apart from some activities, it was brought to a standstill.<sup>196</sup> However, official activities were revived in 1928 when China was reunified after the Northern Expedition.

### 3.2.5 The “Tiger” at the Women’s University

Wei Jiangong did not miss a single opportunity to fulminate against the tiger minister Zhang Shizhao, and many New Culture intellectuals did the same. Another occasion in 1925 was the turmoil at Beijing Women’s Normal University (Beijing nüzi shifan daxue 北京女子師範大學, BWNU).<sup>197</sup>

Some of the exact details remain disputed, but I will use Saiyin Sun’s account. Several Peking University professors and May Fourth intellectuals, most prominently Lu Xun and his brother Zhou Zuoren, also taught at BWNU. When some students failed to come back in time after the summer vacation, the university’s principal, Yang Yinyu 楊蔭榆 (1884–1938)<sup>198</sup> expelled them, which led to protests of the students. Lu Xun, already in a relationship with one of the students, Xu Guangping 許廣平 (1898–1968), and Zhou Zuoren sided with the students and villainized Yang Yinyu, calling her incompetent and a widow obsessed with the relation between men and women.<sup>199</sup>

Zhang Shizhao, as minister of education, being of the opinion that the “students were too involved in leftist political activity”,<sup>200</sup> shut down the university to stop the turmoil. Lu Xun and Zhou Zuoren, who were also professors of Peking University, also persuaded “Beida’s policy-making council to break off relations

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in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, vol. 3, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 416–419, see 416.

195 Wei Jiangong’s call was heard. Wu Zhihui published the article “Zhang Shizhao – Chen Duxiu – Liang Qichao” (in baihua) to ridicule Zhang. Zhang Shizhao responded (in *wenyan*) with the article “Wu Jingheng – Liang Qichao – Chen Duxiu”. The intellectual battle is described by Jin Shupeng 靳树鹏, “Zhang Shizhao yu Wu Zhihui” 章士钊与吴稚晖 [Zhang Shizhao und Wu Zhihui], in: *Mingren (Ha’erbin) 名人 (哈尔滨)* [Famous persons (Harbin)] 6 (1995), 30–32. In the 1940s it also found mention in: Wen Zhe 文哲, “Wu Zhihui waku Zhang Shizhao” 吴稚晖挖苦章士钊 [Wu Zhihui ridicules Zhang Shizhao], in: *Haichao zhoubao* 海潮週報 [Tide weekly] 33 (1946), 2.

196 Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 49.

197 Sometimes also Women’s Normal College, or Women’s College of Education.

198 Yang Yinyu was one of the first female students to study in Japan and in the USA on official scholarships. Sun, Saiyin, *Beyond the Iron House: Lu Xun and the Modern Chinese Literary Field*, London / New York: Routledge, 2016, 65.

199 Sun, Saiyin, *Beyond the Iron House: Lu Xun and the Modern Chinese Literary Field* (2016), 65; Jie Gao claims that the reason for the protests was that Yang did not allow the students to partake in “memorial activities” for Sun Yat-sen. Gao, Jie, *Saving the Nation Through Culture: The Folklore Movement in Republican China* (2019), 86.

200 Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898–1929* (2004), 238.

with the Ministry of Education”, which led Zhang Shizhao to threaten to close Beida as well and to cut all government funding.<sup>201</sup>

Lu Xun was not only a teacher at both universities but was also a senior official at the Ministry of Education. As a consequence, Zhang Shizhao dismissed Lu Xun from his official position. Wei Jianguo “congratulated” Lu Xun for his dismissal in an open letter published in the journal “Vigorous progress” *Mengjin* 猛進<sup>202</sup> on August 21, 1925. In this letter, he questioned Zhang Shizhao’s legitimacy as a minister and said [we] “don’t know where he came from” (*bu zhi suo chu* 不知所出)<sup>203</sup> and that he held up the “banner” (*zhaopai* 招牌) of “Tiger” (*laohu* 老虎) – a clear reference to Zhang Shizhao’s magazine. He refers to the ministry as a “tiger cave” (*hu ku* 虎窟) that Lu Xun should be glad to leave.<sup>204</sup> He also clearly referred to Zhang Shizhao’s *Jiayin* magazine as an “insect” (*dachong* – or repulsive creature).<sup>205</sup>

Wei Jianguo continued to combat Zhang Shizhao in *Guoyu zhoukan*. In this seemingly political incident, he also found a linguistic argument. Wei Jianguo replied to Zhang Shizhao’s order to close down the university<sup>206</sup> on August 30, 1925 in *Guoyu zhoukan*.<sup>207</sup> In this polemic article, Wei Jianguo juxtaposed Zhang’s negative words about the female student activists at the Womens’ University with Zhang’s *Jiayin* magazine manifesto, in which ideas such as pureness and refinement are upheld.<sup>208</sup> Once again, Wei Jianguo sought, just like Qiu Tingliang, to expose the “essential vulgarity” hidden underneath the classical language. This argument goes hand in hand with Wei Jianguo’s idea that language

201 Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898-1929* (2004), 239.

202 *Mengjin* was edited by the Beida philosophy professor and founding father of modern archeology in China, Xu Bingchang 徐炳昶 (1888–1976), also known as Xu Xusheng 徐旭生. Xu wanted his journal *Mengjin* to bring about the “thought revolution” (*sixiang geming* 思想革命) that was advocated by the May Fourth intellectuals. *Mengjin*’s efforts should, according to Xu, be sided with the efforts of the journals *Yusi* and *Xiandai pinglun* 現代評論 (Contemporary review). Liao Jiuming 廖久明, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shiliao yanjiu ju yu: Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Gao Zhanhong* 中國現代文學史料研究舉隅: 魯迅、郭沫若、高長虹 [Examples from modern Chinese literature historical documents research: Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Gao Zhanhong], Taipei 臺北: Xinrui wen chuang 新銳文創, 2012, 23.

203 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “He Lu Xun xiansheng” 賀魯迅先生 [Congratulating Mr Lu Xun], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 431–32, see 431.

204 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “He Lu Xun xiansheng” (2001), 431–32.

205 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “He Lu Xun xiansheng” (2001), 432.

206 Zhang Shizhao 章士钊, “Tingban Beijing nüzi shifan daxue chengwen” 停办北京女子师范大学呈文 [Memorial to disband the Beijing Women’s Normal University], in: *Zhang Shizhao wenxuan* 章士钊文选 [Selected works of Zhang Shizhao], ed. by Li Miaogen 李妙根: Shanghai yuandong chubanshe 上海远东出版社, 1996, 385–387.

207 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Zhayiyi wenti yajie de jiaoyu zongzhang tingban Beijing nüzi shifan daxue chengwen” 摘譯文體雅潔的教育總長停辦北京女子師範大學呈文 [Translation of selected passages of the refined and pure memorial by the education minister Zhang to disband the Beijing Women’s Normal University], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版, 2001, 435–437.

208 The idea of elegance *ya* 雅 is also discussed. This leads to the question of *ya* vs. *su*, which is a reoccurring topic in Wei Jianguo’s texts.

should be universal and accessible for all. Zhang's words are hard to understand; therefore, Wei Jianguo translates them into *baihua* to expose their plainly mean content.<sup>209</sup>

What did Zhang Shizhao write to enrage Wei and others in this fashion? Zhang wrote in his submission to suspend the Women's University (directed to Duan Qirui, published in *Jiayin* on August 8, 1925), that after six students (among them Xu Guangping) were expelled and the students took over the school building with sticks and bricks and locked out principal Yang Yinyu,<sup>210</sup> men joined the female students in their protest inside and took pictures. Underaged women, who were usually gentle and respectful, have now ganged up with men (*xiaojun nansheng* 嘯聚男生), completely have their heads turned and despise their elders (*mieshi zhangshang* 蔑視長上). Zhang implied that the parents who sent their daughters to Beijing to study might be very worried, and that this whole affair shed a negative light on the education of women in general. He wrote that those supporting the female student protests and claiming that they respect (*zunzhong* 尊重) women actually humiliate women (*cuiru nüzi* 摧辱女子). With this, Zhang might implicitly allude to New Culture intellectuals like Lu Xun who supported the protests, and the female victims of these humiliations are not only the students occupying the university in, as viewed from a traditional standpoint, outrageous conditions, but also the principal Yang Yinyu, who was terribly slandered at the time by both the student activists and Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren and others.<sup>211</sup>

Activists for women's rights also used the image of the "tiger that blocks the road". A writer with the pseudonym "Autumn sounds/voice" (Qiusheng 秋聲, alluding to a prose poem *fu* 賦 by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, 1007–1072) called on the female compatriots (*nü tongbao* 女同胞) to stand up (*qilai* 起來) to "overthrow the tiger that blocks the road of the women's liberation movement – Zhang Shizhao" (*dadao funü jiefang yundong de lanlu-hu* – Zhang Shizhao 打倒婦女解放運動的攔路虎——章士釗).<sup>212</sup> As well, the author also evoked the image of

209 See Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Zhaiyi wenti yajie de jiaoyu zongzhang tingban Beijing nüzi shifan daxue chengwen" (2001). The translation of *wenyan* into *baihua* was an important issue for Wei Jianguo to demonstrate that there is nothing that cannot be said in an easily accessible language. See Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Tan wen fan bai" 談文翻白 [About the translation of literary Chinese into the vernacular], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 277–284. and Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Tan he rongyi wen fan bai" 談何容易文翻白 [About how easy it is to translate the literary Chinese into the vernacular], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 285–291.

210 Zhang Shizhao 章士釗, "Tingban Beijing nüzi shifan daxue chengwen" 停辦北京女子師範呈文 [Memorial to disband the Beijing Women's Normal University], in: *Zhang Shizhao quanji* 章士釗全集 [Complete works of Zhang Shizhao], ed. by Wang Junxi 王均熙, vol. 5, Shanghai 上海: Wenhui chubanshe 文匯出版社, 2000, 104–106, see 104.

211 Zhang Shizhao 章士釗, "Tingban Beijing nüzi shifan daxue chengwen" (2000), 105.

212 Qiusheng 秋聲, "Dadao funü jiefang yundong de lanlu-hu" 打倒婦女解放運動的攔路虎 [Overthrow the stumbling blocks [tiger that blocks the way] of the women's liberation movement], in: *Funü zhoukan* 婦女週刊 [Women weekly] (1925), 2.

a “people-eating moralistic education” (*chiren de lijiao* 吃人的禮教)<sup>213</sup> that was advocated by Zhang Shizhao. This trope resonates with Lu Xun’s famous *Diary of a madman* as a parable of Confucian society. Wei Jianguo also read the *Diary* and mentioned this “people-eating moralistic education” in relation to gender equality.<sup>214</sup> Zhang resigned from his post as minister of education in November, 1925.<sup>215</sup>

### 3.2.6 Wei Jianguo as a Communist

Since graduating from Peking University in the summer of 1925, Wei Jianguo continued to work as a linguist, educator and editor. In the spring of 1926, he was appointed teaching assistant (*zhujiao* 助教) at Peking University and worked with Liu Bannong in the phonetics laboratory. The laboratory’s equipment bore witness to increasing modernization and Westernization. For example, they worked with a kymograph, an instrument to record sound waves, mechanically written as waves on paper wrapped around a revolving drum.

Wei Jianguo additionally took on editing tasks that were part of New Culture intellectuals reorganizing Chinese heritage and viewing it with scrutiny and with what they believed to be scientific objectivity.<sup>216</sup> Lu Xun assigned him with the task of editing stories from the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記<sup>217</sup> that were included in his “Collection of wonder tales of the Tang and Song dynasties” (*Tang Song chuanqi ji* 唐宋傳奇集).<sup>218</sup> Wei Jianguo also took over the editorship of the journal *Guoxue zhoukan* 國學週刊 (National learning weekly), which subse-

213 Qiusheng 秋聲, “Dadao funü jiefang yundong de lanlu-hu” (1925), 1.

214 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Zuzong jiruò” 祖宗積弱 [The long-standing weakness of the ancestors], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 285–291, see 477. In “Diary of a madman” (*Kuangren riji*), the protagonist is convinced that everyone wants to eat him, and that in between the lines of a history book filled with the words “Virtue and Morality” is written “eat people”. Young people in particular suffered from the constraints of traditional society that put children at the absolute command of their parents. The trope that filial piety involves going to extreme lengths, such as giving one’s own body as food to the parents, or wives having to devote their lives completely to their husbands, and if necessary, dying as chaste widows. Schoppa, R. Keith, *The Columbia Guide to Modern Chinese History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, 63–64.

215 Sun, Saiyin, *Beyond the Iron House: Lu Xun and the Modern Chinese Literary Field* (2016), 67.

216 One example is the above-mentioned Gu Jiegang and his “Doubting Antiquity School”.

217 The title is translated as “Extended Accounts of the Reign of Grand Tranquility” by Kirkland, Russell, “A World in Balance: Holistic Synthesis in the T’ai-p’ing kuang-chi”, in: *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 23 (1993), 43–70. Lu Xun’s interest in the magazine is not surprising, since the *Taiping Guangqi* is considered as the first compilation project that actively collected “fiction” (*xiaoshuo* 小說 were, see DeWoskin, Kenneth J, “The Six Dynasties Chih-kuai and the Birth of Fiction”, in: *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, ed. by Plaks, Andrew H, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977, 21–52, see 48. namely *zhiguai* 志怪 and *chuanqi* 傳奇 (“wonder tales”), mostly dating from the Six Dynasties (*Liuchao* 六朝, 222–589), and Tang dynasty, respectively, see Wang Rutao 王汝涛, Qian Qinlai 钱勤来 et al. (ed.), *Taiping Guangqi xuan* 太平广记选 [Selected works of the *Taiping Guangqi*], vol. 1, Jinan 济南: Qilu shushe 齐鲁书社, 1980, 12. As mentioned above, in his *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe*, Lu Xun carves out the role of popular ghost stories for the development of fiction in China.

218 Lu Xun 鲁迅 (ed.), *Tang Song chuanqi ji* 唐宋傳奇集 [Collection of wonder tales from the Tang and Song Dynasties], Beijing 北京: Wenxue guji kanxingshe 文学古籍刊行社, 1956, 11.

quently became a monthly periodical and was renamed *Guoxue yuekan* 國學月刊).<sup>219</sup>

In late 1925, on Fan Hongjie's 范鴻劫 (1897–1927)<sup>220</sup> recommendation, Wei Jiāngōng became a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and he was assigned into the Sino-French University's small group (Zhong-Fa daxue xiaozu 中法大學小組), together with Chen Yi 陳毅 (1901–1972),<sup>221</sup> Wang Yueyu 王躍郁 et al. The Sino-French University (Université Franco-Chinoise) was founded in 1920 in Beijing by Li Shizeng 李石曾 (1881–1973), Wu Zhihui and Cai Yuanpei, together with the Chinese-French education society (Hua-Fa jiaoyuhui 華法教育會) in the context of the work-study movement (*qingong jianxue yundong* 勤工儉學運動) whose goal was sending students to study in Europe. In 1921, the partner institution “Institut Franco-Chinois” was founded in Lyon, France.<sup>222</sup>

Before long, Wei Jiāngōng worked in the “Chinese association to relieve distress” (Zhongguo Jinan hui 中國濟難會).<sup>223</sup> The Jinan hui was founded in September 1925, and while it was dominated by CCP members and de facto led by the Communist Youth League (Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingnian tuan 中國共產主義青年團), it was separate from the Party organization. It was one of the most important mass organizations and sought to provide economical help to revolutionaries or their families, including bail money, funeral costs or medical expenses. Fundraising was therefore an important task. Moreover, it served as a liaison to the CCP. Lu Xun, for example, was able to contact the party through the association in Shanghai in 1927.<sup>224</sup>

- 219 Recounting the multitude of tasks Wei Jiāngōng managed in his lifetime, from editorships to education projects, would go beyond the scope of this work. More information can be obtained from Cao Da's *nianpu*. Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996).
- 220 Fan Hongjie was a Marxist Peking University student who died a communist “martyr”: he was executed along with Li Dazhao and others on Zhang Zuolin's 張作霖 (1873–1928) orders on April 28, 1927. See Feng Xiaowei 冯晓蔚, “Geming yinglie Fan Hongjie” 革命英烈范鸿劫 [Revolutionary martyr Fan Hongjie], in: *Dangshi wenhui* 党史文汇 [Materials from CPC History] 2.2 (2012).
- 221 Chen Yi studied in France and in Beijing at the Sino-French University. He was an early friend of Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893–1976) and became an important military leader in the 30s and 40s, mayor of Shanghai after 1949 and minister of foreign affairs in 1958. See Boorman, Howard L., “Ch'en Yi”, in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, vol. 1, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 254–259. and Klein, Donald W., and Anne B. Clark, “Ch'en I”, in: *Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Communism*, vol. 1, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971, 104–113.
- 222 Müller, Gotelind, *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus* (2001), 346. See also He Yan, “Overseas Chinese in France and the World-Society: Culture, Business, State and Transnational Connections, 1906–1949”, in: *State, Society and Governance in Republican China*, ed. by Leutner, Mechthild, and Izabella Goikhman, Münster: LIT, 2014, 49–63. During the Japanese occupation, the Sino-French University moved to Kunming 昆明 and became part of Xinan lianhe daxue. See Hayhoe, Ruth, “The Spirit of Modern China: Life Stories of Influential Educators”, in: *Selected Essays on China's Education: Research and Review*, ed. by Ding, Gang, vol. 1, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2019, 106–173, see 135. Wei Jiāngōng also worked there when it was evacuated to Yunnan 雲南. See Xu Zhimian 徐知免, “Huiyi Wei Jiāngōng xiansheng” 回忆魏建功先生 [Remembering Wei Jiāngōng], in: *Sanwen* 散文 [Prose] (1999).
- 223 See Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 7. and Wei Nai 魏乃, Wei Zhi 魏至 and Wei Chong 魏重, Short biography (1996), 4.
- 224 Stranahan, Patricia, *Underground: The Shanghai Communist Party and the Politics of Survival, 1927–1937*, Lanham et. al. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998, 99–100.



Wei Jiāngōng did not stay a party member for long. In February, 1926, Wei Jiāngōng had to go to the hospital because of pleurisy (*leimoyan* 肋膜炎), and while he was still hospitalized, the March 18 Massacre (*San yi ba can'an* 三一八慘案) took place. Demonstrations against unequal treaties, imperialism and the warlord government took place in front of Duan Qirui's house, led by Li Dazhao, who gave a speech. Duan Qirui ordered military police to disperse the protesters, who were mainly students. The situation then escalated, and more than 40 protesters were killed. The protests were organized by communist and Kuomintang adherents. In the aftermath, members of both groups/parties were persecuted by the warlord government. The universities were kept under surveillance.<sup>225</sup> Subsequently, many scholars and students “went south” (*nanxia* 南下), i.e. left Beijing.<sup>226</sup> When Wei Jiāngōng left the hospital in April, 1926, he withdrew his membership from the CCP. There is mention of his family compound being searched by government agents.<sup>227</sup> Wei Jiāngōng left Beijing and headed south to teach Chinese language and literature (*guowen*) at Jiangsu 3rd Women's Normal School (Jiangsu shengli di san nüzi shifan xuexiao 江蘇省立第三女子師範學校) in Xuzhou 徐州.<sup>228</sup> Contributions for the journal *Guoxue yuekan* were sent to him for editing.<sup>229</sup> After one semester at Jiangsu 3rd Women's Normal School, Wei Jiāngōng shortly returned to Beijing before leaving for Korea, as will be explained in the next section.

As explained in this section, Wei Jiāngōng was a May Fourth student. This can be characterized by his personal contacts (his teachers), his involvement in the discourse of the time (especially in magazines), his language concepts, and his advocacy of universal education. His key concepts of language, decisive for his career, posit that language is a tool for communication and that it can be reformed. Furthermore, everyone should be able to understand it and take part in communication. This inclusive approach is also mirrored in his involvement in folklore and dialect research. This part of his life is the starting point for Wei Jiāngōng's involvement in language planning. It was not institutionalized yet, since Wei Jiāngōng only acted as an individual with important ties. This status would change. The role of Wei Jiāngōng evolved from an agent in the discourse to an agent in policy making. His involvement in language planning would result in tangible results for the Chinese populace.

225 Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898-1929* (2004), 243.

226 It might be useful to mention here that many intellectuals and students in Beijing came from southern areas, such as the Jiangnan region. However, in 1926, Peking University was in such a difficult financial situation that many of the teaching personnel left to find better paid jobs in the South. See Lin, Xiaoqing Diana, *Peking University: Chinese Scholarship and Intellectuals 1898-1937* (2005), 44.

227 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 7.

228 See Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 8. and Wei Nai 魏乃, Wei Zhi 魏至 and Wei Chong 魏重, Short biography (1996), 4.

229 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 8.

### 3.3 On the First Language Mission: Teaching Chinese in Korea

While in Xuzhou, Wei Jiāngōng longed for Beijing and his leftist companions<sup>230</sup> and returned in December 1926. However, he was isolated in Beijing, since the communists were being persecuted, and he was not able to find employment.<sup>231</sup> At that time, the Faculty of Law and Letters (Fa-wen xuebu 法文學部) of Keijō Imperial University (Jingcheng diguo daxue 漢城的京城大學 = Kyōngsōng cheung taehak, Keijō Teikoku Daigaku)<sup>232</sup> in Seoul (Kyōngsōng 京城 at that time) was looking for a lecturer in Chinese. Keijō University was established by the Japanese who occupied Korea (1910–1945) in 1924. The Japanese headmaster of Keijō Imperial University, Hattori Unokichi 服部宇之吉 (1867–1939) asked a fellow Japanese scholar at Peking University at that time, namely Imamura Kandō 今村完道 (1884–1949),<sup>233</sup> to find a Chinese teacher to teach in Korea. Peking University was the obvious place to look for academic personnel, since many Peking University professors previously studied in Japan. The Chinese Language and Literature department’s professors Shen Yinmo, Zhang Fengju 張鳳舉 (1895–1986) and others recommended Wei Jiāngōng.<sup>234</sup>

Wei Jiāngōng left Beijing in late March, 1927, and started his teaching at Keijō Imperial University in April. In 1948, when he was already in Taiwan, Wei said that he felt his involvement with *guoyu* really started when he assumed the position of Chinese lecturer in Seoul.<sup>235</sup> His appointment also showed a change in attitude of the Japanese towards the teaching of Chinese. They did not require a teacher with a Beijing accent; instead, they sought someone who analytically understood the pronunciation of the characters and picked Wei because of his background in phonology.<sup>236</sup> Wei Jiāngōng taught spoken Chinese at the beginner level and taught his students Zhuyin fuhao. The students were familiar with

230 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Huai na guguai de quanzi” 懷那古怪的圈子 [Missing this odd circle of friends], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 466–67.

231 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 70.

232 I am very grateful for the help of Sangwook Lee, a fellow PhD student in Heidelberg, for helping me acquire information about Wei Jiāngōng’s stay in Korea.

233 Imamura was sent by the Japanese government to study in China for one year in 1926, and prolonged his stay for an additional year at his own expense. He returned to Japan in March, 1928. Later, he was appointed professor at Taihoku University in Taiwan. Cf. Zhang Wenchao 張文朝, “Jincun Wandao de ‘Zhouyi’ guan ji qi dui Taiwan jingxue de yingxiang” 今村完道的《周易》觀及其對臺灣經學的影響 [Imamura Kandō’s view on the *Zhouyi* and his influence on the studies of the classics in Taiwan], in: *Xingda renwen xuebao* 興大人文學報 [*Chung Hsing Journal of The Humanities*] 59 (2017), 126–164, see 126. Many thanks to Egas Moniz-Bandeira for helping me find this resource.

234 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 8. See also Wei Nai 魏乃, Wei Zhi 魏至 and Wei Chong 魏重, Short biography (1996), 4.

235 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Wenfaxue de lilun yu shiji” 文法學的理論與實際 [Theory and practice of grammar studies], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 400–402, see 400.

236 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Wenfaxue de lilun yu shiji” (2001), 400.

classical literary Chinese, so he used *wenyan* to explain. When that did not work, he tried his best to use English. Wei Jianguo used Liu E's 柳鄂 (Tieyun 鐵雲, 1857–1909) "The travels of Lao Can" (*Lao Can youji* 老殘遊記) as a textbook. This will be discussed below. While Wei's aim was to teach the "living language" (*huo yuyan*), the classes mainly comprised translation. Wei Jianguo was not able to really converse with the students: he compared their level of spoken Chinese to little babies just learning to speak.<sup>237</sup>

Although far from home, Wei Jianguo was nonetheless preoccupied with the fate of China. This is evident from his travelogue and the choice of *Lao Can youji* as a textbook. Addressing the language question also meant addressing China's future development. The Chinese nationalism of the time can be analyzed in two dimensions: one directed towards the outside of China, and one towards the inside, exemplified by Qian Xuantong's editorial above (page 63). The first dimension referred to the perception of the intellectuals that China faced an external threat from the imperialist powers; the second dimension referred to China's perceived flaws that – they felt – made it weak and backwards.

Wei Jianguo's nationalist endeavors in Korea were marked by questions of identity and preservation of the self or the nation. He researched and sought source material of the Ming loyalists who had fled Qing China for Korea. He was well aware that Korea was subjugated by Qing China as a tributary state and colonized by the Japanese. In addition, he busied himself with comparisons between China and Korea, becoming self-aware of his Chinese identity and scrutinized fellow Chinese living in Korea.

### 3.3.1 The Choice of *Lao Can Youji* 老殘遊記 as Textbook

Chinese secondary literature that highlight and overemphasize Wei Jianguo's role in the study of Chinese in Korea claim that there were not many textbooks for Chinese as a foreign language at that time. (This also ignores the existence of Western-authored Chinese textbooks<sup>238</sup>) and that the existing material was outdated.<sup>239</sup>

237 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Yingyin Huang Ming yimin zhuan ba" 影印皇明遺民傳跋 [Postface to the facsimile 'Biographies of Ming dynasty adherents'], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhensheng 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 360–361, see 360.

238 For example, Paul Sinclair describes how Thomas Francis Wade's (1818–1895) 1867 Chinese textbook series titled *Yü yen tsü êrh chi: a Progressive Course designed to assist the student of Colloquial Chinese, as spoken in the capital and the Metropolitan Department* was used by Japanese educators who previously paid less attention to the spoken language in Beijing. Sinclair, Paul, "Thomas Wade's 'Yü yen tsü êrh chi' and the Chinese Language Textbooks of Meiji-Era Japan", in: *Asia Major (Third Series)* 16.1 (2003), 147–174, see 148. The textbook is accessible online: Wade, Thomas Francis, *Yü yen tsü êrh chi: a Progressive Course designed to assist the student of Colloquial Chinese, as spoken in the capital and the Metropolitan Department*, London: Trübner, 1867. Accessed online (Feb. 8, 2022): <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb10495539?>

239 Such as: Zhao Jinming 赵金铭, "Wei Jianguo xiansheng zai Chaoxian jiao Hanyu he zai Taiwan tuiguang guoyu de gongxian" 魏建功先生在朝鲜教汉语和在台湾推广国语的贡献 [Wei Jianguo's achievements in teaching Chinese in Korea and promoting the national language in Taiwan], in: *Shijie*

However, the study of Chinese in Korea can be traced to the Three Kingdoms period (57 BCE–668 CE). In this time period, the focus was the written language and the Classics. In the Chosun dynasty (1392–1910), the study of the spoken language gained more weight.<sup>240</sup> Two important textbooks published in the 14th century were in use when Wei Jiāngōng traveled to Korea: *Lao Qida* 老乞大 (“Chinese Expert”, *Nogŏltae* in Korean)<sup>241</sup> and *Piao Tongshi* 朴通事 (“Park the interpreter”, *Pak T’ongsa*).<sup>242</sup> Both were reedited several times. They comprise dialogues from everyday life (especially the life of merchants) and are the oldest surviving textbooks for Chinese as a foreign language.<sup>243</sup>

Wei Jiāngōng himself stated that there was also no suitable grammar book available to him. In retrospect, he was very humble about his performance as a teacher, saying that he could hardly do his task any justice, and that he had neither enough knowledge nor the means to clearly and systematically explain the language structure *yuyan zuzhi* 語言組織<sup>244</sup> to his students.<sup>245</sup>

He used the novel *Lao Can youji* as textbook. Although this was an unconventional choice, Wei Jiāngōng felt some of its features made it interesting and suitable for class. Written at the turn of the 20th century, *Lao Can youji* is one of the classical *baihua* novels, i.e., it is written in the literary vernacular. Wei Jiāngōng, advocating the above-mentioned “congruency of writing and speech” (*yan wen yi zhi*) to overcome the perceived state of diglossia in China, was a supporter of *baihua* fiction. He also admired Lu Xun, whose “Diary of a Madman” is seen as

*Hanyu jiaoxue* 世界汉语教学 [Chinese Teaching in the World] 3 (2002). Chien Tuo 錢拓 [Qian Tuo], “Wei Jiāngōng yinxue shuping” (2013). or Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 71.

240 Lee, Kwang Sook, “History of foreign language education in Korea”, in: *Foreign Language Education Research* 18 (2015), 37–52, see 37–38.

241 Wilkinson translates *lao* as “expert”, other translations can be found in which “old” is used. *Qida* refers to “Khitān” (or Qidan 契丹), a people that lived in north and northeast China and Mongolia that founded the Liao 遼 dynasty (916–1125). The term was used for northern China in general and found its way into European languages in Marco Polo’s (1254–1324) rendering as “Cathay”. Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 786.

242 See, for example: Zhao Jinming 赵金铭, “Wei Jiāngōng xiansheng zai Chaoxian jiao Hanyu he zai Taiwan tuiguang guoyu de gongxian” (2002), 103. Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 71. or Chien Tuo 錢拓 [Qian Tuo], “Wei Jiāngōng yinxue shuping” (2013), 4.

243 Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 786. Before the Japanese occupation, the teachers were often “bannermen”, i.e. Manchu. Zhao Jinming 赵金铭, “Wei Jiāngōng xiansheng zai Chaoxian jiao Hanyu he zai Taiwan tuiguang guoyu de gongxian” (2002), 103. This is confirmed by Wu Zhihui 吴稚晖 in a 1909 article in the Paris anarchist journal *Xin shiji* 新世纪 (New century). Ran 燃 [Wu Zhihui 吴稚晖], “Shu Fuzhou Ribao ‘Dongxue Xi jian’ pian hou” 书《福州日报》《东学西渐》篇后 [After writing ‘Eastern learning penetrates the West’ in *Fuzhou Daily*], in: *Xinhai Geming qian shi nian shijian shilun xuanji* 辛亥革命前十年时间时论选集 [Selected works of public opinion of the ten years before the Xinhai Revolution], ed. by Zhang Zhan 张梅, Wang Renzhi 王忍之, vol. 3, Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, zhishi san lian shudian 生活·读书·新知三联书店, 1977, 459–477, see 470. “Banner” were organizational units in the Qing dynasty that also reflected the clan structure. For more information, see: Elliott, Mark C., *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001. While secondary literature praises Wei Jiāngōng’s innovative spirit for not using conventional teaching material, it is to be noted that linguistically speaking, these books were not ill-suited for teaching *guoyu*. As will be shown below, Wei Jiāngōng would later explicitly trace the national pronunciation back to Yuan times.

244 Wei Jiāngōng uses this term on several occasions to refer to both syntax and morphology.

245 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Wenfaxue de lilun yu shiji” (2001), 400.

the first modern text. He later stated explicitly that “*baihua* is close to the spoken language” (*jiejìn kǒuyǔ* 接近口語).<sup>246</sup> By using a *baihua* novel as a textbook, he was able to come comparatively close to the spoken language.

Qi Yongxiang has pointed out that the textbooks used previously and the *Lao Can youji* can be characterized by being “half vernacular, half classical” (*ban bai ban wen* 半白半文). If one considers the level of Chinese characters the Koreans mastered at that time, both were intelligible, but the pronunciation of the characters had to be learned.<sup>247</sup> In the *Lao Can youji*, the passages of landscape description, for example, are full of *wenyan*, while the direct speech can be characterized as *baihua*, very similar to the *Lao Qida* and the *Piao Tongshi*. These two textbooks originated when Early Modern Chinese, often equated with *baihua*, started to develop (see above page 43).

In addition to *Lao Can youji*'s linguistic functions, its content was also important to Wei Jianguo. Yan Fu (in 1897) and Liang Qichao (in 1902) already gave fiction an important role in society, viewing it “as an instrument for national reform”.<sup>248</sup> Since Wei Jianguo was very concerned with the well-being of China and its citizens, he might have chosen the “Travels of Lao Can” due to its depiction of social problems, especially in Confucian-influenced officialdom (such as corrupt officials). In *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe*, Lu Xun classified *Lao Can youji* as “novel of denunciation” (*qianze xiaoshuo* were 譴責小說).<sup>249</sup>

It is also possible that Wei Jianguo identified with the protagonist of the novel, and maybe even with the author Liu E. There is evidence that Lao Can is not just a protagonist but a veritable alter ego of Liu E.<sup>250</sup> Wei, just like Lao Can, was a traveller (in Korea). Wei also wrote travel reports; one report that will be discussed below illustrates how Wei Jianguo also wanted to expose problems of China and the Chinese, just like Liu E's alter ego Lao Can. I am rather sure Wei interpreted the book as criticizing China's situation at the time, and the hero as a humble clairvoyant who tried to improve the situation. Wei Jianguo would have liked to be such a hero.

Many points can be made about why the “most beloved of all Chinese novels produced during the last decade of the Ch'ing dynasty”<sup>251</sup> was chosen by Wei

246 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guanyu *Zhonghua xinyun* – yi jiu si er nian qi yue zai Zhongyang daxue de jiangyan” 關於《中華新韻》——一九四二年七月在中央大學的講演 [About the *Zhonghua xinyun* – Talk at the National Central University in July, 1942], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集, ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮, vol. 1, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 633–636, see 636.

247 Qi Yongxiang 漆永祥, “Wei Jianguo xiansheng Chaoxian shouke shilüe” 魏建功先生朝鮮授課事略 [Brief account of events of Wei Jianguo teaching in Korea], in: *Yan Huang wenhua yanjiu* 炎黃文化研究 [Culture of the Hot and the Yellow emperor] 1 (2004), 271–277.

248 Hsia, C. T., “Yen Fu and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao as Advocates of New Fiction”, in: *C.T Hsia on Chinese Literature*, New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2004, 183–201, see 183.

249 Lu Xun 魯迅, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe* 中國小說史略 [Brief history of Chinese fiction], Hongkong 香港: Xin yi chubanshe 新藝出版社, 1970 [1923], 298–307.

250 Wong, Timothy C., “The Name “Lao Ts'an” in Liu E's Fiction”, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109.1 (1989), 103–106.

251 Hsia, C. T., “The Travels of Lao Ts'an: An Exploration of Its Art and Meaning”, in: *C.T Hsia on Chinese Literature*, New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2004, 202–218, see 202.

Jiangong as a textbook (its popularity actually being also one of them). To conclude, the main reasons for this are probably its linguistic nature, its content, the circumstances of the novel's genesis and the biography of its author.

### 3.3.2 Collecting Ancient Books

In his free time, Wei Jiangong frequented book markets and collected or hand-copied old books. He was asked by the head of the Peking University Library, Yuan Tongli 袁同礼 (1895–1965), to find old books for the library.<sup>252</sup> Additionally, it appears that Wei's teaching duties did not fulfill or exhaust him, and perhaps he did not have many contacts he could talk to at a satisfactory level. Several books in his family's possession in Beijing bear a seal stating that Wei Jiangong obtained the book in Korea. An important find of Wei Jiangong's was the previously unknown *Huang Ming yimin zhuan* 皇明遺民傳 (Biographies of Ming dynasty adherents) about Ming loyalists in Qing period China, Korea and Japan.<sup>253</sup> Other discoveries are mentioned and discussed briefly by Qi Yongxiang.<sup>254</sup>

### 3.3.3 Travel Reports

Wei Jiangong also wrote travel reports that were published in the weekly magazine *Yusi* (Thread of talk) starting in 1926.<sup>255</sup> *Yusi* appeared for the first time on November 17, 1924, edited by Sun Fuyuan. In August 1926, Zhou Zuoren took over the editorship; in December 1927, Lu Xun; in December 1928, Rou Shi 柔石 (Zhao Pingfu 趙平福, 1902–1931). In September 1929, Li Xiaofeng took over. In March 1930, the publication of *Yusi* ceased.<sup>256</sup> This is the aftermath of the May Fourth Movement. The intellectuals still advocated a new culture, introduced Western ideas, and criticized tradition and imperialism. However, they were still very disappointed with the political situation in China, and the criticism of the government, warlords and corrupt politicians was even stronger. These quarreling ruling powers were perceived as an impediment to China's modernization and democratization by the intellectuals.<sup>257</sup> The warlord Zhang Zuolin gained control over Beijing and the government in 1926 and "terrorized" the press.<sup>258</sup> This meant that *Yusi* could no longer be published in Beijing. Instead, it moved to Shanghai, where Lu Xun became the chief editor.

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252 Qi Yongxiang 漆永祥, "Wei Jiangong xiansheng Chaoxian shouke shilüe" (2004), 274.

253 Sun Weiguo 孫衛國, "Chaoxian 'Huang Ming yimin zhuan' de zuozhe ji qi chengshu" 朝鮮《皇明遺民傳》的作者及其成書 [The authorship and publication of 'Biographies of Ming dynasty adherents' from Korea], in: *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 [Sinological research] 20.1 (2002), 163–188, see 163.

254 Qi Yongxiang 漆永祥, "Wei Jiangong xiansheng Chaoxian shouke shilüe" (2004), 275.

255 Cao Da 曹達, "Wei Jiangong nianpu" (1996), 31.

256 Schneider, Elisabeth, "Skizze einer literarischen Zeitschrift: Die Anfänge der *Yu si* und ihre Zielsetzung", in: *Oriens Extremus* 26.1/2 (1979), 173–188, see 174.

257 Schneider, Elisabeth, "Skizze einer literarischen Zeitschrift: Die Anfänge der *Yu si* und ihre Zielsetzung" (1979), 173.

258 Schneider, Elisabeth, "Skizze einer literarischen Zeitschrift: Die Anfänge der *Yu si* und ihre Zielsetzung" (1979), 174.

While the literary society *Yusi she* 語絲社 formally stood behind the publication, neither the society nor the magazine openly pursued a definite agenda.<sup>259</sup> However, it can be said that *Yusi*, headed by Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Sun Fuyuan, Qian Xuantong, Gu Jiegang, Liu Fu, Yu Dafu 郁達夫 (1896–1945) and Lin Yutang, “tended to consider itself the guardian of the May Fourth iconoclastic spirit”.<sup>260</sup> The preface of the first edition claimed that no political agenda was pursued. Instead, its aim was complete freedom of expression. While contributions from various literary by more than 600 authors<sup>261</sup> found their way into *Yusi*, including the majority of Lu Xun’s work at that time, the magazine’s content became more and more political. It stood in for the new Republic of China, fighting all tendencies or attempts of a restoration of the previous dynasty.<sup>262</sup>

The *Yusi* society did not have a clear-cut ideology or a homogeneous group of writers, as is often assumed of other literary societies. Miller rejects the view that there must be a political motivation behind the society’s “ideology”. Rather, he sees it as a group of people with individual motivations who are connected in a complex way.<sup>263</sup> The *Yusi* group was never really institutionalized.<sup>264</sup> However, it must be said that the authors shared an iconoclastic attitude and the New Culture spirit. Miller talks of a somewhat collective identity.<sup>265</sup>

A relatively large number of articles in *Yusi* are *zawen* 雜文 (miscellaneous essays), and the magazine played an important role in popularizing this kind of essay, which became influential in Chinese literature until today.<sup>266</sup> Many of the contributors were not only important intellectuals of the time but also were also teachers of Wei Jianguo or thinkers that had an influence on him. Among the contributors were Liu Bannong, Qian Xuantong, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Lin Yutang, Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900–1990), Sun Fuyuan. There is also a noteworthy overlap with the contributors to *Xin Qingnian*. The founders were Sun Fuyuan, Zhou Zuoren, Lu Xun, Jiang Shaoyuan 江紹原 (1898–1983), Gu Jiegang, Qian Xuantong, Lin Yutang, et al.<sup>267</sup> Most of them were either Peking University professors or worked at another school in Beijing.<sup>268</sup>

The series of travel reports that Wei Jianguo published in *Yusi* from May 14, 1927, to March 5, 1928, is entitled “Trivial talk from my stay in Korea” (*Qiao*

259 Schneider, Elisabeth, “Skizze einer literarischen Zeitschrift: Die Anfänge der *Yu si* und ihre Zielsetzung” (1979), 174.

260 Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898-1929* (2004), 233.

261 Schneider, Elisabeth, “Skizze einer literarischen Zeitschrift: Die Anfänge der *Yu si* und ihre Zielsetzung” (1979), 176.

262 Schneider, Elisabeth, “Skizze einer literarischen Zeitschrift: Die Anfänge der *Yu si* und ihre Zielsetzung” (1979), 181.

263 Miller, Mark, “The *Yusi* Society”, in: *Literary Societies of Republican China*, ed. by Denton, Kirk A., and Michel Hockx, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008, 171–206, see 172.

264 Miller, Mark, “The *Yusi* Society” (2008), 191.

265 Miller, Mark, “The *Yusi* Society” (2008), 192.

266 Miller, Mark, “The *Yusi* Society” (2008), 171.

267 Schneider, Elisabeth, “Skizze einer literarischen Zeitschrift: Die Anfänge der *Yu si* und ihre Zielsetzung” (1979), 175.

268 Miller, Mark, “The *Yusi* Society” (2008), 196.

Han suo tan 僑韓瑣談). It comprises 14 published episodes; episode number 15 remained unpublished.<sup>269</sup> In the series, Wei Jiāngōng reported all sorts of daily life occurrences, observations, culture, including music, performances, folk beliefs etc. It shed light on the research of Korean culture, history, Chinese-Korean relations and Chinese history of thought.<sup>270</sup>

The second episode, “Chinese high-class cuisine” hints at Wei Jiāngōng’s self-image as a Chinese teacher in Korea as well as his views on the nation. In this report, Wei Jiāngōng described how he walked into a Chinese restaurant in Seoul with an edition of *Yusi* in his hand. To Wei Jiāngōng, the waiter looks just like the people from Shandong 山東 he knows from Beijing. He notes down the entire dialogue, asking the waiter where he thinks Wei is from. The waiter replies that Wei Jiāngōng does not seem Chinese.<sup>271</sup> “How do you not believe that I’m Chinese?”<sup>272</sup> – “Ah! I hear you speak, how can there be so much I don’t understand. You must be a southerner?”<sup>273</sup>

Expressing his feelings, Wei exclaims: “I felt very embarrassed, speaking my own National Language,<sup>274</sup> I can’t even teach my own ‘compatriots’ to understand! Actually, his ㄍ | , ㄅ | , ㄆ | (*gi, ki, hi*) sounds like ㄐ | , ㄑ | , ㄒ | (*ji, qi, xi*) and ㄗ | , ㄘ | , ㄙ | (*zhi, chi, shi, ri*), no wonder he doesn’t understand.”<sup>275</sup>

Decades after Wei Jiāngōng’s travels to Korea, when he helped to simplify Chinese characters, Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1911–1966) noted the following about Wei’s and other language planners’ way of speaking:

Spreading the use of the standard vernacular really would be good for standardizing the Chinese language. In theory, that is easy, but it can be difficult in practice. People who advocate it have been studying rhymes for many years. The theory of rhymes is relatively lofty and profound, but with the exception of Mr. Luo Changpei, no one speaks the standard vernacular well. At the present time, Messrs. Li Jinxi, Lu Zhiwei [陸志韋, 1894–1970], Wei Jiāngōng, Lü Shuxiang [呂淑湘, 1904–1998] all still speak in their local dialects.<sup>276</sup>

269 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Qiao Han suo tan” 僑韓瑣談 [Trivial talk from my stay in Korea], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 157–205, see 205.

270 Park Jae-woo 朴宰雨 [Piao Zaiyu], “1920 niandai Wei Jiāngōng youji ‘Qiao Han suo tan’ jiazhi de tansuo” 1920年代魏建功游记《侨韩琐谈》价值的探索 [Investigation about the value of Wei Jiāngōng’s travel report ‘Trivial talk from my stay in Korea’ of the 1920s], in: *Dangdai Hanguo* 当代韩国 [Contemporary Korea] 4 (2008), 61–68.

271 Wei Jiāngōng employs a historic term for Korea, “Gaoli” 高麗 (Korean: Koryō), which was the name of three dynasties throughout Korean history.

272 *Zhongguoren* 中國人.

273 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Qiao Han suo tan” (2001), 161.

274 He wrote this term in English!

275 Note that the Zhuyin orthography is different to that of today. See Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Qiao Han suo tan” (2001), 161.

276 Chen, Mengjia [陳夢家], “On the Future of Chinese Writing”, in: *Language Reform in China*, ed. by Seybolt, Peter J., and Gregory Kuei-ke Chiang, New York: Sharpe, 1978, 148–158, see 152.



The travelogue “Trivial talk” encompasses an abundance of information going well beyond language teaching and shows how much Wei Jiāngōng was a scholar and researcher in all realms of the humanities.<sup>277</sup>

An important event in Wei Jiāngōng’s life also occurred during his stay in Korea: his marriage with Wang Bīshū. They had three children together; the fourth died directly after birth. She was the daughter of the Peking University mathematics professor Wang Shàngjī 王尚濟. The two met during Wei Jiāngōng’s summer vacation visit to Beijing in July 1927. In the spring of 1928, Wei Jiāngōng traveled again to Beijing to marry Wang Bīshū, and the two returned to Korea together. The pair then left Korea in August 1928 and returned to Beijing (“Beiping” 北平 at the time), where Wei Jiāngōng took up teaching positions at Sino-French University and at the College of Arts and Sciences for Women of Beiping University (Beiping daxue nǚzi wén-lǐ xuéyuán 北平大學女子文理學院).<sup>278</sup>

277 The period from 1910 to 1945 saw many Chinese travelers to Korea, some of whom acknowledged the progress brought by the Japanese. Others pitied the Koreans for their fate of being subdued and their ensuing economic disadvantage vis-à-vis the Japanese colonizers and suppression of Korean culture. Sun, Kezhi, “Chinese Understandings of Colonial Korea in Modern Times, 1910–1945”, in: *International Impact of Colonial Rule in Korea, 1910–1945*, ed. by Ha, Yong-Chool, Seattle, Washington: Center for Korea Studies, University of Washington, 2019, 239–257.

278 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 8. Wei Jiāngōng’s children claim that Wei Jiāngōng left Korea before his teaching duty was formally over due to the Jinan 濟南 incident (Wusan Can’an 五三慘案) on May 3, 1928, when the Japanese army killed several thousand Chinese soldiers. Wei Nai 魏乃, Wei Zhi 魏至 and Wei Chong 魏重, Short biography (1996), 4. The incident “lead to substantial bitterness, a variety of protests, and a nation-wide boycott against the Japanese.” Schoppa, R. Keith, *Revolution and its Past*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006, 241. While the exact reasons for Wei’s departure cannot be determined now, secondary literature suggests that while the Japanese switched from a “military” to a less repressive “cultural rule” in 1920, there was still discrimination against Koreans and Chinese (Wei also speaks of prejudices in his travel reports). As well, they indicate that he spoke no Japanese or Korean and had to rely on colleagues to interpret for him, and that he was only teaching a handful of students. All these reasons may have prompted the newlyweds to return to China. See: Shin, Eun Kyong, “The Morphology of Resistance: Korean Resistance Networks 1895–1945”, PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2015, 46. Zhao Jinming 趙金銘, “Wei Jiāngōng xiānshēng zài Chāoxiān jiāo Hányǔ hé zài Táiwan tuiguāng guóyǔ de gōngxiān” (2002), 104. Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Qiao Han suo tan” (2001), 204–206. Qi Yongxiang 漆永祥, “Wei Jiāngōng xiānshēng Chāoxiān shouke shilüè” (2004), 272.



## Chapter 4

# The National Language on the Mainland

After demonstrating his revolutionary vigor for *guoyu* and collecting teaching experience with Chinese and Korean students, Wei Jianguo entered the official, institutionalized sphere of language planning. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the fact that language planning was institutionalized did not mean that all battles were fought and won.

### 4.1 From “Old” to “New National Pronunciation”

Wei Jianguo's official involvement in the national language planning began in December 1928, when Qian Xuantong encouraged Wei Jianguo to participate in the Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language (*Guoyu tongyi choubenhui*)<sup>1</sup> established by the Ministry of Education (*Jiaoyu bu* 教育部). Wei was elected member of the standing committee (*changwu huiyuan* 常務會員).<sup>2</sup> The Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language was established on April 21, 1919,<sup>3</sup> and its first session took place on May 4, 1919. Its personnel was tightly intertwined with Peking University.<sup>4</sup>

Its aims were:

统一语言，提倡言文一致，改革文字<sup>5</sup>

1 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 8.

2 Huang Yingzhe 黄英哲, “Wei Jianguo yu zhanhou Taiwan ‘guoyu’ yundong (1946-1948)” 魏建功與戰後台灣「國語」運動 (1946-1948) [Wei Jianguo and the post-war ‘national language’ movement in Taiwan], in: *Taiwan wenxue yanjiu xuebao* 台灣文學研究學報 [Taiwanese literature research journal] 1 (2005), 93.

3 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 391.

4 Lin, Xiaoqing Diana, *Peking University: Chinese Scholarship and Intellectuals, 1898–1937*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, 111-12.

5 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996).

Unify the language, advocate the congruence of language and writing, reform the script

Wei Jiāngōng's activities in the Preparatory Committee starting in 1928 were focused on editing and compiling. He edited the "National language ten-day periodical" (*Guoyu xunkan* 國語旬刊) and was in charge of the data/material management at the "Large Dictionary Compilation Office" (Da cidian bianzuan chu 大辭典編纂處).<sup>6</sup> This is just one of the many compilation projects Wei Jiāngōng took on in his life.

In her book, Elisabeth Kaske interprets the establishment of this committee in 1919 as an important turning point and the ending point of her investigation, since it represented the starting point of official *guoyu* promotion by the government:

The establishment of the Preparatory Committee as a permanent institution attached to the Ministry of Education was an important step in the process of institutionalizing language planning in the educational system. [...] [T]he intellectual elite of China began to accept their responsibility for the elaboration and standardization of *baihua* as a modern literary language of the Chinese nation.<sup>7</sup>

While the (written) vernacular, *baihua*, was adopted as literary language, *guoyu*, the spoken form, should also be discussed. It was the main focus of the phonologist Wei Jiāngōng. During his phase of student activism, Wei Jiāngōng articulated clearly that he wanted a national language, that China needed a national language. However, he was not very clear about what this national language should be like and especially how it should sound like. What he had articulated so far only concerned writing. He expressed his support for a written language that was understandable for all readers.

In the following sections, I will illustrate how Wei Jiāngōng wanted the Beijing dialect to be the model for *guoyu*, and that he employed his expertise and research in phonology to legitimize this claim. To contextualize Wei Jiāngōng's support of the Beijing dialect, and especially its four tones, we need to know that the 1913 Conference for the unification of reading pronunciations (Duyin tongyi hui) decided on a mix of several dialects' pronunciations. The result was called "blue-green Mandarin" *lan-qing guanhua* 藍青官話 by its critics. After its abolition, it was called the "old national pronunciation" (*lao guoyin* 老國音). *Lan-qing* implies that it was corrupted, not pure or mixed. In the 1920s, while Wei Jiāngōng was a student, there was a debate between adherents of the national pronunciation of the time (i.e. old pronunciation) and proponents of the Beijing pronunciation. Li Jinxi was the loudest of the latter group. While Wei Jiāngōng studied at the Chinese department of Peking University at that time, he participated in the Dialect Fact-Finding Committee (Fangyan diaocha hui 方言調查會) established in 1924. This work would provide him and the other linguists with material about the Beijing dialect, until a Beijing-dialect-based "new national pronunciation" (*xin guoyin* 新國音) was introduced.

6 Cao Da 曹達, "Wei Jiāngōng nianpu" (1996), 9.

7 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 391–2.

However, its implementation and dissemination took much longer. Those familiar with the language situation in China might say that it is still far from being completed today. There was the need for an accurate description of the pronunciation to form the basis for prescription, such as handbooks or teaching material. Here, it is apparent that when Wei Jianguo was active, the phase of identity crisis and self-doubt with its radical reform calls was over. A phase of consolidation, decision and implementation was beginning. In terms of political history, however, the times were still uncertain and full of trouble.

The approach describing Wei Jianguo’s involvement in the standardization and implementation of *guoyu* is chronological as well as topical. If we want to understand the situation Wei Jianguo encountered when he entered the Preparatory Committee, we need to examine the events of the national language discourse immediately preceding Wei Jianguo’s appointment.

One important issue was the question of the “entering tone” *rusheng* 入聲, which was a feature of the “old” national pronunciation. The Beijing pronunciation does not have an entering tone. The research of the phonologists provided historical and linguistic explanation for this fact. Its goal was to facilitate the adoption of the Beijing pronunciation by the often Southern-influenced elite. By demonstrating how it historically evolved from Middle Chinese (MC, to which many southern dialects are closer), the linguists showed that it was not as barbaric as critics claimed. They affirmed its Chinese-ness, and made it acceptable as *guoyu*.

#### 4.1.1 “Blue-Green” Mandarin as National Language

Republican language planning had begun before the Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language (Guoyu tongyi choubhui) was founded. In 1911, the Central Education Conference (Zhongyang jiaoyu huiyi 中央教育會議) “had adopted the Beijing dialect as the basis of a future pronunciation standard”.<sup>8</sup> However, it included the checked entering tone *rusheng* (or *ru*-tone) and was based on *guanhua* grammar. Cai Yuanpei expressed his dissatisfaction in 1912 during the Provisional Education Conference (Linshi jiaoyu huiyi 臨時教育會議). He stated that due to the diversity of the Chinese language in the different regions, simply adopting the language of one area would be met with resistance. Therefore, the national language first needed to be unified.<sup>9</sup> Here, Kaske summarizes Cai Yuanpei’s objections to the unification of the national language:

Cai Yuanpei’s claim that the unification of the national language was still a contested issue reflects nationalist disdain for the Beijing dialect and the use of a language too closely associated with the previous dynasty.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 406.

<sup>9</sup> Kaske quotes Cai Yuanpei’s “Opening address at the Provisional Education Conference” (Quanguo linshi jiaoyu huiyi kaihuici 全國臨時教育會議開會詞). See Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 405–6.

<sup>10</sup> Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 406.

To resolve the issue of the Beijing dialect and/or Northern Mandarin, the 1913 Conference for the Unification of Reading Pronunciations (Duyin tongyi hui, the predecessor of the Preparatory Committee) agreed on setting the pronunciation of 6500 characters with democratic means.<sup>11</sup> Which characters were they? This corpus was based on the rhyme book “Subtleties of phonology” *Yinyun chanwei* 音韻闡微, commissioned by the imperial court and compiled by Li Guangdi 李光地 (1642–1718) and Wang Lansheng 王蘭生 (1680–1737) in 1726.<sup>12</sup> That such a rhyme book was employed for language planning in the Republic, with its focus on nation-building, demonstrates how traditional philology played a much larger role for these processes than usually assumed.

Wu Zhihui, a native of Jiangsu province, was strongly against the Beijing pronunciation, and he wished to bring the *rusheng* and voiced initials into the national pronunciation.<sup>13</sup> The numerous scholars from Jiangsu and Zhejiang who were involved were successful: This earlier *guoyu* pronunciation included the entering tone.<sup>14</sup> The pronunciation system that was an arbitrary mix of northern and southern pronunciations was then called “blue-green Mandarin” and later “old pronunciation”.

The entering tone is of special interest for Wei Jianguo. In Middle Chinese (MC),<sup>15</sup> the entering tone is characterized by the finals -p, -t, -k and a shorter vowel. In Southern Mandarin and many modern dialects that still display an entering tone, it is characterized by a glottal stop [ʔ] at the end of a short vowel.<sup>16</sup>

The features of “national pronunciation” *guoyin* in comparison to the Beijing dialect have been summarized neatly by Kaske.<sup>17</sup> Here, I present some of the most important features of her summary:

- The “entering tone” *rusheng* is the fifth tone.
- Middle Chinese *rusheng* syllables that ended in -k, diphthongized in the modern Beijing dialect, are not diphthongized: [pai] 白 – [pɔʔ].
- “Sharp” (*jianyin* 尖音) and “rounded” (*tuanyin* 團音) initial consonants are differentiated: [ts], [tsʰ], [s] vs. [tɕ], [tɕʰ], [ç]: [tsʰiŋ] 青 vs. [tɕʰiŋ] 清.<sup>18</sup>

11 Kaden, Klaus, “Sprachpolitik”, in: *Das große China-Lexikon*, ed. by Staiger, Brunhild, Stefan Friedrich, and Hans-Wilm Schütte, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008, 705–708, see 705–6.

12 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 43.

13 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 408.

14 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 413.

15 The Middle Chinese tones are “level” *ping* 平, “rising” *shang* 上, “departing” *qu* 去 and “entering” *ru* 入. See Baxter, William H., and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese – A New Reconstruction* (2014), 14.

16 Li, Chris Wen-Chao, “Rù 入 Tone Development in Běijīng Mandarin”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 627–635. In some regional dialects today, some different entering tone codas may be found. Yun, Mai, “Rù 入 Tone Development in Non-Mandarin Dialects”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 3, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 641–646. Wei Jianguo does not discuss them.

17 Kaske bases her summary on the work of Zhao Yuanren and Dorothea Wippermann, and on the “Comparative table of national and Beijing pronunciation” (*Guoyin jingyin duizhaobiao* 國音京音對照表) by Wang Pu, see: Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 413–15.

18 Note that the “sharp-rounded” (*jian-tuan*) terminology for sibilants and velar-laryngeals may be an influence from the pointy or rounded letters of the Manchu script. The distinction is still an important

- A number of other initials and finals that do not exist in the modern Beijing dialect were included in the national pronunciation, such as the velar nasal [ŋ] as initial.

Kaske concludes that this pronunciation system resembled the “bookish Mandarin of the old philologists”. With its mixture of northern and southern pronunciation, it came rather close to what Zhang Binglin had requested.<sup>19</sup> However, in the speaking and teaching practice, this standard resulted in what detractors called “blue-green Mandarin (*lan-qing guanhua*), since every speaker or teacher applied his own phonetic dispositions to the national pronunciation.<sup>20</sup>

Zhao Yuanren (Yuen Ren Chao) retrospectively said the following about the dissemination of this pronunciation standard in 1923:

I wasn’t so interested in the reform from writing in the classical form to writing in the colloquial form. I just followed the fashion and started writing more and more in the colloquial form. As for the unification of the language, I was fairly active. I think it was 1912 or later – I don’t remember the exact date – when a system of so-called kuo-yin national pronunciation was decided on, including entering tones and the difference between “o” and “e” (in different dialects, “o” and “e” were varieties of the same phoneme, but in this national pronunciation – kuo-yin – they were distinguished).<sup>21</sup> One of the most important distinctions is between sharp and rounded – that is, between tsi, tsi, si and chi, ch’i, hsi, a distinction which has always been kept by singers of Peking opera. But in the natural speech of Peking, that is not distinguished.

I mentioned the addition of the entering tone (in addition to the first, second, third and fourth tones) with glottal stop endings. Those were the main features of this artificial kuo-yin, and I made a special set of records for it and a textbook to go with it.<sup>22</sup>

From Zhao Yuanren’s statement, one can conclude that this mixed Mandarin standard was not successfully implemented. The mixed standard was not the only proposed standard phonology. Already in 1920, Zhang Shiyi 張士一 (1886–1969) called for the use of the Beijing dialect as pronunciation standard. His statement had a major influence on later developments:

中華民國的標準語。就是有教育的北京本地人所說的話。<sup>23</sup>

The standard language of the Republic of China is the language of an educated native of Beijing.

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feature of Peking opera pronunciation. See Söderblom Saarela, Mårten, “Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)” (2015), 390ff. See also Wang Weimin 王为民, “Manwen wenxian yu jian-tuanyin wenti” 满文文献与尖团音问题 [Documents in the Manchu script and the *Jian-Tuan* problem], in: *Zhongguo yuwen* 中国语文 [Chinese language and script] 3 (2017), 339–348.

19 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 415.

20 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 452.

21 This is about [ɔ] (ㄛ) like the exclamation 哦, and [ɤ] (ㄝ) like 饿 “hungry”.

22 Chao, Yuen Ren, interview by Levenson, Rosemary, “Chinese linguist, phonologist, composer and author, Yuen Ren Chao”, URL: [http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb8779p27v&brand=calisphere&doc.view=entire\\_text](http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb8779p27v&brand=calisphere&doc.view=entire_text) (visited on June 30, 2017).

23 Zhang Shiyi 張士一, “Guoyu tongyi wenti” 國語統一問題 [The problem of the unification of the national language], in: *Jiaoyu chao* 教育潮 [Education magazine] 1.9–10 (1920), 23–58, see 35.

Others, such as Liu Fu, remained enthusiastic supporters of the old mixed national pronunciation, while many began to favor the Beijing standard. A real fight then began:

In the early 1920s, when debate on “national pronunciation” vs. “Beijing pronunciation” raged in educational circles, Liu Fu sent a letter from Paris claiming that “my ideal national language is ... nothing more than the generally accepted progressive blue-green Mandarin.”<sup>24</sup>

Wei Jiāngōng, looking back on the 1920s (while he was in Taiwan in 1948), remembered the “fight between the ‘capital’s pronunciation’ and the ‘national pronunciation’” (“*jīngyīn*”, “*guōyīn*” *zhī zhēng* “京音”、“國音”之爭). He echoed Zhang Shiyi’s solutions for the “Problem of the unification of the national language” (*guōyǔ tōngyī wēntí* 國語統一問題). One of these included his idea of a standard, in Wei Jiāngōng’s words:

至少受過中等教育的北京本地人的話為國語的標準<sup>25</sup>

the language a native from Beijing speaks who has received at least middle school education as the standard for the national language

This view deeply influenced Wei Jiāngōng; he would state nearly the same during his activities in Taiwan (see page 141).<sup>26</sup>

The following sections will demonstrate how Wei Jiāngōng was substantially involved in reconstructing the historical evolution of the Beijing northern pronunciation. Together with Li Jīnxi and Bāi Dìzhōu, he demonstrated that the tonal specificities and the loss of the entering tone were not arbitrary mutilations but a historical development that can be described with scientific means. By showing that this change (the loss of the entering tone in particular) was caused by natural (socio-) linguistic developments in a more or less systematic fashion, they tried to counter many intellectuals’ disdain for the Beijing dialect. Through demonstrating that this change was a natural development involving countless Chinese speakers over time, they emphasized that the Beijing dialect was suitable as a standard language due to its history.

The first issue is the question of the entering tone. By scientifically demonstrating how the evolution of the northern pronunciation led to the loss of the entering tone, the linguists gave legitimacy to the Beijing dialect as *guōyǔ*.

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24 The punctuation follows Kaske. Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 454.

25 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Zhōngguó yǔwén jiàoyù jīngshén hé xūnlián fāngfǎ de yǎnbiàn – ‘Guōyǔ shuohuà jiàocái jī jiàofǎ’ xù” 中國語文教育精神和訓練方法的演變——《國語說話教材及教法》序 [The evolution educational spirit and the practicing methods of Chinese language and literature – Preface to ‘Teaching material and teaching methods for speaking the national language’], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wénjí* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiāochūn 叶笑春, Róng Wénmín 戎文敏, Zhōu Fāng 周方 and Mǎ Zhēnxīng 馬鎮, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiāngsū jiàoyù chūbānshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 392–399, see 398.

26 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Guōyǔ yúndòng zài Tāiwān de yìyì’ shēnjié” (2001), 306.



### 4.1.2 Li Jinxi Against the Entering Tone in the National Language

One linguist was opposed to the blue-green Mandarin: Li Jinxi. The introduction (*Xuyan* 叙言) to his 1923 “Beijing pronunciation entering tone character list” (*Jingyin rusheng zi pu* 京音入聲字譜) became the “manifesto” (*xuanyan* 宣言<sup>27</sup>) that called for abolishing the entering tone in the national pronunciation.

Li Jinxi’s argument can be summarized in the following points:

1. There is a dispute (*zheng* 爭) between advocates of the “national pronunciation” (*guoyin*) and the Beijing pronunciation (*jingyin*).
2. There is a natural development that causes national pronunciation to converge towards the Beijing dialect; *guoyin* has a “tendency” (*qushi*)<sup>28</sup> to “Beijingize” (*jingyinhua* 京音化).
3. No phonetic standard has yet been established. While tones have been agreed on in principle, everybody pronounces the tones according to his home dialect, which results in “blue-green Mandarin” (*lan-qing guanhua*). This is the unintended result.
4. As a consequence, the tones of *one* dialect must be chosen for the national pronunciation, and this dialect is naturally the Beijing dialect. “Of course the four tones (*sisheng* 四聲)<sup>29</sup> of “the language of Beijing” (*Beijingyu* 北京語) have this “qualification” (*zige* 資格).
5. The pronunciation would then have to be learned like a foreign tongue, which would be easy for children and illiterates, but more difficult for people familiar with the characters, who often deduce a character’s reading from their knowledge of other characters.
6. However, since the pronunciation of script is an arbitrary system, it can be altered.
7. The occurrence of the entering tone (*rusheng*) in many Southern dialects<sup>30</sup> and in Southern Mandarin is heterogenous, while the South-Eastern dialects pronounce it clearly, the South-Western dialects do not clearly distinguish between the *ru*-, *yang*- and *ping*-tones. (In Southern Mandarin, the *rusheng* has often developed into the *yang-ping* tone.)<sup>31</sup>
8. In Northern Mandarin, the entering tone is distributed into all four tones (*yangping*, *yinping*, *shang*, *qu*), and a regular distribution is not obvious for today’s speakers.

27 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jianguong* (2007), 106.

28 The term “tendency” is used by Wei Jianguong in 1925 to describe how characters naturally evolve into a phonetic script. See Wei Jianguong 魏建功, “Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi shang lun hanzhi – fangkuaizi – de yinggai feichu” (1925). This will be discussed further in section 7.1.2 on page 195.

29 The tones of Modern Standard Chinese are: 1 *yinping* 陰平, 2 *yangping* 陽平, 3 *shang* 上, 4 *qu* 去.

30 Li Jinxi himself, like many important intellectuals of the time, identified as a southerner. He was born in Xiangtan 湘潭.

31 Li Jinxi actually offers a more detailed account of the tones in the different dialects, mentioning the respective rivers (Huai 淮, Yang 揚, Gan 贛, Xiang 湘, etc.) to refer to the geographical distribution of the dialects. Rivers have been important geographical features used for identity-building for a long time in Chinese history. For example, the Han dynasty was named after the river Han 漢.

9. However, a systematic relationship exists between the distribution of tones in the various dialects. In other words, the *rusheng* was transformed into another tone whenever it disappeared.

10. Speakers will have to memorize the tones for characters that formerly had *rusheng*. This is the purpose that the *Jingyin rusheng zi pu* serves.<sup>32</sup>

Subsequently, Li Jinxi explains what source material he used for compiling the *Jingyin rusheng zipu*. He lists around a dozen rhyme books (*yunshu* 韻書), vocabularies (*cihui* 詞彙) and dictionaries.<sup>33</sup> He explains the phonetic systems that they represent and their relationship with one other. First, he mentions the *Zhongyuan yinyun* 中原音韻 (“Sounds and Rhymes of the Central Plains” by Zhou Deqing 周德清, 1324, Yuan dynasty), which also plays a significant role for Wei Jianguo. It is “arguably the earliest extant record of a *ri*-tone-less Mandarin variety, which some take to be ancestral to the Běijīng dialect”.<sup>34</sup>

The *Zhongyuan yinyun* “eliminates the independent category of entering tone; instead, Middle Chinese entering tone words are appended to the list of words in the tones they have merged with, although they are clearly marked as entering tone words.”<sup>35</sup> In terms of arrangement, the *Zhongyuan yinyun* is a novelty. While preceding Middle Chinese rhyme books in the *Qieyun* system were primarily organized by the different tones, the *Zhongyuan yinyun* was organized by rhyme. The rhymes were then, at the lower level, classified by tones.<sup>36</sup>

Which language the *Zhongyuan yinyun* exactly represents is still debated. Its use as described by Söderblom Saarela is “to facilitate the writing of a northern tradition of vernacular verse”.<sup>37</sup> Li Jinxi belongs to the group of scholars that see it as a phonetic system preceding and related to the Beijing dialect. Therefore, it is “ancestral to modern Mandarin”.<sup>38</sup>

這書雖是為製曲而作的，却真是當時實地的調查的北京音。<sup>39</sup>

Although its purpose is making songs, the book was really carrying out field research about the Beijing pronunciation at that time.

Why are these “songs” or “arias” (*qu* 曲) important?

32 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, “Jingyin rusheng zi pu” 京音入聲字譜 [Table of the characters in the entering tone in the Beijing pronunciation], in: *Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌 [Eastern Miscellany] 21. 紀念號 (1923), 64–68.

33 One is a publication by the Presbyterians: *A Pocket Dictionary and Pekingese Syllabary* by C. Goodrich, printed in 1918. It is an example of the strong influence protestant missionaries exercised. See Mak, George Kam Wah, *Protestant Bible Translation and Mandarin as the National Language of China* (Sinica Leidensia 131), Leiden: Brill, 2016. Li Jinxi notes that the *Dictionary* uses “Arabic numbers” (*yalabo shuma* 亞拉伯數碼) to indicate the four tones of the Beijing dialect. Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, “Jingyin rusheng zi pu” (1923), 67.

34 Some scholars believed that the *Zongyuan yinyun* does not prove the loss of the entering tone, such as Lu Zhiwei. Li, Chris Wen-Chao, “Rù 入 Tone Development in Běijīng Mandarin” (2017), 633.

35 Wang, Hongzhi, “Rù 入 Tone Development in Mandarin Dialects”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 635–641, see 636.

36 Oh, Young, “Rime Dictionaries”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, vol. 3, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 600–608, see 600, 604. See also: Söderblom Saarela, Márten, “Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)” (2015), 73.

37 Söderblom Saarela, Márten, “Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)” (2015), 73.

38 Wang, Hongzhi, “Rù 入 Tone Development in Mandarin Dialects” (2017), 637.

39 Emphasis as in original. Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, “Jingyin rusheng zi pu” (1923), 66.

As Viatcheslav Vetrov explains in his dissertation on the Yuan drama, the arias can be seen as representing the phonetic system of a language variety spoken in the North of China in the 14th century. They have been preserved in Zhou Deqing’s *Zhongyuan yinyun* which was used as a handbook for the composition of these arias. Vetrov also summarizes Zhou’s division of the rhymes into 19 groups, as well as his explanation of how verses in the *qu*-arias are constructed.<sup>40</sup>

Both the *Zhongyuan yinyun* as well as Yuan drama played an important role in the quest for the history and legitimization of Beijing-based pronunciation for *guoyu*. Wei Jianguo’s research, which demonstrates their influence, will be covered in the following sections. I will explain certain characteristics of the Yuan drama that made it an important object of study for the language planners in the first half of the 20th century.

In Yuan drama, dialogue passages in vernacular prose alternate with rhymed arias (*qu*) in the classical written language (*wenyan*). This vernacular prose, in contrast to *wenyan*, *baihua*, is called *binbai* 賓白 when referring to Yuan drama. Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521–1593) explained that the arias are the “master” (*zhu* 主, or main part), the prose dialogs a mere “guest” (*bin* 賓). *Bai* means that they are clear and easy to understand.<sup>41</sup>

Hu Shi, whose 1928 “History of vernacular literature” (*Baihua wenxue shi* 白話文學史) became very influential in the discourse on the use of the vernacular in literature and how to modernize China’s language situation, defined *baihua* as clear and easy to understand. It was a living language, as opposed to a dead language *wenyan*.<sup>42</sup>

The Yuan drama *binbai* prose is seen as one of the earliest occurrences of “*baihua*” (vernacular) in literature or performing art. What do we know about its pronunciation? We can infer the pronunciation from the rhymed *qu*-arias, which were composed with the aid of rhyme books such as the *Zhongyuan yinyun*. Therefore, the *Zhongyuan yinyun* also indicates the pronunciation of the *binbai* prose. Li Jinxi, Wei Jianguo and many other linguists believed that to be the spoken dialect of the Yuan capital, now Beijing.<sup>43</sup>

The main body of Li Jinxi’s *Jingyin rusheng zipu* comprises a list of characters pronounced in the *ru*-tone in many dialects. It also lists them by the tones used in the Beijing dialect. In this way, a dialect speaker using the *ru*-tone can look up the pronunciation of the different characters. This again shows the close connection between research, the creation of reference material, and the realization of language planning measures.

40 Vetrov, Viatcheslav, *Das Traummotiv im Yuan-Drama. Zur Semiotik der chinesischen Formelemente*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010, 56.

41 Vetrov, Viatcheslav, *Das Traummotiv im Yuan-Drama. Zur Semiotik der chinesischen Formelemente* (2010), 20.

42 Vetrov discusses different concepts of *baihua* and *wenyan* which are both present in Yuan drama. See Vetrov, Viatcheslav, *Das Traummotiv im Yuan-Drama. Zur Semiotik der chinesischen Formelemente* (2010), 158ff.

43 Schlepp has argued that not all Yuan songs are entirely void of the entering tone. Southern poets of the Yuan dynasty also wrote songs that contained a *ru*-tone. Schlepp, Wayne, “A Note on Entering Tones in Yuan Songs”, in: *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 19.1 (1991), 63–78.

### 4.1.3 The New National Pronunciation

Li Jinxi's call was heard. In his *History of the national language movement (Guoyu yundong shigang)*, Li details how the Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language (Guoyu tongyi choubenhui) convened in 1924, led by Wu Jingheng (Wu Zhihui), and how they discussed the revision of the "Dictionary of national pronunciation" *Guoyin zidian* 國音字典.<sup>44</sup> They decided to use the "beautiful Beijing pronunciation as standard" (*piaoliang de Beijing yin* 漂亮的北京音為標準) but also included some "alternative readings" (*youdu* 又讀) with the former pronunciation.<sup>45</sup> In 1925 and 1926, the Preparatory Committee convened again. In 1926, and after more than half a year of work, they (Qian Xuantong, Li Jinxi, Wang Yi 汪怡 (1878–1960), Xiao Jialin and Bai Dizhou) presented a draft for the "Revised dictionary of national pronunciation" *Zengxiu guoyin zidian* 增修國音字典.<sup>46</sup>

In the following year, they also compiled the "National language homophone dictionary" *Guoyu tongyin zidian* 國語同音字典, which followed the ordering of Zhuyin zimu, and the "National language frequently used character vocabulary" *Guoyin changyong zihui* 國音常用字彙, which grouped all homophones together in the four tones. This volume was aimed at the primary and middle school students.

In these publications, Li Jinxi explains the phonetic features by naming the four differences to the "old national pronunciation":

1. The initials [v] (ㄅ), [ŋ] (ㄋ) and [ɲ] (ㄐ) are no longer used.<sup>47</sup>
2. There is no distinction between *jianyin* and *tuanyin*. There is only [ts] (ㄗ), [ts<sup>h</sup>] (ㄘ), [s] (ㄙ); [tɕ] (ㄑ), [tɕ<sup>h</sup>] (ㄒ), [ɕ] (ㄔ).<sup>48</sup>
3. The three vowels [ɔ] (ㄛ), [ɤ] (ㄜ) and [ɛ] (ㄝ) are differentiated.

In the "Declaration of the countrywide national language movement assembly" (*Quanguo guoyu yundong dahui xuanyan* 全國國語運動大會宣言), Li Jinxi proclaims that the Beijing dialect is the standard dialect and the common language of the Chinese Republic. He also stated that this situation has come about naturally, and that it is not at all an artificial language.<sup>49</sup> This naturalness of language development is also crucial for Wei Jiāngōng's concept of language.

44 First published 1919, made official standard dictionary 1920. Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 43.

45 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, vol. 2, (1990), 171.

46 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, vol. 2, (1990), 171.

47 Note the Zhuyin characters that are no longer part of today's standard set. I extend my thanks to Herbert Voß DANTE e.V. for enabling me in the display of them. As a remark: In Li Jinxi's sentence, the particle that we would nowadays use, *le* 了, is represented with *lo* 咯为ㄛ (with Zhuyin annotation). Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, vol. 2, (1990), 172.

48 Pinyin: *z-, c-, s-; j-, q- x-*. Li also provides the syllabic spelling with *-i* and *-u* to show that [tsi] became obsolete, and that this syllable should be pronounced [tɕi]. See Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, *Guoyu yundong shigang*, vol. 2, (1990), 172.

49 Li Jinxi, *Quanguo guoyu yundong dahui xuanyan*, has been published twice: In the publication organ of the assembly, the *Quanguo guoyu yundong dahui huikan* 全國國語運動大會會刊 and in *Guoyu zhoukan*, Vol. 29, December 2, 1925, see Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, "Quanguo guoyu yundong dahui xuanyan" (1925).

#### 4.1.4 Wei Jiāngōng on the *Yīn* 陰, *Yáng* 陽 and *Rù* 入 Tones

What did Wei Jiāngōng say about the question of entering tone in *guoyu*? We will start with a phonological article that discusses the interdependency of three tones in Old Chinese (OC). It has been taken up by Bai Dizhou in his article on the evolution of the entering tone in the northern pronunciation. I will discuss this article afterwards.

A short remark on the editions need to be made: Wei Jiāngōng’s “Study of the three Old Chinese tones *yīn*, *yáng* and *rù*” (Gu yīn yáng rù sān shēng kǎo 古陰陽入三聲攷)<sup>50</sup> was published twice, namely in *Guoxue jikan* 國學季刊 (National learning quarterly) 2.2, and in *Gouyu xunkan* 1.3, both published in 1929. In the collection of Wei Jiāngōng’s manuscripts, I found three versions. Two are handwritten fragments.<sup>51</sup> There is also a worn copy of the *Guoxue jikan* edition (manuscript no. 00144), which contains annotations in red ink that show corrections of Wei Jiāngōng. These indicate his dissatisfaction with the typesetting, particularly the IPA characters.<sup>52</sup> I will, however, quote the version from the *Wenji*, since it appeared to have solved these problems. Content-wise, I have not found any difference in the versions. In the compilation process of the *Wenji*, Wei Jiāngōng’s manuscripts were consulted.

When this article was published in 1929, Wei Jiāngōng was already a member of the Preparatory Committee. He examined the tones of Old Chinese. While he does not explicitly mention *guoyu*, this text helped him gain the experience, standing and fame required to convincingly discuss the question of tone in Northern Mandarin, the Beijing dialect, and *guoyu*.

While “Gu yīn yáng rù sān shēng kǎo” attempted to establish a network of interdependencies of tones over time in great detail, I will provide some general information that will contextualize the following discussion and hopefully help readers who are not experts in phonology.

The main achievements in the reconstruction of Old and Middle Chinese were made by scholars of the Qing dynasty. In the early 20th century, Chinese scholars, as well as Western scholars, such as the famous Bernhard Karlgren, also made considerable progress on the basis of the findings of these Qing scholars.

In Old Chinese, there were three tones *yīn*, *yáng* and *rù*. These are not tones in the sense of pitch, like in Modern Chinese. Instead they reflect certain characteristics of the syllable. Therefore, Wei Jiāngōng said:

古音無有所謂平上去入（以下簡稱“四聲”）<sup>53</sup>

50 攷 = 考。

51 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Gu yīn yáng rù sān shēng kǎo” 古陰陽入三聲攷 [Study of the three Old Chinese tones *yīn*, *yáng* and *rù*], Beijing, family possession, 1929 (?) [a]. (Manuscript no. 00139 on Pile 5.) Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Gu yīn yáng rù sān shēng kǎo” 古陰陽入三聲攷 [Study of the three Old Chinese tones *yīn*, *yáng* and *rù*], Beijing, family possession, 1929 (?) [b]. (Manuscript no. 00141, also on Pile 5.)

52 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Gu yīn yáng rù sān shēng kǎo” 古陰陽入三聲攷 [Study of the three Old Chinese tones *yīn*, *yáng* and *rù*], in: *Guoxue jikan* 國學季刊 [National learning quarterly] 2.2 (1929), 299–361.

53 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Gu yīn yáng rù sān shēng kǎo” 古陰陽入三聲攷 [Study of the three tones *yīn*, *shang* and *rù* in Old Chinese], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng],

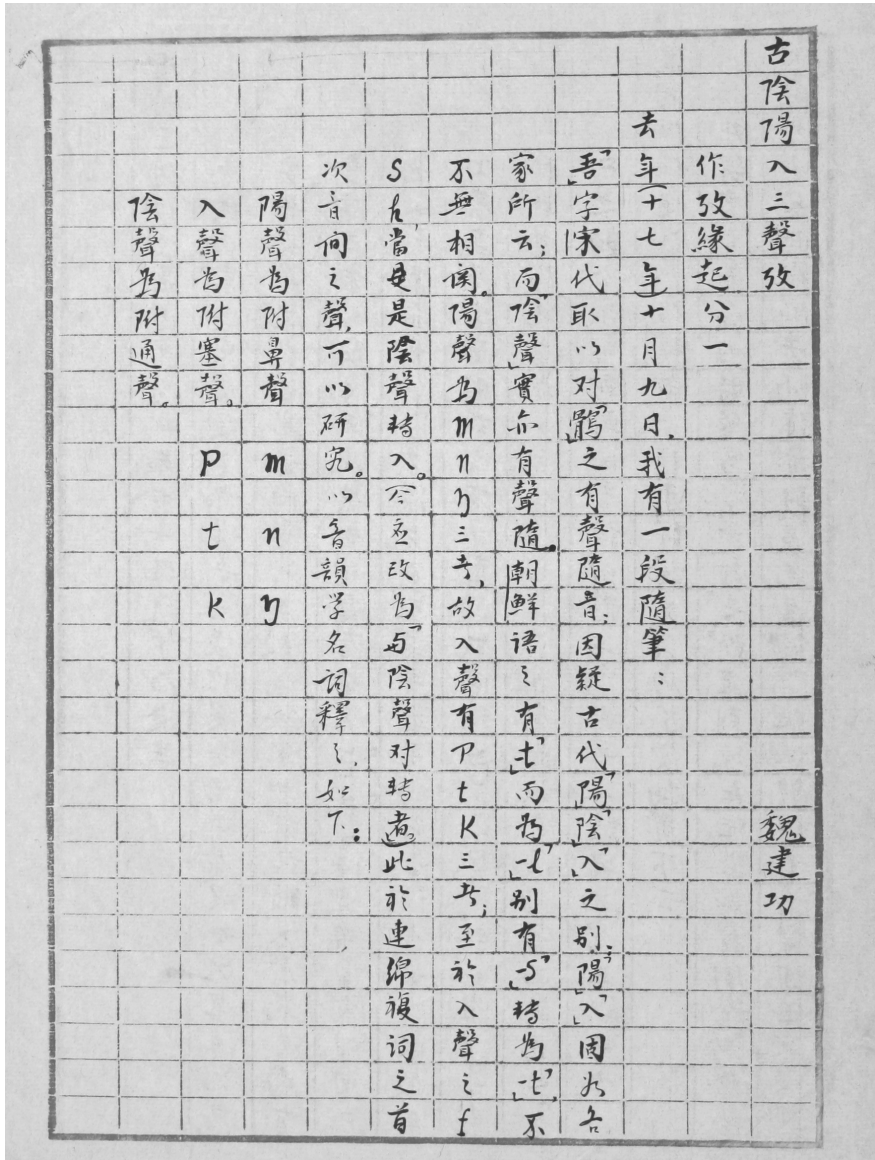


Figure 2: Page from Wei Jianguo, "Gu yin yang ru san sheng kao" 古陰陽入三聲攷 (Study of the three Old Chinese tones *yin*, *yang* and *ru*), family possession, Beijing, 1929 (?).

Old Chinese pronunciation does not have the so-called level, rising, departing and entering [tones] (abbreviated as “four tones” below)

Since the rhyme book *Qieyun* of the Middle Chinese period contains the four tones, Wei wanted to clarify its relationship with Old Chinese. Wei Jiāngōng, however, was reluctant to make a distinction between Old (*shànggǔ* 上古) and Middle (*zhōnggǔ* 中古) Chinese in use today. He felt it would obstruct finer differences.<sup>54</sup> Wei Jiāngōng proceeds with a list of his basic assumptions:

(1) 古三聲是字音組織上的問題。

The three tones in Old Chinese is an issue of a character’s phonetic structure.

(2) 今四聲是字音聲調上的問題。<sup>55</sup>

The four tones in use today is an issue of a character’s tone and pitch.

This is an important point that is also made by Baxter and Sagart. To avoid confusion with actual pitch-characterized “tones”, they call the *san sheng* 三聲 of Old Chinese “three categories of rhymes”. They write, just like Wei Jiāngōng, that *yinsheng* words have no coda or a vocalic coda, that *rusheng* words have a voiceless stop coda, namely -k, -t or -p, and that *yangsheng* words have nasal codas, such as -m, -n, -ng.<sup>56</sup>

Wei Jiāngōng also states that it is not clear if the syllables could have pitch-tones (assumption 3), in addition to the three tones of Old Chinese. While “*rusheng*” is used both in OC and MC, it refers to two very different concepts (assumption 4). In assumption 5, Wei Jiāngōng refutes previous claims from scholars, stating that they mistakenly identified the OC and the MC or modern *rusheng* as *rusheng*. These scholars include Kong Guanglin 孔廣林 (1746 – ca. 1814), Huang Kan and Duan Yucai, and they claimed that OC has no *ru*-tone, no *shang*- and *qu*-tones or no *qu*-tone, respectively. Wei Jiāngōng continues (assumption 6), that by systematically comparing OC tones with the four tones, these scholars and others were able to establish a systematic relationship.<sup>57</sup>

In his last assumption, number 7, Wei Jiāngōng makes reference to the article “*Rusheng kao*” 入聲考 by Hu Shi. This article is the main motivation for Wei Jiāngōng to discuss the “tones” of OC. In “*Rusheng kao*”, Hu Shi discusses handed-down theories about the tones of OC, and tries to establish a systematic relationship between the OC and MC tones.<sup>58</sup> Hu also states that while Cantonese (*Yueyu* 粵語) has conserved the entering tone with the three different codas (-k, -t, -p), the dialects around the midstream and the lower reaches of the Yangzi

ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 3, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 176–274, see 191.

54 Mǔnning, Mariana, “Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功 (1901-1980)” (2017), 509.

55 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Gu yin yang ru san sheng kao” (2001), 191.

56 See Baxter, William H., and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese – A New Reconstruction* (2014), 22. See also Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Gu yin yang ru san sheng kao” (2001), 177. In his earlier work, Baxter presents more approaches to the loss of consonantal distinctions and appearance of tones from OC to MC. See: Baxter, William H., *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* (Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 64), Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992, 302ff.

57 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Gu yin yang ru san sheng kao” (2001), 191.

58 Hu Shi 胡適, “*Rusheng kao*” 入聲考 [Study of the entering tone], in: *Xinyue* 新月 [New moon] 1.11 (1929).

River (Chang Jiang 長江) have lost this distinction, and their entering tone is only a very short final (*duancu de shousheng* 短促的收聲). In all northern areas since the Song and Yuan dynasties, the entering tone has been distributed into the three tones *ping*, *shang* and *qu*<sup>59</sup> (The *ping*-tone is further divided into *yinping* and *yangping*, which makes four tones altogether).

Wei Jiāngōng criticizes Hu Shi for being inconsistent in his terminology and corrects those assumptions of Hu Shi he believes to be incorrect.<sup>60</sup> Wei Jiāngōng believes Hu Shi's conclusion that the entering tone somehow changed into the *yin* or *yang* tones does not make sense since it confuses categories that are chronologically distinct.<sup>61</sup> Motivated by his conclusion, Wei Jiāngōng presents his own system of establishing the connection between OC and MC tones.

Why have I covered these seemingly obscure depths of historical phonology? I would like to demonstrate how the two discourses on tones – the highly technical philological discourse and the practical, implementation-oriented language planning discourse – merged. At this point, Wei Jiāngōng was still a passionate phonologist. We will see how this will gradually change. For Wei and his colleagues, the historical reconstruction of the origins of the modern language would lend legitimacy to their language planning. They nurtured the image that modern *guoyu* is based on tradition. Furthermore, the *baihua* movement has been examined much more in comparison to the *guoyu* movement. The issue of a common language and of a written language that represents the spoken language accessible to everyone has often been studied in literature. However, I would like to approach it from another angle: linguistics, especially the study of historical phonology.

#### 4.1.5 Bai Dizhou on the Evolution of the Entering Tone in Northern Pronunciation

If the northern pronunciation (*beiyin* 北音) does not have an entering tone, it must have been lost at some point, since it was present in Middle Chinese (MC). Since regular change in many languages have been observed over time, Bai Dizhou<sup>62</sup> attempted to find out how the tones changed over time. He also looked out for a rule or system to the change. His goal was to find the systematic relationship in which the entering tone disappeared in the northern pronunciation. However, he wanted to accomplish an impossible task: to this day, no one has been able to achieve this goal. A regular, systematic development and explana-

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59 Hu Shi 胡適, "Rusheng kao" (1929), 1.

60 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Gu yin yang ru san sheng kao" (2001), 179–80.

61 See Hu Shi 胡適, "Rusheng kao" (1929), 20. See also Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Gu yin yang ru san sheng kao" (2001), 191.

62 Bai Dizhou, given name Zhenying 鎮瀛, of Mongolian descent, was an important linguist of the time. Like Wei Jiāngōng, his research stretched from the area of phonology into the planning of *guoyu*. As a graduate of Peking University, he was also involved with many of the leading scholars and intellectuals of the time. He was an "intimate friend" (*zhiyou* 知友) and colleague of Wei Jiāngōng. They worked together in Liu Bannōng's phonetics laboratory. He was also a member of the Preparatory Committee. See Ma Si 馬嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 110–111.



tion for the disappearance of the entering tone in the northern pronunciation would lend *guoyu* legitimacy. This makes Bai Dizhou’s “Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao” 北音入聲演變考<sup>63</sup> from 1931 an important, influential stepping stone in making the northern pronunciation the standard for *guoyu*.

Bai Dizhou’s article can be summarized in the following fashion:

First (section 1), he criticizes phonologists’ preference for examining the ancient pronunciation (*guyin* 古音, usually OC and MC), thereby overlooking the early modern regional pronunciation (*jindai fangyin* 近代方音). While the research of ancient pronunciation is important, Bai Dizhou points out that

1. Phonologists often neglect the limitations of time and place, which leads to a lack of differentiation between the different sources. As a result, the pronunciation of an area far too large and a time period too broad is presented as a single phonological system.
2. Phonologists share the prejudice that the pronunciation after Tang and Song dynasties have no worth.<sup>64</sup>

He names examples of conclusions that are too broad or even wrong, particularly rhyme books that were attributed wrongly or overlooked.<sup>65</sup>

Bai Dizhou points out that he wants to focus on early modern pronunciation, i.e. Yuan, Ming, and Qing times as well as the entering tone of the northern pronunciation.

Next (section two), he presents the specific geographical area (*quyu* 區域) of this northern pronunciation (*beiyin*) that is the focus of his research. He claims that this pronunciation corresponds to today’s *guoyu* and former *guanhua*.

北音就可以說是國語，一向稱之為官話。<sup>66</sup>

We can say that the northern pronunciation is the national language; up to now it was called Mandarin.

This language can be used throughout the entire country; it is spoken in Liaoning 遼寧, Jilin 吉林, Heilongjiang 黑龍江, Hebei 河北, Shanxi 山西, Henan 河南, Shandong, Shaanxi 陝西 and Gansu 甘肅. From this vast area, where the language is not entirely uniform, he takes Beijing (Beiping) as representative (*daibiao* 代表). The Beijing pronunciation has the qualification to be the representative pronunciation for 600 years. Only few provinces close to the Yellow River do not share this northern pronunciation.<sup>67</sup>

63 I am very grateful to Christian Obst for providing me with a scan of the article from the Brown University Library. It is a facsimile edition which bears the original page numbers as well as a sequential numbering running through all volumes. Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, “Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao” [Study of the evolution of the entering tone in the northern pronunciation], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] (1931), 1–42.

64 The Song dynasty was followed by the Mongol-ruled Yuan dynasty, which marks the beginning of Early Modern Chinese. Text genres (such as drama) that were originally not considered prestigious began to reflect the spoken language to a higher degree (see page 104). If a scholar focuses mainly on the Classics and is mainly concerned with the reconstruction of Old Chinese to read the Classics, this period may look like a demise of language.

65 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, “Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao” (1931), 1–2.

66 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, “Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao” (1931), 3.

67 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, “Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao” (1931), 3.

While this northern pronunciation has “existed since ancient times” (*gu yi you zhi* 古已有之), it has undergone changes, as Bai Dizhou points out.<sup>68</sup>

He presents the following assumptions to justify why the Beiping pronunciation is representative of a rather homogenous sound system for the past 600 years in Beiping (= Beijing) and the northern area:

1. Since it might not be possible to speak of one completely homogenous language, differences and developments of this long time period will be taken into account.
2. However, the examined geographical scope is constant. Therefore, it is likely that the languages were unified. The reasons for that are:
  - (a) Infrastructure was already rather advanced at that time, so it was easy for the language to become “standardized” or “uniform” (*huayi* 劃一).
  - (b) The empire was unified; Beiping was the capital for most of this time. The time of the Hongwu 洪武 reign (1368–1398) with Nanjing as capital is negligibly short.
  - (c) Given that Beiping was a place where people from all places met, its language underwent many changes as it spread to other places of the empire through the travels and assignments of the numerous officials, envoys, scholars and members of the gentry from the different provinces.<sup>69</sup> This is how the Beijing dialect (*jinghua* 京話), through many intangible modifications by the numerous different speakers, came to attain its quality as the standard (*yangcheng le biao zhun de zige* 養成了標準的資格).
  - (d) The songs in Yuan drama *Yuanqu* 元曲<sup>70</sup> were rhymed according to this very northern pronunciation. Later, the very popular vernacular novels (*baihua xiaoshuo* 白話小說) were written with this pronunciation in mind.
3. This is how the Beijing pronunciation came to unify not only the north but also perhaps the entire country.<sup>71</sup>

The following chapters will show how Wei Jianguo made similar assumptions in his discussion of the development of the Beijing dialect as well as in the legitimization of *guoyu* in Taiwan. This is not surprising: both scholars did not only know each other but also frequented the same scholars and teachers, worked together in Liu Bannong’s phonetics laboratory, and they were both in the Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language (*Guoyu tongyi choubei hui*).<sup>72</sup>

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68 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, “Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao” (1931), 4.

69 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, “Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao” (1931), 4.

70 The term *qu* 曲 can refer to a type of poetry, “song”, “aria” (or “air”), or “drama” or “opera”. Therefore, it can denote the arias in the drama or opera of the Yuan dynasty, as well as the entire drama as a genre.

71 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, “Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao” (1931), 5.

72 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Wenfaxue de lilun yu shiji” (2001), 400.

After explaining that the entering tone is characterized by a stop consonant or “occlusive” (*shesheng* 塞聲)<sup>73</sup> at the end of the rhyme, and that it was one of the three tones (*yin*, *yang*, *ru*) of Ancient Chinese (*guyin*),<sup>74</sup> Bai Dizhou makes reference to his “friend” (*pengyou* 朋友) Wei Jiangong’s article “*Gu yin yang ru san sheng kao*” (see above) that also provides a similar explanation.

This gradual tone evolution happened in three ways:

1. keeping the original features (*mianmu* 面目), such as the *rusheng* in Min 閩 and Guang[dong] 廣 dialects (i.e. Cantonese/Yue)
2. turning the three possible *rusheng* endings into a glottal stop,<sup>75</sup> such as the *rusheng* in Jiang[su] 江 and Zhe[jiang] 浙 dialects
3. having the coda (*shengwei* 聲尾) disappearing completely and distributing the former *rusheng*-syllables in all the different tones (*shengdiao* 聲調), such as in the northern language (*beifangyu* 北方語) (in the language of the South-West, the *rusheng* only became the *yangping*-tone)

Bai Dizhou next asks when the coda disappeared in the northern pronunciation (*beiyin*). He uses the poem “Mocking the incorrect language of my wife’s family” (*Xi qizu yu bu zheng* 戲妻族語不正) from the Tang dynasty poet Hu Ceng 胡曾 (ca. 840–?) as an example.<sup>76</sup>

呼“十”卻為“石”，喚“針”將作“真”。

忽然雲雨至，總道是天“因”。<sup>77</sup>

xu “dzyip” khjak hjwe “dzyek”, xwanH “tsyim” tsjang tsak “tsyin”.

xwot nyen hjun hjuX tsjihH, tsuwngX daoX dzyeX then “jin”.<sup>78</sup>

When she shouts “ten” it becomes “stone”; when she calls out “needle” it will come out as “true”.

Suddenly, clouds and rain arrive, and she finally says the sky is “cause”.

Instead of “cause” she meant “dark”, *yin* 陰 = ‘im. This shows how the distinct *yangsheng* codas -m and -n were confused.

In terms of *rusheng*, both *dzyip* 十 and *dzyek* 石 are *rusheng* syllables. They differ in their main vowels (-i- vs. -e-) and codas (-p vs. -k). In Modern Standard

73 *Sesheng* could also be translated as “plosive” or “stop sound”, which are synonyms for “occlusive”. Nowadays, the terms *seyin* 塞音 (sometimes also read *saiyin*), *bisaiyin* 閉塞音 and *baopoyin* 爆破音 are usually employed. Note that (*bi-*) *saiyin* is the direct semantic equivalent of “occlusive” and *baopoyin* of “plosive”.

74 As I have mentioned above, *guyin* was often a general term for Old and Middle Chinese. Note that this clear-cut distinction has also not always been made. Bai Dizhou criticizes the fact that Old Chinese has been studied much more than Middle Chinese, but he does this without the clear-cut technical terms of today. However, from the dynasties and rhyme books he mentioned, it can be inferred that *guyin* referred to both. I here decided to equate “*guyin*” with “Ancient Chinese”, since Bernhard Karlgren established the two terms Archaic Chinese and Ancient Chinese before Old Chinese and Middle Chinese became popular. Ancient Chinese is *de facto* Middle Chinese, and the term “ancient” reflects well Bai’s “*gu*”.

75 Glottal stop: *shengmen jian de* 聲門阻的 “?” (= blocking the glottis).

76 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, “*Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao*” (1931), 5.

77 Here, I used Bai Dizhou’s punctuation, see: Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, “*Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao*” (1931), 5. The poem is included in the *Quan Tangshi* 全唐詩 [Complete Tang Poems], vol. 870.

78 The MC pronunciation is indicated according to Kroll, Paul W., *A Student’s Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese*, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2015.

Chinese, both are pronounced *shí*.<sup>79</sup> Bai Dizhou uses this humorous poem to illustrate how the pronunciation of the entering tone was already changing and formerly clear distinctions were gradually disappearing in the Tang dynasty.<sup>80</sup>

Hu Ceng's poem seems to have been a welcome example of pronunciation change for other phonologists as well. In 1949, Luo Changpei used the poem to argue that the Tang local pronunciation (*fangyin* 方音) already evolved from the pronunciation reflected in the rhyme book *Guangyun*.<sup>81</sup> Luo's explanations go actually further than Bai's (admittedly, they were written nearly two decades later). Luo points out that the rhyme groups (*yunbu* 韻部), formerly distinct, gradually merged until the Tang era. The syllables *dzyip* 十 and *dzyek* 石 were in the distinct *Guangyun* rhyme groups -ip 緝 and -jek 昔, respectively. The items *tsyim* 針 and 'im 陰 were in the rhyme group -im 侵, and *tsyin* 真 and 'jin 因 were in the rhyme group -in 真.<sup>82</sup>

Bai Dizhou admits that he cannot say exactly when the entering tone disappeared from the northern pronunciation. However, he states his aim: to use existing material to illustrate the tones the former *rusheng* syllables that lost their coda were transformed into and to show how they evolved.<sup>83</sup>

After enumerating and describing the source material he used and showing the tonal development in elaborate tables, Bai Dizhou makes the following conclusions:<sup>84</sup>

1. The *yinping* tone was interchangeable (*zhuan* 轉) with and subsequently transformed into the departing tone.
2. In the *yangping* tone category, some characters were interchangeable with the *yinping* or *qusheng*.<sup>85</sup>

79 The convergence already happened in the Yuan dynasty, according to Pulleyblank's reconstruction of Old Mandarin: *shí*. Pulleyblank, Edwin G., *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin*, Vancouver: 1991, UBC, 283.

80 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, "Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao" (1931), 5.

81 Luo dates the *Guangyun* to a time preceding the Tang era, thereby implicitly referring to its predecessor *Qieyun* from 601. Only fragments have been found until today; *Guangyun* is actually the main access point to its predecessor. If the *Qieyun* reflects the pronunciation of the capital Chang'an 長安, the elite speech of the Lower Yangzi region, or even an eclectic mix of dialects, or an artificial speech would then be disputed. Chennault, Cynthia L., et al. (ed.), *Early Medieval Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2015, 226–227, 229.

82 Luo Changpei 羅常培, *Zhongguo yinyunxue daolun* 中國音韻學導論 [Introduction to Chinese phonology], Beijing: Guoli Beijing daxue chubanshu 國立北京大學出版部, 1949, 2. The title calligraphy of the book is by Wei Jianguo.

83 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, "Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao" (1931), 5–6.

84 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, "Beiyin rusheng yanbian kao" (1931), 42.

85 The term *zhuan* 轉 merits an explanation because it appears in many phonological texts. In that context, it has acquired a specialized technical meaning. Coblin explains that in "Medieval Chinese Buddhist terminology, the verb *zhuàn* 轉 meant to turn or scroll through a devotional text from beginning to end, reading it aloud to accumulate merit." It was then used to describe the secular, phonological practice of taking a "Sanskrit initial consonant through the full sequence of vowels with which it could co-occur" or taking a "vowel through the full series of initial consonants it might follow". Coblin, W. South, "Zhang Linzhi on the Yunjing", in: *The Chinese Rime Tables: Linguistic Philosophy and Historical-Comparative Phonology*, ed. by Branner, David Prager, Amsterdam / Philadelphia: Benjamins, 2006, 123–150, see 126.

3. *Zhuoniu zi* 濁紐字, i.e. characters with a voiced initial consonant<sup>86</sup> gradually changed without a rule (*bushen guize de qushi* 不甚規則的趨勢).

4. *Ping* turned to *qu*, and *qu* turned *ping*.

Bai Dizhou employed his methods in a very careful way. Stating that the number of characters was too small for an adequate statistical analysis, Bai saw that it was hard to reach a definite conclusion. Nonetheless, he claimed that a distinct rule for the development of the entering tone would probably not be found for two reasons:

The first reason Bai mentioned is that voiced obstruents (*zhengzhuo sheng* 正濁聲)<sup>87</sup> no longer existed in the northern pronunciation. The distinction of the *zhuo* initial gradually disappeared, and voiced and voiceless initials were mixed.

The second reason can be summarized as follows. Before this development, which would include Middle Chinese poetry, the principle of correctly alternating between “level” *ping* 平 and “oblique” *ze* 仄 tones had to be followed. Every tone that was not “level” *ping* was “oblique” *ze*. The level-oblique pattern in recited text is an important feature of prosody. Northerners who did not have the entering tone still wanted to follow the aesthetic conventions of the *ping-ze* prosody. Therefore, they read the former entering tone syllables in a shortened form of the departing tone. This is how formal reading of classical texts and colloquial, spoken language drifted apart.<sup>88</sup>

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An overview is presented by Zhang Binglin (= Zhang Taiyan) in his *Guogu lunheng* 國故論衡 (Critical comments on the national heritage, 1910). There, he presents a diagram of phonetic interchangeabilities between the different rhyme groups, and he defines the different possible interchangeabilities with a prefix to *zhuān*. Depending on the kind of *zhuān*, the rhymes share certain features. The two syllables could either rhyme in certain occasions, while in other occasions they share a certain feature, such as the main vowel. I am grateful for Prof. Zhu Jianing’s advice on that matter. Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, *Guogu lunheng* 國故論衡 [Critical comments on the national heritage] (Penglai ge congshu 蓬萊閣丛书), Shanghai 上海: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 2003, 12.

In Bai Dizhou’s case, I would like to point out that he chose to use the term *zhuān* instead of *bian* 變, since he wanted to refrain from making a temporal assertion. *Bian* 變 (= to change) implies that there is a point of before and after: this means the change that is completed at a given moment of time. The term *zhuān*, in contrast, denotes that there is a time period in which both phonetic or graphic representations were in use. It can point to a development in which both tones (in this case) were temporarily present for that character and also indicate that both tones were used for a considerably long time period.

86 *Zhuo* 濁 literally “muddy” or “turbid”, as opposed to voiceless, “clear” *qing* 清. See Norman, Jerry, *Chinese* (1988), 30. *Niu* 紐 means “initial”.

87 I think these “entirely muddy initials” are identical to *quanzhuo* 全濁 initials, see Norman, Jerry, *Chinese* (1988), 30.

88 The Tang dynasty saw the introduction of the “modern style poem” *jinti shi* 近體詩, which defined these *ping-ze* tonal patterns. Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2018), 438. Defined as the language used in the Tang dynasty, Middle Chinese (MC) provided the phonetic basis for this stylistic norm. Cf. Mazanec, Thomas J, and Yu Taiming 余泰明, “Jià Dào’s Rhythm, or, How to Translate the Tones of Medieval Chinese”, in: *Journal of Oriental Studies* 49.1, Special Issue: Experiments in Translating Classical Chinese Poetry (2016), 27–48, see 33. See also: Stimson, Hugh M., “The Sound of a Targ Poem: “Grieving about Greenslope,” by Duh-Fuu”, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89.1 (1969), 59–67. See also: Mei, Tsu-lin, and Yu-kung Kao, “Tu Fu’s ‘Autumn Meditations’: An Exercise in Linguistic Criticism”, in: *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 28 (1968), 44–80.

Bai Dizhou provides an example of drift by making reference to Li Jinxi's *Jingyin rusheng zipu*. Li's work shows that *yang* and *ping* syllables have the *qusheng* as alternative reading. In modern days, according to Bai Dizhou, the reading of the classics has been abolished in the education system, and they are now recited like the spoken colloquial language (*kouyu*). He also states that *kouyu* as well as the recital of classical texts changes with the natural language development. This change cannot be planned or regulated.

Bai Dizhou concludes with naming the three phases of the entering tone in northern pronunciation:

1. Voiced obstruents are read in *yangping*, voiced sonorants<sup>89</sup> are read in the *qu*-tone, and voiceless initials are read in the *shang*-tone (正濁讀陽平，次濁讀去聲，清紐讀上聲).
2. Syllables with a voiced obstruent initial are still read like before. If either of them are aspirated or not aspirated, or if they are fricative, the syllables with a voiceless initial are transformed into *yangping* and *qu*-tones. (正濁次濁仍舊，清紐依送氣不送氣或擦聲的關係，改讀陽平與去聲). Some are still read in the *shang*-tone, which recalls history (*lishi de yiji* 歷史的遺跡). That one part needs to be read in *yingping* is a newly appeared tendency.
3. Bai Dizhou concludes that the situation remains unchanged, but he is afraid that future development will have no rules at all.<sup>90</sup>

Bai Dizhou's endeavor to explain what happened to the entering tone in the northern pronunciation does not produce the desired result of a simple and regular rule of change. He attests that after a certain regular development, regularity decreases. During the later stage of development in particular, it does not seem to be regular at all. He is not the only scholar left with this admittedly unsatisfying conclusion: it is also attested by Chris Wen-Chao Li, who gives an overview of the *ru*-tone research.<sup>91</sup> Bai, Wei and their colleagues were driven by both scientific inquisitiveness and the desire to legitimate language policy. Through this unsatisfying conclusion, they demonstrate the dominance of description over prescription in science.<sup>92</sup>

#### 4.1.6 The New National Pronunciation in Practice

While the new national pronunciation was theoretically established in 1924 and systematized in 1926 (see section 4.1.3, page 106), implementing and promulgating it was still a challenge. The use of the transcriptions Zhuyin and Gwoyeu Romatzyh was an important means to spread the national pronunciation. While Gwoyeu Romatzyh was officially introduced in 1928, Zhuyin remained the more

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89 "Secondary muddy", Norman, Jerry, *Chinese* (1988), 30.

90 Bai Dizhou 白滌洲, "Beiying rusheng yanbian kao" (1931), 42.

91 Li, Chris Wen-Chao, "Rù 入 Tone Development in Bèijīng Mandarin" (2017).

92 To contrast this conclusion with other possible interpretations I refer to Hossenfelder, who argues that aesthetic expectations have obscured objective research in physics: Hossenfelder, Sabine, *Lost in Math: How Beauty Leads Physics Astray*, New York: Basic Books, 2018.

widely used transcription.<sup>93</sup> The Ministry of Education tried to promulgate it in different publications. For example, it arranged for Gwoyeu Romatzyh to be printed in newspapers. However, teaching material was still scarce and did not reach the remote areas of the Republic.<sup>94</sup>

The journal *Guoyu zhoukan* remained an important medium for Wei Jiāngōng and the *guoyu* promoters. Bai Dizhou explained the phonetics of the new national pronunciation in 1932 in three *Guoyu zhoukan* editions.<sup>95</sup> Gwoyeu Romatzyh appears in the title of *Guoyu zhoukan*. However, Zhuyin is still Wei Jiāngōng’s preferred transcription. An experienced seal carver, he produced seals with Zhuyin inscriptions and the reader is encouraged to guess which names they represent. Wei Jiāngōng appears as Tianxing Shangui 天行山鬼, one of his pseudonyms.<sup>96</sup> He produced seals for many well known people; impressions of most of the seals are collected in an album.<sup>97</sup>

A breakthrough for the Preparatory Committee (Guoyu tongyi choubiehui) was the publication of the *Guoyin changyong zihui* in 1932, which was made the official standard dictionary by the Ministry of Education in the same year.<sup>98</sup> It finally replaced the *Guoyin zidian* from 1919/1920, which still comprised the old pronunciation. This shows the length of time required for discourse among scholars to produce tangible effects for the populace.

This breakthrough in the implementation of language policy was prompted by political changes, especially the consolidation of the government in Nanjing. The capital gave this historical period its name: the Nanjing Decade (1927–1937). It was a period of comparable stability despite the continuing warlordism, the threat of the communists<sup>99</sup> and of Japan. Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石,

93 Latinxua Sinwenz began circulating in northern China in 1929. Simmons, Richard VanNess, “Whence Came Mandarin? Qīng Guānhuà, the Běijīng Dialect, and the National Language Standard in Early Republican China” (2017), 65. It was developed by Chinese and Soviet linguists in the Soviet Union and found wider application in the 1930s and 1940s, especially in the communist controlled areas, such as Yan’an 延安. Wippermann, Dorothea, “Transcription Systems, Overview”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 396–404, see 398. See also Belde, Klaus, *Saomang: Kommunistische Alphabetisierungsarbeit im ländlichen China vom Jiangxi-Sowjet bis zum Ende des Großen Sprungs nach vorn (1933–60)* (Chinathemen 7), Bochum: Studienverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1982, 49ff.

94 Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 58–63.

95 Vol. 28, April 2, 1932, Vol 29, April 9, 1932, and Vol 30, April 16, 1932 Bai Dizhou 白濤洲, “Shenme shi ‘xin guoyin’” [What is the ‘new national pronunciation’], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 28, 29, 30 (1932).

96 See *Guoyu zhoukan* vols. 18, 29, and 30, 1932. It is also mentioned in: Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985).

97 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, *Tianxing Shangui yintui: Wei Jiāngōng yinpu* 天行山鬼印蛻: 魏建功印譜 [Seal imprints of Tianxing Shangui: Album of seal impressions of Wei Jiāngōng], Beijing 北京: Zhongguo shudian 中国书店, 2001.

98 Simmons, Richard VanNess, “Transcription Systems: Gwoyeu Romatzyh 國語羅馬字”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 4, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 416–424.

99 The communists were nearly completely driven back and only survived thanks to the Long March. Schmidt-Glitzner, Helwig, *Das Neue China: Von den Opiumkriegen bis heute*, München ³: C. H. Beck, 2004, 57.

1887–1975) was not only president of the state, but also chairman of the KMT and commander-in-chief of the army. Thanks to him and rising nationalism, the republic was able to realize much more sovereignty with respect to the imperialist powers.<sup>100</sup> In domestic terms, this stability came hand-in-hand with a high degree of authoritarianism and political repressions.<sup>101</sup>

## 4.2 From Drama Rhymes to the “New Rhymes of China”

Wei Jiāngōng’s involvement in *guoyu* planning on the Mainland hit its zenith in 1941 with the publication of the *Zhonghua xinyun* 中華新韻, the “New rhymes of China”. This was a rhyme book with the national pronunciation that he compiled as a member of a small team. It was made the official reference work for the pronunciation of the national language by the Republican government. Here, his journey was shaped by his knowledge and experience as a historical phonologist and folklore researcher.

The following sections depict this research path chronologically with representative texts by Wei Jiāngōng. These texts illustrate his research on evidence of the history of the pronunciation that formed the basis for *guoyu* and its legitimization. They also show how Wei Jiāngōng sought out a model of the “living language”, since the written vernacular does not fully indicate actual pronunciation. He advocated a pronunciation system that was not only alive, but also looked back on a certain history that would give it traditional legitimacy. Such a system would be acceptable to commoners and intellectuals alike.

The main issues addressed by Wei Jiāngōng in the following texts are rhyming, traditional philology (and its use of rhyme books), folk performative arts, and Beijing as a melting pot with both Han and non-Han influence. This discussion starts with Wei Jiāngōng’s views on rhyming and ends with it.

### 4.2.1 Wei Jiāngōng on the Thirteen Rhymes of Drama

What is Wei Jiāngōng’s position in the discourse on the national pronunciation?

In his article “About broad-rhyme classes” (Shuo zher 說轍兒),<sup>102</sup> which was published in two parts in *Guoyu zhoukan* in the volumes 103 and 104 in September 1933,<sup>103</sup> Wei Jiāngōng addressed the question of rhyming in the national language. Rhymes, as can be seen from the long history of rhyme books, play an important role in Chinese phonology. The issue of rhyming of syllables goes

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100 Schoppa, R. Keith, *The Columbia Guide to Modern Chinese History* (2000), 81.

101 Schoppa, R. Keith, *Revolution and its Past* (2006), 211.

102 The term *zhe* is used by Wei Jiāngōng in two ways. One is simply “rhyme”. The other is “broad-rhyme classes” found in Beijing popular performing art, as the following explanations will show.

103 The article was also included in *Wei Jiāngōng Wenji*: Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Shuo ‘zher’” 說“轍兒” [About ‘broad-rhyme classes’], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 3, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 317–332.



beyond aesthetics for the composition of poetry or song: it essentially determines a syllable’s pronunciation. Since Chinese has a finite number of syllables, two widespread ways of indicating a character’s pronunciation were the “direct pronunciation method” (*zhiyinfa* 直音法)<sup>104</sup> or the *fanqie* 反切 method.<sup>105</sup> The former indicates a homophone to help readers with pronunciation. The latter divides a syllable into two parts: an initial and a rhyme (or final); it indicates one character where the initial is pronounced the same way and another character with the same rhyme. Since phonetic transcriptions only became widespread in the 20th century, these methods were important indicators for the pronunciation for a long time.

The starting point for Wei Jiāngōng’s article was a letter by a certain She Yun 舍耘,<sup>106</sup> who wrote:

韻從流水，並無“轍”數 [...].<sup>107</sup>

The rhymes follow [the principle of] flowing water; there is no such thing as a number of “rhymes” [...].

She Yun’s view was an ideal starting point for Wei Jiāngōng to start explaining the rhymes of the new national pronunciation as well as historic rhymes. In this text, Wei Jiāngōng takes on two roles: that of a historical phonologist and of a supporter of a unified, accessible national language. Wei’s explanations mark the starting point of actual convergence between his involvement in the scientific phonology discourse and the language planning discourse that required applied teachings and teaching material. Wei Jiāngōng’s endeavor to provide a systematic description of the national pronunciation that respected the spoken language and handed-down phonological traditions resulted in the “New Rhymes of China” (*Zhonghua xinyun*) nearly a decade later, published in 1941. However, in 1933, he refuted She Yun’s claim and believed that there was a finite number of rhymes.

In the second paragraph of the article, Wei Jiāngōng emphasized his role as a linguist, stating that he was not a literary critic. Specifically, he did not want to make any value judgement about the quality of a rhymed body of a text.<sup>108</sup> However, if a body of text is written in verses (*yunwen tili de dongxi* 韻文體例

104 Early evidence include the dictionaries *Erya* from the 3rd century BCE (at least in part) and Xu Shen’s 許慎 (ca. 58–ca. 148) *Shuowen jiezi* from 121 CE. Sound glosses in the *Shuowen* are marked with “read like” (*duruo* 讀若). Cf. Coblin, Weldon South, “Ēryǎ 爾雅”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 2, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 188–192. See also Boltz, William G., “Shuōwén jiězì 說文解字”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 4, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 46–55.

105 It first appeared in the 2nd to 3rd century CE. For more information about *fanqie* and other “traditional” Chinese sound glossing methods, see: Sun, Jingtāo, and Hede Wu, “Fanqiè 反切”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 2, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 225–228. and Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2018), 27.

106 Unfortunately, Wei Jiāngōng neither indicates any details about this person nor mentions the date of the letter. It was not yet possible to locate any biographical information.

107 Wenli 文狸 (= Wei Jiāngōng), “Shuo zher” 說轍兒 [About broad-rhyme classes], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 103 (1933), 1–2, see 1.

108 The question of the literary quality of vernacular poetry and of rhyming in *baihua* was discussed in the 1930s. One such example is Lu Xun’s letter to Du Tan 杜談 (1911–1986, pen name Dou Yinfu 竇隱夫), editor of the magazine “New Poetry” (*Xin shige* 新詩歌) from 1934. Lu Xun believes that the new *baihua* poetry should also roughly rhyme to make it easy to remember, easy to read out aloud or

的東西), it produces a harmonious sound (*shengyin hexie* 聲音和諧) when it is read aloud, and the listener will find it pleasant to hear (*haoting* 好聽). In folk literature and art (*minzhong wenyi* 民眾文藝)<sup>109</sup> in the Mandarin-speaking area (lit. “national language area” *guoyu quyu* 國語區域),<sup>110</sup> there is a specialized term for rhymes: “be fitting to the ruts” (*he zher* 合轍兒):

合轍兒者，押韻之謂也。

Be fitting to the ruts means to rhyme.

Literal translations of *zhe* 轍 are “rut” or “trail”,<sup>111</sup> referring to the furrows made by vehicles on a road.<sup>112</sup> However, I will continue to use *zhe* or *zher* with the Beijing-typical retroflex final.<sup>113</sup>

Wei Jiangong explains the terminology and unravels his sources. His explanation also includes his concepts of language, or, to be more exact, his concept of how rhyming should be done and the role it plays. His text contains technical terms, some of which are typical for the performing arts in Beijing. This is why I follow some of his arguments in greater detail. Note that Wei’s discussion also picks up the above-discussed texts by Li Jinxi and Bai Dizhou, and it also makes reference to the *Zhongyuan yinyun* and Yuan drama.

這個“轍兒”就是我們常說的“韻”。<sup>114</sup>

This “*zher*” is what we usually refer to as “rhyme”.

Wei argues that there is a specific difference between *zher* and *yun* 韻 (rhymes) in his explanations about different rhyming standards and practices. He proceeds as follows:

1. Wei Jiangong discusses the composition of rhymed texts.

2. There are handed down rhyming standards or poetic traditions<sup>115</sup> that are still used, even if the spoken language has developed in a way where these rhymes do not rhyme anymore. Wei Jiangong refers to the rhyming standard called *Pingshuiyun* 平水韻 or *Shiyun* 詩韻 (they are often used synonymously). This ob-

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to sing, like the song “Drizzling Rain” (*Maomaoyu* 毛毛雨) by the composer Li Jinhui 黎錦暉 (1891-1967, brother of Li Jinxi), drawing a parallel between song and poetry. See: Lu Xun 魯迅, *Lu Xun shuxin ji* 魯迅書信集 [Lu Xun letter collection], vol. 2, Beijing 北京: Renmin wenxue chubanshe 人民文學出版社, 1976, 655.

109 Wei Jiangong employs this term rather often. It is an umbrella term for folklore, storytelling and -singing, drama, and other genres that have been passed on orally and that are performed in a local dialect.

110 Referring to “Geographical Mandarin” as conceptualized in Sanders, Robert M., “The Four Languages of ‘Mandarin’” (1987). presented on 2.3.2 on page 45.

111 Kaske uses “trail” as translation. Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 45.

112 Ancient roads and rutways had ruts that guided the wheels; the axles had to fit the ruts. See Yang Zhenqi 楊振淇, *Jingju yinyun zhishi* 京劇音韻知識 [Peking opera phonology knowledge], Beijing 北京: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe 中國戲劇出版社, 1991, 141.

113 Wei Jiangong likes to add the retroflex final *er* 兒, as it is common in the Beijing dialect pronunciation. Since the two characters are spoken as one syllable, I transcribe it as *zher*. Wenli 文狸 (= Wei Jiangong), “Shuo *zher*” (1933), 1.

114 Wenli 文狸 (= Wei Jiangong), “Shuo *zher*” (1933), 1.

115 “Poetische Traditionen”, Behr, Wolfgang, *Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung*, Bochum: Projekt Verlag, 2008, 468.

ervation is confirmed by Wolfgang Behr, who explicitly states that this standard has been partially maintained until the Republican era.<sup>116</sup>

The *Pingshuiyun* (Pingshui rhymes) rhyming standard has its origins in the two rhyme dictionaries “Outline of the rhymes by the Ministry of Rites, newly printed in the renzi cyclic year [= 1252]” (*Renzi xinkan Libu yunlüe* 壬子新刊禮部韻略, 1252) by Liu Yuan 劉淵 and “Outline of rhymes, newly-carved in Pingshui” (*Pingshui xinkan yunlüe* 平水新刊韻略, 1229) by Wang Wenyu 王文鬱. Both Liu and Wang are said to be natives of Pingshui, which is located in modern-day Linfen 臨汾 in Shanxi 山西.<sup>117</sup> The *Pingshuiyun* system became the rhyming standard for candidates in the imperial examinations after they were reintroduced in the Yuan dynasty in 1312. They came to be known as “poetic rhymes” *shiyun*, since it was the norm for “regulated poetry” (*lüshi* 律詩).<sup>118</sup>

Wei calls this rhyming standard extremely irrational (*ji bu heli* 極不合理). Its rhyming system not only diverges from how people speak but also from the system that is represented in proper or orthodox rhyme books (*zhengze yunshu de xitong* 正則韻書的系統). For more than 200 years, it was the standard for the imperial examinations, and only the very educated would make the effort to memorize its rhymes (or the characters representing these rhymes, *yunzi* 韻字).

3. Authors from popular literature and art (*minzhong wenyi*), however, do not have this *shiyun* standard (*shiyun de biao zhun* 詩韻的標準) in mind.

4. Roughly since Song and Yuan dynasties, the rhyming (*yunzhe* 韻轍) of the “proletariat” (*puluo* 普羅)<sup>119</sup> developed naturally. While we cannot definitively say that the drama (*xiqu* 戲曲) of the Song and Yuan times was a popular per-

116 Behr, Wolfgang, *Reimende Bronzeinschriften und die Entstehung der chinesischen Endreimdichtung* (2008), 468.

117 There is a certain disagreement about the exact background of the authors, which is discussed in: Yang Chunqiao 杨春俏, “Guanyu ‘Pingshui yun’ ruogan wenti de zai kaobian” 关于“平水韵”若干问题的再考辨 [Renewed study and differentiation about certain questions concerning the “rhymes of Pingshui”], in: *Xibei minzu daxue xuebao* (*Zhexue shehuikexue ban* 西北民族大学学报 [哲学社会科学版]) [Journal of the Northwest University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Science)] 3 (2009), 140–145.

118 Oh, Young, “Rime Dictionaries” (2017), 603–4.

119 *Puluo* (as abbreviation) and *puluolietaliya* 普羅列塔利亞 as phonetic loans of “proletariat” or “proletarian” circulated in the earlier phase of the reception of Marxism in China (and also in Japan). Also Lu Xun employed the term in 1930. See: Lu Xun 鲁迅, “‘Yingyi’ yu ‘wenxue de jieji xing’” “硬译”与“文学的阶级性” [‘Forced translation’ and the ‘class character of literature’], in: *Lu Xun quanji* 鲁迅全集 [Complete works of Lu Xun], vol. 4, Beijing 北京: Renmin wenxue chubanshe 人民文学出版社, 1989, 195–222, see 196. Wolfgang Lippert discusses the different terminologies and implications for Marxist terms and demonstrates how many neologisms came to China via Japan. He mentions the phonetic loan in a footnote. See Lippert, Wolfgang, *Entstehung und Funktion einiger chinesischer marxistischer Termini: Der lexikalisch-begriffliche Aspekt der Rezeption des Marxismus in Japan und China* (Münchener Ostasiatische Studien 19), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979, 309. Lippert furthermore presents the nowadays accepted terms, such as *laodongzhe* 勞動者, *pingmin* 平民, *wuchanzhe* 無產者 and *wuchanjieji* 無產階級. See: Lippert, Wolfgang, “Marxism and the Development of the Chinese Political Lexicon”, in: *China in seinen biographischen Dimensionen*, ed. by Neder, Christina, Heiner Roetz, and Ines-Susanne Schilling, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001, 373–386, see 381.

forming art (*minzhong wenyi*), we can at least say that it was much more like the spoken language.<sup>120</sup>

5. The rhyme book from that period, Zhou Deqing's *Zhongyuan yinyun*, confirms this, according to Wei Jianguo. The *Zhongyuan yinyun* is also different from the orthodox rhyme books (*zhengze yunshu*), and it can be said that it was slightly closer to the "natural" (*ziran* 自然) pronunciation.

6. The *zher* of the popular performing arts<sup>121</sup> basically come from that *Zhongyuan yinyun*.

7. Actors and musicians<sup>122</sup> practice the pronunciation in their recital and singing. This specialized enunciation or extravagant opera pronunciation is referred to as *yaozi* 咬字, or as Wei Jianguo quotes it in Beijing dialect, *yao ziyann* 咬字眼兒 (to "bite the words", literally), and it represents the "pronunciation of the central plains" (*zhongzhou yin* 中州音).

8. This *zhongzhou yin* is the predecessor of the Beijing pronunciation that is the standard for the national pronunciation (*guoyin biao zhun de Beiping yin* 國音標準的北平音). However, there are a few differences between the two.

9. While the Beijing pronunciation, which is the basis for the national pronunciation, is not completely identical with the pronunciation of the central plains, the rhymes (*zher*) of drama (*xiqu*) are very much the same. They are not entirely identical to the pronunciation of Beijing.

The *zher* conserve a certain historical inheritance (*lishi de yichuan* 歷史的遺傳), whereas the Beijing pronunciation changes freely over time (*ziyou de gen shidai zai bianhua* 自由的跟時代在變化).

We know that the system of national pronunciation is derived from the *Zhongyuan yinyun* rhyme book, which contains 19 rhymes. These have been synthesized into 12 rhymes in Fan Tengfeng's 樊騰鳳 (1601–1664) "Primordial sounds of the five regions" (*Wufang yuanyin* 五方元音).<sup>123</sup> The national pronunciation has 19 rhymes. I now will explain the rhymes using Wei's arguments.

The following includes a table showing the national pronunciation (*guoyin*) and the rhymes of the *Wufang yuanyin* and the *Zhongyuan yinyun*, see Table 1 below. This table follows Wei Jianguo's structure. The rhymes of *guoyin* are represented by Zhuyin. As well, I have added Pinyin, and in the case of *e* in Pinyin, which represents two distinct phonetic values, I have added the IPA symbol. The rhymes of the *Wufang yuanyin* and the *Zhongyuan yinyun* are each represented by a character of the respective pronunciation. The order of the rhymes from *Wufang yuanyin* and *Zhongyuan yinyun* is broken up to build a correlation with

120 In *Guoyu zhoukan* it is written 合於口語; the *Wenji* takes *wu* 唔 as a spelling mistake for *yu* 語 and corrects it.

121 It is to be noted that the Peking opera pronunciation originally comes from Hubei 湖北 and Anhui 安徽. See Yang Zhenqi 楊振淇, *Jingju yinyun zhishi* (1991), 31.

122 Actors are referred to as the ones from the "pear garden" Liyuan 梨園, the theater academy founded in the Tang dynasty in the 8th century, and the musicians as the ones that play a stringed instrument (*shua xian* 耍絃).

123 Söderblom Saarela argues that the division into 12 rhymes, as well as its initial-based phonological order, may indicate the influence of Manchu syllaberies during the Qing dynasty. See Söderblom Saarela, Márten, "Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)" (2015), 75–76.

the national pronunciation. The number of the original sequence is indicated in parentheses. Since *guoyin* contains more rhymes than the *Wufang yuanyin* and *Zhongyuan yinyun*, some of their rhymes repeat. The example of lines 19 and 20 shows that the *Wufang yuanyin* did not distinguish between *-u* and *-ü*.

The important developments that Wei Jiangong points out are the following characteristics of the national pronunciation that are different from the rhyme books:

1. ㄛ [ɤ] emerged as independent vowel, while in both rhyme books, only ㄛ [ɔ] and ㄝ [e] existed.
2. 儿 [aə], ㄓ [z], ㄒ [s] are differentiated.<sup>124</sup>
3. ㄟ [ei] and ㄨ [i] are differentiated.
4. ㄨ [u] and ㄩ [y] are differentiated (Pinyin: *u* vs. *ü*).

In the following table (see Table 2), Wei Jiangong presents the 13 “big” and two “small” *zhe*. I added the *guoyu* pronunciation of the rhyme characters in Pinyin. The small *zhe* are rhoticized (*erhua* 兒化), meaning they are pronounced with a retroflex final. The table shows how certain rhymes are grouped together in single *zhe* that are distinguished in the national pronunciation. Using the list above as reference, we see that characteristic 1 is visible from Table 2 by looking at line 10, where we have the final [e], but the vowel [ɤ] is nowhere to be found. Characteristic 3 is visible by looking at line 3 in Table 2 which gives us [i]; [ei] cannot be found. All distinct rhymes that we find in Table 1 but not in Table 2 are differentiated in *guoyin* but not in the *zhe* for opera performance. This means that in performances, syllables not rhyming in the national pronunciation do rhyme. Wei Jiangong makes more tabular concordances, and we will come to the comparison with the rhymes of the national pronunciation in the *Zhonghua xinyun* below. He concludes:

有一種人以為十三道韻是金科玉律，那是不對的。你如果要作現代的國語韻文，最好依照現行的國音押韻，因為這是分析得最正確的韻類。你如果以為要照十三道韻押韻，最好大體上也給它變動變動，把那已成為音韻史上的痕跡的地方總得除去了。[...] 換句話說，十三音之必伸縮為十四、十五，地使然也；十三韻之將細析為十七、十八，時使然也。<sup>125</sup>

There is one kind of person who thinks that the 13 *zhe* are an immutable precept. That is not correct. If you want to produce modern poetry [or rhymed prose], you best should rhyme according to the modern national pronunciation because it distinguishes the most correct way between the rhyme classes. If you want to rhyme according to the 13 *zhe*, you best also by and large change it a bit and eliminate the places where it has become a remnant of the phonological history. [...] To put it differently, the 13 sounds should actually be expanded to 14, 15, which are a regional effect; to distinguish the 13 *zhe* further into 17, 18, is an effect of time.

Secondary literature also suggests a direct relationship between all these above-mentioned rhyming sources. Nonetheless, the rhymes are not identical. How-

124 These three rhymes may seem odd, since their phonetic values could also be assigned to initials. However, Wei Jiangong treats them as single syllables that just consist of a rhyme and no initial.

125 Wenli 文狸 [= Wei Jiangong], “Shuo zher (xu) 說韻兒 (續)” [About broad-rhyme classes (continued)], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 104 (1933), 1–2, see 2.

Table 1: Wei Jiangong's comparison of the rhymes of the national pronunciation (*guoyin*) and the rhyme books *Wufang yuanyin* and *Zhongyuan yinyun*.

No.	Zhuyin	Pinyin	<i>Wufang yuanyin</i>	<i>Zhongyuan yinyun</i>
1	ㄚ	a	馬 (十)	家麻 (十三)
2	ㄛ	o	駝 (八)	歌戈 (十二)
3	ㄛˊ	e [ɤ]	駝, 蛇 (九)	歌戈, 車遮 (十四)
4	ㄛˊ	e [e]	蛇	車遮
5	ㄞ	ai	豺 (十一)	皆來 (六)
6	ㄟ	ei	地 (十二)	齊微 (四)
7	ㄞ	ao	葵 (六)	蕭豪 (十一)
8	ㄡ	ou	牛 (五)	尤侯 (十六)
9	ㄢ	an	天 (一)	寒山 (八), 監咸 (十八)
10	(ㄨㄢ)	uan/wan		桓歡 (九)
11	(ㄩㄢ, ㄩㄢ)	ian/yan, yuan/uan		先天 (十), 廉纖 (十九)
12	ㄣ	en	人 (二)	真文 (七), 侵尋 (十七)
13	ㄤ	ang	羊 (四)	江陽 (二)
14	ㄥ	eng/ng	龍 (三)	東鍾 (一), 庚青 (十五)
15	ㄝ	er	地	支思
16	ㄝ	ri	地	支思
17	ㄝ	si	地	支思
18	ㄟ	i/yi	地	齊微
19	ㄨ	w/u	虎 (七)	魚模 (五)
20	ㄨ	yu/ü	虎	魚模

Table 2: The thirteen big and the two small *zhe*

No.	<i>zhe</i> rhyme characters	Pinyin ( <i>guoyu</i> )
<b>big <i>zhe</i></b>		
	大轍	da zhe
1	中, 東	zhong, dong
2	江, 陽	jiang, yang
3	一, 七	yi, qi
4	灰, 堆	hui, dui
5	油, 求	you, qiu
6	梭, 坡	suo, po
7	人, 辰	ren, chen
8	言, 前	yan, qian
9	發, 花	fa, hua
10	乜, 斜	mie, xie
11	懷, 來	huai, lai
12	姑, 蘇	gu, su
13	遙, 條	yao, tiao
<b>small <i>zhe</i></b>		
	小轍	xiao zhe
1	人兒, 辰兒	renr, chenr
2	言兒, 前兒	yanr, qianr

ever, showing a systematic relationship between the historical pronunciation and *guoyu* pronunciation is a way of legitimizing the *guoyu* pronunciation. Wei Jianguo claims that there is a logical, explainable, systematic process of pronunciation change, a natural process describable by scientific research that provides the *guoyu* standard with scholarly authority. As has been mentioned above, many members of the intellectual elite were southerners, and traditional scholarship rested of course on the on Confucian classics. By tracing the *guoyu* pronunciation back to historical predecessors, Wei Jianguo legitimized modern language planning with history and tradition. This approach will also be seen in his legitimization of *guoyu* in Taiwan and is quite contrary to the approach he would adopt when legitimizing the script reform in the PRC.

It should be stated that the 13 *zhe* are an important element of Peking opera singing until today. Their relation to the *Zhonghua xinyun* rhymes and practical examples of lyrics can be found in Yang Zhanqi's *Jingju yinyun zhishi*.<sup>126</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The “Forging” of the Beijing Dialect

In the preface to Zhang Xunru's 張洵如 (Zhang Deze 張德澤, 1905–1998)<sup>127</sup> “The 13 broad-rhyme classes of the Beiping phonetic system” (*Beiping yinxi shisan zhe* 北平音系十三韻), Wei Jianguo explains his view on the genesis of the Beijing dialect.<sup>128</sup> He has already described the 13 *zhe* above, and here, he connects them

126 Yang Zhenqi 楊振淇, *Jingju yinyun zhishi* (1991), 141ff.

127 Zhang Xunru not only made a name for himself as linguist specializing in the language of Beijing, but also as specialist in archive studies. Together with Wei Jianguo, he participated the Committee for the Disposition of the Qing Imperial Possessions (Qingshi shanhou weiyuanhui 清室善后委员会, 1924) that was in charge of making an inventory of the objects that were kept in the imperial palace. Chiang, Nicole T. C., *Emperor Qianlong's Hidden Treasures: Reconsidering the Collection of the Qing Imperial Household*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2019, 1. Also like Wei, he became a member of the Jiusan xueshe 九三學社 (see page 214). Anonymous, “Ming-Qing dang'an zhuanjia Zhang Deze xiansheng shishi” 明清档案专家张德泽先生逝世 [The Ming-Qing archive studies specialist Zhang Deze has passed away], in: *Lishi dang'an* 历史档案 [Historical Archives] 1 (1999), 137. See also Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jianguo* (2007), 51. See also Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2018), 510. Many thanks to Dr. Jeanette Werning for pointing me to this source on the matter: Wang Hongjun 王宏钧 (ed.), *Zhongguo bowuguanxue jichu* 中国博物馆学基础 [The Basis of Chinese Museology], Shanghai 上海: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1990, 88–89.

128 Zhang Xunru's book *Beiping yinxi shisan zhe* was published in 1937 by Zhonghua yinshuju 中華印書局, distributed by the Large Dictionary Compilation Office of the Committee for the Promotion of the National Language (Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui Zhongguo Da cidian bianzuanchu 國語推行委員會中國大辭典編纂處), where Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Zhang Xunru 'Beiping yinxi shisan zhe' xu” 張洵如《北平音系十三韻》序 [Preface to Zhang Xunru's “The 13 broad-rhyme classes of the Beiping phonetic system”], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 2, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 295–312. In addition to being published in the book, the preface (*Xu* 序) by Wei was published in the volumes 282 to 285 of *Guoyu zhoukan*, which is by that time turned into a supplement of “World Daily” *Shijie ribao* 世界日報. *Shijie ribao* was founded in 1925 by the journalist Cheng Shewo 成舍我 (1898–1991), chief editor was Liu Bannong. Zhang Chengzhi 张承志, “Xinwenxue chuangujiang – Liu Bannong lun” 新文学闯将——刘半农论 [The New literature's trailblazer – On Liu Bannong], PhD dissertation, Jilin daxue 吉林大学, 2020, 148.



to the historical development of Beijing as a place. He explains how the development from the language of a place formerly known as Youzhou 幽州 (more below) to the Beijing dialect came about. It is a further example how Wei Jiāngōng as a phonologist endeavored to search for the roots of the national language.

The development of the Beijing dialect that Wei Jiāngōng envisages is heavily influenced by the geographical position of Beijing. Its location led to an influx of non-Chinese languages. The influence of these languages on the Chinese variety of Beijing has been used by critics to debase it. For example, Wu Zhìhuì had likened it to “dog-barking” (*goujiao* 狗叫).<sup>129</sup> Wei Jiāngōng finds rather objective words in comparison to other philologists.

Wei Jiāngōng recounts how the area of Beijing lay at the margins of the Chinese empire. Around the turn of the eras, non-Chinese languages were spoken there. Around the Tang dynasty, the location, which was named Youzhou at the time, became a point of exchange between the Chinese and the “barbarians” (*yi* 夷) Khitan (Qidan 契丹). The marginal position of Youzhou is exemplified by the following quote:

這幽州的名稱在《釋名》裏說是“在北，幽昧之地也”。關於這地方的地位自然是一種邊徼荒遠，其語言也不過是鄙語方言了。<sup>130</sup>

This name Youzhou is defined in the *Shi ming*<sup>131</sup> as “a dark place in the North”.<sup>132</sup> About the position of this place, it is naturally a remote area situated at the margins. As well, only vulgar languages and dialects are spoken there.

Over time, this heterogenous array of dialects developed into a “language system”:

我們從這個事實的表現，可以知道揚雄、許慎的時代這一個區域的語言雖是有獨立系統的地位，而其中實在又要分得很繁複的小區間，等到魏晉以降就成了一個比較範圍寬泛的“幽州人語系”了，越往後越減少了特殊方言的色彩。<sup>133</sup>

These facts tell us that during the times of Yang Xiong and Xu Shen [Han dynasty], while the language of this region had the status of an independent system, it still must be further divided into complicated little areas. It was only in the Wei and Jin dynasties it became a single encompassing “Youzhou

129 Ran 燃 [Wu Zhìhuì 吳稚暉], “Shu Fuzhou Ribao ‘Dongxue Xi jian’ pian hou” (1977), 470. This is Wu’s above-quoted *Xin shiji* article from 1909 (see page 90) in which he lamented that Manchu bannermen taught this variety of Chinese abroad. See also: Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 385. On the journal *Xin shiji*, see: Müller, Gotelind, *China, Kropotkin und der Anarchismus* (2001), 219ff.

130 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Zhang Xunru ‘Beiping yinxi shisan zhe’ xu” (2001), 295.

131 The *Shi ming* 釋名 (On Explaining Names) dates to ca. 200 CE. It was authored by Liu Xi 劉熙 and is a type of dictionary. The entries are ordered according to categories. Youzhou is found under the heading “explaining administrative divisions and states” (*Shi zhou guo* 釋州國). Most entries have a paranomastic sound gloss to indicate the pronunciation and an explanation or definition why Liu chose this particular sound gloss, often making an “extremely tenuous” semantic connection between the lexeme and the gloss. Cf. Bodman, Nicholas Cleaveland, *A Linguistic Study of the Shih Ming: Initials and Consonant Clusters*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954, 1–2.

132 Wei literally chose a mnemonic pun (*You* as the place name vs. *you(me)* “dark”) from the *Shi ming* to illustrate the remoteness and wildness of Youzhou.

133 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Zhang Xunru ‘Beiping yinxi shisan zhe’ xu” (2001), 296.

people language system”, and as time went by, its special dialect characteristics diminished.

Next, Wei Jianguo described how the Khitan installed their capital in modern-day Beijing, and how this marks the beginning of Beijing’s ascent to capital and metropolis.

公曆九百三十六年，這幽州和其他十五個州同時被石敬瑭送給了契丹人，第二年契丹人把幽州設析津府作了“南京”，因此成了華夷雜處的大都會，到現在整整一千年了！經過一千年的時間，那原來比較寬泛的“幽州人語系”似乎漸漸消滅變化成了另一個新的語言系統。這個語言系統是佔極重要的地位的，簡直是中國語的近代標準系統。我們稱之為“北平語系”。<sup>134</sup>

In 936, this Youzhou and the other 15 provinces were simultaneously gifted to the Khitan by Shi Jingtang.<sup>135</sup> In the second year, the Khitan made Youzhou their “Southern Capital”, Xijinfu. This way it became a metropolis in which Chinese and Barbarians lived together, which is a full 1000 years until today! In the course of these 1000 years, this originally very broad “Youzhou people language system” slowly nearly disappeared and transformed into a new language system. This language system occupies an extremely important place: it namely is China’s modern standard system. We call it “Beiping language system”.

Wei Jianguo explains how a standard language is the result of a natural evolution. Following the natural laws of language development, the language was transformed. Certain features were selected to stay while others disappeared. This development followed the economy of language in particular, since the speakers strove for the lowest articulatory effort. The characteristics of several languages merged. As Beijing became a political center, its language came to be seen as standard.

大凡一個語言標準系統的成立，乃是許多不同語系的人薈萃在一處，互相融和，竭力推置，不知不覺，去泰去甚，把語言的音素選拔出最便易的，將語言的組織鍛鍊成最簡明的；所以都會最久的地方語言系統聚的最接雜，混合而成的標準却最易於溥及四方。<sup>136</sup>

Generally speaking, the establishment of a language standard system is many people of different language systems coming together in one place, mixing with each other, doing their utmost to establish themselves in the new location, unconsciously shunning the extremes and maintaining the middle course, selecting the most convenient and easy from the phonetic features of the languages, and forging the language structure into its simplest and clearest form. Therefore, the oldest local language systems are made up of the most different [elements], mixing to become a standard that is nonetheless the easiest to be spread everywhere.

This concept of natural laws of language development is one of the concepts that Wei Jianguo would reiterate during his promotion of *guoyu* in Taiwan in the

134 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Zhang Xunru ‘Beiping yinxi shisan zhe’ xu” (2001), 297.

135 Emperor Gaozu 高祖 (892–942) of Later Jin (Hou Jin 後晉, 936–947).

136 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Zhang Xunru ‘Beiping yinxi shisan zhe’ xu” (2001), 297.

1940s. This ability to legitimize official language policy with a concept that appeared not only to be scientific evidence in a modern sense but also grounded in the traditional philological and historical knowledge system made him a valuable member of the language planning institutions.

### 4.2.3 The “New Rhymes of China” *Zhonghua Xinyun* 中華新韻

In 1937, war with Japan broke out. The Kuomintang government relocated to Chongqing 重慶 for the duration of the war. Peking University and other institutions, including the Ministry of Education’s Committee for the Promotion of the National Language (Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui)<sup>137</sup> moved southwards into Kuomintang-controlled areas, to avoid the turmoil of war and Japanese occupation. Wei Jianguo became professor of Changsha Interim University (Changsha linshi daxue 長沙臨時大學) and Kunming Southwestern United University (Xinan lianhe daxue 西南聯合大學).<sup>138</sup>

In June 1940, the Committee for the Promotion of the National Language (Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui) was able to resume its work.<sup>139</sup> Wei Jianguo again became a member as well as a member of the standing committee. A general assembly conferred by the Ministry of Education in July decided Li Jinxi, Lu Qian 盧前 (1905–1951),<sup>140</sup> Xiao Jialin and Wei Jianguo should provide the standard for the survey of the national pronunciation (*guoyin*) and compile a rhyme book with this pronunciation, the “New rhymes of China” *Zhonghua xinyun* 中華新韻. After its completion, it was made the official national rhyme book by the government (國府頒布為國家韻書) in October 1941.<sup>141</sup>

137 The Preparatory Committee for the Unification of the National Language (Guoyu tongyi choubi weiyuanhui) was dissolved and re-established as Committee for the Promotion of the National Language (Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui) in 1935. The announcement of the founding of the Committee for the Promotion of the National Language claimed that the Preparatory Committee was “cut back” (*jinsuo* 緊縮) financially by the central government. As a result, a decision was made to dissolve it. Since the linguists involved, such as Li Jinxi, wanted to continue the promotion of *guoyu*, they talked to the education minister Wang Shijie 王世杰 (1891–1981), who agreed to the founding of the new committee. [Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui 國語推行委員會], “Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui guicheng ji weiyuanhui mingdan” (1935).

138 See Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 68. Wei Jianguo recounts more about his displacement to Sichuan in Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Huiyi jing’ai de laoshi Qian Xuantong” 回憶敬愛的老師錢玄同先生 [Remembering my beloved teacher Qian Xuantong], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 526–533.

139 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 12.

140 Lu Qian is foremost known as poet, playwright and opera and drama historian. Firmly grounded in traditional practices of composition and rhyming, he began to advocate to rhyme according to modern colloquial pronunciation during the Second Sino-Japanese War. His participation in the compilation of the *Zhonghua xinyun* may have contributed to this development. Du Yunwei 杜运威, Ma Dayong 马大勇, “Lun Lu Qian *Zhongxing guchui* de ci shi jiazhi” 论卢前《中兴鼓吹》的词史价值 [About the value of Lu Qian’s ‘The trumpet of national resurgence’ for the history of *Ci* [poetry]], in: *Nanjing shifan daxue wenxueyuan xuebao* 南京师范大学文学院学报 [Journal of the School of Chinese Language and Culture of Nanjing Normal University] 2 (2016), 68–73, see 72.

141 Chien Tuo 錢拓 [Qian Tuo], “Wei Jianguo yinxue shuping” (2013), 5.

A digitized version of the *Zhonghua xinyun* is available online.<sup>142</sup> It was also included in *Wei Jiangong wenji* in volume 1. The *Zhonghua xinyun* has many features of traditional publications, and its layout is similar to traditional rhyme books. It is printed from right to left, top to bottom. It does not mention Wei Jiangong by name,<sup>143</sup> although the annotation in the *Wei Jiangong wenji* version indicates he did the main compilation work while the others mainly did the revision.<sup>144</sup>

The first page of *Zhonghua xinyun* bears this decree of the Republican government: this rhyme book was published and promulgated, and authorized by the Chairman Lin Sen 林森 (1868–1943), the president of the Executive Yuan Jiang Zhongzheng 蔣中正 (Chiang Kai-shek), and the minister of education Chen Lifu 陳立夫 (1900–2001). It is followed by Chen Lifu's public announcement that looking up the correct rhymes (*zhengyun* 正韻) required consultation of government publications (*guanshu* 官書) for all genres of text. Since the establishment of the Republic of China, no proper rhyme book was published. Only Zhuyin fuhao had been promulgated since 1918 to replace the *fanqie* transcription. In 1932, the *Guoyin changyong zihui* was published. He then explains how the Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui appointed Li Jinxi, Lu Qian and Wei Jiangong to compile this book, giving the *Zhonghua xinyun* government backing.

The rhyme book begins with explaining how the rhymes of the national pronunciation are connected to the rhymes of the central plains, as recorded in *Zhongyuan yinyun*. This explanation sheds light on Wei Jiangong's research on the 13 *zhe* and their connection to the *Zhongyuan yinyun*: he wanted to hear the rhymes of the central plains in practice, and the 13 *zhe* of the performing arts were for him a living tradition of this phonetic system.

The *Zhonghua xinyun* furthermore contains a rhyme table similar to those found in the traditional rhyme books. In it, the rhymes are represented with Zhuyin and a representative character. The main body is divided into the 18 rhymes, which are then again divided into the four tones (see Table 3). At the end, former *ru*-tone characters are listed and their modern standard pronunciation and tone are indicated.

If we compare Table 3 to Table 1 (page 124), we see the following differences: in line 5 of Table 3, [i] is no longer differentiated into the two items in Table 1 (lines 16 and 17). Line 14 of Table 3 encompasses what was formerly divided into 3 items in Table 1 (lines 9, 10 and 11). Item 18 in table 3, *-ong*, is new.

Wei Jiangong's view that a more or less direct evolution can be traced from former rhyme books over the 13 drama rhymes (*zhe*) to the national pronuncia-

142 Jiaoyu bu Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui 教育部國語推行委員會 [Ministry of Education Committee for the promotion of the national language] (ed.), *Zhonghua xinyun* 中華新韻 [New rhymes of China], Chengdu 成都: Ru gu shuju 茹古書局, 1941. (Accessible online: <https://taiwanebook.ncl.edu.tw/zh-tw/book/NCL-9900010685/reader>)

143 The same was the case with the *Xinhua zidian*.

144 Jiaoyu bu Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui 教育部國語推行委員會 [Wei Jiangong 魏建功], "Zhonghua xinyun" 中華新韻 [New rhymes of China], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 1, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 571–632, see 571.

Table 3: The rhymes of *Zhonghua xinyun*

No.	Zhuyin	Pinyin	Character	Char. Pinyin
1	ㄚ	a, ia, ua	麻	ma
2	ㄛ	o, uo	波	bo
3	ㄜ	e	歌	ge
4	ㄝ	ie, üe	皆	jie
5	ㄝ	-i [i]	支	zhi
6	ㄝ	er	兒	er
7	ㄝ	i	齊	qi
8	ㄝ	ei, ui	微	wei
9	ㄝ	ai, uai	開	kai
10	ㄝ	u	模	mu (mo)
11	ㄝ	ü	魚	yu
12	ㄝ	ou, iu	侯	hou
13	ㄝ	ao, iao	豪	hao
14	ㄝ	an, ian, uan, üan	寒	han
15	ㄝ	en, in, ün	痕	hen
16	ㄝ	ang, iang, uang	唐	tang
17	ㄝ	eng, ing	庚	geng
18	ㄝ	ong, iong	東	dong

tion is also reflected in secondary literature. Gan Guofang published an article in which she establishes the systematic connection between the 206 rhymes of the *Guangyun*, the *Pingshuiyun*, the *Zhongyuan yinyun*, the 13 *zhe* and the *Zhonghua xinyun*.<sup>145</sup> All these rhyme schemes have been discussed by Wei Jianguo.

In his own presentation of the *Zhonghua xinyun*, Wei Jianguo returned to the practical issue of rhyming, the issue that had prompted him to write about the 13 *zhe*. He gave a talk at Central University (Zhongyang daxue 中央大學, in Chongqing at that time) in 1942 to explain the new rhyme book to the students. As well, he first reiterates that modern poetry was not necessarily rhymed. However, he makes a much longer historical reference. Consulting rhyme books to write poems started, according to Wei Jianguo, in the Song dynasty. The *Qieyun* had been developed further into the *Tangyun*, and authors could theoretically consult it when they composed poetry. However, comparing poem with the rhyme book shows a certain discrepancy. Although the rhyme book theoretically provided a standard, the poet might have been a dialect speaker. If a person with a different dialect now recites the poem, it might not rhyme. Therefore, the *Zhonghua xinyun* needs to provide a concrete standard for both the poet and reader. This would then ensure that the poet's creation can be appreciated just as the poet intended.

The history of rhyming was, according to Wei Jianguo, closely connected to the history of the imperial examinations. The "Outline of the rhymes of the Ministry of Rites" *Libu yunlüe* 禮部韻略 was compiled by Ding Du 丁度 (990–1053) under Song Renzong 宋仁宗 (r. 1022–1063) and finalized in 1037.<sup>146</sup> The rhyme book became an important reference work for the preparation for the imperial examination, since composing rhymed poetry was periodically part of the examination. It was divided into 206 rhymes, like the *Guangyun*.<sup>147</sup> Wei further claims that the examination essays in the *baguwen* 八股文 style ("eight-legged essays"), for example, had to be rhymed. Each dynasty then had its own official rhyme book, such as the *Hongwu zhengyun* 洪武正韻 of the Ming,<sup>148</sup> or the *Peiwen yunfu* 佩文韻府 of the Qing.<sup>149</sup> Since imperial examination candidates needed to memorize the rhymes, they composed poem to practice them. With these historical references, Wei provides historical legitimacy for his "New rhymes of China". He claims that the "New rhymes" were not only built on a well-established tradition in linguistics but also on a history of government authority.

145 Gan Guofang 甘国芳, "Erlingliu yun, Pingshui yun, Zhongyuan yinyun, Shisan zhe he Zhonghua xinyun zhijian de guanxi" 二〇六韵、平水韵、中原音韵、十三辙和中华新韵之间的关系 [The relationship between the 206 rhymes, the Pingshui yun, the Rhymes of the central plain, the Thirteen rhymes and the New rhymes of China], in: *Hubei di yi shifan xueyuan xuebao* 湖北第二师范学院学报 [Journal of Hubei Institute of Education] 31.10 (2014).

146 Cf. also: Oh, Young, "Rime Dictionaries" (2017), 603.

147 Söderblom Saarela, Márten, "Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)" (2015), 72.

148 The rhyme book was commissioned by the Hongwu (r. 1368–1398) emperor, compiled by Yue Shaofeng 樂韶鳳 and published in 1375. Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 47.

149 "Treasury of rhymes from the Hall of Honoring Literature", commissioned in 1704 and completed in 1711 by Zhang Yushu 張玉書 and others. Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2018), 85.

The problem of the different dialects' pronunciation, Wei Jianguo continues, still exists. Therefore, the Ministry of Education promulgated the national language pronunciation standard that is present in the *Zhonghua xinyun*. Wei Jianguo emphasizes that more than half of the rhymes, albeit being exemplified with different characters, are actually rhymes that have been passed on.<sup>150</sup>

Wei Jianguo's emphasis on the fact that the rhymes were not new but could be traced back in history shows that language planning was and had to be based on tradition. Traditional scholarship, especially phonology, provided the basis for a modern national language. It utilized traditional tools, rhyme books, which were then used to promote the national language as standard language of the modern Republic of China. This also served as legitimization strategy, as traditionalists in the KMT were more likely to accept such a "traditionalist" procedure.

The approach of building modernity on tradition would also be used in the PRC, as Part III about the script reform will show. It was less clear, however, because explicitly all elitist notions were discarded, and the popular, "proletarian" element was pointed out. However, the script reform basically sought to re-establish the Chinese script tradition. The simplified characters that would be promoted were either historical shorthand forms or new characters constructed according to handed down, traditional methods. The reformers basically reclaimed command over the very Chinese "essence" of the Chinese script. As all these language planning events can be seen as a long-time effect of the May Fourth period, they are often seen as iconoclastic, just like perception of the whole period.<sup>151</sup> Given these traditional approaches to language and script in mind, the iconoclasts of the May Fourth period might actually not have been that iconoclastic after all.

## 4.3 The National Language between Discourse and Reality

I have attempted to demonstrate how the language planning activities of Wei Jianguo and the other linguists tried to navigate between description and prescription. By describing its historical genesis with traditional philological methods, they provided legitimacy for a standard language that was, while politically implemented, *de facto* the closest any of the many language varieties of China could come to a "standard" or "common language" at that time. Hence, it could be said

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150 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Guanyu *Zhonghua xinyun* - yi jiu si er nian qi yue zai Zhongyang daxue de jiangyan" (2001).

151 Schwarz summarizes some of the most influential intellectual positions of the era. Among these were Chen Duxiu with the slogan "Down with the Rotten Band of Confucian shopkeepers", who also motivated Qian Xuantong and Liu Bannong (Liu Fu) to "document the way in which outworn habits of mind were being perpetuated in modern-day China in the guise of Confucian learning." Chen had even gone so far to authoring the essay "On Iconoclasm" in 1918, criticizing how "idol worshippers" impeded the introduction of science in China by supporting traditional values like emperor worship or filial piety. Others, like Gu Jiegang, were less radical and rather wanted to criticize than completely reject tradition. See Schwarz, Vera, *The Chinese Enlightenment* (1986), 125-27.

that the existing language reality was cemented. However, while the status of Northern Mandarin was accepted and was nominally declared the national standard, it was not still widely used in regions outside the Mandarin-speaking area. As I mentioned above, even the most famous promoters of the national language still did not speak the national language in the 1950s, including Wei Jiāngōng.<sup>152</sup> While the efforts in describing the language were completed, successful prescription (from today's point of view, one may also question its desirability) was still incomplete.

Although the country was divided because of the war with Japan and the linguists themselves were far from Beijing, the efforts to implement the national language were not paused but rather increased. As well, it is quite likely that the insistence on the Beijing dialect was instrumentalized to reclaim supremacy over the city that was occupied by the Japanese. In 1942, Wei Jiāngōng began to work as a professor of the Chinese Language Department (Guowenxi 國文系) of the National Women's Teacher's College (Guoli nüzi shifan xueyuan 國立女子師範學院) in Baisha 白沙, Sichuan.<sup>153</sup> He became academic dean (*jiaowu zhuren* 教務主任)<sup>154</sup> and director of the national language special training courses (*guoyu zhuanxiuke zhuren* 國語專修科主任) in 1943. It was one of three courses established at the orders of the Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui.<sup>155</sup> As Wei was more philologist-researcher than pedagogue or didact, he himself managed the special training courses. Nonetheless, his teaching was focused on historical philology and he held, for example, the lecture "Outline of Chinese Graphemics" (*Wenzixue gaiyao* 文字學概要).<sup>156</sup>

In 1944, to facilitate the promotion of the national language, the Ministry of Education published the "Guiding principles of the national language movement" (*Guoyu yundong gangling* 國語運動綱領).<sup>157</sup> They were presented at the "national language movement week" (*guoyu yundong zhou* 國語運動週) in Chongqing that year. These principles included the following: the reading pronunciation of the Chinese characters should be standardized, *guoyu* should be promoted in the entire country and as standard for foreigners learning Chinese, and the use of Zhuyin fuhao as transcription as well as *Zhuyin guozì* 注音國字 (characters accompanied with Zhuyin fuhao in small print) should be promoted. The explicit purpose of the *Zhuyin guozì* was to illustrate the pronunciation of characters to readers unfamiliar with them. Implicitly, it would help speakers with a low

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152 Chen, Mengjia [陳夢家], "On the Future of Chinese Writing" (1978).

153 Ma Si 馬嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 160.

154 Huang Yingzhe 黃英哲, "Wei Jiāngōng yu zhanhou Taiwan 'guoyu' yundong (1946-1948)" (2005), 93.

155 Cao Da 曹達, "Wei Jiāngōng nianpu" (1996), 13.

156 Ma Si 馬嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiāngōng* (2007), 162. Wei Jiāngōng discussed with Chen Duxiu (before his death in May 1942) Chen's textbook *Xiaoxue shizi jiaoben* 小學識字教本 (Primary school literacy textbook). Chen's idea behind the textbook was that the pupils should not solely memorize the characters, but know and understand the etymology behind them.

157 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Guoyu yundong gangling" 國語運動綱領 [Guiding principles of the national language movement], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiāngsu jiāoyu chubanshe 江蘇教育出版社, 2001, 317-18.



literacy,<sup>158</sup> including learners, since they were expected to learn Zhuyin fuhao (37 characters) quickly. The pronounced aim of promoting Zhuyin fuhao presented by the “Guiding principles” was to “link up (= homogenize) the language at the border areas” (*goutong bianjiang yuwen* 溝通邊疆語文).<sup>159</sup>

When he was in Taiwan in 1946, Wei Jianguo reformulated the “Guiding principles” to match the situation in Taiwan. Now, they included the following: *guoyu* should be learned by inferring from Hokkien, the Japanese linguistic influence should be wiped out, Zhuyin should be employed, and the Taiwanese should also be integrated into the culture of the Republic ideologically.<sup>160</sup> These reformulations will be discussed in the next chapter.

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158 While Republic of China saw an increase in literacy thanks to a greater coverage of schooling, there is some disagreement about the exact numbers. The degree of literacy was furthermore different between urban or rural dwellers and the different social strata. See Seeberg, Vilma, *Literacy in China: The Effect of the National Development Context and Policy on Literacy Levels, 1049–79* (Chinathemen 52), Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1990, 47.

159 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong gangling” (2001), 317.

160 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong gangling” (2001), 318.



## Chapter 5

# The National Language in Taiwan

The Republic of China on Taiwan as we know it today would be unthinkable without the “national language” *guoyu* as the official language. The “promotion of the national language” (*guoyu tuixing* 國語推行) gave the island off the coast of Fujian the role of a guardian of Chinese traditional culture, as some would claim still is today. This section will shed light on Wei Jiangong’s legitimization and promotion of the national language in Taiwan 1946–1948, ten years before the language politics of the Kuomintang (KMT) began showing the grim face of repression.

### 5.1 Historical Background

Taiwan was a Japanese colony from 1895 until 1945. During the wartime period (1937–1945), “politics of Japanization” (*kōminka* 皇民化)<sup>1</sup> was enforced. It encompassed a national language (*kokugo* 國語) program to discourage the populace from speaking Chinese and promote speaking Japanese instead. It is important to note that the varieties of Chinese spoken by most Taiwanese at the time were the Quanzhou 泉州 and Zhangzhou 漳州 varieties of the Southern Min dialect (*Minnanyu/Bân-lâm-gú* 閩南語),<sup>2</sup> that only started to be perceived as one single “Taiwanese language” (*taiyu/Tâi-gú/-gí* 臺語, *taiwanhua/Tâi-oân-oē* 台灣話 or *Hō-ló-oē* 鶴佬話) under the auspices of the Japanese colonial “other” and their language indoctrination efforts.<sup>3</sup>

1 Otherwise known as assimilation. Literal translation: turning people into imperial subjects.

2 Also often referred to as Hokkien [Fujian (-hua)] 福建話.

3 Klöter, Henning, “Re-writing language in Taiwan”, in: *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan* (Asia’s Transformations), ed. by Shih, Fang-Long, Stuart Thompson, and Paul-François Tremlett, London / New York: Routledge, 2009, 102–122, see 107–8.

Although the Japanese *kokugo*-policy was reported to have increased the percentage of Taiwanese able to speak Japanese from about 37% in 1937 to 51% in 1940, secondary literature is not unanimous about the success of the policy. The fluency of the speakers can be doubted, since even model “national language families” (*kokugo katei* 國語家庭) were “hardly conversant” in Japanese.<sup>4</sup> However, evidence indicates that fluency depended on the age of the speakers and the amount of education they had received in the Japanese-language school system. Young people apparently attained a greater level of fluency at the expense of their mother tongue, Taiwanese Minnan.<sup>5</sup>

While there is no evidence about the *exact* scope of *taiyu* being spoken around the time of “liberation” in 1945,<sup>6</sup> there is a report by the Taiwanese literary scholar Wu Shouli 吳守禮 (1909–2005) from 1946 on the degree of Japanese spoken by the Taiwanese and its influence on *taiyu* speakers.<sup>7</sup> At that time, Wei Jianguo was already in Taiwan. Wu Shouli, born in Tainan 臺南, had lived in Taiwan during the Japanese colonization and graduated in Chinese literature from Taihoku Imperial University (Taihoku Teikoku Daigaku 臺北帝國大學, [Taipei diguo daxue]), which was reorganized as National Taiwan University after the KMT retook the island. He occupied several teaching positions, also in Japan, until he became a professor at National Taiwan University after the end of the Japanese colonization. Wu Shouli became a member of the Committee for the Promotion of the National Language, and gradually shifted his interest to the research of the Minnan dialect, its literature, performing arts, and history. He authored several *taiyu* dictionaries. Just like Wei Jianguo, as we will see on the following pages, Wu Shouli advocated for the comparison of *taiyu* and *guoyu* to facilitate language acquisition.<sup>8</sup>

In this 1946 report, Wu Shouli mentioned three age groups of *taiyu* speakers, old people, middle-aged people, and young people, whose language were exposed

- 4 Lamley, Harry J., “Taiwan Under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945: The Vicissitudes of Colonialism”, in: *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. by Rubinstein, Murray A., Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007, 201–260, see 240. Cheng states that these families spoke Japanese at home. See Cheng, Robert L., “Taiwan Under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945: The Vicissitudes of Colonialism”, in: *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to the Present*, ed. by Rubinstein, Murray A., Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994, 357–391, see 360.
- 5 The circumstances of Hakka (*Kejiayu* 客家語) and the Austronesian languages, also spoken in Taiwan, are not discussed here. As well, I have not found any texts of Wei Jianguo discussing them in detail.
- 6 Huang Xuanfan 黃宣範, *Yuyan, shehui yu zuqun yishi: Taiwan yuyan shehuixue de yanjiu* 語言、社會與族群意識：台灣語言社會學的研究 [Language, society and ethnic consciousness: Research into Taiwan’s language sociology], Taipei 臺北: Wenhe chuban youxian gongsi 文鶴出版有限公司, 1993, 103.
- 7 Wu Shouli 吳守禮, “Taiwanren yuyan yishi cemianguan” 臺灣人語言意識側面觀 [Profile of the language mentality of the Taiwanese], in: *Taiwan xinsheng bao* 台灣新生報 [Taiwan New life] *Guoyu zhuanke* 國語專刊 [Special issue on the national language] vol. 1 (1946). I am very thankful to Prof. Chang Lung-chih 張隆志 and Hsu Kuo-Yang 徐國暘, both from Academia Sinica, for helping me acquire this text.
- 8 *Zhonghua Minguo dangdai mingrenlu bianji weiyuanhui* 中華民國當代名人錄編輯委員會 [‘Who’s who in the Republic of China’ editing committee] (ed.), “Wu Shouli xiansheng” 吳守禮先生 [Mr. Wu Shouli], in: *Zhonghua Minguo dangdai mingrenlu* 中華民國當代名人錄 [Who’s who in the Republic of China], ed. by *Zhonghua Minguo dangdai mingrenlu bianji weiyuanhui* 中華民國當代名人錄編輯委員會 [‘Who’s who in the Republic of China’ editing committee], vol. 1, Taipei 臺北: Taiwan Zhonghua shuju 台灣中華書局, 1978, 603.

to Japanese to different degrees. The precondition of all three age groups was that their “mother tongue” (*myu* 母語) was Taiwanese (*taiwanhua* 台灣話).

Old people, according to Wu, still spoke Taiwanese in their everyday communication, but their vocabulary (*yuhui* 語彙) and grammar (*yufa* 語法) had absorbed a notable amount of Japanese characteristics. This did not apply to some very old people who did not receive any education in Japanese at all, while it applied rather more to those with a higher level of education.

The second age group, middle-aged people, contained a few people who had not been familiarized with Japanese. The majority, however, could speak, read and write Japanese. Wu Shouli continued that the thinking of some had been influenced by Japanese grammar. Although these people spoke their mother tongue fluently, it had already retreated from the realms of society into the realms of the family, and “they cannot help thinking in Japanese” (*tamen budebu yong riyu xiang dongxi* 他們不得不用日語想東西). Wu Shouli used a metaphor to describe this language phenomenon:

臺灣話的根幹雖沒有搖動，枝葉的作用已經變了。<sup>9</sup>

Although the roots of Taiwanese have not moved, the use of the branches and leaves has already changed.

Wu Shouli closed his description with the third age group, young people. They have not only learned Japanese, but there were even quite a few who were no longer able to speak *taiwanhua*. Wei Jianguo agreed with the fact that Japanese left a notable trace in the Taiwanese language situation.<sup>10</sup> The *kokugo*-policy also had the effect of pushing *taiyu* into the realm of the private, while in the public sphere, Japanese was spoken.<sup>11</sup>

After Japan’s surrender, Taiwan came under the rule of the Kuomintang government on October 25, 1945. Decolonizing and reintegrating Taiwan into China proved difficult and was perceived negatively by the Taiwanese.<sup>12</sup> Promoting the Chinese national language became an integral part of the KMT policy. The first attempt of language planning was that the Kuomintang-installed “chief executive” (*xingzheng zhangguan* 行政長官) Chen Yi 陳儀 (1883–1950) prohibited speaking Taiwanese and Japanese to promote the national language *guoyu*. However, it became clear rather quickly a more elaborate strategy to promote *guoyu* was needed. On April 2, 1946, the Taiwan Committee for the Promotion of the National Language (Taiwan sheng Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui) was established and

9 Wu Shouli 吳守禮, “Taiwanren yuyan yishi cemianguan” (1946).

10 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Ribennren chuane le women de guoyin” 日本人傳訛了我們的國音 [The Japanese have corrupted our national pronunciation], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 350–51.

11 Huang Xuanfan 黃宣範, *Yuyan, shehui yu zuqun yishi: Taiwan yuyan shehuixue de yanjiu* (1993), 103.

12 Phillips, Steven, “Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations Under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945–1948”, in: *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. by Rubinstein, Murray A.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007, 275–319, see 277. Phillips describes that many Taiwanese perceived the KMT provincial administration merely as new, less competent colonial rulers. To them, “reintegration” became synonymous with “recolonization”.

Wei Jiangong installed as its head (*zhuren weiyuan* 主任委員).<sup>13</sup> We will see that Taiwanese was then seen as a stepping stone for learning *guoyu*.<sup>14</sup> Only in 1956, an explicit prohibition on speaking dialects in public places was issued anew by the Department of Education (*Jiaoyu ting* 教育廳).<sup>15</sup>

## 5.2 Wei Jiangong's Legitimization of *Guoyu* in Taiwan

This part discusses Wei Jiangong's concepts of language in his texts that legitimize the promotion of the national language *guoyu* in Taiwan from 1946 to 1948. I explain why he believed China and Taiwan needed a national language and why he felt this language had to be based on the Beijing dialect pronunciation.

I argue that the main concepts he uses to legitimize the Beijing-pronunciation-based *guoyu* are the following: progress of both language and the nation, sovereignty of the state and linguistic kinship between the Chinese "dialects".<sup>16</sup> For Wei Jiangong, the purpose of promoting *guoyu* was to (re)integrate Taiwan into the Republic of China, reverse the effects of Japanese colonization, and legitimize the national language movement (*guoyu yundong*) on the Mainland. Reversing the effects of Japanese colonization appeared to be a pretext to actually integrating Taiwan, which was in China's frontier, into the nation after 1945. This early *guoyu* movement in Taiwan was different from the later repressive language politics of the KMT: the earlier movement did not forbid but instead encouraged the use of the Taiwanese Southern Min dialect (*taiyu*). Wei Jiangong hoped that a successful promotion of *guoyu* in Taiwan would legitimize the *guoyu* movement on the Mainland.

Wei Jiangong described the *guoyu* movement as apolitical:

[...] 我們的國語運動是一種文化的社會運動，並非政治的語文政策。<sup>17</sup>

[...] our national language movement is a kind of social movement of culture and not really a political language and script policy.

Building on the basis of the above-mentioned "Guiding principles of the national language movement" of the Ministry of Education, he and his colleagues presented principles for the *guoyu* movement in Taiwan. These principles indicated

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13 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiangong* (2007), 166.

14 See, for example Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Zenyang cong taiwanhua xuexi guoyu" 怎樣從臺灣話學習國語 [How to learn the national language from Taiwanese], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 328–336, see 328–36.

15 Huang Xuanfan 黄宣範, *Yuyan, shehui yu zuqun yishi: Taiwan yuyan shehuixue de yanjiu* (1993), 108.

16 Essentially, power decides what constitutes a "language" and a "dialect". See: Klöter, Henning, "Rewriting language in Taiwan" (2009). Since the question cannot be discussed in detail in this dissertation, I will follow the convention of calling the Sinitic languages "dialects".

17 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Guoyu de si da hanyi" 國語的四大涵義 [The four great implications of the national language], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 322–27, see 324.

that the *guoyu* movement in Taiwan was facing entirely different challenges than the *guoyu* movement on the Mainland. For example, illiteracy was not a prevalent problem at all.<sup>18</sup> These new “principles” stipulated that Taiwanese (*taiyu*) be “restored” (*fuyuan* 復原) to ensure that *guoyu* pronunciation could be learned by inferring from the “regional pronunciation” (*fangyin*); that the influence of Japanese syntax should be “wiped out” (*shuaqing* 刷清), and “every ethnic group” (*ge zu* 各族) should be “merged” (*rongguan* 融貫) into Chinese culture (*Zhonghua wenhua* 中華文化).<sup>19</sup>

On February 10, 1946, Wei Jiangong reached out to the public for the first time through a radio broadcast, “The purpose of the national language movement in Taiwan”, and he wrote an accompanying “Thorough explanation” that was published in *Xiandai zhoukan* 現代週刊 (The modern weekly) on February 28.<sup>20</sup> In this article, he defined *guoyu* as:

北平社會受過中等教育的人日常應用的話<sup>21</sup>

The language used by people of the Beiping [Peking] society who have received secondary-school education in everyday life<sup>22</sup>

Hence, the events and discussions in the early 20th century that ensured *guoyu* would be modeled after the Beijing dialect have been addressed above. Here, I will discuss only Wei Jiangong's legitimization of it. I will demonstrate how the three main concepts of progress, sovereignty, and kinship of dialects were at the core of his legitimization strategy.

### 5.2.1 Progress

Like many other intellectuals of his time, Wei Jiangong was concerned about China's ability to compete on an international scale. I have summarized his article on the abolition of the Chinese script for the sake of progress from 1925 above (3.2.2, page 66).<sup>23</sup> In 1946, he looked at the matter with the eyes of a phonologist and phonetician. He believed that a standardized national pronunciation was required for attaining a high level of development:

文化進步而組織健全的國家，沒有不是確用一個標準聲音系統做國語的。<sup>24</sup>

Among the countries with an advanced culture and perfectly organized system, all countries were determined to use a standard phonetic system as the national language.

In China's case, not only its spoken and written language, but also as in ancient times, the units of measurement, and even clothing, nutrition and housing should

18 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie” (2001), 316.

19 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong gangling” (2001), 318.

20 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie” (2001).

21 The original text has emphasis dots, see Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie” (2001), 306.

22 This definition goes back to Zhang Shiyi, 1920, see 4.1.1, page 101.

23 More on Wei Jiangong's idea of progress will be discussed in Chapter 7.1.2 on page 198.

24 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie” (2001), 308.

be standardized. This standardization would lead to a “new” and implicitly better China:

新中國一切應該真正標準化!<sup>25</sup>

The new China shall really be completely standardized!

In this article Wei Jianguo put forward his utilitarian concept of language.<sup>26</sup> He called it a tool for communication,<sup>27</sup> or a “tool of the Chinese Han nationality to express its will” (我國漢族表達意志之工具).<sup>28</sup> This understanding was in line with the views of his teachers and forerunners of language planning, such as Wu Zhihui, Cai Yuanpei or Qian Xuantong. Qian Xuantong in particular called the signifiers of language mere “signs without consciousness” (*wu yishi de jihao* 無意識的記號),<sup>29</sup> and all three of them rejected the idea of a “national essence” *guocui* preserved in language. As mentioned above (page 103), they saw language as arbitrary symbols that could be replaced by more suitable ones.

As a result, claiming the reformability and changeability of language, Wei Jianguo presents mechanisms of language change: natural language change occurs on the basis of language contact and linguistic economy. The economy of language,<sup>30</sup> or that the speakers strive for the lowest articulatory effort and pronunciation evolves into the most simple and convenient one for all speakers, is what naturally shaped the standard language.<sup>31</sup>

As examples, he mentions two earlier concepts of a standard language from China’s history, namely *yayan* 雅言<sup>32</sup> and *guanhua*. *Yayan* is for Wei Jianguo

25 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 311.

26 The juxtaposition of “utilitarian” and “ideological” language concepts can be seen in Ping, Chen, “China”, in: *In Language and National Identity in Asia*, ed. by Simpson, Andrew, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 141–67, see 141–42.

27 Ping, Chen, “China” (2007).

28 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi xingtǐ biànci shǐ” 漢字形體變遷史 [History of the change of the shape of the Chinese characters], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 1–50, see 2. This is a lecture script from his time at the Southwestern United University (Xinan lianhe daxue), presumably dating from 1938. Wei does not mention any non-Han people.

29 Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, “Tongxin” 通信 [Correspondence], in: *Xin qingnian* 新青年 [*La Jeunesse*] 5.2 (1918), 183–84, see 183–84.

30 William Withney, Otto Jespersen and André Martinet (“loi du moindre effort”) put forward this concept. For a summary, see Vicentini, Alessandra, “The Economy Principle in Language: Notes and Observations from Early Modern English Grammars”, in: *Mots Palabras Words* 3 (2003), 37–57.

31 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 307.

32 There is some debate on the exact meaning of *yayan* in pre-imperial China, as suggested by: Behr, Wolfgang, “Phonophoric Repair Strategies in Warring States Writing as a Reflex of Orthoepic Awareness?”, presented at International EASCM-Conference “Orthopraxy, Orthography, Orthodoxy. Emic and Etic Standards and Classifications of Chinese Manuscripts”, University of Heidelberg, 2014. Unger calls it “Hochsprache”. See Unger, Ulrich, “Dialektales und Umgangssprachliches in den Klassikern”, in: *Zurück zur Freude. Studien zur chinesischen Literatur und Lebenswelt und ihrer Rezeption in Ost und West. Festschrift für Wolfgang Kubin* (Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 57), ed. by Hermann, Marc, Christian Schwermann, and Jari Grosse-Ruyken, Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2007, 108. According to Park, *yayan* was the *lingua franca* or pronunciation standard roughly during the Old Chinese period. Park, Haeree, *The Writing System of Scribe Zhou: Evidence from Late Pre-imperial Chinese Manuscripts and Inscriptions (5th–3rd centuries BCE)*, Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter, 2016, 36.



the earliest spoken standard language (*biaozhunyu* 標準語), a phonetic tool used for communication between the many different “clans” (*zongzu* 宗族) of the heterogeneous, pre-imperial society.<sup>33</sup> It was a sort of *lingua franca* from before the Qin 秦 dynasty (221–206 BCE). He explains the meaning of *ya* 雅 as “correct” (*zheng* 正), and correct as “standard (*biaozhun* 標準). He contrasts it with the “vulgar” (*su* 俗, a common term to describe dialects), and defines the scope of *ya* as “general” (*pubian* 普遍) and the scope of *su* as “marginal” (*pianpi* 偏僻). He presents evidence from the “Book of Odes” *Shijing* 詩經, in which two of the three sections are titled *ya* (“Elegantiae”) and *feng* 風 (“Airs”),<sup>34</sup> the latter of which he equates with “*su*”. This *yayan* changed incessantly, as people from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds integrated by adapting to the dominant culture. The most “prevalent” (*liuxing* 流行) pronunciation that would provide the basis for *yayan* was the one from the political center, i.e. the capital.<sup>35</sup>

The other, more recent historic concept of standard language that was used by Wei Jiangong to legitimize the status of the Beijing pronunciation was the concept of “Mandarin” or *guanhua*. The *guanhua* definition presented in his 1946 article “On the virtue of the national language” corresponds to the definition of *yayan*. According to Wei Jiangong, *guanhua* does not mean the “language the officials spoke” (*guan shuo de hua* 官說的話), but a “public” (*gonggong* 公共) as opposed to a “private” (*si* 私) language.<sup>36</sup>

Wei Jiangong stresses that Beijing (Beiping) was not only the last but also the most long-lived imperial capital. Over “more than a thousand years”, the speech of the area was increasingly used as a standard language to the extent that it was used by officials and envoys (*guan shi shehui* 官使社會) throughout the Qing dynasty. Therefore, this speech was called “Mandarin” by Westerners.<sup>37</sup> This Mandarin with the Beijing phonetic system (Beiping *yinxi*) was by far not the only variety. However, it was, according to Wei, the only “proper” one (*zhengze guanhua* 正則官話).<sup>38</sup>

Because so many people practiced the Beijing dialect over such a long period of time, the principles of the lowest articulatory effort caused “the most convenient and easy” (*zui fangbian rongyi* 最方便容易) pronunciation to be instinc-

33 On the structure of early Chinese family and society, see Gassmann, Robert H., *Verwandschaft und Gesellschaft im alten China: Begriffe, Strukturen und Prozesse* (Welten Ostasiens 11), Bern: Lang, 2006.

34 These translations of *ya* and *feng* are taken from Chen, Zhi, *The Shaping of the Book of Songs: From Ritualization to Secularization* (Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 52), Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2007, 13. Chen Zhi discusses the concept of *ya* in detail.

35 Wei explains that since Zhou 周 times (1046–256), the capital (*duyi* 都邑) was located around the Yellow River drainage area (*Huang He liuyu* 黃河流域), and he names Xianyang 咸陽 (capital of the state of Qin, Luoyang 洛陽, Chang'an 長安 and Kaifeng 開封 and finishes with Beiping, which was the “last and longest one” (*zui hou zui jiu de* 最後最久的). Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 306–7.

36 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu de dexing” 國語的德行 [The virtue of the national language], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 373–75, see 373.

37 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 307.

38 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang” (2001), 134. As discussed on page 47, Wei Jiangong presents several distinct varieties of *guanhua*.

tively “chosen” (*xuanze* 選擇). This process resulted in the most progressive, namely “simplest and clearest structure” (*zui jiandan mingliao de zuzhi* 最簡單明瞭的組織)<sup>39</sup> in the Beijing dialect:

我們可以說這種標準的國語條件是聲音系統和組織習慣是全國人民最方便使用的。不用談學理，我們只要把現在的標準國語，北平話，跟任何的土語方言對照一下，就很明白。<sup>40</sup>

We can say that this kind of condition (requirement) for the standard(ized) national language is that the sound system and the structural conventions are most convenient<sup>41</sup> for the people of the entire country. We do not even have to mention scientific principles; we only have to compare the present standard national language, Beijing speech, to any local dialect, and it will be very clear.

As we have seen in his “Thorough explanation”, he sees the origin of *guoyu* on the basis of the Beijing dialect as an organic, natural development, and an evolution towards progress. In another article from 1946, on “The virtue of the national language”, he makes this claim even more obvious:

我們的國語標準的形成是文化的自然演變，它的推行也靠着文化自然的發展；[...]<sup>42</sup>

The formation of the national language standard is [the result of] a natural evolution of culture; its implementation is also dependent on the natural development of culture; [...]

This shows that Wei Jiāngōng does not only have an organic understanding of language but also of culture. He saw language as one form of the expression of culture. In “The virtue of the national language”, Wei Jiāngōng justifies why *guoyu* has not yet been completely “established” (*shuli qi lai* 樹立起來): it is an organic process and therefore takes time.<sup>43</sup>

However, Wei Jiāngōng felt that this natural development was not sufficient on its own: it is complemented and in constant interaction with language policy. In addition to showing natural processes led to the formation of the standard language, he also states that the standardization of *guoyu* made the standard language more modern and more progressive.<sup>44</sup> Wei Jiāngōng used language planning measures to illustrate how *guoyu* already looks back on several decades of promotion by the government and that it attained a certain level of progress: since the Republic was established, meetings were held to standardize the pronunciation, Zhuyin fuhao was promulgated, the dictionaries *Guoyin changyong zihui*, and *Zhonghua xinyun* were published, and the primary school curriculum was rewritten to include *guoyu*. He concludes with a rhetorical question: “can

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39 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 307.

40 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 308–9.

41 Compare to the economy of language discussed on page 142.

42 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Guoyu de dexing” (2001), 373.

43 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Guoyu de dexing” (2001), 373.

44 Here, we may add that as a veritable May Fourth intellectual, Wei blamed tradition for ossifying the language and impeding its natural development. The goal of modern language policy was to combat tradition and get the organic evolution of language back on track.

such a process still not obtain the people's recognition?" (如此的經過，還不能得人了解嗎?)<sup>45</sup>

### 5.2.2 Sovereignty

In a next step in his argument, he blames the Japanese for interfering with the alleged natural state of language. Wei Jiangong then explains how the term *guoyu* came to denote the standard language in a short sketch of the concept's history. In the first phase (*jieduan* 階段) of the *guoyu* concept, it referred not to the single language of the state but *what people in the various states were speaking*, such as in the title of the book *Guoyu* 國語, "Discourses of the States".<sup>46</sup> In its second phase, the term *guoyu* was

統治中國的外來民族自稱他們的語言的名目。<sup>47</sup>

The name foreign nations controlling China called their own languages.

Wei Jiangong hereby referred to conquerors (*zhengfuzhe* 征服者) such as the Jurchen (Nüzhen 女真), Mongols (Menggu 蒙古) and Manchus (Manzhou 滿洲), and says that this concept of *guoyu* had a certain "smell of blood" (*xiexingqi* 血腥氣) to it.<sup>48</sup> Without doubt, this was also understood by the readers as an allusion to the Japanese occupation and their politics of "Japanization" (*kōminka*) during their colonial rule over Taiwan, where the "national language" (*kokugo* 國語) referred to Japanese.<sup>49</sup> Wei Jiangong's view on the conceptual history of *guoyu* is accepted by other scholars. After first appearing as a book title, it was used to denote the Manchu language and took on its modern meaning as Chinese "national language" – ironically – via Japan during the first years of the 20th century.<sup>50</sup>

The third and last phase of the *guoyu* concept brings the aspect of sovereignty into play, as the Republic is juxtaposed to alien regimes. Wei Jiangong not only legitimizes the national language but also the Republic of China as a whole, emphasizing the right to self-determination:

民國成立了以後，才演變成第三階段現在的意義，“中華民國人民共同採用的一種標準的語言是國語；國語是國家法定的對內對外，公用的語言系統。”<sup>51</sup>

Only after the Republic was established, did the third stage evolve which is today's meaning, [namely] “the kind of standard language commonly employed by the people of the Republic of China is *guoyu*; *guoyu* is the official language system for internal and external public use.”

45 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie" (2001), 309.

46 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie" (2001), 307.

47 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie" (2001), 307.

48 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie" (2001), 307.

49 Chou, Wan-yao, "The Kōminka Movement: Taiwan under Wartime Japan, 1937–1945", PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1991.

50 Kaske, Elisabeth, "Mandarin, Vernacular and National Language – China's Emerging Concept of a National Language In the Early Twentieth Century" (2004), 287.

51 Emphasis and punctuation as in original. Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie" (2001), 307.

The article's title is "Thorough explanation of 'The purpose of the national language movement in Taiwan'", and Wei Jiāngōng alludes to it. With regard to *guoyu* being the legitimate language of a sovereign state, it follows that:

臺灣光復了以後，推行國語的唯一的意義是“恢復台灣同胞應用祖國語言聲音和組織的自由”！<sup>52</sup>

Since Taiwan was recovered, the only purpose of promoting the national language is to “restore the freedom of the Taiwanese compatriots to use their nation's language's pronunciation and structure”!

Japan as the enemy is blamed for the non-homogeneous or fragmented language situation between Taiwan and the Mainland. This implies that there either was before or could otherwise be a linguistic uniformity between Taiwan and the Mainland:

我們要 [...] 再把敵人攪亂過的語言組織方式，一一在全臺灣返本還原起來！<sup>53</sup>

We have to return to the way that language was originally structured, which has been put in disorder by the enemy, one by one!

Here, not only Wei Jiāngōng, but also Wu Shouli pointed out the influence of Japanese grammar (*yufa*) on *taiyu* speakers. Wei Jiāngōng, however, focused mainly on the aspect of pronunciation. Two months after Wu Shouli, Wei Jiāngōng published two articles in the same journal.<sup>54</sup>

In the first article, Wei discussed the “influence of Japanese on Taiwanese phonetics”.<sup>55</sup> While Wei praised the diligence of the Taiwanese people studying *guoyu*, he pointed out that:

[...] 我們却發現幾點受日本語影響而不能分辨的現狀。<sup>56</sup>

[...] we however notice a few conditions in which [the pronunciation] is not distinguishable because it was influenced by Japanese.

The first influence he mentioned was the pronunciation of the unaspirated (*bu songqi* 不送氣) initials *g* ㄍ [g̊] and *d* ㄉ [d̊] as aspirated (*songqi* 送氣) *k* ㄎ [kʰ] and *t* ㄊ [tʰ], since the Japanese used the katakana syllables *ka* ㄎ and *ta* ㄊ to transliterate them.<sup>57</sup> As the second influence, he listed the confusion of tones, which was an especially severe problem for him: he stressed that the existence of tones is an important common feature of all Chinese dialects, and because the

52 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 310.

53 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 314.

54 The journal “Taiwan new life” (*Taiwan Xinsheng bao* 臺灣新生報, short: *Xinsheng bao*), was established in 1945 on the basis of an existing Japanese journal in Taiwan and became the official organ of the KMT. Zhao Libin 趙立彬, “Taiwan guangfu yu *Xinsheng bao*” 台灣光復與《新生報》[The recovering of Taiwan and the ‘New life journal’], in: *Zhongshan daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 中山大學學報 (社會科學版 [*Journal of Sun Yat-sen University (Social Science Edition)*]) 3.56 (2016), 90–98.

55 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Taiwan yuyin shou Ribenyu yinxiang de qingxing” 臺灣語音受日本語影響的情形 [The circumstances of the influence of Japanese on Taiwanese phonetics], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江蘇教育出版社, 2001, 348–49.

56 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Taiwan yuyin shou Ribenyu yinxiang de qingxing” (2001), 348.

57 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Taiwan yuyin shou Ribenyu yinxiang de qingxing” (2001), 348.

*guoyu* tones could be learned by inferring from one's home dialect. He illustrated his views with a joke about a Japanese person in Beiping who wanted to buy "soap" (*yizi* 胰子<sup>58</sup>) but was given a "chair" (*yizi* 椅子) instead.

The third pronunciation problem that he felt the Taiwanese adopted from the Japanese was the pronunciation of one syllable by one syllable. All these aspects, Wei Jiangong concluded, made some of the Taiwanese learners of *guoyu* sound as if they did not even know *taiwanhua*.<sup>59</sup>

In the next text published in the same *Xinsheng bao* issue, Wei Jiangong focused on the pronunciation mistakes by Japanese who speak Chinese as a second language. He mainly attributes these to the inadequacy of katakana for representing Chinese phonetics. An example he mentioned is how Japanese speakers pronounced the final *er* 儿 like *a-ru* アール or *o-ru* オール.<sup>60</sup>

In a slightly damaged manuscript from 1947 or 1948,<sup>61</sup> Wei even goes so far as to call the Japanese education policy an "education to stultify the people" (*yumin jiaoyu* 愚民教育): in this way, the failure of the KMT politics could be blamed on the Japanese rule. The goal of *guoyu* education was to remove the "poison" (*dusu* 毒素) of the Japanese education measures. Ironically, in the same manuscript, he also admits that Taiwan has a high level of education and literacy as well as a higher number of schools of all levels than anywhere in the Mainland.<sup>62</sup>

### 5.2.3 Kinship of *Guoyu* and *Taiyu* 臺語

Apart from blaming differences between *taiyu* and *guoyu* on the enemy, Wei Jiangong stresses that *guoyu* and *taiyu* are related through blood (*xuemai xiangong* 血脉相通).<sup>63</sup> This relation is a close one, unlike the relationship to Japanese:

國語和臺語是兄弟姊妹的關係，國語的字音和日語漢字音讀是外祖外孫或舅甥的關係 [...]。<sup>64</sup>

The relationship between *guoyu* and *taiyu* is that of brother and sister. The *guoyu* pronunciation of characters and the Japanese reading of Chinese characters<sup>65</sup> are related to each other like maternal uncle and nephew<sup>66</sup> [...].

58 This term was especially used in the Northeast of China.

59 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Taiwan yuyin shou Riben yu yinxiang de qingxing" (2001), 349.

60 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Ribennren chuane le women de guoyin" (2001), 350.

61 Wei mentions the February 28 incident, 1947 (*er-erba shijian* 二二八事件). In this incident, several thousand anti-KMT protesters were killed. Therefore, it must have been written afterwards.

62 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Tai sheng guangfu wei jiu" 臺省光復未久 [Taiwan province has not been recovered for long], Beijing, family possession, 1947/48.

63 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie" (2001), 309, 312. Wei reiterates this medical metaphor to describe the relationship between the two language varieties on several occasions.

64 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi' shenjie" (2001), 310.

65 Also known as the Sino-Japanese reading, (*on'yomi* 音読み). See Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 56.

66 As the traditional Chinese family is virilocal (i.e. the bride goes to live with the husband's family) and the lineage and inheritance passes from father to son(s), the relationship to uncles on one's mother's side or nephews on one's sister's side is considered less close. See Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 95, 101.

The Min dialects are indeed very important for the reconstruction of Old Chinese, since they took a different development from the others beginning in the 3rd or 2nd century BC.<sup>67</sup> Min dialects furthermore retain a large amount of the Middle Chinese lexicon.<sup>68</sup> With regard to the coherence of the many different Chinese dialects, Wei Jianguo claims that although their pronunciation is very diverse and that many dialects are mutually unintelligible (although some are more intelligible than others), in terms of “script and grammar, there is nothing that is not intelligible” (*wenzi he wenfa meiyou shenme bu xiangtong de* 文字和文法沒有不相通的).<sup>69</sup> Having established the coherence of all dialects via script and grammar, he legitimizes standardization in general and specifically the Beijing (Peking) dialect:

我們沒有分歧的文字和文法之中，共同拿最方便容易的聲音來表示，便是國語要標準化的惟一理由。<sup>70</sup>

As we have no differences within script and grammar, together adopting the most convenient and simple sound to express ourselves is the only reason for standardizing the national language.

Wei emphasizes that the dialects are “local languages” (*tuyu* 土語) that are regionally specific. Therefore, they cannot be used as the standard. Moreover, they have often been perceived as lacking prestige.<sup>71</sup> However, they were only prohibited in Taiwan in 1956.<sup>72</sup> The *guoyu* movement in Wei Jianguo’s times was still very different. While marginalizing dialects, Wei much more prominently presented the above-mentioned “restoration” of the *taiyu* dialect as an important stepping stone towards the promotion of *guoyu*.<sup>73</sup>

As Wei Jianguo himself taught *guoyu* or observed his colleagues teaching, he also learned *taiyu* from his students. Opposing the widespread conception that *taiyu* did not have a script, he not only wrote dialect expressions in Chi-

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67 Schuessler, Axel, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007, 125.

68 Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2018), 30.

69 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 308. Wei deliberately ignores the many important differences in vocabulary. In his defense, dialect research only experienced a state-sponsored boost a few years later after the establishment of the PRC. Cf. the 1956 directive: *Wenzi gaige chubanshe* 文字改革出版社 [Script reform publishing house] (ed.), “Gaojiao bu, Jiaoyu bu guanyu Hanyu fangyan diaocha gongzuo de zhishi” 高教部、教育部关于汉语方言调查工作的指示 [Directive for the survey work about Chinese dialects by the Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Education], in: *Tuiguang Putonghua wenjian huibian* 推广普通话文件汇编 [Collection of documents about the promotion of the common language], ed. by *Wenzi gaige chubanshe* 文字改革出版社 [Script reform publishing house], Beijing 北京: *Wenzi gaige chubanshe* 文字改革出版社, 1985.

70 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 308.

71 Chris Wen-Chao Li’s description of the contemporary language situation in Taiwan basically resonates with Wei’s image of a perceived vulgarity of the dialects vs. social prestige of Mandarin. Li, Chris Wen-Chao, “Shifting Patterns of Chinese Diglossia: Why the Dialects May Be Headed for Extinction”, in: *Divided Languages? Diglossia, Translation and the Rise of Modernity in Japan, China and the Slavic World*, ed. by Ārokay, Judit, Jadranka Gvozdanović, and Darja Miyajima, Cham: Springer, 2014, 65–86, see 75.

72 Huang Xuanfan 黄宣範, *Yuyan, shehui yu zuqun yishi: Taiwan yuyan shehuixue de yanjiu* (1993), 108.

73 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong gangling” (2001), 318.

nese characters but also used specialized Zhuyin fuhao transcription for dialects.<sup>74</sup> This practice shows how he restored the recognition of *taiyu* as a full-fledged language, existing not only in the verbal but also in the graphical dimension through Chinese characters. As for learning *guoyu* by inferring from Taiwanese as stated in the above-mentioned “Guiding principles”, he tried to realize this approach: His “How to learn *guoyu* from *taiyu*” article compares *guoyu* and *taiyu* pronunciation and places a particular emphasis on the common vocabulary.<sup>75</sup>

Wei Jiangong's view that a systematic relationship exists between *taiyu* and *guoyu* has been noted by secondary literature. Cai stresses that Wei Jiangong saw an important difference between the learning of a foreign language and of *guoyu* as another Chinese dialect, since the dialect could be used as springboard.<sup>76</sup> In this context, Wei Jiangong refers to the possibility of individual study in particular.<sup>77</sup>

Apart from the influence of Japanese grammar on the *taiyu* speakers, Wei Jiangong also saw that they were alienated from Chinese in general. *Taiyu* speakers found it “not as convenient to speak *taiyu* as it is to speak Japanese”.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, he felt while *taiyu* and *guoyu* share extensive vocabulary, *taiyu* speakers had great difficulty to infer from *taiyu* to *guoyu*.<sup>79</sup> He was of the opinion that the Taiwanese should be encouraged to keep their mother tongue (*baocun muyu* 保存母語, i.e. *taiyu*), and even make an effort in standardizing (*biaozhunhua* 標準化) it<sup>80</sup> while learning *guoyu* to:

恢復民族意識，建設學習心理。<sup>81</sup>

Renew the national consciousness and build up the learning mentality.

For Wei, the relationship between *guoyu* and *taiyu* not only legitimized but also facilitated the promotion of *guoyu*.

74 Such as “banana”: Wei transcribes 芭蕉 [*gongjiao*] in dialect Zhuyin as: ㄅㄚˊㄅㄢㄠˊㄩㄠˊ. The dialect Zhuyin reads *kim jio*. Since 芭蕉 should be romanized *king-tsoi*, it may also be that Wei accidentally transcribed the synonym 金蕉 [*jinjiao*]. Cf. Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan da yiyi shenjie” (2001), 311–12. Many thanks to Herbert Voß and DANTE e.V. for the help in displaying the specialized Zhuyin characters and to Dr. Egas Moniz Bandeira for his linguistic expertise.

75 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, *Zenyang cong taiwanhua xuexi guoyu* (2001).

76 Cai Shengqi 蔡盛琦, “Zhanhou chuqi xue guoyu rechao yu guoyu duben” 戰後初期學國語熱潮與國語讀本 [The early postwar national language learning wave and Chinese language textbooks], in: *Guojia tushuguan guankan* 國家圖書館館刊 [National library journal] 2 (2011), 83.

77 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Heyi yao tichang cong taiwanhua xuexi guoyu” 何以要提倡從台灣話學習國語 [How to encourage learning the national language from Taiwanese], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 319–21, see 321.

78 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Heyi yao tichang cong taiwanhua xuexi guoyu” (2001), 320; Compare the above-quoted report Wu Shouli 吳守禮, “Taiwanren yuyan yishi cemianguan” (1946).

79 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Heyi yao tichang cong taiwanhua xuexi guoyu” (2001), 320.

80 Dialects are usually characterized by the absence of standardization, manifested by a great geographic variety and oral tradition. Bußmann, Hadumod, “Dialekt”, in: *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008, 131–132. To preserve them and teach them, they need to be written down. As well, dictionaries and textbooks have to be compiled. These efforts inevitably lead to a compromise and sometimes even loss of local varieties. Roberts summarizes the challenges but mostly merits of dialect standardization for their preservation in his review article: Roberts, David, “Dialogue on dialect standardization”, in: *Writing Systems Research* 10.1 (2018), 68–71.

81 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Heyi yao tichang cong taiwanhua xuexi guoyu” (2001), 321.

#### 5.2.4 Taiwan as “Sandbox”

Wei’s legitimization of *guoyu*, which is based on the Beijing pronunciation, rests on three main concepts: progress, sovereignty, and kinship. In Wei Jiangong’s eyes, the natural development of language constantly evolves, leading to an ever-improving standard language. Policies can enhance this development and enable the nation’s further progress.

The concept of state sovereignty is somehow connected to the concept of kinship between the languages and dialects of that state. While the choice and implementation of a national language is an expression of the state’s sovereignty, the state also demonstrates that it is able to protect the indigenous languages from detrimental foreign influences. This is demonstrated by Wei Jiangong through the example of *taiyu* first being “corrupted” (*chuan’e* 傳訛) under Japanese colonial rule and then recovering under the KMT government. This is possible since a close linguistic kinship between all languages or dialects within the state is assumed, meaning that *taiyu* speakers can easily learn *guoyu*. Although the national standard language takes precedence over the language varieties, they are alike and have a right to exist in both spoken and written form.

These characteristics of the national language movement were evidence for Wei Jiangong that the successful promotion of *guoyu* is feasible and realistic:

我們有得經過一千多年培養，二三百年應用，幾十年政府提倡的聲音系統，當然應該切實推行。所以，北平話做標準國語是有它的來歷的。<sup>82</sup>

We have acquired a sound system that has been cultivated over more than one thousand years, used for two to three hundred years and advocated by the government for several decades. Of course, it can realistically be put into practice. Therefore, it is not an accident that the Beijing dialect is the standard national language.

Apart from illustrating its feasibility, Wei Jiangong also saw how the promotion of *guoyu* in Taiwan would play a role for the rest of China:

所以臺灣光復以後的國語運動，使得我們直覺的知道國語的重要，而更顯明的教訓了我們理智的認識國語的實質。<sup>83</sup>

Therefore, Taiwan’s post-liberation national language movement made us intuitively understand the importance of the national language and even more clearly taught us to intellectually recognize the essence of the national language.

For Wei Jiangong, the aim of promoting *guoyu* in Taiwan had a greater goal: showing the significance of *guoyu* for and to all of China. He perceived Taiwan as a sandbox experiment, a test area, and a propaganda example for the entire Republic. A successful promotion of *guoyu* in Taiwan would legitimate the entire *guoyu* movement on the Mainland.

As well, the level of infrastructure, electrification and education in Taiwan made it a veritable testing ground. In the manuscript from above (page 147) that he must have written roughly one year later, Wei states that Taiwan “is the most

82 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 308.

83 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Guoyu yundong zai Taiwan de yiyi’ shenjie” (2001), 309.



ideal experimental site for the promotion of language education” (推行語文教育最理想的實驗地). The *Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui* just needs to implement measures such as reopening closed-down schools, reactivating radio broadcasting stations, and making *guoyu* gramophone recordings to ensure the successful promotion of *guoyu*.<sup>84</sup> With this statement, however, he also indirectly admits the positive effects of Japanese colonization and the inability of the KMT to maintain Taiwan at the same level.

### 5.2.5 Language as Sign

When in Taiwan, Wei Jiangong formulated his concept of language in the foreword to Dong Changzhi's 董長志<sup>85</sup> “Practical grammar of the national language” (*Shiyong guoyu wenfa* 實用國語文法) in 1948. This “Theory and practice of grammar studies” by Wei was also published in *Guowen yuekan* 國文月刊 (National [written] language monthly), vol. 76, 1948.<sup>87</sup>

The classical literary language *wenyan* was, according to Wei Jiangong, a “sign-language” (*fuhaoyu* 符號語),<sup>88</sup> and has never been a spoken language. In this view, he follows Liu Fu and his “Talk on Chinese grammar” (*Zhongguo wenfa jianghua* 中國文法講話). In the past, when education was taken care of by individual families, few people had the opportunity to study. Those fortunate enough to study became the “scholars” (*shi* 士). Their status was linked to the knowledge of the script. Wei Jiangong criticized the fact that people would learn characters by heart without reasoning (*wu lixing de* 無理性的), blindly reciting some formulas in this sign language and become officials.<sup>89</sup>

The new education was different; now the state had taken over the responsibility for the schooling of its citizens. Citizens were supposed to receive basic education, ensuring that language and script needed for everyday life would be commonly transmitted. According to Wei Jiangong, a new concept was created only recently: language is a system of sound expressing meaning that is produced with our mouths: *Zui shang yong shengyin xitong biaoshi yisi de shi yuyan* 嘴上用聲音系統表示意思的是語言. Script is what expresses meaning with a structure of shapes on paper: *Zhi shang yong xingtí zuzhi biaoshi yisi de shi wenzi* 紙上用形體組織表示意思的是文字. What is recorded (*jilu* 記錄, written down) is the national written language (*guowen* 國文, national writing).

About the structure (*zuzhi* 組織, referring to both syntax and morphology) of *guoyu*, Wei Jiangong says that it is a sequence of sounds produced by the mouth; what is written down on paper should also represent a sequence of sounds. To research this sequence is “grammar studies” (*wenfaxue* 文法學).

Wei Jiangong explains that these “grammar studies” underwent significant development in the last 50 years. At the beginning, only the formulaic *wenyan* was

84 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Tai sheng guangfu wei jiu” (1947/48), 4-5.

85 Wei Jiangong describes how he knew Dong from Beijing and invited him to go to Taiwan with him to promote *guoyu*, which Dong did.<sup>86</sup>

87 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Wenfaxue de lilun yu shiji” (2001), 402.

88 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Wenfaxue de lilun yu shiji” (2001), 402.

89 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Wenfaxue de lilun yu shiji” (2001), 401.

researched, the sign language mentioned above. Morphology (*xingtaixue* 形態學) then slowly was considered, and grammarians such as Dong Changzhi broke away from *wenyan* research and started addressing the question of practice (*shiyong* 實用), i.e. the spoken language.<sup>90</sup> This also shows how the aspect of teaching methods and material gained further ground within the *guoyu* promotion efforts.

### 5.3 Outlook: From *Guoyu* to *Putonghua* 普通話

After the February 28 incident in Taiwan in 1947, the government gradually took over more control of the *guoyu* promotion. Speaking dialects (the “mother tongue” *muyu*, i.e. Hokkien) and Japanese faced more and more constraints, and even the method to learn *guoyu* by inferring from *taiyu* was completely discarded. Teaching materials that were formerly published by many individual actors soon fell under government control as well.<sup>91</sup>

Wei Jiangong started to feel dissatisfied with his role in Taiwan, as the political circumstances changed and the “White Terror” began.<sup>92</sup> During his visit to Beijing in 1946, the Peking University authorities already invited him to return to his Alma Mater. As well, since the administrative system in Taiwan changed, there was not much that could hold Wei Jiangong back. After Chen Yi’s retirement from his position as chief executive, the Bureau of Education (Jiaoyu chu 教育處) was transformed into the Department of Education (Jiaoyu ting 教育廳), which was rather hostile towards the National language committee (Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui), and Wei Jiangong gave up his position as head member.<sup>93</sup> He Rong took his place.<sup>94</sup>

In the surviving manuscript still in Wei’s family’s possession from above (see page 147 and 150), Wei argues in favor of a Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui that is directly subordinate to the Taiwanese Provincial government and not to the Jiaoyu ting (臺灣省國語推行委員會應使為省政府之一單位，不必隸屬於教育廳).<sup>95</sup> He acknowledges that the *guoyu* promotion was not as successful as hoped. While he mainly blamed the Japanese education policy for the lack of success,<sup>96</sup> he also attacked the “rash” (*caoshuai* 草率) education measures following the February 28 incident that did not improve the situation. As the Taiwanese com-

90 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Wenfaxue de lilun yu shiji” (2001), 402.

91 Cai Shengqi 蔡盛琦, “Zhanhou chuqi xue guoyu rechao yu guoyu duben” (2011), 85–86.

92 Martial law was introduced in 1949 and not lifted until 1987. During this time period, which has also been called “White Terror” (*baise kongbu* 白色恐怖), many people were persecuted as communist spies. Phillips, Steven, “Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations Under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945–1948” (2007), 302.

93 Huang Yingzhe 黃英哲, “Wei Jiangong yu zhanhou Taiwan ‘guoyu’ yundong (1946–1948)” (2005), 103–4.

94 Shijie huayuwen jiaoyuhui 世界華語文教育會 [World Chinese educational association] (ed.), *Guoyu yundong bai nian shilüe* 國語運動百年史略 [Brief history of 100 years national language movement], Taipei 臺北: Guoyu ribao she 國語日報社, 2012, 166.

95 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Tai sheng guangfu wei jiu” (1947/48), 5, 9.

96 The “poisonous Japanese propaganda” (Riren edu xuanchuan 日人惡毒宣傳) has made the Taiwanese adopt an “anti-outsider” (*paiwai* 排外) attitude. See Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Tai sheng guangfu wei jiu” (1947/48), 4.

patriots (*taibao* 台胞)<sup>97</sup> indeed had a thirst for and extensive experience with culture and education, their *guoyu* education cannot be compared to other border areas (*bianjiang* 邊疆) with a much lower education standard. In order to “attract the Taiwanese’s inner psychology” (吸引台胞之內嚮心理), a Min-Taiwan-Area (Min-Tai-*qu* 閩臺區) should be established that caters to the needs of the Taiwanese *guoyu*-learners.<sup>98</sup> However, the fact that the *Guoyu* tuixing weiyuanhui would be an independent organ directly under the Provincial government would show the Taiwanese that *guoyu* promotion is a nationwide pursuit.<sup>99</sup>

These suggestions were not implemented, and it is not clear if the ideas in the manuscript were circulated. In 1948, as the communist victory was indeed already becoming more and more likely,<sup>100</sup> Wei Jianguo left Taiwan to take up a professorship at Peking University.<sup>101</sup> When the Communist Party rose to power in 1949, Wei Jianguo had already started to plan his next important linguistic project, the compilation of the *Xinhua zidian*. The dictionary will be discussed in the next chapter.

While language planning in the PRC was *de facto* a continuation of the ROC movements and policies, it had to be radically relabelled. The standard language of the PRC came to be named *putonghua* 普通話 (common language). Its characteristics, however, remained very much identical to *guoyu*. It is based on the Beijing pronunciation, the northern dialects, and the grammar of the written vernacular.

Wei Jianguo discussed the standard language once again, but his article on *putonghua* remained a fragment. In this article, he presented the historical development of the standard language and showed how there had been a common language of the Han ethnic group for a long time.<sup>102</sup> The rhetorical similarity to his former *guoyu* legitimization is striking.

When he looked back on the *guoyu* movement from the PRC perspective, he pictured the *guoyu* activists as representatives of the bourgeois new intellectuals ( “國語” 運動者代表着資產階級新知識階層). In order to differentiate between the two (nearly identical) standard languages, and to increase the legit-

97 Wei Jianguo alternates between 臺 and 台 for *tai*.

98 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Tai sheng guangfu wei jiu” (1947/48), 3–4, 9.

99 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Tai sheng guangfu wei jiu” (1947/48), 9.

100 Phillips, Steven, “Between Assimilation and Independence: Taiwanese Political Aspirations Under Nationalist Chinese Rule, 1945–1948” (2007), 277.

101 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 15. He was able to realize one last success in Taiwan: the establishment of the *Mandarin Daily News* (*Guoyu ribao* 國語日報), a newspaper with short and simple texts for children which were entirely transcribed in Zhuyin. It is still published today. The idea came from the 1947 Beijing founded *Guoyu xiaobao* 國語小報 (National language small newspaper). Lin Che-Chang 林哲璋, “*Guoyu Ribao* de lishi shuxie” 「國語日報」的歷史書寫 [The Development of *Mandarin Daily News*—A Historical Viewpoint], MA dissertation, Guoli Taidong daxue 國立台東大學, 2006, 15–16.

102 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Putonghua’ jianshuo” “普通話” 簡說 [Brief explanation of the ‘common speech’], Beijing, family possession, 1956 (?) The date was reconstructed according to the script.

imacy of *putonghua*, Wei Jianguo equated *guoyu* with *guanhua*.<sup>103</sup> In that way, Wei Jianguo distanced himself from his past as Republican language planner.<sup>104</sup>

In the meantime, the KMT retreated to Taiwan and the Republic of China was confined to the island. The KMT language policy became more and more repressive, until in 1956, it became very different to what Wei Jianguo had imagined: The use of dialects was prohibited.

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103 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Cong ‘guoyu’ yundong dao Hanyu guifanhua” 從“國語”運動到漢語規範化 [From the “national language” movement to standardization of the Chinese language], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 595–603, see 597.

104 I have discussed his self-censorship after the regime change in Münning, Mariana, “Sprachpolitik als Selbstzensur. ‘Elegante Sprache’ (*yayan*) und ‘volkstümliche Zeichen’ (*suzi*) bei Wei Jianguo (1901–1980)”, in: *Worüber man nicht spricht. Tabus, Schweigen und Redeverbote in China*, ed. by Breuer, Rüdiger, and Heiner Roetz, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018, 91–112.

## Part II

# Meaning (*yi* 義)



## Chapter 6

# The “New China Dictionary” *Xinhua Zidian* 新華字典

The “New China dictionary” *Xinhua zidian* 新華字典, whose compilation was led by Wei Jiāngōng and which was first published in 1953, is not only the first dictionary published after the establishment of the PRC,<sup>1</sup> but also “the world’s most popular reference work” of which more than 400 million copies were sold until 2015.<sup>2</sup> Since its compilation was not state-commissioned, it cannot be called a language planning measure in the narrow sense. However, due to its huge influence, it could actually be considered one.

Different dictionaries play different roles in a range from description to prescription. Even if they claim to simply describe the language, they may also play a normative role whenever users look up a “correct” pronunciation or spelling. This is the reason why the content collected and recorded in a dictionary is so important. Wei Jiāngōng was aware of this role that dictionaries play. As this chapter explains, he wanted to not only record the language that was actually spoken but also wanted to create a tool for the learning the standard language.

The *Xinhua zidian* was compiled by Wei Jiāngōng and his team at a time of drastic change in Chinese lexicography, which was spurred by two main reasons:

1. The adoption of “modern” Western linguistics, including the introduction of a concept for “word” and phonetic spelling.
2. The promotion of the written vernacular *baihua*(*wen*) and a spoken standard language, which comprises a large portion of polysyllabic words.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Huang Wenxing 黄文兴, Wan Fucheng 宛福成, Zhang Changcai 张长才, Wang Dongyan 王东艳, *Cishu leidian* 辞书类典 [Encyclopedia of dictionaries], Beijing 北京: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe 中国广播电视出版社, 1993, 129.

2 Glenday, Craig (ed.), *Guinness World Records 2015*, New York: Guinness Publishing Ltd., 2015, 172. This number is the sum of all sales numbers from the different print editions, the most recent being the 11th edition that appeared in 2011.

3 For example, 88% of the words in the *Xiandai Hanyu pinlü cidian* 现代汉语频率词典 (Frequency dictionary of Modern Chinese) are bisyllabic or longer. See Schindelin, Cornelia, “Word Length”, in:

Until the 20th century, most monolingual Chinese dictionaries focused on the classical language and the lemmas were monosyllabic<sup>4</sup> and consisted of one character. While bilingual dictionaries compiled by Western missionaries for spoken language varieties included polysyllabic words,<sup>5</sup> they are neither discussed by Wei Jianguo nor by other actors in monolingual lexicography. He and his contemporaries stress that the polysyllabic nature of Modern Standard Chinese (regardless of its label, *guoyu* or *putonghua*) calls for a concept of “word” that transcends the single character.

This chapter begins with a discussion of Wei Jianguo’s views on the recently published “National language dictionary” *Guoyu cidian* 國語辭典, which indeed collected polysyllabic words. But within one entry, the sub-entries are not strictly ordered according to semantics. Wei Jianguo defined the word as a unit of meaning. This, in turn, led him to the question of dictionary structure, which had to negotiate all three dimensions of (written) language: the script, the meaning, and the pronunciation. Wei’s discussion in the course of the preparation for and the compilation of the *Xinhua zidian* about the order of linguistic units within the dictionary addresses crucial issues in lexicology and morphology. It can also be considered groundbreaking in 20th century Chinese lexicography.<sup>6</sup>

## 6.1 Wei Jianguo on the *Guoyu Cidian* 國語辭典

The promotion of the national language called for a dictionary that was more than a rhyme book simply indicating the pronunciation of single characters.<sup>7</sup> The compilers of the *Guoyu cidian* aimed for comprehensiveness. It was published by the Commercial Press (Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館) in eight volumes over a span of six years, from 1937 to 1943. It was “the first large philological dictionary of vernacular Chinese”,<sup>8</sup> or:

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*Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 4, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 584–589, see 585.

- 4 Shengli Feng describes the process from presumably monosyllabic Archaic Chinese to Medieval Chinese (100 BCE–100 CE) that is characterized by an increase of the number of disyllabic words. Feng, Shengli, “Disyllabification”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 2, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 108–113.
- 5 See, for example: Masini, Federico, “Notes on the First Chinese Dictionary Published in Europe”, in: *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003), 283–308, see 290–291. Henning Klöter also discusses this fact and also mentions that “polysyllabic expressions” can be found in earlier dictionaries or rather rhyme books. See: Klöter, Henning, “China from c. 1700”, in: *The Cambridge World History of Lexicography*, ed. by Considine, John, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 317–339, see 324, 332ff. Some of these bilingual dictionaries compiled by missionaries are important sources for the pronunciation of Mandarin (*guanhua*) during the Ming and Qing dynasties or non-standard language varieties.
- 6 Many thanks to Dr. Stefan Schneider for his recommendations on lexicography literature.
- 7 Such as the *Guoyin changyong zihui* (already mentioned on pages 106 and 117, discussed again on page 159) or the *Zhonghua xinyun*.
- 8 Kholkina, Liliya, “Lexicography, Modern”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 2, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 594–600, see 595.



《國語辭典》是我國第一部描寫性詳解型現代漢語詞典。<sup>9</sup>

The *Guoyu cidian* is China's first descriptive, detailed dictionary of Modern Standard Chinese.

Its compilation started in 1928 under the leadership of Li Jinxi,<sup>10</sup> with Wang Yi 汪怡 (1878–1960) as chief editor, and a group of ten or more people.<sup>11</sup> Wang Yi was a *guoyu* phonetician who had already participated in the Conference for the unification of reading pronunciations (*Duyin tongyi hui*) in 1913 and was a member of the *Guoyu tongyi choubai weiyuanhui*. He taught the national pronunciation (*guoyin*) at several institutions before he became the leader of the compilation group for the *Guoyu cidian* that was called “National pronunciation common dictionary group of the ‘Great Chinese dictionary’ compilation office” (*Zhongguo da cidian bianzuan chu guoyin putong cidian zu* 《中國大辭典》編纂處國音普通辭典組).<sup>12</sup>

Naturally, this dictionary became a major point of interest for the *guoyu* enthusiast Wei Jiangong. He was, however, not quite satisfied with it, and would plan and compile a dictionary of his own. This chapter section discusses Wei Jiangong's views on the *Guoyu cidian* as well as some crucial points about Chinese lexicography of the first half of the 20th century.

### 6.1.1 Going beyond *Guoyin* 國音: The Sounds in the *Guoyu Cidian*

Wei Jiangong enters the discussion of lexicography via phonetics. In his first article about the *Guoyu cidian*, he discusses “special sounds” (*tebie yin* 特別音),<sup>13</sup> which are sounds included in the dictionary that do not officially belong to *guoyu* phonetics. He begins with a retrospect of the key reference work for the national language, the *Guoyin changyong zihui* (Glossary of commonly used characters in the national pronunciation), officially published by the Ministry of Education in 1932, to compare the *Guoyu cidian* with it.

The *Guoyin changyong zihui* is “the first officially sponsored dictionary to use the northern dialect, especially that of Beijing, as the basis of the national lan-

9 Yang Wenquan 楊文全, *Jin bai nian de Zhongguo Hanyu yuwen cidian* 近百年的中國漢語語文辭書 [Chinese language dictionaries of the past hundred years], Chengdu 成都: Bashu shushe 巴蜀書社, 2000, 180.

10 Kholkina, Liliya, “Lexicography, Modern” (2017), 595.

11 Yang Wenquan 楊文全, *Jin bai nian de Zhongguo Hanyu yuwen cidian* (2000), 180.

12 Xu Youchun 徐友春 (ed.), “Wang Yi (1878–1960) 汪怡 (1878–1960)”, in: *Minguo renwu da cidian* 民國人物大辭典 [Large biographical dictionary of Republican China], ed. by Xu Youchun 徐友春, Shijiazhuang 石家莊: Hebei renmin chubanshe 河北人民出版社, 1991, 412. He also developed a shorthand system for stenography that was employed not only by the KMT government but also by the Communists in Yan'an. He went to Taiwan in May 1947 and remained there until his death. Kaske, Elisabeth, “Stenography”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 4, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 202–208, see 204.

13 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian* li suo zeng shou de yin” 國語辭典裏所增收的音 [The sounds that were additionally included in the ‘National language dictionary’], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 343–47, see 343.

guage.”<sup>14</sup> In it, 411 syllables or “standard sounds” (*biaozhun yin* 標準音, ignoring the tones) are listed.<sup>15</sup> In the appendix, the *Guoyin changyong zihui* lists “special sounds” that vary from the national pronunciation (*yu guoyin bu tong* 與國音不同).<sup>16</sup> Like in the rest of the dictionary, they are indicated with the respective character first, followed by the pronunciation in Zhuyin, and then in Gwoyue Romatzyh.<sup>17</sup> Among these special sounds are for example exclamations (*gantanci* 感嘆詞) like *hng* ㄏㄥ 哼 to express contempt (*biao bichi* 表鄙斥). As this example illustrates, some special Zhuyin-letters are employed to describe these sounds. ㄥ is used here for a syllabic [ŋ], while the [ŋ] as initial or final would be spelled ㄥ. There are also dialect readings, such as *gaam* ㄍㄚㄚ 咁 (“so”) in the Guangdong dialect (*Guangdongyu* 廣東語). Beiping (= Beijing) readings are not labeled “dialect” (*fangyan*) readings (like the other) but as “Beiping” readings, showing that the Beiping dialect has a special status as the basis for the standard language, in contrast to other dialects. For transcriptions (from foreign languages), the final -m (ㄇ *mu* 姆)<sup>19</sup> is listed. Wei Jianguo argues that dialect words shall also be a part of *guoyu*:

我們國語的意義決不是死說北平話。凡是誤解國語標準的人，忘了中華民國的人民共同建設的國家是文化凝結性最大的國體，不是由壓力來強制脅迫成的；又忘了他們的語言也是如此這般的在演化。<sup>20</sup>

The purpose of our national language is not at all to speak the Beiping dialect come hell or high water. All people who misunderstand the national language standard forget that this country jointly built up by the people of the Chinese Republic is the state with the strongest cultural cohesion. It is not forcefully coerced by pressure, and they also forget that their language is developing exactly like that.

- 14 The former “old national pronunciation” that still included the entering tone had been reflected by the *Guoyin zidian* (Dictionary of national pronunciation, 1919). See Creamer, Thomas B., “Lexicography and the History of the Chinese Language”, in: *History, Languages, and Lexicographers* (Series Maior 41), ed. by Zgusta, Ladislav, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1992, 105–135, see 128–129.
- 15 In Zhuyin and Gwoyue Romatzyh, the alphabetic order proceeds according to the initials in the highest order and the rhymes in the second order and the tones in the third. It begins with: *ba, bo, bai, bei, bau* (Pinyin: *bao, ban, ben...* and ends with: *iu* (Pinyin: *yu, iue (yue), iuan, (yuan), iun (yun), iong (yong)*).
- 16 Compare: Jiaoyu bu Guoyu tongyi choubi weiyuanhui 教育部國語統一籌備委員會 [Preparatory committee for the unification of the national language of the Ministry of Education] (ed.), *Guoyin changyong zihui* 國音常用字彙 [Glossary of commonly used characters in the national pronunciation], Shanghai 上海: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1932, 282–286.
- 17 I additionally indicate the tones or the IPA transcription only if necessary for understanding.
- 18 The Zhuyin-letter ㄇ is used here for a syllabic [m] in contrast to ㄇ as initial or final [m]. Jiaoyu bu Guoyu tongyi choubi weiyuanhui 教育部國語統一籌備委員會 [Preparatory committee for the unification of the national language of the Ministry of Education] (ed.), *Guoyin changyong zihui* (1932), 284.
- 19 For example, it is used in the entry for Dumdum bullet. Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu 中國辭典編纂處 [Chinese dictionary compilation office] (ed.), *Guoyu cidian* 國語辭典 [National language dictionary], vol. 1, Shanghai 上海: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1943, 274.
- 20 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin*” (2001), 343.

Wei Jiāngōng stresses that the special sounds of the *Guoyin changyong zihui* are mere examples (*juli* 舉例).<sup>21</sup> Therefore the dialects from different places (*gedi fangyan* 各地方言) could still be part of *guoyu*.<sup>22</sup>

The *Guoyu cidian* also included special sounds, in Wei's words. The neutral tone (*qingsheng* 輕聲, lit. "light tone") syllables were of particular interest to him, given that Beijing Mandarin is said to have four tones. However, there is the neutral tone as fifth tone, first comprehensively described by Zhao Yuanren (Yuen Ren Chao) in the 1920s "to describe the pitch pattern of some syllables in Beijing Mandarin which show variability as a function of the preceding lexical tone. These syllables are also short and reduced in segmental articulation."<sup>23</sup> This neutral tone has been studied most in Beijing Mandarin and in Modern Standard Chinese.<sup>24</sup>

While a considerable number of neutral-tone syllables obtained an independent entry in the dictionary, Wei points out that many of the neutral tone-syllables have not been indicated separately. He believes they are a "flexible phenomenon" (*huodong de xianxiang* 活動的現象)<sup>25</sup> and occur only in combination with other tones. This feature of the neutral tone is key for Wei Jiāngōng, as I will explain below on page 162.

Wei Jiāngōng provides a list with ten neutral-tone entries and sub-entries in the *Guoyu cidian*. Among these are the negation (*fouding ci* 否定詞) *bù* 不.<sup>26</sup> For its neutral-tone reading, Wei Jiāngōng uses the example of *láibuji* 來不及 (to be too late to do something).<sup>27</sup> His example of *nang* 囔 shows that the neutral-tone reading usually appears in combination with syllables in other tones. There is no single-character word known to be represented by *nang*, since it needs to combine with another character to obtain a meaning. We will discuss below the case of a character that cannot stand alone. In this case, the complete word is *dūnang* 嘟囔 (to mumble to oneself). The *Guoyu cidian* lists the neutral-tone syllables, such as *nang*, additionally after the other tones and marks them with a dot (·) before its Zhuyin or Gwoyue Romatzyh transcription. This occurrence gives the impression that there is a fifth tone. *Nang* has its own entry on page 902 of volume 2, where the reader is referred to the entry of *dunang* on page 666. In turn, this page lists a number of other possible compounds starting with *du* 嘟.

21 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin" (2001), 343.

22 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin" (2001), 344; Interestingly, this thought resembles the principles behind the old national pronunciation (*lao guoyin*) that was discarded in favor of the Beijing dialect. Simmons describes the wide reach of the ideal of an eclectic pronunciation in the early 20th century. Simmons emphasizes, however, that *lao guoyin* comprised different varieties within the Mandarin dialect family. Simmons, Richard VanNess, "Whence Came Mandarin? Qing Guānhuà, the Běijīng Dialect, and the National Language Standard in Early Republican China" (2017).

23 Chen, Yiya, "Neutral Tone", in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 168–176, see 168.

24 Since the 1980s, there has been an increase in studies about the neutral tone in other dialects. Southern Min and Cantonese are an exception, as they "rarely, if at all, exhibit neutral-tone syllables"; Chen, Yiya, "Neutral Tone" (2017), 169, 171.

25 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin" (2001), 344.

26 Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 1, (1943), 165.

27 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin" (2001), 344.

Wei Jianguo continues with a second list of 35 special sounds from the *Guoyu cidian* not limited to neutral-tone syllables. Among these is *niá* ㄋㄧㄚˊ 娘 (the variant form 孃 is listed on the following page),<sup>28</sup> which denotes (1) a married woman, (2) mother and children or (3) elderly women and children in the expression *niamen’r* 娘們兒 or *nia’rmen* 娘兒們.<sup>29</sup> Another one is *diāng* 噹; *diāngdi-ang’r* is a person who has no knowledge and has not seen the world, and in the Beijing area, *diāngdiang’r che* 噹噹兒車 refers to a streetcar (*dianche* 電車).<sup>30</sup> The *Guoyu cidian* also employs *fanqie*: in a square, two characters, in this case *di* 低 and *yang* 央, are printed. A dot at one of the 4 corners of the square indicates the tone. The first tone, as it is the case for *diang*, is indicated with a dot in the bottom left corner.<sup>31</sup>

With all these special sounds and five tones (including the neutral tone), Wei Jianguo believes that *guoyu* should actually have 1345 sounds.<sup>32</sup> He encourages readers to write down these 35 special sounds in the back of their *Guoyin changyong zihui* or the pronunciation table (*yinbiao* 音表) they might be using.<sup>33</sup>

Wei Jianguo concludes that the neutral tone and other tone sandhi or variant reading issues (*bianyin wenti* 變音問題) should only be included as long as they make a semantic (*yiyi* 意義) difference. This point brings us to the next text. If there is only a phonetic difference, such as the difference between the *wenyan* and the *baihua* reading,<sup>34</sup> they do not need to be included.<sup>35</sup> With this argument, Wei Jianguo, who entered the lexicography discussion in the field of phonetics, arrived in the field of semantics and morphology. These play the key role in his next text about the *Guoyu cidian*.

### 6.1.2 Review of the *Guoyu Cidian*

Wei Jianguo wrote a rather encompassing review of the *Guoyu cidian* that tackles the aspect of semantics: “*Guoyu cidian* lunping” 國語辭典論評. Written on February 12th, 1947, during his sojourn in Shanghai, it was first published in the *Tushu zhoukan* 圖書週刊 (Books weekly) supplement of *Dagong bao* 大公報 (Impartial newspaper), vol. 12, on July 6. Wei Jianguo was on the Mainland from November 1946 to April 1947: he traveled first to Beijing to find staff for the *Guoyu tuixing weiyuanhui* and to convene with members of the different cultural and educational circles (at that time he also agreed to become professor at Peking University as soon as he finished his stint in Taiwan); then to Shanghai to attend the founding of the “Chinese Linguistics Association” (*Zhongguo yuyanx-*

28 *Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu* 中國辭典編纂處 [Chinese dictionary compilation office] (ed.), *Guoyu cidian* 國語辭典 [National language dictionary], vol. 2, Shanghai 上海: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1943, 912–13.

29 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin*” (2001), 345.

30 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin*” (2001), 345.

31 *Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu* (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 2, (1943), 654.

32 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin*” (2001), 654.

33 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin*” (2001), 347.

34 Wei Jianguo does not provide an example of the different literary and colloquial readings of a character. A well-known example might be 白: *bái* (colloq.) vs. *bó* (lit.).

35 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian li suo zeng shou de yin*” (2001), 347.

uehui 中國語言學會)<sup>36</sup> with Ye Shengtao.<sup>37</sup> Having access to the *Guoyu cidian*, however, was also one of his aims for this trip.<sup>38</sup>

The foreword for the *Guoyu cidian* was written in February 1943 by the chief editor Wang Yi.<sup>39</sup> In his review, Wei Jiangong quotes extensively from this foreword and cross-references the quotes with the content of the dictionary. He comments on the dictionary's approaches and frequently refers to the history of and current debates in Chinese lexicography. His arguments are presented in the following and are placed into context of some major issues in linguistics at the time.

### History of Lexicography: Dictionary types and the linguistic units collected in them

Wei begins his review with an overview over the extant modern dictionaries. Since the start of the “movement for a new literature” / “movement for the rebirth of literature” (*xin wenxue yundong* 新文學運動), there has been considerable progress (*jinbu* 進步) in the use (*yingyong* 應用) of language and script (*yuyan wenzhi* 語言文字). However, there is still a lack of reference material (*cailiao* 材料). Up to that point, teachers relied on character dictionaries (*zishu* 字書) such as the *Kangxi zidian* 康熙字典<sup>40</sup> (“Character classic of the Kangxi emperor”, first published 1716),<sup>41</sup> revised and republished as *Zhonghua da zidian* 中華大字典 (Great Chinese character dictionary) in 1915.<sup>42</sup> The *Kangxi zidian* is a good example of a character dictionary. As Harbsmeier put it:

The cultural importance of the Khang Hsi Dictionary can be gauged by the fact that the modern Chinese word for ‘dictionary’ *tzu-tien* 字典 actually derives from the title *Khang Hsi Tzu Tien*. The Khang Hsi Dictionary became synonymous with the general concept of a dictionary, and in fact, it has all but replaced its pioneering predecessors (excepting the *Shuo Wen Chieh Tzu* 說文解字) on modern scholars’ bookshelves. One consequence of the

36 This is not the same body as the current association with the same name that is affiliated with the Chinese Association of Social Sciences, CASS (Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan 中國社會科學院).

37 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiangong nianpu” (1996), 14.

38 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” 國語辭典論評 [Review of the ‘National language dictionary’], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 376–87, see 383.

39 An earlier version of Wang Yi’s foreword, which was printed in volume 1 in 1937, was published in *Guoyu zhoukan*, see: Wang Yi 汪怡, “*Guoyu cidian xu*” 國語辭典序 [Foreword to the ‘National language dictionary’], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 278 (1937), 1–2. The foreword in the 1943 *Guoyu cidian* edition, however, is consistent with Wei Jiangong’s quotes. He does not specify the edition he used.

40 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 377.

41 Harbsmeier, Christoph, *Language and Logic (Science and Civilization in China 7.1)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 79.

42 Kholkina gives a short summary of the different revisions of the *Kangxi zidian*. The editor-in-chief of the 1915 *Zhonghua da zidian* edition was Lufei Kui 陸費達 (1886–1941; Lufei founded the Zhonghua Book Company (Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 in 1912), see: Kholkina, Liliya, “Lexicography, Modern” (2017), 594–95.

official character of the Kang Hsi Dictionary was that it concentrated entirely on the educated literary language and omitted non-literary meanings of characters. This was a matter of policy, and it constitutes an unfortunate shortcoming of the book.<sup>43</sup>

In short, the *Kangxi zidian* coined the term for ‘dictionary’. However, it is not a descriptive lexicon of actual spoken Chinese in the 20th century. As Wei Jianguo points out, it is also one of many “character dictionaries” (*zidian* 字典) that only deals with separate single characters (*yi ge ge danzi* 一個個單字). At that point in time, reference books only began collecting “words” *ci* 辭 or *ci* 詞,<sup>44</sup> and dictionaries like the *Ciyuan* 辭源 (Origin of words), *Ci tong* 辭通 (Lexical Compendium)<sup>45</sup> or *Cihai* 辭海 (Sea of words) were published.<sup>46</sup>

This development from “character dictionaries” *zidian* to “word dictionaries” *cidian* 詞典/辭典<sup>47</sup> occurred in Japan before coming to China and began as early as in the 1890s. For example, Nishimura Shigeki 西村茂樹 (1828–1902), an official in the Ministry of Culture, explained in the preface to the 1891 “Japanese Word Dictionary: Sea of Words” (*Nihon jisho genkai* 日本辭書言海) that Japan and China (the former because of the latter) only had character dictionaries, unlike the West. Word dictionaries, in contrast, would show a higher cultural level.<sup>48</sup>

43 Harbsmeier, Christoph, *Language and Logic* (1998), 80. The main lexicographical features of the *Kangxi zidian*, such as the sorting according to section headers (*bushou*), or “classifiers” (also known as Kangxi “radicals”), a classification system consisting of “214 recurrent graphic elements selected to organize the classification of characters in dictionaries” into sections. Bottéro, Françoise, “Lexicographical Ordering, Premodern”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 590–593. See also page 170 in this book. This sorting principle was developed by its predecessor, the 1615 *Zihui* 字匯 (Compendium of Characters). See: Harbsmeier, Christoph, *Language and Logic* (1998), 79. Title translation of the *Zihui* after Creamer, Thomas B., “Lexicography and the History of the Chinese Language” (1992), 116.

44 The concept and terminology of “word” in Chinese is discussed below. Wei uses *ci* 辭 and *ci* 詞 interchangeably. Note that the character 詞 was used to replace the homonymous 辭 as early as 174 CE. Cf. Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (Stockholm East Asian monographs 11), Stockholm: Department of Oriental Languages, Stockholm University, 2006, 175.

45 Translation of the title after: Boltz, William G., “Binomes”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 1, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 299–304, see 304.

46 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian* lunping” (2001), 377.

47 Henning Klötter emphasized that the *zidian-cidian*-dichotomy is exaggerated and that that a *cidian* does by no means *only* collect words but also single characters, proverbs, and other units of language. He defines *ci* as expression “written with any number of characters” and *cidian* as “multiple-character-dictionar[y]” with both “single-character and multiple-character expressions”. See Klötter, Henning, “Chinese Lexicography”, in: *Dictionaries. An International Encyclopedia of Lexicography. Supplementary Volume: Recent Developments with Focus on Electronic and Computational Lexicography* (Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft / Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science (HSK) 5.4), ed. by Gouws, Rufus H., et al., Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2013, 884–893, see 885.

48 Doleželová-Velingerová, Milena, “Modern Chinese Encyclopaedic Dictionaries: Novel Concepts and New Terminology (1903–1911)”, in: *Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930): Changing Ways of Thought*, ed. by Doleželová-Velingerová, Milena, and Rudolf G. Wagner, Berlin Heidelberg: Springer, 2014, 289–328, see 297–298.

Nishimura's view would be reiterated well into the Republican period,<sup>49</sup> as we can see by Wei Jiāngōng's statements.

Subsequently, the Japanese terms *cishu* 辭書 (Jap. *jisho*) and *cidian* 辭典 (*jiten*) for “dictionary” were introduced in China.<sup>50</sup> In 1915, the “first major *cidian* type dictionary of the 20th century” was published, the “Origin of words” *Ciyuan*. It was compiled under the leadership of Lu Erkui 陸爾奎 (1862–1935), who was head of the Commercial Press (Shangwu yinshuguan) dictionary section in 1908. This dictionary first appeared in 1915. Its 98,994 entries were ordered according to the Kangxi “radical” system.<sup>51</sup>

The structure of the *Ciyuan* was groundbreaking. While 19th century dialect dictionaries compiled by Western missionaries already included polysyllabic entries to depict the spoken language,<sup>52</sup> the *Ciyuan* was the first Chinese-compiled, entirely character-based dictionary to introduce the widespread two-level structure of today. An article is headed by a (single) head-character and is ordered according to the stroke count. Entries to these head-characters comprise compound words or phrases starting with that head-character, ordered according to the stroke count of the following characters. This two-level approach to include both single characters (as main- or head-entry or -lemma) and compounds (as subentries or sub-lemmata) was developed by more than 50 members of the *Ciyuan* compilation team and had tremendous influence on future dictionaries. Because of its inclusion of polysyllabic words, the *Ciyuan* marks a watershed in

49 See Doleželová-Velingerová, Milena, “Modern Chinese Encyclopaedic Dictionaries: Novel Concepts and New Terminology (1903–1911)” (2014), 298. See also Wang Jiarong 汪家熔, “*Ciyuan*, *Cihai* de kaichuangxing” 《辞源》、《辞海》的开创性 [The pioneering nature of the *Ciyuan* and the *Cihai*], in: *Cishu yanjiu* 辞书研究 [Dictionary research] 1 (2001), 130–140, 94.

50 Yang Wenquan 楊文全, *Jin bai nian de Zhongguo Hanyu yuwen cidian* (2000), 3–4.

51 Kholkina, Liliya, “Lexicography, Modern” (2017), 594.

52 The 1873 *Chinese-English dictionary of the vernacular or spoken language of Amoy* by Carstairs Douglas introduced the grouping of polysyllabic entries under the monosyllabic head-lemma. It describes the Southern Min spoken in Amoy (Xiamen 廈門). It employs romanization exclusively. Klöter argues that the character structure remains visible, since syllables are separated with hyphens. See: Douglas, Carstairs, *Chinese-English Dictionary of the Vernacular or Spoken Language of Amoy, with the Principal Variations of the Chang-chew and Chin-chew Dialects*, London: Trübner & Co., 1873. (accessible online: <https://archive.org/details/chineseenglishdi00doug/>) and Klöter, Henning, “China from c. 1700” (2019). Alsford and Fuehrer believe it had a major influence on other Western lexicographers of the Amoy dialect and also the Taiwanese Ministry of Education's online dictionary *Taiwanese Minnanyu changyongci cidian* 臺灣閩南語常用詞辭典. Before Douglas, Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857) included a few compound words in subentries in his 1832 *A Dictionary of the Hok-k'een Dialect of the Chinese Language, According to the Reading and Colloquial Idioms*. See: Alsford, Niki, and Bernhard Fuehrer, “Carstairs Douglas (1830–1877) and his *Chinese-English Dictionary of the Vernacular or Spoken Language of Amoy* (1873)”, in: *Journal of Translation Studies* 1.1, 137–182, see 148, 162. The missionaries' works did not play a role for Wei Jiāngōng (Trigault's *Xi ru er mu zi* 西儒耳目資, referred to by Wei only for its transcription, is an exception, see page 201) or other Chinese historians of lexicography. Cf. for example: Yang Wenquan 楊文全, *Jin bai nian de Zhongguo Hanyu yuwen cidian* (2000), 33ff. See also: Liu Yejiu 刘叶秋, *Zhongguo zidian shilue* 中国字典史略 [Short history of Chinese dictionaries], Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中华书局, 1992, 233ff. Only Yong and Peng mention Douglas briefly, but misspell his name, cf. Yong, Heming, and Jing Peng, *Chinese lexicography: A history from 1046 BC to AD 1911*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 389.

Chinese lexicography for Wei Jiāngōng<sup>53</sup> and others.<sup>54</sup> However, one question still remains: how should “word” be defined?

### Wordhood

Along with the adoption of new terminology for dictionaries, the modern concept of the “word” came to be phrased. It is a key concept for discussing Wei Jiāngōng’s *Guoyu cidian* review. The definition most widely accepted today is Bloomfield’s “minimum free form”.<sup>55</sup> If we want to find out how the Chinese linguists defined the concept of “word” for the Chinese language, we need to start a little earlier: The best known starting point in the research about Chinese grammar studies is “Mr. Ma’s grammar” (or “Basic principles for writing clearly and coherently by Mister Ma” *Mashi Wentong* 馬氏文通, 1898) by Ma Jianzhong 馬建忠 (1845–1900). Written in the literary language *wenyan*, it is famous for being “[t]he first grammar of Chinese written in Chinese”.<sup>56</sup> However, Ma was often criticized by later linguists for merely copying Western grammar theory and terminology. This criticism opened up the debate about the use of Western methodology in Chinese grammar studies. While Kurhofer in 1998 diagnoses a certain obsession among Chinese linguists for criticizing Ma Jianzhong as copycat and calling for a genuinely Chinese approach towards language and grammar,<sup>57</sup> Peyraube embarked on a journey to find out which Western grammars did actually act as models.<sup>58</sup>

Peyraube concludes that the main influence must have been the *Grammaire de Port-Royal* (1660),<sup>59</sup> written in French about the French language by Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694) and Claude Lancelot (1615?–1695). Peyraube states, “Ma Jianzhong, believing in Universal Grammar, was trying to find similarities between Western and Chinese syntax”.<sup>60</sup> However, he was not only exposed to Western language grammars. Another important influence must have been *Notitia linguae sinicae* (1831) by Fr. Joseph de Prémare (1666–1735). It explains both classical and vernacular Chinese and is written in Latin.<sup>61</sup> Just like Prémare, “Ma

53 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 377–378.

54 See Wang Jiarong 汪家熔, “*Ciyuan* – jindai di yi ben cishu” 《辞源》—近代第一本词书 [*Ciyuan* – the first modern dictionary], in: *Chuban shiliao* 出版史料 [*Publication archives*] 1 (2001), 110–113. Wang summarized the findings on the *Ciyuan* and placed them within the context of the *Cihai* in: Wang Jiarong 汪家熔, “*Ciyuan*, *Cihai* de kaichuangxing” (2001).

55 Bloomfield, Leonard, “A Set of Postulates for the Science of Language”, in: *Language* 2.3 (1926), 153–64, see 156.

56 Zádrapa, Lukáš, “Māshì wéntōng 馬氏文通”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 2, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 682–689, see 682.

57 Kurhofer, Horst Friedrich Wilhelm, “Chinesische Grammatikforschung und -schreibung von 1898 bis 1949: Bestandsaufnahme und Analyse”, *Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität*, 1998, 11.

58 Peyraube, Alain, “Some Reflections on the Sources of the *Mashi Wentong*”, in: *New Terms for New Ideas. Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*, ed. by Lackner, Michael, Iwo Amelung, and Joachim Kurtz, Leiden: Brill, 2001, 341–356.

59 A reproduction is accessible online: Arnauld, Antoine, and Lancelot Claude, “*Grammaire générale et raisonnée; contenant les fondemens de l’art de parler, expliqués d’une manière claire et naturelle...*”, URL: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k50417t/f1> (visited on Sept. 21, 2019).

60 Peyraube, Alain, “Some Reflections on the Sources of the *Mashi Wentong*” (2001), 352.

61 Peyraube, Alain, “Some Reflections on the Sources of the *Mashi Wentong*” (2001), 351.



takes the *zi* (littera) as the basic grammatical unit”.<sup>62</sup> Ma made no attempt to define a concept of “word” that was distinct from “character”.<sup>63</sup> His successor Lai Yuxun 來裕恂 (1873–1962) also made no such attempt in his *Hanwendian* 漢文典 (Chinese classical language grammar, 1906).<sup>64</sup>

The first attempt to define a concept for “word” distinct from “character” was made by Zhang Shizhao in his 1907 *Zhongdeng guowendian* 中等國文典 (Intermediate Chinese grammar). It was written in classical Chinese and described the classical language.<sup>65</sup> He stated that “a character can be a word, but a word is not necessarily a character” (一字可為一詞，而不必為一字).<sup>66</sup> The “first useful” (“erste brauchbare”)<sup>67</sup> definition of “word” was created by Li Jinxi in his “New national language grammar” (*Xinzhu Guoyu wenfa* 新著國語文法, 1924), the first grammar of Modern Standard Chinese. In contrast to the literary language, it was definitely polysyllabic:

#### 字與詞

字就是一個一個的「單字」。詞就是說話的時候表示思想中一個觀念的「語詞」(註3)。有時一個字就是一個詞，如“人”、“馬”、“紅”、“來”等。有時要兩個字以上組合起來才成功一個詞，如“鸚鵡”、“老頭子”、“便宜”、“吩咐”等。文法中分別詞類(註4)，是把詞作單位；不問他是一個字或是幾個字，只要是表示一個觀念的，便叫做詞。<sup>68</sup>

#### Character and word

Characters are separate “single characters”. Words are “expressions”<sup>69</sup> that express an idea in one’s thoughts when one speaks (note 3). Sometimes, one character is one word, such as “*ren*” [person], “*ma*” [horse], “*hong*” [red], “*lai*” [come]. Sometimes, two characters or more need to be combined to form a word, like “*yingwu*” [parrot], “*laotouzi*” [old man], “*pianyi*” [cheap], “*fenfu*” [instruct]. In grammar, the parts of speech are distinguished (note 4)<sup>70</sup> by treating each word as one unit. Regardless of the fact that it comprises one or several characters, as long as it represents one concept, it is called a word.

According to his definition, having established that what represents one “idea” (*guannian* 觀念) is one word, Li Jinxi adds some detail and historical background

62 Peyraube, Alain, “Some Reflections on the Sources of the *Mashi Wentong*” (2001), 352.

63 Yan Fu also used “*zi*” for “word”. Lackner, Michael, “Circumnavigating the Unfamiliar: Dao’an (314–385) and Yan Fu (1852–1921) on Western Grammar”, in: *New Terms for New Ideas. Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*, ed. by Lackner, Michael, Iwo Amelung, and Joachim Kurtz, Leiden: Brill, 2001, 357–369, see 366.

64 Kurhofer, Horst Friedrich Wilhelm, “Chinesische Grammatikforschung und -schreibung von 1898 bis 1949: Bestandsaufnahme und Analyse” (1998), 58.

65 Kurhofer, Horst Friedrich Wilhelm, “Chinesische Grammatikforschung und -schreibung von 1898 bis 1949: Bestandsaufnahme und Analyse” (1998), 58.

66 Zhang Shizhao 章士釗, *Zhongdeng guowendian* 中等國文典 [Intermediate Chinese grammar] (*Min-guo congshu* 民國叢書 2.54), Shanghai 上海: Shanghai shudian 上海書店, 1990 [originally published in 1907; this is a reprint from 1935], 1.

67 Kurhofer, Horst Friedrich Wilhelm, “Chinesische Grammatikforschung und -schreibung von 1898 bis 1949: Bestandsaufnahme und Analyse” (1998), 58.

68 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, *Xinzhu guoyu wenfa* 新著國語文法 [New national language grammar], Shanghai 上海: Shangwu yinshuguan 上海印書館, 1924, 2–3.

69 Below, he makes clear that *ci* is an abbreviation of *yuci* 語詞: it can be translated as “word” as well.

70 As footnote 4 is not relevant to this discussion, it is not further mentioned.

in the footnote number 3, also adding the respective English key technical term. He explains that in Chinese, one character represents one syllable (*yinjie* 音節). In the past, when the Chinese characters were created, one form (*xingtǐ* 形體) represented one distinct syllable, and one syllable in the most cases represented one concept. That is reason why the linguists of the world say that Chinese belongs to the monosyllabic language family (*danjie yuxi* 單節語系, Li only writes “Monosyllable” in English). However, Li Jinxi continues, sometimes one character does not have a meaning (*yiyi* 意義), or the meaning is not clear. Furthermore, in most cases (especially in the modern spoken language), it is necessary to combine (*fuhe* 複合) two characters to create a word. Li indicates that while the full term for “word” is *yuci* 語詞, it is abbreviated as *ci* 詞. Li Jinxi also explains his concept of “idea” (*guannian*) and establishes its connection with “word”:

一切外界的感覺、內心的直覺、想像、乃至概念等，凡由是認知作用而來的，都可做觀念。用聲音或文字來代表這些單體的整個的意象，都叫做詞。<sup>71</sup>

An external perception, an inner intuition, imagination, even a concept or the like – as long as it is a cognitive action – all of these can be an idea. If sound or script is used to represent these elementary, whole images, they are all called words.

A more handy definition of “word” in Chinese was developed in the 1940s. The linguists Lü Shuxiang, Wang Li and Gao Mingkai 高名凱 (1911–1965)<sup>72</sup> define “word” *ci* as “smallest semantic unit” (*zui xiao yiyi de danwei* 最小意義的單位).<sup>73</sup> With this definition, we are very close to that of Wei Jiāngōng’s as a “semantic unit” (*yiyi danwei* 意義單位)<sup>74</sup> from 1949<sup>75</sup> that he would repeat again in 1976.<sup>76</sup> As Wei Jiāngōng’s arguments are laid out in the following, it will be

71 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, *Xinzhū guoyǔ wénfā* (1924), 3.

72 Gao Mingkai was a grammarian who had studied in Paris 1936–1941 with Henri Maspero (1883–1945) and published a Chinese translation of de Saussure’s *Cours de linguistique générale* in 1963. Romagnoli, Chiara, and Pei Wen, “A New Chinese Translation of the ‘cours de linguistique générale’”, in: *Cahiers Ferdinand de Saussure* 60 (2007), 191–216.

73 Kurhofer, Horst Friedrich Wilhelm, “Chinesische Grammatikforschung und -schreibung von 1898 bis 1949: Bestandsaufnahme und Analyse” (1998), 58. For example, Wang Li defines the word *ci* as “smallest semantic unit of language” (語言的最小意義單位). Wang Li 王力, “Zhongguo yufa lilun” 中国语法理论 [Chinese grammar theory], in: *Wang Li wenji* 王力文集 [Collected works of Wang Li], vol. 1, Jinan 濟南: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe 山東教育出版社, 1984, 16. He furthermore puts it as follows: “We call a linguistic unit that can represent one meaning word” (我們把能代表一個意義的語言成分叫做詞). He mentions items like *ma* 馬 (horse) that is not only one character but it can also stand as one word. He contrasts them to items like *pu* 葡 that can not stand alone as word, as it needs the second character *tao* 萄 to form a the complete word *putao* 葡萄 (grape). Wang calls these “disyllabic words” (*shuang yin ci* 雙音詞). Wang Li 王力, “Zhongguo xiandai yufa” 中国现代语法 [Modern Chinese grammar], in: *Wang Li wenji* 王力文集 [Collected works of Wang Li], vol. 2, Jinan 濟南: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe 山東教育出版社, 1985, 29. Both “Zhongguo yufa lilun” and “Zhongguo xiandai yufa” are based on Wang’s 1938 Xinan lianhe daxue lectures.

74 Also: *biaoshi yiyi de danwei* 表示意義的單位, see Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Bianji zidian jihua” 編輯字典計畫 [Plan to compile a dictionary], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Xingxing 馬鎮, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江蘇教育出版社, 2001, 403–409, see 403.

75 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Bianji zidian jihua” (2001), 404.

76 Here, Wei specifies that a lemma or head-character (*zitou* 字頭) should be an independent semantic unit. Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Dui 1976 nian xiuding *Xinhua zidian* fang’an (caoan) de yijian” 對 1976

shown that the question of wordhood is a core link between all different aspects of lexicography.

An overview of the different ways to define “word” is given by Packard, and Wei Jiāngōng’s definition would fit into Packard’s category of “semantic word”, which he calls “one of the most traditional ways”.<sup>77</sup> However, as Packard points out, the definition of word as “semantic primitive” is actually more the definition of morpheme.<sup>78</sup> Wei Jiāngōng’s definition of the word is in reality the definition of free morpheme. In turn, his definition led to compilation of a *zidian* instead of a *cidian*. A more detailed explanation will follow in the subsection on Morphology (page 176) and in the section on the *Xinhua zidian* (page 188).

Packard himself therefore concludes that the syntactic definition of the word is the most useful. With this conclusion, we return to Bloomfield’s “minimum free form” (emphasis added). Packard defines the syntactic word as “a form that can stand as an independent occupant of a syntactic form class slot”.<sup>79</sup> This view would be formulated for Chinese by Lu Zhiwei in 1960 with words as “units of sentence construction” that need to be “extract[ed] from connected speech”.<sup>80</sup>

### Usability

Another key lexicographical aspect for Wei Jiāngōng is the question of usability. For Wei, it is crucial that a dictionary must shed light on the language it describes. If it wants to be a modern dictionary of the spoken standard language for an ordinary speaker, it needs to provide the information that this user would be looking for. Wei complains:

普通的工具書就很少有合於工具應用條件的了。<sup>81</sup>

Common reference works are rarely suited to being used as a tool.

Wei acknowledges that an all-encompassing corpus of the Chinese language would be very complex. Implicitly, he acknowledges the challenge of creating a homogenous standard language for all of China. For example, there can be huge variances in pronunciation within a large space (in the respective geographical locations) and over time (history). If a dictionary focuses entirely on the pronunciation, it might be too confined to the use in one particular place. While it is difficult to draw a boundary between the Chinese language and script (中

年修訂《新華字典》方案(草案)的意見 [Suggestions for the plan (draft) to revise the ‘New China dictionary’], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 676.

77 Packard, Jerome L., *The Morphology of Chinese: A Linguistic and Cognitive Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 9.

78 Packard, Jerome L., *The Morphology of Chinese: A Linguistic and Cognitive Approach* (2000), 10.

79 Packard, Jerome L., *The Morphology of Chinese: A Linguistic and Cognitive Approach* (2000), 12.

80 Lu still acknowledges the difficulty of defining the word for the Chinese language. Lu, C. W. [Lu Zhiwei 陸志章], “The Status of the Word in Chinese Linguistics”, in: *Beiträge zum Problem des Wortes im Chinesischen* (Ostasiatische Forschungen 1), ed. by Ratchnevsky, Paul, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960, 34–47, see 36.

81 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian* lunping” (2001), 377.

國語和文之間的界限不容易分割),<sup>82</sup> the script may help to bundle different pronunciation habits so that more users can use the dictionary.

Wei Jiangong argued that the *Kangxi zidian*, *Ciyuan* and *Cihai* rely on a philological (*xiaoxue*, the “minor studies”) tradition and therefore include specialized (*zhuanmen* 專門) information that is only of interest to a small proportion of the Chinese speakers. For example, teachers would use the existing dictionaries (*zidian* or *cishu*) merely to look up the pronunciation of a character indicated in the *Qieyun*-method (i.e. *fanqie*) or the source where a character was first found (*chujian de “chuchu”* 初見的“出處”). Therefore, these dictionaries include historical pronunciations or meanings that are no longer used in everyday language. Wei calls for a careful investigation into language changes over time and in different locations; dictionaries should include only the information about pronunciation, meaning and use (*yin* 音, *yi* 義, *yongfa* 用法) that modern users would be looking for.

The *Guoyu cidian*, in contrast to the above-mentioned dictionaries, does not include *fanqie* spelling or *chuchu* 出處 (sources). As a result, Wei Jiangong believes that it is a reliable (*kekao* 可靠) reference book. Wei continues his review by commenting on the four aspects the editor Wang Yi raised in his foreword: Sorting (*liexu* 列序), transcription (*zhuyin* 注音), lexicon (*shouci* 收詞) and definitions (*shiyi* 釋義).

### Sorting and transcription

Wei Jiangong begins with quoting the passages about “sorting” (*liexu*) and “transcription” (*zhuyin*) from Wang Yi’s *Guoyu cidian* foreword. Wang Yi wrote that character dictionaries (*zidian*) until that point in time were sorted by “classifiers” (*bushou* 部首),<sup>83</sup> and in many of these dictionaries one could look for a character according to the stroke count (*bihua* 筆畫). In word dictionaries (*cidian*), a word (*ci*) also needs to be looked up in the same method, which is via the characters. The *Guoyu cidian*, in contrast, uses the national pronunciation (*guoyin*) for sorting. The sorting of the highest order (*gang* 綱) is according to the initials, the sorting of the second order (*mu* 目) according to the rhymes (*yunmu* 韻母). They are all in *Zhuyin fuhao*. Single characters and compound words (*fuci* 複詞) are all listed according to the same rule. Wang Yi praises the dictionary as very advanced: Readers just need to follow *Zhuyin* and they can look up a spelling or a meaning, saving time. If the pronunciation is not known, the *Guoyu cidian* has a “classifier index” (*bushou jianzibiao* 部首檢字表).<sup>84</sup>

82 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 377.

83 *Bushou* have also been called “section headers”. This is a literal translation, since dictionaries were divided into sections according to the classifier of a character. They have also been called “radicals”, from the Latin ‘radix’ = root, since they point to a semantic field. It was assumed they could play a role like the root in morphology of Indo-European languages. The term “radical” actually led to many terminological inaccuracies and misunderstandings about the Chinese language and script. Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 34. The actual “semantic component” or “signifier” of a character is termed (*xingfu* 形符), see chapter 8 on page 218.

84 Wang Yi 汪怡, “Xu” 序 [National language dictionary], in: *Guoyu cidian* 國語辭典, ed. by Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu 中國辭典編纂處 [Chinese dictionary compilation office], vol. 1, Shanghai 上海:

Wei Jiāngōng continues discussing Wang Yi's passage on "transcription" (*zhuyin*); since the *Guoyu cidian* is sorted phonetically, sorting and transcription are interdependent issues. Wang Yi compares the *Guoyu cidian* to older dictionaries which used the *fanqie*-spelling: this practice rendered their use difficult for non-specialists. Furthermore, previous dictionaries usually limited the transcription to the single character (*danzi* 單字), and the pronunciation of a complete compound word, phrase, or idiom was not indicated. The *Guoyu cidian* transcribes every character in every word in the "First" (*Di yi shi* 第一式) and "Second national pronunciation alphabets" (*Di er shi guoyin zimubiao* 第二式國音字母標; i.e. Zhuyin and Gwoyue Romatzyh). Tones are indicated as well. The pronunciation of single characters are also indicated with a homophone character (*zhiyin* 直音); characters that were formerly pronounced with the entering tone are also indicated. The actual spoken pronunciation in *guoyu* is provided for syllables whose pronunciation changed in the spoken language, such as the neutral tone or rhoticization (*erhua*). This transcription of every single syllable (*yingjie*) is the main reason for this dictionary's innovative nature, according to Wang Yi. Foreigners learning Chinese can benefit from that as well. In both transcriptions, the method of "writing words together" (*cilei lianshu* 詞類連書) is employed.<sup>85</sup> *Cilei lianshu* was presented in 1923 by Li Jinxi within the context that "Chinese is definitely not a monosyllabic language" (漢語絕不是單音語) and that "often, a word needs to be expressed by two characters or more" (一個語詞往往要用兩個以上的漢字來表達).<sup>86</sup> I have discussed this issue in the subsection 6.1.2 Wordhood above; here, it is connected to the question of Zhuyin and Gwoyue Romatzyh orthography: the *Guoyu cidian* employs spaces to indicate word boundaries. Multi-syllable words are written without a space between the syllables.

Wei Jiāngōng begins his comment with a compliment: The *Guoyu cidian* made good use of transcription and the indication of word boundaries. This caters to the promotion of *guoyu*. For Wei, the challenge in defining a polysyllabic word is caused or at least aggravated by the evolution of Chinese dictionaries (中國字書的演變). The earliest dictionaries were "semantic books" (*xungu shu* 訓詁書)<sup>87</sup> of the *Erya* type that categorize their lemmas according to their meaning (*yi yi wei lei* 以義為類).<sup>88</sup> As the next step in the development, he lists dictionaries in the style

Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1943, 1–9, see 4–5. Wei Jiāngōng quotes it in: Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, *Guoyu cidian lunping* (2001), 377.

85 Wang Yi 汪怡, "Xu" (1943), 5–6. Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, *Guoyu cidian lunping* (2001), 377.

86 Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, "Hanzi gemingjun qianjin de yi tiao dalu" 漢字革命軍前進的一條大路 [A big road for the advancement Chinese character revolution soldiers are advancing], in: *Guoyu zhoukan* 國語週刊 [National language weekly] 1.7 (1922), 27–65, see 34.

87 *Xungu(xue)* also encompasses etymology.

88 The *Erya* can be described as a thesaurus or compendium of synonyms and near-synonyms. They were most probably collected from annotations to early texts, i.e. the *Erya* glosses a word with all the words that were used to explain that specific word in a commentary about the text where it appeared. Von Rosthorn called it a "synonymicon" and compares its title ("approaching what is correct, proper, refined", Coblin) to the Latin "gradus ad parnassum". See Rosthorn, A. von, "Das Er-ya und andere Synonymiken", in: *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 49 (1942), 126–144, see 126–130. and Coblin, W. South, "Erh ya 爾雅", in: *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. by Loewe, Michael, Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China et al., 1993, 94–99, see 94. (Note that

of the *Shuowen jiezi* that establish connections according to the shape (*ju xing xian* 據形繫聯). After that, the type of books that order according to the sound (*yi yin pailie* 以音排列) like the *Qieyun* and other rhyme books (*yunshu*) appeared. This was further developed during Tang and Song times, when a combination of both (i.e. definitions and pronunciation) produced the *Leipian* 類篇 and the *Guangyun*.<sup>89</sup> The *Guangyun* is based on the *Qieyun* and includes glosses.<sup>90</sup>

According to Wei Jianguo, the need of foreigners (*waizuren de xuyao* 外族人的需要) to work with the Chinese language and script led to an increase of sorting sections according to the stroke count (*shu hua fen bu* 數畫分部) and sorting according to the pronunciation (*yi yin pailie*). Example for books compiled under “foreign” rule (Liao 遼, 916–1125, ruled by the Kitan and Jin 金, 1115–1234, ruled by the Jurchen) given by Wei are the *Long kan shou jing* 龍龕手鏡 (Handy Mirror in the Dragon Shrine, 997) and the *Sisheng pian hai* 四聲篇海 (Sea of chapters under the four tones, 1208). The first is ordered according to the tones; the second according to tones, initials and cross-referenced with the stroke count.<sup>91</sup>

The reason for the absence of word dictionaries (*cidian*) identified by Wei Jianguo is that semantic dictionaries of the *Erya* type disappeared.<sup>92</sup> Since the *Shuowen jiezi*, he complains, compounds (*fuci*) have been ripped apart into individual single characters, destroying the evidence (*yanmie* 湮滅) of many ancient [polysyllabic] words (*gudai yuci* 古代語詞).<sup>93</sup> Wei assumed that spoken Old Chinese was polysyllabic and only the written language – completely different from the spoken – was monosyllabic.<sup>94</sup>

This leads Wei Jianguo to his major point of criticism: lemmatization. It essentially decides which words become dictionary entries. While he acknowledges that the *Guoyu cidian*, like the *Ciyuan*, collected multiple-character/syllable words,<sup>95</sup> it still lists each of its characters individually. If a character is not a com-

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also in von Rosthorn’s text, we find the juxtaposition of the “correct” (*ya* 雅 and *zheng* 正) and the “vulgar” (*su* 俗) and also its association of *yayan* 雅言 with Mandarin (*guanhua*.) Von Rosthorn’s article also appeared in an English translation: von Rosthorn, A. [translated by Wolff, Ernst], “The Erh-ya and other Synonymicons”, in: *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association* 10 (1975), 137–145.

89 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 378.

90 On *Leipian* and *Guangyun* see: Harbsmeier, Christoph, *Language and Logic* (1998), 73, 76.

91 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 378. Söderblom Saarela calls it “hybrid order somewhere in between the radical and stroke count system and the new phonological arrangement.” Söderblom Saarela, Mårten, “Manchu and the Study of Language in China (1607–1911)” (2015), 74.

92 Wei does not mention the 1903 “*New Erya*” *Xin Erya* 新爾雅 by Wang Rongbao 王榮寶 (1878–1933) and Ye Lan 葉蘭 (1875–?; both had studied in Japan) that was compiled to return to this semantic dictionary approach. See Doleželová-Velingerová, Milena, “Modern Chinese Encyclopaedic Dictionaries: Novel Concepts and New Terminology (1903–1911)” (2014), 299.

93 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 378.

94 Lin, Xiaoqing Diana, *Peking University: Chinese Scholarship and Intellectuals 1898–1937* (2005), 112–13.

95 Wei discusses compound words (*fuci*) and single-morpheme words with two or more syllables in one bulk. While Wei did not use this terminology, the terms used today are *shuangyinjie danchunci* 双音节单纯词 and *duoyinjie danchunci* 多音节单纯词 for two- and multiple-syllable-single-morpheme words. Furthermore, “binomes” (*lianmianzi* 聯綿字 - 連綿字 or *lianmianci* 聯綿詞; formerly *lianyu* 連語) have been described for Classical Chinese. Type II binomes are “not analyzable into two morphemes”; the “native” examples are “monomorphemic binomes” such as *furong* 芙蓉 (lotus) and others. Boltz, William G., “Binomes” (2017).

plete morpheme by itself, this is, according to Wei Jiangong, a major mistake. This also leads to the large number of entries in the dictionary: 100,000. Many of these should not have the “qualification” (*zige*) to be a “unit” (*danwei* 單位). He illustrates this reproach with the lemmas starting with *ba* 芭, which the *Guoyu cidian* lists alphabetically, such as *bamang* 芭芒 (*Miscanthus sinensis* or maiden silvergrass) used in hedges, *bali* 芭籬 (fence), *bajiao* 芭蕉 (banana/plantain), *bajiaobu* 芭蕉布 (cloth woven from plantain fiber).<sup>96</sup> Instead of simply listing the entries alphabetically, Wei Jiangong suggests that they should be attributed to two semantic categories: grass and banana. The two entries (*tiao* 條) that Wei Jiangong suggests are *ba* 芭 as in “sweet grass” (*xiangcao* 香草), and *bajiao* 芭蕉, “banana”. The respective compounds would be listed as examples in the respective entry: *bali* would be an entry to *ba* 芭 (“sweet grass”); *bajiaobu* would be an entry to *bajiao* 芭蕉 (“banana”).<sup>97</sup>

Wei concludes this section by stating that the *Guoyu cidian*'s concept (*gainian* 概念) of word (*ci* 辭/詞, used synonymously) lacks correctness (*qian zhengque* 欠正確). This leads him to question which words should be included (*shouci* 收詞): the lexicon.<sup>98</sup>

### Lexicon

Wang Yi claims in his foreword that the *Guoyu cidian* encompasses approximately 100,000 entries. While it may contain more entries than the other dictionaries in circulation, it was not enough for an ideal dictionary. The items collected are characterized by the feature that they “compose a word independently and have one meaning by themselves” (獨立成詞, 自具一義). According to Wang, these words were collected from all kinds of written sources, from the spoken language, from *baihua* texts since the Song and Yuan times, “notwithstanding if they were ancient or contemporary, elegant or vulgar” (*wu lun gu jin ya su* 無論古今雅俗). For many single characters (*danzi*), variant (*yiti* 異體) and abbreviated (*jianti* 簡體) characters have been included.<sup>99</sup>

Wei Jiangong states that three aspects about the lexicon included in a dictionary are key: standard (*biaozhun*), source (*laiyuan* 來源), and scope (*fanwei* 範圍). A precondition for lexical items to be the standard is that they are words, not characters. Expressions like *shenme* 甚麼 (what)<sup>100</sup> or *zenme* 怎麼 (how)<sup>101</sup> should not be separated into two separate characters but kept as one lemma.<sup>102</sup>

96 Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 1, (1943), 5.

97 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian* lumping” (2001), 379.

98 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian* lumping” (2001), 379.

99 Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 1, (1943), 6–7.

100 Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu 中國辭典編纂處 [Chinese dictionary compilation office] (ed.), *Guoyu cidian* 國語辭典 [National language dictionary], vol. 3, Shanghai 上海: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1943, 3231.

101 Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu 中國辭典編纂處 [Chinese dictionary compilation office] (ed.), *Guoyu cidian* 國語辭典 [National language dictionary], vol. 4, Shanghai 上海: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1943, 3409.

102 In the *Guoyu cidian*'s defense, both *shenme* and *zenme* do indeed appear as entries but as sub-entries to *shen* 甚 and *zen* 怎.

As the standard defined by Wang Yi is “what is habitually used and commonly encountered” (習用恆見者),<sup>103</sup> it is clear that for Wang and Wei, a dictionary should *describe* the standard. It has legitimacy to be *prescriptive* because it is *representative*.

The aspect of source and scope then follow. If Wang Yi wanted to collect the “living language” (*huo yuyan*) from both books (*wenji* 文籍) and the spoken language (*kouyu*), the *Guoyu cidian* has collected far too many lexical items that are by no means commonly encountered in daily life, as Wei Jianguo points out. Wei found the inclusion of too many technical or specialized items superfluous, making the *Guoyu cidian* more an encyclopedia than a dictionary. It includes, for example, a number of foreign names starting with *ba* 巴,<sup>104</sup> such as “Babalijin” 巴巴理金, the Russian writer Pyotr Boborykin (1836–1921).<sup>105</sup> However, it left out the influential Chinese author, Esperantist and anarchist Ba Jin 巴金 (1904–2005) that Wei would preferably have included instead. The *Guoyu cidian* lists 35 book titles starting with *gu* 古. Among these are Li Guangdi’s *Guyue jingzhuàn* 古樂經傳<sup>106</sup> and the *Quran* (*Gulanjing* 古蘭經).<sup>107</sup> However, Gu Jiegang’s *Gushi bian* 古史辨 (Debates on ancient history) that “influenced the academic world for nearly 20 years” (近二十年影響學術界) is not mentioned.<sup>108</sup>

Praise for including at least some of the living language and recently developed colloquial semantics is given by Wei only sporadically, such as the inclusion of the gloss “strong” (*qiang* 強) for the lemma *bang* 棒 (lit. ‘stick’),<sup>109</sup> or the gloss “to bother” (*máfan* 麻煩) for the lemma *mogu* 蘑菇 (lit. ‘mushroom’).<sup>110</sup> With the lemma *gudu* 咕嘟 (sound of water bubbling (*shuisheng* 水聲), to boil (*zhu* 煮), to purse the lips (*koubu tuqi jinbi* 口部凸起緊閉)),<sup>111</sup> however, Wei is not entirely satisfied. He would not only have preferred to add the glosses “to ooze out” (*maochu* 冒出) and “to squat” (*dunxia* 蹲下) but also to leave the entry in *Zhuyin*: ㄍ ㄨ ㄉ ㄨ 。

He illustrates this idea with the Xiangsheng 相聲<sup>112</sup> piece *Gudu yi zhi* 孤獨一枝<sup>113</sup> performed by Jiao Dehai 焦德海 (1878–1937).<sup>114</sup> Xiangsheng is a com-

103 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 379.

104 *Ba* is the first syllable according to the *Zhuyin* alphabet and therefore features rather often in dictionary reviews. This is the case when Li Jinxi commented on the *Zhongguo da cidian* 中國大辭典, see Yang Wenquan 楊文全, *Jin bai nian de Zhongguo Hanyu yuwen cidian* (2000), 75–77.

105 *Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu* (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 1, (1943), 1.

106 *Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu* (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 2, (1943), 1330.

107 *Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu* (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 2, (1943), 1325.

108 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 380. Wei’s call to include Ba Jin and Gu Jiegang’s *Gushi bian* can also be read as a political statement as a New Culture reformer.

109 *Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu* (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 1, (1943), 106.

110 *Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu* (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 1, (1943), 289.

111 *Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu* (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 2, (1943), 1320.

112 I am very thankful to Prof. Perry Link and Dr. Qu Jian 瞿见 for their advice on the matter. On the history and etymology of Xiangsheng, see Wang Jue 王决, Wang Jingshou 汪景寿 and Teng Tianxiang 藤田香, *Zhongguo xiangsheng shi* 中国相声史 [History of Chinese Xiangsheng], Beijing 北京: Beijing Yanshan chubanshe 北京燕山出版社, 1995, 65.

113 The title literally means “one lonely branch”.

114 The Beijing-born Jiao Dehai was one of the most famous Xiangsheng performers. See Wang Jue 王决, Wang Jingshou 汪景寿 and Teng Tianxiang 藤田香, *Zhongguo xiangsheng shi* (1995), 173.



ical performance of at least one, mostly two, and sometimes more artists that often relies on puns, accents or other linguistic jokes as the comical element. The punchline of this particular piece relies on *gudu* 孤獨 ('lonely') and *gudu* 咕嘟 ('to boil', 'to bubble') being homophones and containing several possible meanings, interpretations and connotations of *gudu* 咕嘟.<sup>115</sup>

Wei Jiangong concludes his discussion of the lexicon, stating that a veritable national language dictionary would need not only to include a lexicon that is truly alive and used by the speakers on a daily basis, but also the definitions and glosses need to be in exactly that language. Since all the calls for language and script reforms and Hu Shi's advocacy of a vernacular literature (here, Wei Jiangong writes "national language literature" *guoyu de wenxue* 國語的文學), not enough progress has been made – and the *Guoyu cidian* is no exception – in implementing a national language standard.<sup>116</sup>

In his preface, Wang Yi stresses how in the definitions (*shiyi*) of the terms (*yongyu* 用語), the *Guoyu cidian* strives for simplicity and avoids ambiguity (*hanhun* 含混) while indicating the etymology, examples, sources and usage (*yongfa*). Apart from the standard reading, some alternative readings are provided, since the pronunciation is presented by Wang as the most important feature of the dictionary. The definitions, Wang Yi proclaims, are "concise but not lacking, simple, but not crude" (簡而不漏, 淺而不陋). However, Wang Yi states that the compilers tried to limit the length of the definitions in order to stop the dictionary from becoming too thick and therefore too expensive for users.<sup>117</sup>

## Definitions

This reasoning is mocked by Wei Jiangong. He begins with a sarcastic reply: how "interesting" (*youqu* 有趣) it is to consider the buyers of the book but not the definitions themselves! The reason why the *Guoyu cidian* was published in eight volumes was not that the definitions are too long, but, as he has already explained above, that too many expressions not really belonging to the core lexicon of *guoyu* are included.<sup>118</sup> As Wei complains, the *Guoyu cidian* compilers did not make enough effort in distinguishing between "commonly used" (*changyong* 常用) or "not commonly used" (*xian yong* 閑用) vocabulary. He does not believe that Wang Yi's proclaimed aim of the dictionary being "concise but not lacking,

115 The modern transcript of the piece makes the pun obvious by writing "孤独 (咕嘟)", see Bi Yongnian 薛永年, Chen Xin 陈新, *Zhongguo chuantong xiangsheng xiaoduan huiji* 中国传统相声小段汇集 [Collection of Chinese traditional xiangsheng short pieces], Beijing 北京: Wenhua yishu chubanshe 文化艺术出版社, 2002, 218–219. In the relevant part of the piece, one of the two performers claiming that the phrase "*gudu yi zhi*" can be used in fortune-telling to explain any possible number of siblings a person can have: be it one lonely "branch" (*zhi*), three sitting (squatting) on individual (lonely) branches, or many more that were born one after the other like bubbles in boiling water. This polysemy constitutes the comical element for the audience and exposes the fortune teller as charlatan.

116 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "*Guoyu cidian lunping*" (2001), 382.

117 Zhongguo cidian bianzuanchu (ed.), *Guoyu cidian*, vol. 1, (1943), 7.

118 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "*Guoyu cidian lunping*" (2001), 382.

simple but not crude” was achieved. The definitions are too short<sup>119</sup> and too many marginal lexical items are included. The lexicon including personal names and idioms is completely exaggerated.<sup>120</sup> He concludes that the *Guoyu cidian* is not worthy of its name. Because of the shortness of the definitions, it should rather call itself “National pronunciation dictionary of common words” (*Guoyin putong ci dian* 國音普通辭典).<sup>121</sup>

## Morphology

Wei Jianguo concludes his discussion of the *Guoyu cidian* with his views on morphology and on the conception of an ideal dictionary. He believed that linguists paid too much attention to the single characters (*danzi*) and their shape, and that a “tool that objectively describes the morphology of the language” (*keguan miaoxie yuyan xingtai de gongju* 客觀描寫語言形態的工具) was missing.<sup>122</sup> The historical development of Chinese dictionaries, where the semantic approach to lexicography (with the *Erya* as model) disappeared and was replaced by a graphematic approach (since the *Shuowen jiezi*<sup>123</sup>), is also to blame for a lack in the description of morphology. The morphology of Chinese goes beyond the single character; hence, the distinction between *zi* and *ci* is necessary. Wei names the linguistic unit that should be collected in a dictionary as lexical item: the morpheme, although he does not employ that specific term.

For Wei, the unit of pronunciation (or ‘sound’, *shengyin de chengfen* 聲音的成分) was often literally buried (*shenmai* 深埋) under the shape (*xing*) of a character. As a result, even grammar specialists did not have a clear idea (*guannian*) of the difference between character (*zi*) and word (*ci*). That was why many reference works would limit themselves by merely indicating the use of single characters (*danzi yongfa* 單字用法). A good dictionary, in contrast, would need to pay more attention to morphology (*xingtai* 形態) and describe it with the aid of a phonetic transcription. The ideal dictionary is described by Wei Jianguo as follows:

我相信好的辭典，應該著重以注音描寫語言的形態。因此，理想的新辭典，例如以標準國語為主的，開始應該有極扼要的語音學音系的說明，內容裏要把聲音記錄在先，有字對照的隨後寫出，沒有字的用空匡表示。<sup>124</sup>

I believe a good word dictionary should attach importance to describing the morphology of the language with a phonetic transcription. Consequently, the ideal new word dictionary, such as one that concentrates on the standard

119 Wilkinson also calls them “telegraphic”, see Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 86.

120 Wei repeats the argument that the glosses are too short and that the lexicon is too encompassing several times: “The scope of the collected words is too wide; this has added to the length [of the dictionary]” (收詞範圍過泛加多了篇幅), in: Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 385–386.

121 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 383.

122 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 384.

123 Wilkinson traces the development from the *Shuowen* to the *Kangxi zidian*, see Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 78–80.

124 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “*Guoyu cidian lunping*” (2001), 384.

national language, should begin with an extremely brief but accurate explanation of the phonetic system. In the content, it must display the phonetic transcription first, and the respective characters behind it, and what has no character will be represented by an empty square.

For Wei Jiangong, the key was that a lemma could be several characters and syllables long. He stresses that the issue of word boundaries can be answered by morphology (*xingtaixue*). However, there are two issues that need some clarification. First, Wei concentrates on word boundaries and not word formation (*goucifa* 構詞法), therefore ignoring a large portion of morphology. This second issue is that he is actually not discussing *word* boundaries, but rather *morpheme* boundaries. This is symptomatic of the state of flux of Chinese linguistics in the 1940s. The linguist Lu Zhiwei wrote in 1964:

二十年代以來，構詞法問題總是結合着聲音文字提出來的。拼音文字怎樣把音節按字聯寫，規範化詞典該投哪樣的詞 [...]。<sup>125</sup>

Since the 1920s, the question of word formation was always raised in connection with phonetic writing: how the phonetic script should spell each syllable character by character or together, what kind of words should a standardized dictionary include [...].

Lu's *Hanyu de goucifa* 漢語的構詞法 (Chinese word formation) was a pioneer in the 1960s, two decades after Wei's discussion of the *Guoyu cidian*. In the 1940s, Wei was still preoccupied with exactly the issues that Lu mentions. The term for "morpheme" (*yusu* 語素) used by Lu Zhiwei and that is most commonly used today was not used by Wei Jiangong in his writings. Lu Zhiwei defines it in 1964 as a "meaningful syllable" (*you yiyi de yinjie* 有意義的音節). He adds that if such a morpheme cannot be used freely (*ziyou yunyong* 自由運用), it needs to be combined with another morpheme in order to become a word (*ci*).<sup>126</sup> Lu's overall conclusion about Chinese word formation is that words can have the same syntactic structures like sentences.<sup>127</sup> Note that the Western word "morpheme" was coined by the Polish linguist of French descent, Jan Ignacy Niecesław Baudouin de Courtenay (1845–1929) around 1880.<sup>128</sup>

Wei Jiangong concludes his review of the *Guoyu cidian* with an example that makes it clear that the kind of words he is preoccupied with are multi-syllable single-morpheme words. In other words, they are simple words that consist of two or more characters. The example he discusses in detail is "water chestnut" *biqu* 荸薺. Comprising two syllables and two characters, it is one single morpheme. Therefore, it would not make any sense to list either of the characters individually, since they represent one single semantic unit. The entry would list

125 Lu Zhiwei 陸志韋, "Hanyu de goucifa" 漢語的構詞法 [Chinese word formation], in: *Lu Zhiwei yuyanxue zhuzuoji* 陸志韋語言學著作集 [Collection of linguistic works of Lu Zhiwei], ed. by Zheng Renjia 鄭仁甲, vol. 3, Beijing 北京: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1990, 263–372, see 265.

126 Lu Zhiwei 陸志韋, "Hanyu de goucifa" (1990), 268.

127 Münnig, Mariana, "Lù Zhiwéi 陸志韋", in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 653–658, see 656.

128 Glück, Helmut, "Morphem", in: *Metzler Lexikon Sprache*, ed. by Glück, Helmut, and Michael Rödel, Stuttgart 3: J. B. Metzler Verlag GmbH, 2016, 445–446, see 445.

the pronunciation in Zhuyin first, followed by the two characters.<sup>129</sup> Wei Jianguong’s ideal dictionary would then adhere to this principle. But did the *Xinhua zidian* follow this criteria?

## 6.2 Compilation Plan and Realization in the *Xinhua Zidian*

After returning to Beijing in April 1949, Wei Jianguong invited Zhou Zumo 周祖谟 (1914–1995),<sup>130</sup> Jin Kemu 金克木 (1912–2000),<sup>131</sup> Zhang Keqiang 張克強 (Jianmu 建木, 1917–1989)<sup>132</sup> and Wu Xiaoling 吳曉鈴 (1914–1995)<sup>133</sup> to his home to discuss the compilation of a pocket dictionary (*xiaoxing zidian* 小型字典).<sup>134</sup> While the preparations for the dictionary compilation took place during the Chinese civil war,<sup>135</sup> Zhou Zumo remembers his enthusiasm after the war with Japan rather positively and recalls how people of the education and culture circles met (many had been displaced before) to discuss all kinds of ideas. Wei Jianguong came to speak about the need for an up-to-date dictionary for primary and middle school students to spread education (*puji jiaoyu* 普及教育).<sup>136</sup>

129 Wei Jianguong 魏建功, “Guoyu cidian lunping” (2001), 384.

130 Zhou Zumo was a linguist, phonologist and Peking University professor. He also became an advisor to the small group in charge of planning the reorganization and publication of ancient books (Guji zhengli chuban guihua xiaozu 古籍整理出版规划小组, established 1958) of which Wei Jianguong was a member. See: Lin Liantong 林连通, Gu Shixi 顾士熙 (ed.), “Zhou Zumo (1914–1995.1.14)” 周祖谟 (1914—1995.1.14), in: *Zhongguo yuyanxue nianjian* 中国语言学年鉴 [Chinese linguistics yearbook] 1995–1998, 882. See also: Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jianguong* (2007), 214.

131 Jin Kemu was also a Peking University professor, a researcher of Sanskrit and Buddhism, and a polyglot translator and author. Huang Dehai 黄德海, “Dushu, du ren, duwu – Jin Kemu biannianlu” 读书·读人·读物——金克木编年录 [The book, the author, and the literature: a chronological biography of Jin Kemu], in: *Jiangnan* 江南 [Jiangnan Magazine] 5 (2021), 129–207.

132 Zhang Keqiang appears on group photos of the Peking University Chinese department (Zhongwenxi, 1950) and of the *Xinhua* cishushe, see page 179 (1951) together with Wei Jianguong printed in *Wei Jianguong wenji* vol. 4. He was also a renowned scholar of Tibetan. Danzhu Angben 丹珠昂奔 [Tondrub Wangben], *Zangzu wenhua fazhanshi* 藏族文化发展史 [Developmental history of Tibetan culture], vol. 2, Lanzhou 兰州: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe 甘肃教育出版社, 2000, 1141–1142.

133 Peking University professor, linguist, scholar of Classical document studies, Chinese and Indian drama and literature. He had spent one part of the Second Sino-Japanese war at Xinan lianhe daxue and the other part in India. Tang Xian 唐咸, “Wu Xiaoling” 吴晓玲, in: *Manzu xiandai wenxuejia yishujia zhuanlue* 满族现代文学家艺术家传略 [Short biographies of modern Manchu authors and artists], ed. by Guan Jixin 关纪新, Shenyang 沈阳: Liaoning renmin chubanshe 辽宁人民出版社, 1987, 178–181.

134 Zhou Zumo 周祖谟, “Wu ji’ yu *Xinhua zidian*” “伍记”与《新华字典》[‘The records of the five-men squad’ and the *Xinhua zidian*], in: *Wenjiao ziliao* 文教资料 [Data of culture and education] 3 (1995), 21–24, see 21.

135 Wu Haitao 吴海涛, “Zai paohuo zhong yunyu de yi bu gongjushu – shouban *Xinhua zidian* de gushi” 在炮火中孕育的一部工具书——首版《新华字典》的故事 [A reference book bred under artillery fire – the story of the first edition of the *Xinhua zidian*], in: *Dushu wenzhai* 读书文摘 [Reader’s digest] 2 (2012), 71–74. See also: Wu Haitao 吴海涛, “Paohuo zhong yunyu de *Xinhua zidian*” 炮火中孕育的《新华字典》[The *Xinhua zidian* that was bred under artillery fire], in: *Xin Xiang pinglun* 新湘评论 [New Hunan review] 20 (2012), 60–61.

136 Zhou Zumo 周祖谟, “Wu ji’ yu *Xinhua zidian*” (1995), 21.

They drafted a “Plan to compile a dictionary” (*Bianji zidian jihua* 編輯字典計畫) with 10 “characteristics” (*tese* 特色) that their dictionary should have:<sup>137</sup>

1. Compilation based on linguistic principles using scientific methods suited to the actual language phenomena (根據語言學原理, 用科學方法, 就實際語言現象編定)
2. Ordering the shape according to the pronunciation (*yi yin tong xing* 以音統形)
3. Listing words according to their meaning (*yiyi pai ci* 以義排詞)
4. Dividing characters according to words (*yi yu fen zi* 以語分字)
5. Determining the meaning via the use (*yi yong jue yi* 以用決義)
6. Broad inclusion of the living language (*guang shou huo yuyuan* 廣收活語言)
7. Getting to the character via the sound (*you yin qiu zi* 由音求字)
8. Choosing words because of their meaning (*you yi xuan ci* 由義選詞)
9. Adapted to the masses (*shihe dazong* 適合大眾)
10. Appendix (*fulu* 附錄)

In the following subsections, I will explain and discuss these characteristics one by one and cross-reference them with the first *Xinhua zidian* edition of 1953. To begin, I will summarize the compilation process.

While Zhou Zumo and the others were enthusiastic at first and enjoyed working and discussing with the elder Wei Jiangong, the group dissolved.<sup>138</sup> That Wei Jiangong was able to realize his idea of a dictionary happened thanks to Ye Shengtao. Ye, formerly editor-in-chief at the Kaiming shudian 開明書店,<sup>139</sup> was appointed vice chief (*fushuzhang* 副署長) of the Publishing head office of the Central government of the people (Zhongyang renmin zhengfu chuban zongshu 中央人民政府出版總署) when it was founded in 1949. He approached Wei Jiangong about the compilation of a dictionary. They formed the New China dictionary society (*Xinhua cishushe* 新華辭書社)<sup>140</sup> that would provide the name for the dictionary.<sup>141</sup> The actual compilation process began in 1950. That year, Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe 人民教育出版社 (People’s education press) was founded, Ye Shengtao was appointed director, and the *Xinhua cishushe* was incorporated into it.<sup>142</sup> In 1952, the *Xinhua cishushe* was renamed Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe Cishu

137 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “*Bianji zidian jihua*” (2001).

138 Zhou Zumo 周祖謨, “*Wu ji’ yu Xinhua zidian*” (1995), 22–23.

139 Wang Jiarong 汪家熔, “Kaiming shudian chuanshi xiaoji” 開明書店創世小記 [Notes on the foundation of Kaiming bookstore], in: *Chuban shiliao* 出版史料 [Publication archives] 3 (2002), 88–90.

140 Liu Qinglong 刘庆隆, “*Xinhua zidian bianxie xiuding de licheng*” 《新华字典》编写修订的历程 [The process of the *Xinhua zidian*’s compilation and revision], in: *Zhongguo cishu lunji* 中国辞书论集 • 1999 [Collection of essays on Chinese dictionaries]: Shanghai cishu chubanshe 上海辞书出版社, 2000, 280–85, see 280.

141 Zhou Zumo 周祖謨, “*Wu ji’ yu Xinhua zidian*” (1995), 23.

142 Liu Qinglong 刘庆隆, “Ye Shengtao xiansheng he *Xinhua zidian*” 叶圣陶先生和《新华字典》 [Ye Shengtao and the *Xinhua zidian*], in: *Yuwen jianshe* 语言建设 [Language Planning] 11 (2000), 47.

bianji shi 辭書編輯室<sup>143</sup> (Dictionary compilation office); the first edition of 1953, however, still bore “edited by Xinhua cishushe” (新華辭書社編).<sup>144</sup>

While Wei Jianguo is often called the “father” (*fu* 父) of the *Xinhua zidian*, Ye Shengtao has been called “godfather” (*jiaofu* 教父) by the authors Jin Xinxin and Chen Yue.<sup>145</sup> This is not exaggeration, since Wei Jianguo had to admit that he was not capable of being a real leader for the compilation team. Ye Shengtao managed the compilers and proofreaders (*shendingzhe* 審訂者) and the compilation process as a whole. He took responsibility for the final content and layout. He participated in the discussion about many singular entries, in the design of the *bushou* index,<sup>146</sup> and made substantial alterations in the dictionary’s “user’s instructions” (*fanli* 凡例) drafted by Wei Jianguo.<sup>147</sup>

Wei Jianguo and his team, comprising Xiao Jialin,<sup>148</sup> Du Zijin (= Du Tongli), Zhang Keqiang, Kong Fanjun 孔凡均 and Li Jiukui 李九魁,<sup>149</sup> produced a first draft in 1951. It was mimeographed (*youyin* 油印, i.e. duplicated with a mimeograph machine or stencil duplicator) and distributed to a number of “leaders, specialists, cadres with a lower middle school education level and primary school teachers” (领导、专家、初中文化程度的干部和小学教师) to collect feedback.<sup>150</sup> Zhou Zumo estimates that about 1000 of these preliminary copies were distributed.<sup>151</sup> Wei Jianguo and a larger team (in addition to Xiao Jialin, Du Zijin, Zhang Keqiang, Kong Fanjun and Li Jiukui, the team also included Zhang Naizhi 張迺芝, Li Bochun 李伯純, Liu Qinglong 劉慶隆,<sup>152</sup> Zhu Chongtao 朱衝涛, Wang Yunming 王蘊明, You Yucheng 游禹承, Zhao Guijun 趙桂鈞 and Li Wensheng 李文生) incorporated the submitted suggestions in the new draft, and the first edition of the *Xinhua zidian* was published in 1953.<sup>153</sup>

Did this first edition have all the characteristics Wei Jianguo had laid out in the “Plan to compile a dictionary” in 1949? In the following, the 10 characteristics are discussed and compared with the actual *Xinhua zidian* of 1953.

- 143 Liu Qinglong 刘庆隆, “*Xinhua zidian* bianxie xiuding de licheng” (2000), 280.
- 144 Xinhua cishushe 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* 新華字典 [New China dictionary], Beijing 北京: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe 人民教育出版社, 1953.
- 145 Jin Xinxin 金欣欣, Chen Yue 陈悦, “*Xinhua zidian* bianzuan xiuding liushi nian” 《新华字典》编纂修订六十年 [60 years of compilation and revision of the *Xinhua zidian*], in: *Zhongzhou daxue xuebao* 中州大学学报 [Journal of Zhongzhou University] 28.3 (2011), 46–51, see 46–47.
- 146 Jin Xinxin 金欣欣, Chen Yue 陈悦, “*Xinhua zidian* bianzuan xiuding liushi nian” (2011), 46–47.
- 147 Gong Mingde 龚明德, “*Xinhua zidian* chuangbian shikuang” 《新华字典》创编史况 [The historical circumstances of the creation of the *Xinhua zidian*], in: *Chuban shiliao* 出版史料 [Publication archives] 3 (2005), 31–32, see 32.
- 148 Xiao Jialin was the first to join the Xinhua cishushe; his wife also supported their work. See Gong Mingde 龚明德, “*Xinhua zidian* chuangbian shikuang” (2005), 31.
- 149 Jin Xinxin 金欣欣, Chen Yue 陈悦, “*Xinhua zidian* bianzuan xiuding liushi nian” (2011), 48.
- 150 Liu Qinglong 刘庆隆, “*Xinhua zidian* bianxie xiuding de licheng” (2000), 280.
- 151 Zhou Zumo 周祖谟, “Wu ji’ yu *Xinhua zidian*” (1995), 23.
- 152 Liu Qinglong published articles about the *Xinhua zidian* compilation. See for example: Liu Qinglong 刘庆隆, “Ye Shengtao xiansheng he *Xinhua zidian*” (2000). See also: Liu Qinglong 刘庆隆, “*Xinhua zidian* bianxie xiuding de licheng” (2000).
- 153 Jin Xinxin 金欣欣, Chen Yue 陈悦, “*Xinhua zidian* bianzuan xiuding liushi nian” (2011), 48.

### 6.2.1 Compilation based on Linguistic Principles

Characteristic 1 (Compilation based on linguistic principles, scientific methods, and suited to the actual language phenomena) is a direct follow-up to Wei's discussion of morphology in connection to the *Guoyu cidian*. He clearly states that the concept of "word" should not be identified with the unit of a "square character":

中國的“字”的觀念與“詞”的觀念最好暫且不在“方塊字”單位上呆分。我們可能從“語言”的觀念培養起注意聲音的意識，然後再明白的用“詞”來標目，才可以避免了“文字障”。<sup>154</sup>

It would be for the best if the Chinese idea of "character" or the idea of "word" were not be stiffly allotted to the unit of a "square character". Maybe we should nourish a sense to focus on the sound and then understand how to use the "word" as head item.<sup>155</sup> Only then we can avoid a "script blockage".

Wei Jianguo wants to ensure the fixation on graphic units does not prevent semantic units from being seen: semantic units may be single characters or even more complex words. It is from this standpoint that Wei derives that the name of the dictionary: whether it would be called a "*zidian*" or a "*cidian*" may be determined later. For the time being, they aim to include single characters as well as words (*ci*) with several characters that make up one unit expressing [one] meaning (*biaoshi yiyi de danwei* 表示意義的單位).

Wei's "Plan" in 1953 after the establishment of the PRC produced a *zidian*. Its reliance on the smallest free semantic units as lexical items make it so concise and universal. Only in the rare cases of polysyllabic morphemes are headwords longer than one character. He kept this promise with the entry "water chestnut" (*biqi*, see 6.1.2 on page 177).<sup>156</sup> Compounds found their way into the *Xinhua zidian* as glosses.

### 6.2.2 Ordering the Shape according to the Pronunciation

Characteristic 2 makes it clear that the dictionary should have a phonetic macrostructure. In other words, it should be ordered according to the pronunciation

154 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Bianji zidian jihua" (2001), 403.

155 In rhyme books, *biaomu* 標目 is often rendered as "rhyme indicating character". It can also be translated more generally as "heading". In this case, Wei Jianguo uses it as a term that neither means "character" nor "word" to neutrally convey the notion of headword or head-character for a dictionary entry. He would resort to the use of "head-character" (*zitou*) and "headword" (*citou* 詞頭) in his 1976 letters to the linguist and lexicographer Cao Xianzhuo 曹先擢 (1932-2018) on lexicography. Cf. Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Guanyu cidian bianzuan wenti zhi Cao Xianzhuo tongzhi de liang feng xin" 關於詞典編纂問題致曹先擢同志的兩封信 [Two letters to Comrade Cao Xianzhuo about the compilation of dictionaries], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 657-672. Cao directed the revision of the *Xinhua zidian* in 1971. See: Editorial department of *Hanzi wenhua* (*Hanzi wenhua* bianjibu 《汉字文化》编辑部, "Zhuming yuyan- wenzixuejia Cao Xianzhuo xiansheng shishi" 著名语言文字学家曹先擢先生逝世 [Famous language and script scholar Cao Xianzhuo has passed away], in: *Hanzi wenhua* 汉字文化 [Chinese character culture] 24 (2018), 16.

156 Xinhua cishushe 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 22.

of the head-characters, not according to their classifiers or the stroke count. The *Xinhua zidian* employed Zhuyin as transcription. The 411 syllables (excluding tones, identical to the *Guoyu cidian*) in Zhuyin ordering begin with the initial [b] and proceed according to the rhymes: *ba, bo, bai, ...*, ending with ... *yuan, yun, yong*. The same applies to the micro-structure: different readings of one character, represented by different glosses, are listed with Chinese numbers (*yi* 一, *er* 二, *san* 三...) and spelled out in Zhuyin. Homophones (*tongyinzi* 同音字) are listed one after the other according to their stroke count.

Furthermore, “definite listing according to the pronunciation” (*juedui yi yin pailie* 絕對以音排列) has semantic implications. Wei Jianguo makes clear in his “Plan” that the characters must be ordered according to the semantic unit (*yiyi danwei*) they display/stand for (*biaoxian* 表現). This may mean that a different reading may stand for a different meaning and, as in this example, a different word class. As example, Wei Jianguo mentions the character *hao* 好 which can be pronounced in the third or in the fourth tone. In the third tone (*hǎo*), Wei defines it as “friendly” (*hehao* 和好),<sup>157</sup> in the fourth (*hào*) it means “like/love/be fond of” (*xǐhào* 喜好). Wei Jianguo does not state this explicitly, but *hǎo* is an adjective<sup>158</sup> and *hào* is a verb. According to the “Plan”, the two would be listed separately. This was not realized in this form in the *Xinhua zidian*; both *hǎo* and *hào* find themselves as subentries in the same article, numbered with Chinese numbers.<sup>159</sup> Also his deliberations regarding characteristic 5 (see below on page 184) explain this approach and state clearly that he does not want to indicate word classes. The glosses, however, reveal the functions of the words.

In the case of compounds, however, Wei prioritizes semantics over phonetics. Wei gives the example of *gan* 乾 (dry), which appears as “ending” (*mowei* 末尾) of “polysyllabic words” (*fuyinci* 複音詞) like *doufugan* 豆腐乾 (dried tofu) and *gaogan* 糕乾 (sweet rice-flour cake). Wei sees *doufu* and *gao* as modifiers to the head *gan* and therefore wants to group the two compounds as examples to the lemma *gan*.<sup>160</sup> This was realized in the *Xinhua zidian*.<sup>161</sup>

Wei lists another “word made up of several characters” (*shu zi hecheng de ci* 數字合成的詞) that independently becomes one semantic unit (*duli chengwei yi yiyi danwei* 獨立成為一意義單位) and must therefore not be split up (*fenkai* 分開): *doufu* 豆腐 (tofu).<sup>162</sup> In the dictionary, we find it as a gloss (*zhujie* 注解) in square brackets and marked with *yu* 喻 (analogy, metaphor) inside a circle. The circle assigns a metaphorically derived meaning to the head-character *fu* 腐

157 *Hǎo* is nowadays usually translated as “good”.

158 There is a controversy about whether or not Chinese has adjectives or rather “stative verbs”. I follow Huang in categorizing adjectives as distinct word classes from verbs. Cf. Huang, Shi-Zhe, “Adjectives”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 106–115.

159 To be fair, it must be acknowledged that the entry *hao* finds itself as last entry with the third tone; it is followed by fourth tone entries. *Xinhua cishushe* 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 302–303.

160 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Bianji zidian jihua” (2001), 403.

161 *Xinhua cishushe* 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 252–253.

162 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Bianji zidian jihua” (2001), 404.



(rotten/corrupt).<sup>163</sup> If we look up the user's instructions, the dictionary states that the square brackets mark "compound words" (*fuheci* 複合詞); these words are then listed under the head-lemma of their "key character" (*zhongdian zi* 重點字).<sup>164</sup>

### 6.2.3 Listing Words according to their Meaning

Characteristic 3 refers to the micro-structure within one article. As Wei Jianguo put forward in his *Guoyu cidian* review, compounds that are subentries to head-characters should be grouped semantically. If we cross-examine his approach with the example of *ba* in "banana" (as opposed to "grass", see 6.1.2 on page 173), we see two distinct entries: *bajiao* 芭蕉 as banana and *ba* 笆 directing us to the entry *liba* 籬笆 (twig fence).<sup>165</sup> This example shows that Wei did not completely keep his promise of not separating polysyllabic morphemes. Single characters that do not represent<sup>166</sup> a full morpheme are included, and direct the reader to the actual, polysyllabic entry. It should be stated that the *Xinhua zidian* is much more concise and includes fewer lexical items: many of the compound words from the *Guoyu cidian* are not found.

Some compounds, however, are found in the 1953 *Xinhua zidian*. They are not listed as lemmas but as examples. The compound *dianhua* 電話 (telephone) is one such example: the head-morpheme is *dian* 電, and the two separate glosses represent the morphemes "electricity" and "lightning". "Telephone" *dianhua* is then listed as an example to the first gloss, with "electricity" (defined in the modern language as "a kind of force" *yi zhong neng* 一種能) represented by a tilde as a placeholder: ~ *hua* ~ 話.<sup>167</sup>

In 1954, Zhou Zumo, who contributed to the "Plan" but was not involved in the actual compilation, praised the *Xinhua zidian* for this clear division of glosses and examples according to the morpheme, i.e. the semantic unit. Dictionaries comprising a larger amount of compounds as subentries (Zhou mentions the *Ciyuan*, which introduced this two-level approach, the *Cihai*,<sup>168</sup> and the *Guoyu cidian* as well) do not adhere to this principle. These compound subentries grouped with a head-character are listed phonetically, and it is not clear which morphemes they represent.

The grouping of compound subentries to a head-character is still a challenge today. If we take the Chinese-German dictionary *Xin Han-De Cidian* as example, we can see that the entry "道 *dào*" begins with listing 12 different glosses

163 Xinhua cishushe 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 108.

164 Xinhua cishushe 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 3.

165 Note that the *Xinhua zidian* team decided to include *liba* 籬笆 instead of *bali* 芭籬 in the *Guoyu cidian*.

166 The concept that the script *represents* (units of) language is also a key aspect in Zhao Yuanren's writings. Compare for example: Zhao Yuanren 趙元任, "Yuyan gen wenzi" 語言跟文字 [Language and script], in: *Yuyan wenti* 語言問題 [Language problems], Taipei 臺北: Guoli Taiwan daxue wenzhuyuan 國立臺灣大學文學院, 1959, 135–145, see 136. Here, Zhao uses the term *daibiao* 代表.

167 Xinhua cishushe 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 135.

168 Zhou Zumo 周祖謨, "Xinhua zidian pingjie" 《新华字典》评介 [Review of the *Xinhua zidian*], in: *Zhou Zumo yuwen lunji* 周祖謨语文论集 [Collection of essays on language and script by Zhou Zumo], Shijiazhuang 石家庄: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe 河北教育出版社, 1989, 172–176, see 174.

representing just as many morphemes. Then, compound words beginning with *dao* are listed as subentries in an alphabetical order, ignoring their semantic relation. The list begins with “道白 *daobai*”, “spoken part in an opera”, in which *dao* represents the morpheme “to speak”. In the following subentry, “道班 *daoban*”, “railway/highway maintenance squad”, *dao* represents “railway” or “road”. The next subentry with the morpheme “to speak” is then found a dozen subentries below (“道乏 *daofa*”, “to thank sb. for their troubles”).<sup>169</sup>

#### 6.2.4 Dividing Characters according to Words

In characteristic 4, *yu* 語 needs to be understood as “word”. Even if the same characters appear in several lexical items, they must be listed separately since they do not represent the same morpheme. The unity of monomorphemic but polysyllabic words should be preserved. The example in the “Plan” is *dong* 東 (east), *xi* 西 (west) and *dongxi* 東西 (thing); these are three distinct “units of meaning”, otherwise known as free morphemes or words, with *dongxi* being polysyllabic. This was indeed realized in the *Xinhua zidian*.<sup>170</sup>

#### 6.2.5 Determining the Meaning via the Use

Characteristic 5, “determining the meaning via the use”<sup>171</sup> calls for concrete examples of the use of a word and not for its abstract explanations as a “part of speech” (*cipin* 詞品) or “word class” (*cilei* 詞類). Wei and his colleagues reject a “formalistic” (*xingshi* 形式) in favor of a “dialectical” (*bianzheng* 辯證) logic (*luoji* 邏輯) for their dictionary in an attempt to systematically record the Chinese language and its manifestation as sound and meaning. The lack of the indication of word classes can be observed in many modern-day dictionaries. The glosses and examples in the *Xinhua zidian* provide the meaning and actually reveal information about the word class. If we take *ai* 愛 as example, we find three glosses that show that *ai* represents three different morphemes that are different parts of speech:

1. *xihuan* 喜歡: “to love”, “to like”, such as “to love the people” (~ *renmin* ~ 人民) or “to love to work” ~ *laodong* ~ 勞動. [= verb]
2. *xihuan de* 喜歡的: “beloved”, such as “beloved person” *airen* 愛人, i.e. husband or wife. [= adjective]

169 *Xin Han-De Cidian* 新漢德詞典 *Das Neue Chinesisch-Deutsche Wörterbuch*, Beijing 北京: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1985, 170–171.

170 *Xinhua cishushe* 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 147, 415.

171 Wei Jiangong’s approach to semantics is similar to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s use theory of meaning. In his *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Philosophical Investigations, published 1953), Wittgenstein states that the meaning of a word is its use. See Rehbock, Helmut, “Gebrauchstheorie der Bedeutung”, in: *Metzler Lexikon Sprache*, ed. by Glück, Helmut, and Michael Rödel, Stuttgart 5: J. B. Metzler Verlag GmbH, 2016, 223. This can be counted as one of many examples in the history of linguistics in which we cannot simply speak of a reception of Western linguistics in China. Rather, we should see it as a coincidence of linguistic advisement in a time when not only linguistics as a discipline in China underwent important developments.

3. *rongyi* 容易: “easily”, such as “this cloth easily tears” (*zhe zhong bu ai huai* 這種布愛壞).<sup>172</sup> [= adverb]

However, it should be noted that in some instances word classes are mentioned. Take as example gloss number 4 for *yong* 用:

在名詞前，介紹後面動詞所需的材料或工具：～筆寫字。[...]<sup>173</sup>

[Employed] before a noun, [*yong*] indicates the material or tool needed to perform the action of the subsequent verb: to write with a pen (lit.: to use [a] pen [to] write characters). [...]

### 6.2.6 Broad Inclusion of the Living Language

Characteristic 6, the “living language”, is an idea from the New Culture Movement. In light of the rather recent adoption of the polysyllabic written vernacular, Wei calls for the establishment of a “scientific system for ordinary Chinese speech” (中國人民大眾語科學系統) for which the new dictionary should be the reference tool. The *Guoyu cidian* may be taken as the basis and supplemented with New Culture neologisms coined by Lu Xun, communist terminology or colloquialisms.

### 6.2.7 Getting to the Character via the Sound

Characteristic 7 proposes printing stressed syllables in polysyllabic words in bolder or larger fonts. This was not realized in the first *Xinhua zidian* edition.

### 6.2.8 Choosing Words because of their Meaning

Characteristic 8 refers to the polymorphemic words that act as glosses to the head-character. Only the most essential ones shall be included but not idioms (*chengyu*) or technical terminology. The *Xinhua zidian* only included the most essential glosses and examples, which made it a concise dictionary. Users, especially writers, were encouraged to use the dictionary as a thesaurus and to look up polysyllabic synonyms to the head-characters. Wei Jianguo probably expected some writers to be trained in the classical language, i.e. to be familiar with single characters, and to require some help with the compounds of the modern language.

### 6.2.9 Adapted to the Masses

Characteristic 9, the adaption to the masses, referred to lexicon, glosses, definitions and general user friendliness. With regard to the lexicon, Wei aimed to only include items in general use (*tongxing* 通行) and gloss them with the most widely accepted contemporary semantics. Ancient sources (as it is in the case of the *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大辭典) are not quoted as glosses. Instead, the glosses

172 Xinhua cishushe 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 618–619.

173 Xinhua cishushe 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 700.

were formulated in the vernacular language. The entry *zou* 走 (to walk) is a good illustration of the truly innovative nature of the glosses and definitions. The gloss provides the polymorphemic modern term for “to walk”: *zoulu* 走路. The definition is a veritable explanation in the modern spoken language: “moving forward by alternately setting the two feet [in front of each other]” (兩腳交換向前移動).<sup>174</sup> The dictionary was indeed intended as learner’s tool for students and everyone. Judging from the continued success of the *Xinhua zidian* to the present day, especially among primary school students, this idea was definitely implemented.

### 6.2.10 Appendix

Characteristic 10, the inclusion of an appendix, is not a novel idea of Wei and his colleagues. Appendices with linguistic or lexicographical information have existed in Chinese dictionaries for at least a couple of hundred years or longer.<sup>175</sup>

An appendix with useful information for modern daily life, however, is a novelty introduced in the 20th century. Yang Wenquan points out that the “New dictionary” (*Xin zidian* 新字典), first published in 1912 by a seven-person editing team headed by Lu Erkui, was the first monolingual Chinese dictionary to include encyclopedic information in the appendix. The *Xin zidian* was based on the *Kangxi zidian*, and its appendix was to become the “prototype” or “model” (*chuxing* 雛型) for later appendices.<sup>176</sup> The appendix included units of measurement and currency of China and abroad, most notably Western countries and Russia, and a chronological table of Chinese history, beginning with the Yellow emperor (the year *Huangdi* 黃帝 100 is dated to the year 4608 before the Republic *Minguo* 民國) and ending with 1912 (*Minguo yuan* 民國元, i.e. the first year of the Republic). There are no events but just era names.<sup>177</sup> The appendix of the *Xin zidian* is followed by a blank printing error table (*kanwu biao* 勘誤表) the user can fill in and a “supplement” (*bubian* 補編) with “relatively rare characters” (*jiao pi zhi zi* 較僻之字).<sup>178</sup>

Nevertheless, it should be said that earlier bilingual dictionaries had encyclopedic appendices. Yong and Peng<sup>179</sup> mention Baller’s 1900 dictionary whose

174 Xinhua cishushe 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Xinhua zidian* (1953), 573.

175 See, for example Liu Yeqiu 刘叶秋, *Zhongguo zidian shilüe* (1992), 88, 128.

176 Yang Wenquan 楊文全, *Jin bai nian de Zhongguo Hanyu yuwen cidian* (2000), 62.

177 Lu Erkui 路爾奎 et al. (ed.), *Xin Zidian* 新字典 [New Dictionary], Shanghai 上海: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1912, “appendix” *fulu* 附錄.

178 See the “notes on the use” (*liyan* 例言) of the dictionary: Lu Erkui 路爾奎 et al. (ed.), *Xin Zidian* (1912), 1. Cf. also Feng Lu 馮璐, “20 shiji chuqi Zhong Han zidian de bianzuan ji tedian - yi Zhong, Han *Xin Zidian* wei li” 20 世紀初期中韓字典的編撰及特點——以中、韓《新字典》為例 [An Overview Characteristics of Chinese New Dictionary and Korean New Dictionary in the Early 20th Century – Take Chinese New Dictionary and Korean New Dictionary as an Example [sic!]], in: *Xiandai Yuwen* 現代語文 [*Modern Chinese*] 10 (2019), 14–19, see 16. The supplement includes rare and obsolete characters like the old form 下 (= *xia* 下) for “below”, “under”.

179 Yong, Heming, and Jing Peng, *Chinese lexicography: A history from 1046 BC to AD 1911* (2008). It must be stressed that Yong and Peng’s publication, while a laudable attempt at the first comprehensive and exhaustive overview of the history of Chinese lexicography (including bilingual lexicography by

appendix provides “Selected passages from the Four Books, and Standard Commentary of Chu-hsi 四書朱熹集註”, chronological tables listing the dynasties, reign names, cyclical characters for the years, Chinese zodiacal constellations, solar terms, official ranks, and other information. The appendix is followed by a “Radical Index”.<sup>180</sup>

While not a novelty at all, the appendix of the first *Xinhua zidian* is still very voluminous in comparison to other contemporary dictionaries. It seems that it serves not only descriptive but also prescriptive purposes. The linguistic and encyclopedic information given in the index’s 132 pages is:

1. Table of Zhuyin zimu (注音字母表)
2. Usage of punctuation (標點符號用法)  
While punctuation in a broad sense was used since pre-imperial times, Western punctuation was received in the 19th century, and the 20th century witnessed a standardization of the punctuation.<sup>181</sup>
3. Common Program of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (中國人民政治協商會議共同綱領)  
The seven articles were passed on September 29, 1949 and served as the provisional constitution until 1954.
4. Scheme of the PRC administrative areas and districts (中華人民共和國行政區劃)  
This is a list of the provinces and their capitals. However it is not a map.
5. Chronological timeline of Chinese historical events according to the Western [i.e. Christian/Gregorian] calendar 中國歷代紀元公元紀年表  
The timeline begins 2698 BC with the Yellow Emperor Huangdi 黃帝. It lists the dynasties and era names (*nianhao* 年號) and is followed by a phonetic index to the era names. It ends with the establishment of the PRC on October 1st, 1949 and includes an era name index.
6. Table with the capitals, surface area and population of “all” countries (各國首都、面積、人口一覽表)
7. Table with standard currency of “all” countries (各國本位幣名一覽表)

Westerners, which is different to the existing works in Chinese), is highly problematic. Bottéro, and to a lesser extent Pálfi and Nielsen, pointed out numerous methodical and factual inaccuracies. Cf. Bottéro, Françoise, “Heming Yong & Jing Peng (2008). *Chinese lexicography: a history from 1046 BC to AD 1911*”, in: *Cahiers de linguistique – Asie orientale* 39 1 (2010), 81–94. See also Pálfi, Loránd-Levente, and Bent Nielsen, “Heming Yong & Jing Peng. *Chinese Lexicography: A History from 1046 BC to AD 1911*”, in: *International Journal of Lexicography* 22.3, 335–344.

180 Baller, F. W. [Frederick William], *An Analytical Chinese-English Dictionary*, Shanghai: China Inland Mission and American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1900, 459ff. Accessed online (Sept. 2, 2020): <https://archive.org/details/cu31924023354743>.

181 See: Richter, Mathias, “Punctuation, Premodern”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 4, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 46–55. and Stryjewska, Anna, “Punctuation, Modern”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 3, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 494–501. Also Behr, Wolfgang, and Bernhard Führer, “Einführende Notizen zum Lesen in China mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Frühzeit”, in: *Aspekte des Lesens in China in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Referate der Jahrestagung 2001 der Deutschen Vereinigung für Chinastudien (DVCS)*, ed. by Führer, Bernhard, Bochum: Projekt Verlag, 2005, 1–42. (esp. p. 33 ff) illustrate how punctuation was used since Shang 商 times [ca. 18th–11th century BCE], contrary to popular conception.

8. Table with important commemoration days and holidays (重要紀念日及節日表)
9. Table with Chinese and foreign units of measurement (中外度量衡表)
10. Table of chemical elements (化學元素表)

This table of the chemical elements is in list form, and not yet structured like the periodic table of elements of today where the position of the items reflects their atomic structure. Later editions of the *Xinhua zidian* included the graphically standardized periodic table in their index.

Wei Jiangong and his colleagues originally stated in their “Plan to compile a dictionary” that they wanted to include even more linguistic information, such as kinship addresses in different dialects. Furthermore, the indices that stand on their own and are not part of the appendix were listed as appendix items in the “Plan”. Wei clearly stated that since he wished to abide strictly by the linguistic unit in the main body, the encyclopedic information had to be presented separately. It is safe to say that Wei’s plan was realized and that the appendix not only catered to the “convenience” (*fangbian* 方便) of the user,<sup>182</sup> but also to the legitimacy of the dictionary as standard reference work and tool of not only language prescription but also promotion of state policy.

### 6.3 The *Xinhua Zidian* in Historical Perspective

Apparently, the *Xinhua zidian* was not immediately well-received by potential users. In 1954, an edition which was not ordered phonetically was published. It was instead “ordered [according to] the section headers” (*bushou pailie* 部首排列).<sup>183</sup> It was easier to use for those who memorized the Kangxi radicals but were not familiar enough with the spoken standard language to search for entries in the phonetically arranged book at a satisfying speed. Many new and revised editions followed, which moved away from the direction of Wei Jiangong’s first edition. Wei himself was only involved once again as an advisor in the publication of the 1971 edition.<sup>184</sup>

The role of the *Xinhua zidian* for pupils in the PRC until today cannot be underestimated. It has remained an unsurpassed compromise between conciseness and universality. This was made possible by Wei Jiangong’s narrow definition of the word. The main body of the first *Xinhua zidian* edition has 700 pages; more recent editions are even more compact thanks to improvements in the paper and binding technology. The first edition’s 6840 entries (*tiao* 條, or “articles”), all single-morpheme words, contain at the micro-level an even larger number of compounds.

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182 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Bianji zidian jihua” (2001), 408.

183 Xinhua cishushe 新華辭書社 (ed.), *Bushou pailie Xinhua zidian* 部首排列新華字典 [New China dictionary arranged according to the section headers], Beijing 北京: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe 人民教育出版社, 1954.

184 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiangong* (2007), 193.

Admittedly, the concept of “word” nowadays is more a colloquial and rather intuitively used term.<sup>185</sup> In linguistic science, it is mostly discarded in favor of concepts like lexeme or morpheme. For Wei Jiangong and other linguists of the first half and mid-20th century, however, the concept of the word still played a decisive role, partly due to the fact that technical terminology for the science of language was still being created. Furthermore, the discussion of wordhood has yielded results for lexicography. While Henning Klöter rightfully argued that the distinction between character-dictionaries (*zidian*) and “word”-dictionaries (*cidian*) has been exaggerated, the *cidian* usually just collecting items with any character length, Wei’s discussion of the word as semantic unit has led him to compile a free-morpheme-dictionary that is both comprehensive and concise. The multi-level approach introduced to monolingual Chinese lexicography by the *Ciyuan* and the phonetic sorting popularized by the *Guoyu cidian* developed further by Wei and his compilation team resulted in the first universal pocket dictionary.

In contrast to Wei’s focus on the “semantic unit”, Klöter believes the main driving force behind Chinese lexicographical innovation is alphabetically arranged bilingual dictionaries compiled by missionaries. The phonetic transcription and the alphabetical sorting is certainly also one of Wei Jiangong’s key concerns. However, just as Klöter concluded, the exposure to Western lexicographic traditions did not at all lead to a complete rejection of the Chinese tradition. Instead, as the example of Wei Jiangong and the *Xinhua zidian* illustrates, it led to a hybridization. The digraphic (i.e. characters and transcription, which in the modern-day PRC comprises Hanyu Pinyin) two-level approach preserves the central role of the Chinese character.<sup>186</sup> Similar to other endeavors of language prescription where Wei Jiangong was involved, he and his colleagues strove to adequately conceptualize the Chinese language and script. This was with a view to achieve suitable methods of not only *describing* but also *prescribing* the use of language and script. Suitable “foreign” methodologies were utilized and traditional philological approaches were not only preserved but also refined.

185 Bußmann, Hadumod, “Wort”, in: *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008, 794, see 794.

186 Klöter, Henning, “China from c. 1700” (2019), 333, 338-339.





## Part III

# Shape (*xing* 形)



## Chapter 7

# The Script Reform in the Republic

The famous character simplification took place in the PRC in the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. Hence, the simplified or abbreviated characters (*jiantizi* 簡體字 - 简体字 or *jianhuazi* 簡化字 - 简化字) are usually associated with the Communist government today. However, the basics were already laid out during the Republican era. As previously discussed (see for example page 68), many intellectuals debated the abolition of the script and its replacement by an alphabetic or syllabic spelling, or even the abolition of the language altogether and an introduction of English or Esperanto instead. This was, however, not the whole story. The simplification or partial reform of the characters was an idea that was already floated in the Republic. Even earlier in the late Qing dynasty, the idea to write simpler non-standard characters was formulated. This brings me to the first claim I wish to substantiate in this part on the “shape” of language, i.e. the script: whether it may be non-standard characters or (semi-)cursive forms, the choice of historic character variants shows that the script reform was deeply rooted in Chinese philological tradition.

Wei may have begun with advocating the complete abolition of the Chinese characters. As a second claim, he viewed the development of the script as a progressive development towards a phonetic script (see page 66). Like his teacher Qian Xuantong, he originally anticipated a replacement of the characters by a phonetic script or even a dissolution into such a phonetic script.<sup>1</sup> Yurou Zhong has called this view “phonocentrism” and the pursuits of the linguists and writers a “script revolution”.<sup>2</sup> By not abolishing the characters in the end, this revolution

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1 The idea to replace the characters with a phonetic (alphabetic or syllabic) spelling has been extensively discussed elsewhere. An absolute standard work is: De Francis, John, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China* (1957).

2 Zhong, Yurou, *Chinese Grammarology: Script Revolution and Literary Modernity, 1916–1958* (2019). Zhong speaks of “romanization” when speaking of KMT-endorsed Gwoyeu Romatzyh) and of “latinization” when discussing the Communist Latinxua Sinwenz.

was “contained”, and the affirmative action towards the Chinese script can be counted as emancipation from Western norms.

The script reform debates were also part of Wei’s development. After originally envisaging the total dissolution of the original shape of the characters to purely serve the sound, he would gradually grow fond of the ideas to “partially reform the script”. This would include abbreviating or simplifying it according to millennia-old structural principles. While his Republican views of possible simplified characters merely focus on the graphical aspects, the final chapter on the PRC reforms (chapter 8, page 213) will show a synthesis of conserving graphical principles and reintroducing phonetic aspects into the script. This brings me to my third claim: according to Wei Jiangong’s language concept, sound is the key to meaning. The script reform abided by this principle and made the characters more phonetic again. The methods for implementation included the adoption of existing and creation of new phono-semantic compound characters (*xingshengzi* 形聲字).

While the Republican and PRC periods are highly coherent from the perspective of linguistic science, the political perspective presents a different picture. This brings me to my fourth claim: while Wei’s legitimization of the language policy in the PRC looks different from that of the Republic, he only changed the rhetoric. His basic language concept remained unchanged.

## 7.1 Wei’s Early Views on Script Reform

In the following subsections, I explain how Wei Jiangong began to formulate his views on the Chinese script and the possibility to reform it. He set out asking the general question how spoken and written language interact and grew increasingly fond of phonographic spelling. As early as in 1925, he claimed that a development towards a phonographic spelling was the inevitable evolution all scripts of the world would undergo. If we compare this to the conceptions underlying the simplification of the characters in the PRC, we realize that this idea would have proven to be persuasive. Nevertheless it should be noted that Wei was by far not the only linguist to promote this idea. Another important foundational concept formulated at the time was that it was generally possible to reform any given script.

### 7.1.1 1920–1925: Folk Songs and Script Evolution

Wei Jiangong’s starting point of inquiring into the nature of the Chinese script are folk songs (*geyao* 歌謠). Wei inquired about the relationship that sound (*yin* 音) and shape (*xing* 形) of characters have with meaning (*yi* 義). How should researchers represent a morpheme used in folk songs that clearly do not have a written form? For the singers of these songs, they are not represented by a character. Wei Jiangong addressed this question in a letter to Gu Jiegang in 1920. The term Wei Jiangong uses to refer to dialect words that do not have a clear equiva-

lent is “popular” or “non-standard characters”: *suzi* 俗字. Wei Jianguo also used another key concept in this early letter: “evolution” *jinhua* 進化. The evolution of language resulted in a change of the pronunciation. Some dialects still conserve historical states of the language. Therefore, in this letter of 1920, Wei advocated the representation of these dialect words or *suzi* by characters whose historical pronunciation coincides with the pronunciation in that particular folk song. Wei Jianguo argued explicitly against Shen Jianshi, who said that these words with sound but no character (*you yin wu zi* 有音無字) should only be represented by Zhuyin fuhao.<sup>3</sup>

Wei Jianguo discussed this letter again five years later on October 27, 1925, in his “Reporting [on my own offense] that ‘sound’ does not serve ‘shape’” (Jianju bu “yi ‘sheng’ wei ‘xing’ yi” 檢舉不“以‘聲’為‘形’役”). Here, Wei declared that he has changed his mind completely and that he was wrong. He now believed that phonographic spelling *biaoyin* 標音 is the only reasonable method to graphically represent these words that seem to exist only in the dimension of sound.<sup>4</sup>

### 7.1.2 1925: Script Reform for Evolution

About four months before his vow to employ phonographic spelling, Wei Jianguo advocated abolishing Chinese characters altogether. In his article “Arguing from the tendency of the Chinese script that the characters – square characters – need to be abolished” (Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi lun hanzi – fangkuaizi de yinggai feichu 從中國文字的趨勢上論漢字（方塊字）的應該廢除, published in *Guoyu zhoukan* vol. 8 on August 26, 1925, and written on June 26, 1925,<sup>5</sup> Wei Jianguo not only criticized the characteristics of the Chinese script but also explains his views on its development.

His first article on the topic of script reform (*wenzi gaige* 文字改革) focuses on the concept of evolution and progress. He explains his concept of language and script and of their development over time. He claims that this historical change of the script proves the existence of evolution and subsequently illustrates where this evolution will lead and what role language planning could play. Wei Jianguo opens his discussion with the radical, iconoclastic call to “throw the Chinese characters in the pile of antiquities” (*guidao gudong dui li qu* 歸到古董堆裏去).

The first paradigm of script development Wei establishes is the people’s struggle for the simple and convenient; this is his explanation why people who write have a tendency to scribble unintelligible things. The characters are simply too complicated and the writer wanted to save time.

3 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Guanyu geyao zhong zheng su zi wenti gei Gu Jiegang xiansheng de yi feng xin” (2001), 2.

4 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Jianju bu ‘yi ‘sheng’ wei ‘xing’ yi’” 檢舉不“以‘聲’為‘形’役” [Reporting [on my own offense] that ‘sound’ does not serve ‘shape’], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集, ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 3, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 72–74.

5 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi shang lun hanzi – fangkuaizi – de yinggai feichu” (1925), 4.

On the nature of language, he calls it a “sign” or “symbol” *fuhao* 符號.<sup>6</sup> This symbol is used by a person to express his/her will. Wei identifies it as the most distinctive feature of humankind. Script then is a sign of signs, since it is the spoken sign written down on paper. Both language and script develop incessantly; this “tendency” (*qushi*) cannot be stopped. He implies that someone in the society is trying to petrify the state of the script. While phonetic loan characters (*jiajiezi* 假借字) were already documented in the *Shuowen jiezi*, people today are not allowed to write phonetic loans (*jinren bu xu xie jiajiezi* 今人不許寫假借字, i.e. create new phonetic loans).<sup>7</sup> The script itself, however, has the natural tendency to develop and to evolve. Hence, a script reform introducing phonographic spelling would hasten the natural development.

Wei calls the current state of the evolution of the Chinese script “form development” or “shape evolution” *yanxing* 衍形.<sup>8</sup> For Wei, this means the shape of the characters is the distinctive feature of a semantic unit. We find this expression in Liang Qichao’s “On renovating the citizen” *Xin min shuo* 新民說 from 1902, and it is very probable that Wei deliberately borrowed from him.<sup>9</sup>

列國文字，皆起於衍形。及其進也，則變而衍聲。夫人類之語言，遞相差異，經千數百年後，而必大遠於其朔者，勢使然也。故衍聲之國，言文常可以相合；衍形之國，言文必日以相離。<sup>10</sup>

The script of any given country originated from the development of shape, and the more it developed, the more it changed to a development of sound. The languages of humankind are all very different, and after many thousands of years have passed, they have become very different from what they were before; the circumstances cause this. In the countries in which [script] changes according to the sound, language and writing coincide. In countries in which [script] follows the shape, language and writing drift ever more apart.

This statement of Liang Qichao resonates with the aim of the *guoyu* movement adherents that a congruency of language and writing (*yan wen yizhi*) should be accomplished. Liang continues that a disparity between spoken and written language is detrimental for a country and that the Chinese characters are just too many and too hard to learn.<sup>11</sup>

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6 More information about the “sign” follows in section 7.1.2 on page 199.

7 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi shang lun hanzi – fangkuaizi – de yinggai feichu” (1925), 2.

8 *Yan* 衍 could also be read as a synonym of or a loan for *yan* 演. While also 演 has the meaning of “developing” or “evolving”, the phrase could also be translated as “displaying the shape”.

9 However, Wei Jiangong is immersed in a discourse in which the other linguists participate as well. The same key words (*yanxing*, *yansheng*) are used in: Li Jinxi 黎錦熙, “Quanguo guoyu yundong dahui xuanyan” (1925), 2.

10 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, “Xin min shuo: di shiyi jie: Lun jinbu” 新民說：第十一節：論進步 [On renovating the citizen: section 11: About progress], in: *Xin min congbao* 新民叢報 [New citizen] 11 (1902), 8–20. The punctuation follows: Liang Qichao 梁啟超, “Xin min shuo” 新民說 [On renovating the citizen], in: *Liang Qichao quanji* 梁啟超全集 [Complete works of Liang Qichao], ed. by Zhang Pinxing 張品興, vol. 3: Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, 1999, 655–735, see 684.

11 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, “Xin min shuo” (1999), 684.

Wei Jiāngōng explains this concept of *yanxing*: the Chinese script developed from a state of “script picture” *wenzihua* 文字畫<sup>12</sup>, and its following stages were the different “six scripts” *liushu* 六書 (or six different types of characters). These “six traditionally recognized types of Chinese character structures or usages”<sup>13</sup> are often attributed to Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58–ca. 148) and his *Shuowen jiezi*. However, they are not only attested earlier, and it is also not certain that Xu Shen himself wrote the postface to his dictionary.<sup>14</sup> They are:

1. *zhishi* 指事 (literally, indicate matters; indicative): *shang* 上 (up) and *xia* 下 (down)
2. *xiangxing* 象形 (literally, resembling form; pictographic): *ri* 日 (sun) and *yue* 月 (moon)
3. *xingsheng* 形聲 (form and sound, i.e. signific-phonetic): *jiang* 江 (river), *he* 河 (river)
4. *huiyi* 會意 (literally, combine meanings; associative): *wu* 武 (military), *xin* 信 (trust)
5. *zhuanzhu* 轉注 (literally, turned and annotated; notative): *kao* 考 (old) and *lao* 老 (old)
6. *jiajie* 假借 (literally, false borrowing; borrowed or rebus characters): *ling* 令 (order), *zhang* 長 (far back)<sup>15</sup>

Wei Jiāngōng presents the six categories in the following order: “pictographic” (*xiangxing*), “indicative” (*zhishi*), “associative” (*huiyi*). For him, these is evidence of the “shape development” (*yanxing*) of the script. He then continues with the signific-phonetic compound characters (*xingsheng*) followed by the borrowed characters (*jiajie*; he does not mention *zhuanzhu*). With this sequence, he argues that the *liushu* show a development from a pictographic to a phonographic writing, with *xingshengzi* and especially *jiajiezi* as the closest the Chinese script could come to such a phonographic writing. Wei Jiāngōng believed that the *jiajiezi* illustrated how the script already entered a half-phonographic period (*ban yinfu de shidai* 半音符的時代). Only a small step to the state of “sound development” *yan-sheng* 衍聲 would be needed, and the natural evolution points to that direction. That characters are often mixed up in everyday usage indicates the introduction of a phonographic spelling would be the logical consequence. Wei then ends with an enthusiastic call for the abolition of the Chinese characters (*hanzi* 漢字). Such a reform would simply speed up the natural evolution that is taking place.<sup>16</sup>

12 I decided not to call it “pictogram” because that term is the following state of development.

13 Boltz, William G., “Liù shū 六書 (Six Scripts)”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Bybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 616–624, see 616.

14 Boltz, William G., “Liù shū 六書 (Six Scripts)” (2017), 617.

15 Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 35.

16 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi shang lun hanzi – fangkuaizi – de yinggai feichu” (1925).

The alternative writing schemes Wei Jiāngōng presents are Zhuyin and Wade-Giles,<sup>17</sup> giving preference to the former.<sup>18</sup> As I pointed out in my first discussion of the article above (section 3.2.2, page 66) Wei believed sound is the crucial means for transporting meaning. The fact that there are many homophonic characters does not bother him – he sees the misspellings (“scholar” *shi* 士 instead of “to be” *shi* 是, as an example) as proof that sound and context matter for the identification of a semantic unit.<sup>19</sup>

Another text that advocates language engineering going hand in hand with script evolution is Wei Jiāngōng’s “New historical materials and old mentality” (*Xin shiliao yu jiu xinli* 新史料與舊心理), published in the weekly magazine of the National Learning (*guoxue*) department of Peking University in 1926. In it, Wei Jiāngōng elaborates on his concept of language change as a process of evolution. He states that the change (*bianqian* 變遷) of language and script is not degeneration or retrogression (*tuihua* 退化), but evolution or progress (*jinhua* 進化).<sup>20</sup> These two terms, especially in juxtaposition, imply a teleological concept of evolution, one of advancement (*jin* 進), while the alternative development would be retreat (*tui* 退).

Darwinism came to China in the late 19th century. The concept of evolution prevalent in early 20th century China encompassed not only the idea that evolution was some sort of progress constantly leading to a somehow improved state but also struggle for survival. It was “submerged in extrascientific discourse about the nature of historical progress and China’s ability to compete with other nation-states.”<sup>21</sup> The first step in the reception of evolutionary theory was Yan Fu’s *Tiānyān lùn* 天演論, an interpretational translation or paraphrase of T. H. Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* (1896–1898). A translation of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (originally published in 1859) only appeared in parts in 1903

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17 The Wade-Giles romanization was created by Sir Thomas Francis Wade (1818–1895) and improved and popularized by Herbert Allen Giles (1845–1835) in the 19th century. It was the standard transcription for most Western countries for the most of the 20th century. See: Wippermann, Dorothea, “Transcription Systems: Wade-Giles (English)”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 432–436.

18 I deduce the inclination towards Zhuyin because it is employed significantly more often in his writings. The fact that Zhuyin represents the Chinese syllable structure (initial, medial, rhyme/final, see 46 on page 58) may also be a reason why the phonologist Wei preferred it. Cf. Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 18ff. See also page 79.

19 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi shang lun hanzi – fangkuai – de yinggai feichu” (1925).

20 See: Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Xin shiliao yu jiu xinli” 新史料與舊心理 [New historical materials and old mentality], in: *Beijing daxue yanjiusuo guoxuemen zhoukan* 北京大學研究所國學們週刊 [Weekly review of the Institute of Sinology of Peking University] 2.15/16 (1926), 19–31, see 25. See also: Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Xin shiliao yu jiu xinli” 新史料與舊心理 [New historical materials and old mentality], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 127–140, see 133.

21 Schneider, Laurence, *Biology and Revolution in Twentieth-Century China*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003, 42–43.



and 1904, and then completely in 1920 by Ma Junwu 馬君武 (1881–1940) with the title *Wuzhong yuanshi* 物種原始.<sup>22</sup>

In the article “New historical materials and old mentality”, Wei Jianguo also reiterates his basic concepts of language and script:

語言是用聲音表現的大家公認而實行傳達意志的符號。運用繪畫的方法將語言拿有形的符號記載下來就是文字；文字就成了符號的符號。符號是人造的，不是一成不變古今如一的；所以語言文字便有了變遷。語言文字的變遷並不是退化的，是進化的；因為符號怎樣用的方便便怎樣的用，所以規定非常活動，隨時可以修改。修改次數越多，簡便的程度越深，這就是進化的標準。<sup>23</sup>

Language is a commonly recognized symbol that finds its expression in sound, thereby realizing the transmission of intention. Applying the technique of drawing to express the language in writing is script. In this fashion, script is a sign of a sign. Signs are man-made; they are not unalterable and uniform in ancient times and today. Therefore, language and script have changed. The change of language and script is not a retrogression but progress. Because signs are used in a way that is convenient, their rules are very flexible, and they can be altered any time. The more they have been altered, the more they become simple and convenient. This is the standard of progress.

By stating that regulations are flexible and they can be changed anytime, Wei goes one step further than the previous article. He argues more outspokenly that language engineering is possible and worthwhile. Since one can interfere with natural development, and this interference is recommended, it will lead to speeding up evolution. This will culminate in progress.

The term “sign” reminds readers of today of Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotics (he called it *sémiologie*). However, secondary literature points out that de Saussure’s ideas did not arrive in China until the 1930s.<sup>24</sup> Hence, it is not likely that Wei Jianguo has read de Saussure’s *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916).<sup>25</sup> Therefore, I think that both “sign” and “symbol” can be suitable translations for *fuhao*, since Wei Jianguo uses the term in its general meaning. Still, Wei Jianguo’s concept of this “sign” resonates with Saussure’s *l’arbitraire du signe* (the

22 Yang, Haiyan, “Encountering Darwin and Creating Darwinism in China” (2013).

23 From Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Xin shiliao yu jiu xinli” (1926), 25. and Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Xin shiliao yu jiu xinli” (2001), 133.

24 See: Zhang, Yanfei, and Shaojie Zhang, “How and Why Saussure is Misread in China: A Historical Study”, in: *Language and History* 57.2 (2014), 149–67, see 150. See also: He Jiuying 何九盈, *Zhongguo xiandai yuyanxue shi* 中国现代语言学史 [History of Modern Linguistics in China], Zhaoqing 肇庆: Guangdong jiaoyu chubanshe 广东教育出版社, 1994, 177. The term *fuhaoxue* 符號學 today that denotes semiotics was presented in 1926 by Zhao Yuanren to mean symbolics or symbology. See: Zhao Yuanren 趙元任, “Fuhaoxue dagang” 符號學大綱 [Outline of symbolics], in: Kexue [Science] 5 (1926), 571–591. Zhao published a continuation of his article in volume 11.

25 A Japanese translation was made only in 1928. Toyama, Tomonori, “Semiotics in Japan”, in: *The Semiotic Sphere*, ed. by Sebeok, Thomas A., and Jean Umiker-Sebeok, New York / London: Plenum Press, 1986, 328.

arbitrariness of the sign). However, Wei Jiāngōng does not make Saussure's clear distinction between *langue* and *parole*.<sup>26</sup>

These early texts can be considered as preparation for Wei Jiāngōng's involvement in the script reform. Below, I will argue that Wei Jiāngōng was especially fond of increasing the phonetic information in the Chinese characters. This matches his concept that the script evolves in the direction of a phonographic writing, and that the purpose of reform is to ensure the script reaches this stage faster.

### 7.1.3 1935: Science and Script Reform

In 1935, Wei Jiāngōng explained his views on the relationship between science and script reform, using the example of the history of phonology as a scholarly discipline. He connects the “script reform movement” (*wenzi gaige yundong* 文字改革運動) with the import of Western linguistics.

In the first part of his “Historical draft of Chinese phonology” (*Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang*), he gave an overview of the different disciplines researching language and script and explains their objective. Then, he explained how “philology” *xiaoxue* came to be linguistics and assigned the script reform movement a role in this history and established its connection with the import of Western linguistic's phonetics:

近代國勢的凌替，引起了文字改革運動。由文字改革運動的需要，音標文字的創制發軔了。往日由外來文字的方法上引申出的分析字音的方法更加滋長，脫了文字的牽絆。純粹語言的科學很增加了許多新的色彩。這是與文字改革運動同時起的科學文明的影響。清儒成就的意義已進了“語學”範圍，今後由“語音學”的輸入洗滌了前此的韻學中的玄學霧霧，再加“語言學”的培養，可以更進一步建設起科學的中國語言學來了。<sup>27</sup>

The decline of national strength nowadays led to the script reform movement. Out of the demand for the script reform movement began the creation of a phonetic script. In former days, the reception of the methods of foreign script led to an increase of methods for the analysis of the sound of characters. This took away the impediment of the script/characters. Pure language science increased by many colors. This is the influence of science and civilization that came up simultaneously with the script reform movement. The significance of the Qing scholars' achievements already entered the scope of “*yuxue*”.<sup>28</sup> From then on, the import of “phonetics” (*yuyinxue*) cleansed phonology (*yunxue*) from the formerly existing mist of spiritualism.<sup>29</sup> A for-

26 Compare: Bußmann, Hadumod, “Zeichen”, in: *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008, 806. Compare also: Bußmann, Hadumod, “Bezeichnendes vs. Bezeichnetes”, in: *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*, Stuttgart: Kröner, 2008, 89.

27 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “*Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang*” (2001), 131.

28 *Yuxue* 語學 is an earlier term for linguistics that was most likely transmitted to Wei Jiāngōng from Japan (Japanese: *gogaku*) via Zhang Binglin (who was in Japan at the time of publication): Zhang Shixue 章氏學 [Binglin 炳麟], “Wenxue shuo li (xu di wu hao)” 文學說例 (續第五號) [Explaining examples from literature (continuing number five)], in: *Xin min congbao* 新民叢報 [New Citizen] 9 (1902), 7–12, see 65. Here, Wei uses the term in a sense of proto-linguistics.

29 Maybe even “esotericism”.

mation in “linguistics” (*yuyanxue*) was added. This led to a step forward towards the establishment of Chinese linguistics (*Zhongguo yuyanxue*) as a science.

This explanation is followed by a further explanation of foreign influence on Chinese language study. He especially mentions the Indian influence.<sup>30</sup> Apart from an influence on language study, the contact with foreign languages and scripts also lead to the development of phonetic spellings:

先由中外交通引起語言文字的接觸，接觸上的困難需要解決，就產生了幫助漢字注音的方法；

中外交通以後，國族的危亡問題引起愛國保種的運動，就首先發生開通民智從改革文字著手的主張。

前一句話是外來的要求，後一句話是自我的覺悟。從這兩個方面演成國音字母的兩套音標：注音符號與國語羅馬字。<sup>31</sup>

Communication between China and other countries led to a contact with [their] language and script; difficulties in communication had to be solved, and this is why the method of using a phonetic transcription for the Chinese characters as a help was created;

Since China had begun to interact with others, the problem of the Chinese race being in peril led to the patriotic protection movement, and the first endeavor was to strive to remove all obstacles for the intelligence of the people through script reform.

The first statement describes a demand from outside; the second describes a self-realization. These two aspects led to the two different tables of national phonetic script: Zhuyin fuhao and Gwoyeu Romatzyh).

These transcription systems did not materialize from thin air. Wei Jianguo takes the reader back to the earliest Latin transcriptions developed by Western missionaries, and focuses especially on Nicholas Trigault's (Jin Nige 金尼閣, 1577–1628) work *Xi ru er mu zi* 西儒耳目資 (Aid to the ear and eye of the Western scholar). Wei explains how it was indeed an aid to either ear or eye: it enabled the reader to find a character according to the sound (*yi yin qiu zi* 依音求字) or a sound according to the character (*yi zi qiu yin* 依字求音).<sup>32</sup> It was, however, based on Western orthographic practice. Wei proceeds chronologically and mentions the developers of indigenous transcription systems, beginning with Lu Zhuangzhang who developed the “phonetic writing” *qieyinzi* 切音字 that can be traced to the *fanqie* principle of spelling according to initials and rhymes, which goes back to respecting the Chinese syllable structure.<sup>33</sup> Wang Zhao's “Mandarin alphabet” *guanhua zimu* 官話字母 then followed; its author was inspired by the Japanese *kana* scripts<sup>34</sup> that graphically draw, in a similar fashion to later Chinese tran-

30 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang” (2001), 133.

31 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang” (2001), 173.

32 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang” (2001), 176.

33 Kaske, Elisabeth, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (2008), 97.

34 Wippermann, Dorothea, *Das Phonetische Alphabet Zhuyin Zimu – Entstehung und Verbreitung im Zuge der Nationalsprachlichen Bewegung in der Republik China 1912–1949* (1985), 13.

scriptions, from Chinese characters or their components.<sup>35</sup> Wei then focuses on Lao Naixuan's 勞乃宣 (1843–1921) “Simple characters” *jianzi* 簡字,<sup>36</sup> which are an extension of Wang's *guanhua zimu*. This development culminates in the invention of *guoyin zimu* 國音字母, “national phonetic alphabet”, later known known as Zhuyin Zimu/Fuhao.

Despite Wei's preference for Zhuyin – he employs it as a baseline of national pronunciation – his goal was not to discuss the perks of each of the systems. In *Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang*, he wanted to outline the language or pronunciation they represent. I have already described in Part I how the phonological research into the development of the Mandarin dialects was employed to legitimize a Beijing-pronunciation-based standard language. Relating to a possible reform or even replacement of the script, or at least with an auxiliary spelling, the question of a pronunciation standard is more significant if the script aims at unambiguously representing sound. While Western transcriptions were indeed the crucial impetus, Wei and many of his colleagues preferred looking to the traditional inventory to tackle script reform.

## 7.2 Simplified Characters with a Historical Basis

Looking into traditional philological inventory during Republican times provided reformers the basics for the upcoming script reform. The following subsections discuss Wei Jiangong's perception that simplified characters had a long history, the role played by “vulgar characters” (*suzi*) and the simplification ideas that saw the light of day.

### 7.2.1 Vulgar Characters, Simplified Characters

Wei Jiangong may have been most famous as a phonologist, but his role as a paleographer cannot be overlooked either. In his lecture on the historical evolution of the Chinese characters' shape (*Hanzi xingtí biānqiǎnshǐ* 漢字形體變遷史) at the Southwestern United University (Xinan lianhe daxue, dated 1937 or later), Wei makes reference to the current “trend” (*chaoliu* 潮流) of simplified characters (*jiǎntǐzì* 簡體字).<sup>37</sup> This “vogue” had begun with Qian Xuantong's idea in 1920 that his students would increase the speed of their note taking if they adopted (*caiqǔ* 採取) the following eight simplification ideas (Qian numbered them a-h):

1. old characters (*guzi* 古字): *xiong* 胸 - 匈 (chest)
2. non-standard characters (*suzi*): *sheng* 聲 - 声 (sound)
3. cursive script characters (*caoshu* 草書): *dong* 東 - 东 (East)<sup>38</sup>

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35 Müller-Yokota, Wolfram, “Schrift und Schriftgeschichte”, in: *Sprache und Schrift Japans*, ed. by Lewin, Bruno, Leiden: Brill, 185–221, see 195, 199.

36 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Zhongguo shengyunxue shigang” (2001), 202ff.

37 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Hanzi xingtí biānqiǎnshǐ” (2001), 42. Bökset also writes of a “vogue”: Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 11.

38 Qian Xuantong 錢玄同, “Jiansheng hanzi bihua de tiyi” 減省漢字筆畫底提議 [Proposition to reduce the strokes of Chinese characters], in: *Xin qingnian* 新青年 [*La Jeunesse*] 7.3 (1920), 111–116, see 112.

4. homophonic loan characters from old books (*gu shu shang de tongyin jiajiezi* 古書上的同音假借字): *gong* 供 (*gōng* = supply, *gòng* = confess, offer sacrifices) - *gòng* 共 (share, common, together)
5. popular homophonic loan characters (*tongsu de tongyin jiajiezi* 通俗的同音假借字): *jiang* 薑 - 姜 (ginger, also a surname)
6. newly drafted homophonic loan characters (*xin ni de tongyin jiajiezi* 新擬的同音假借字): *fan* 範 - 范 (pattern, model, scope, also a surname)<sup>39</sup>
7. newly drafted semantic loan characters (*xin ni de jie yi zi* 新擬的借義字): *nao* 腦 (brain) - *xin* 囟 (fontanel)<sup>40</sup>
8. newly drafted reduced stroke characters (*xin ni de jiansheng bihua zi* 新擬的減省筆畫字): *li* 歷 - 历 (history)<sup>41</sup>

This list shows the basic principles of the creation of simplified characters or even their rediscovery. Adoption of existing non-standard variants was called for even earlier, namely by Lufei Kui in 1909, whose views on the *sutizi* 俗體字 I discuss below in section 8.2 on page 227. In general, analysis of Qian's eight approaches to simplifying the Chinese script shows the following: the fundamental construction principles that would lead to the simplified characters of the PRC were not only known in the Republic; they are deeply rooted in the Chinese script tradition. In terms of structural principles, some of Qian's categories overlap. Numbers 1, 2, 4 and 7 are characterized by an omission of components. The following will show how Wei Jianguo navigated this background.

Concluding his previous lectures, Wei presents the two tendencies in the history of the script, namely “avoiding complexity” (*bi fan* 避繁) and “eliminating the strange” (*qu guai* 去怪). As well, he discusses the two extremes between which the script development oscillated, namely “restriction” (*ju* 拘) and “liberation” (*fang* 放).<sup>42</sup>

“Avoiding complexity”, however, did not necessarily mean that the characters lost their complexity. Wei Jianguo indicates how the “vulgar” or “popular characters” (*suzi*) are not simpler or contain fewer strokes than the standard forms. Since many *suzi* were created with more explicit phonetics or include clearer semantic components, some of them may be more complex. Still, for the most part of the use in daily life, Wei argues, *suzi* tended towards simplification.

For these reasons, Wei continues, the recently proposed *jiantizi* are by no means only informed by *suzi*. He presents another method of simplifying the characters: the replacement of components with their cursive (*caoshu*) forms, i.e. replacing a complex element with a simple one. Since clarity and recognizability are key, these *jiantizi* were often written in regular (or standard) script form (*kaishu zhi tishi* 楷書之體勢).<sup>43</sup>

39 In numbers 4, 5 and 6 we see a convergence of different characters.

40 Qian Xuanton 錢玄同, “Jiansheng hanzi bihua de tiyi” (1920), 113.

41 Qian Xuanton 錢玄同, “Jiansheng hanzi bihua de tiyi” (1920), 114.

42 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi xingtí bianqianshi” (2001), 42.

43 See Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi xingtí bianqianshi” (2001), 42. See also section 7.2.2 on page 207.

While in the future Wei sees no constraint (*jushu* 拘束) for the creation (or appearance, *shengzhang* 生長) of *jiantizi*, given their long history,<sup>44</sup> he also acknowledges that official intervention in this development is desirable. For him, the circulation of “handwritten characters” *shoutouzi* 手头字<sup>45</sup> circulating in Shanghai news and culture magazines<sup>46</sup> and the official publication of the “List of simplified characters” (*Jiantizi biao* 簡體字表)<sup>47</sup> by the KMT government (both circulated in 1935) were important steps in the right direction. The idea behind the *shoutouzi* was to turn widely used handwritten short forms into a font for printing. It must be pointed out that both lists already contain a large amount of characters that would later be made official in the PRC reforms. Many of the proposed simplified characters on the two lists were created by omitting or contracting one or several components of the characters.

Both the list of *shoutouzi* and the *Jiantizi biao* not only show a considerable overlap but also a large number of characters that would later be officially adopted in the PRC. The main approach used during the Republican era was to decrease complexity in a graphical way: components are omitted, contracted or replaced by components with lesser strokes. The vast majority, however, are not newly created characters but existing variants. A list of examples can be found at the end of this chapter (see 7.2.3 on page 209). All of the listed characters would then be made official in the PRC reforms.

This approach to the simplification of the characters makes it evident that this reform approach is very different from the call to replace the characters with phonetic spelling (be it Latin/Western or based on the Chinese characters). This was important for Wei Jianguo. Wei stresses that simplified characters have significant components to them (*zhu yi* 注義, literally: to annotate meaning). Different from *jianzi* or Zhuyin as a phonetic transcription, reformed characters will constitute a new system of shape and sound (*xin xing sheng xitong* 新形聲系統).<sup>48</sup>

44 Wei claims that they can be traced back to the Han dynasty. For the vast majority, this is true. Bökset, however, presents the earliest appearance of *jiantizi* created by omitting a part as early as some time between 770 and 476 BC (Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 174.). He also points out that Huang Lizhou 黄梨洲 (1610–1695, given name Zhongyi 宗義) already advocated the use of *suzi* with lesser strokes. Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi xingtí bianqianshi” (2001), 42.

45 Or “simplified handy characters (for daily usage)”, as translated by Zhang Liqing 张立青. Zhou Youguang 周有光 [translated by Zhang Liqing 张立青], *Zhongguo yuwen de shidai yanjin* (2003), 61.

46 The mission statement of the initiators (*faqiren* 發起人, among them Ba Jin, Ye Shengtao and Lao She 老舍 (1899–1966), but not Wei Jianguo) and a first list of *shoutouzi* was published in several magazines, such as *Shenghuo jiaoyu* 生活教育 (Life and Education) and *Xinsheng zhokan* 新生週刊 (New Life Weekly). See also: Ding Shujing 丁淑靜 et al., “Tuixing shoutouzi yuanqi” 推行手头字緣起 [Mission statement of the promotion of handwritten characters], in: *Taibai* 太白 [Venus] 1.21 (1935). *Venus* (*taibai* lit.: great white) refers to the star.

47 The “List” is based on Qian Xuantong’s work on the “Table of simplified characters” (*Jiantizi pu* 簡體字譜) from the same year. Apart from Qian, other notable linguists who participated in the drafting of the “List” included Li Jinxi, Wang Yi, and Zhao Yuanren. He Jiuying 何九盈, *Zhongguo xiandai yuyanxue shi* (1994), 484.

48 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi xingtí bianqianshi” (2001), 43.

### 7.2.2 The Partial Reform of the Chinese Characters

In 1937, Wei Jianguo published his view on a possible “partial” (*jubu* 局部) transformation/reform (*gaizao* 改造) and his comments on the current reform propositions and graphemic research.<sup>49</sup> He first outlines his general concerns and then comments on the *Jiantizi biao*, the “Dictionary of simplified characters” (*Jiantizi zidian* 簡體字典) by Rong Geng 容庚 (1894–1983) and Huang Zhongming’s 黃仲明 research on the semi-cursive script (*xingshu* 行書).<sup>50</sup>

Wei describes the current state of the script debate and presents the three approaches to reforming the Chinese writing:

1. abolish the characters altogether (*genben feichu* 根本廢除)
2. partially reform the characters (*jubu gaizao* 局部改造)
3. add help to the characters (*fujia bangzhu* 附加幫助)<sup>51</sup>

The first option, the abolition of the characters, is still the preferred prospect for Wei. However, he regards it as unrealistic. The majority of the population would not be able to accept an abolition for two reasons: the ability of the characters to hold the Chinese nation together, and the difficult separation between the spoken language and the script. Thus it would cause the abolition of the characters to be confused with the abolition of the Chinese language altogether. The third option is the addition of a phonetic spelling like *Zhuyin fuhao* to the characters. In this article, he concentrates on the second option: the partial reform of the characters.<sup>52</sup>

As Wei stated (and has already said so on different occasions), partial reforms must be based on natural linguistic development, which is characterized by the gradual, involuntary change of speech and script. Script is merely a tool to represent the spoken language on paper; both language and script change incessantly. Wei describes how “our people” (*women de minzhong* 我們的民眾) is ingenious in using and adapting the script. He illustrates how people use and adapt the script, employing one specific figure of speech that appears all over his text. This figure of speech also encapsulates his beliefs on the principle for reform: *you jing you quan* 有經有權. It can be translated rather literally: the people “had the classics

49 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi jubu gaizao de wenti – jiantizibiao, jiantizidian he biao zhun xingshu shuping” 漢字局部改造的問題 – 簡體字表, 簡體字典和標準行書書評 [The question of a partial reform of the Chinese characters – commentary on the List of simplified characters, the Simplified character dictionary and the standard semi-cursive script], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 169–187. Originally published in the journal *Yishibao: Dushu zhoukan* 益世報·讀書周刊 (*Social Welfare Daily: Reading Weekly* (supplement)) volumes 93 and 94. The English translation of the journal title is from Fung, Edmund S. K., *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity* (2010), 181.

50 Huang Zhongming 黃仲明, “Biaozhun xingshu zhi yanjiu” 標準行書之研究 [Research on a standardized semi-cursive script], in: *Dongfang Zazhi* 東方雜誌 [*Eastern Miscellany*] 33.7 (1936), 195–211. *Xingshu* is sometimes also called “running script” or “cursive”. By calling it “semi-cursive”, I follow Wilkinson, see Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2018), 34.

51 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi jubu gaizao de wenti – jiantizibiao, jiantizidian he biao zhun xingshu shuping” (2001), 169.

52 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi jubu gaizao de wenti – jiantizibiao, jiantizidian he biao zhun xingshu shuping” (2001), 169.

and the insight into the ideal moment”,<sup>53</sup> but the general philosophical concept called *jing quan shuo* 經權說 and *jing quan lun* 經權論 actually goes back well into pre-Imperial times.<sup>54</sup> In philosophical terms, it describes how the *Dao* 道 is laid out in principle and how it adapts to the circumstances. In more general terms, it also states a traditional fixed rule may have to be disregarded to suit one particular situation.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, Wei explains, *jing* 經<sup>56</sup> is some sort of core that needs to be continued (*yin* 因), whereas elements affected by *quan* 權 can be dismissed or altered (*ge* 革). Since the people naturally know which elements in the script should be continued and those that should be dismissed, Wei calls for an adoption of characters and simplification methods that developed among the common people. These characters and methods are “established by custom” (*yue ding su cheng* 約定俗成), a phrase Wei and other reformers like to quote from *Xunzi* 荀子 (ca. 3rd cent. BCE).<sup>57</sup> This concept is represented by the principle of “adopt the existing ones and do not create new ones” (*shu er bu zuo* 述而不作) in the official explanations accompanying the Republican *Jiantizi biao*.<sup>58</sup>

Many of these existing character variants, however, have been called “vulgar” (*su* 俗, also: popular, non-standard), and are juxtaposed with “correct” (*zheng* 正, also: standard, orthodox) characters. Between these two extremes on the spectrum of the social status of character variants, Wei proposes a third category: “common” (*tong* 通). Wei then offers an explanation for these three categories that removes them from the realm of prestige and enters the realm of chronology. “Correct” characters have been established longer. “Vulgar” characters have been newly created and are therefore simply not accepted yet. They are not inferior or “erroneous” (*e* 訛), but chronologically younger. It is not a question of quality, but of chronology. Newly created characters were called *su* because they lacked tradition. The different categories are fluid and change with time. Today’s “erroneous” or “vulgar” may be tomorrow’s “standard” and “correct”.<sup>59</sup>

53 Hintzen, Geor, “The Place of Law in the PRC’s Culture”, in: *Cultural Dynamics* 11.2 (1999), 167–192, see 184.

54 Jiang Qing 蒋庆, *Gongyang xue yinlun* [Introduction to the study of the Gongyang commentary], Shenyang 沈阳: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe 辽宁教育出版社, 1995, 232ff.

55 Zhang Dainian quotes the passage *Li Lou* 離婁 I, 17 from the *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子), that states even if men and women are not to touch each other, a man should still grab his sister-in-law to save her from drowning, to show that *quan* can be translated as “assessment”. Zhang, Dainian, *Key concepts in Chinese philosophy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, 358.

56 The term *jing* originally denoted “warp” (from weaving) and subsequently metaphorically meant “rule”, “canon”, “guiding thread”, “guideline”. See: Unger, Ulrich, *Grundbegriffe der altchinesischen Philosophie: ein Wörterbuch für die Klassische Periode*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000, 48.

57 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi jubu gaizao de wenti – jiantizibiao, jiantizidian he biao zhun xingshu shuping” (2001), 170. Wei here uses it as general ideal concept for reforms, but it can also characterize one particular character variant. Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 6.

58 Jiaoyu bu 教育部 [Ministry of Education], “Jiantizi biao” 簡體字表 [Table of simplified characters], in: *Xiang-E tielu xunkan* 湘鄂鐵路旬刊 [Ten-day periodical of the Hunan-Hubei railway] 117 (1935), 19–21, see 20. See also: Zhou Youguang 周有光 [translated by Zhang Liqing 张立青], *Zhongguo yuwen de shidai yanjin* (2003), 61.

59 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi jubu gaizao de wenti – jiantizibiao, jiantizidian he biao zhun xingshu shuping” (2001), 170–171.



According to Wei, an example of this categorization and its chronological explanation is found in Tang dynasty: Yan Yuansun's 顏元孫 (d. 732) orthography dictionary *Ganlu zishu* 干祿字書 (Lexicon for Seeking a Salary).<sup>60</sup> This volume and other reference books of the Tang dynasty mark the introduction of a standardized orthography that became a crucial criterion for the examinations of scholar-officials.<sup>61</sup> Wei explains how the Tang ended an era where writers had a certain orthographic freedom and began an era of standardization of writing norms thanks to a wider spread of block printing.<sup>62</sup> The Tang also marked the introduction of *kaishu* as predominant script for block printing.<sup>63</sup>

*Kaishu* provided the graphical standard for the ROC "List of Simplified Characters". The adopted simpler *caoshu* variants were "kai-ized" (*kaitihua* 楷體化 or *kaihua* 楷化).<sup>64</sup> In other words, their shape was adapted to *kaishu*. The explanations accompanying the "List" state that while the round forms of *caoshu* are well-suited for handwriting, the straight lines and sharper angles of *kaishu* make it suitable for printing. Wei did not believe that handwriting and printing types had to be the same.<sup>65</sup>

Adopting existing graphical solutions to decrease the complexity of the characters was also pursued by the two scholars whose work Wei discussed: Rong Geng and his *Jianti zidian* and Huang Zhongming's research on a standardized semi-cursive script. Rong's dictionary already contained 138 characters that would later be adopted in the PRC reforms, most of which are the results of

- 60 Wei also examined it in its secondary capacity as rhyme book. Cf. his 1939 article: Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Tāngdài xīngyōng de yī zhōng yūnshū de mùcì (*Gānlù zìshū* suǒ jù yūnmù kǎo)" 唐代行用的一種韻書的目次 (《干祿字書》所據韻目考) [The table of contents of a rhyme book in use during the Tang period (examination of the rhymes in the *Ganlu zishu*)], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wénjí* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiāochūn 叶笑春, Rong Wénmín 戎文敏, Zhōu Fāng 周方 and Mǎ Zhēnxīng 马镇兴, vol. 2, Nanjing 南京: Jiāngsū jiàoyù chūbānshè 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 317–338.
- 61 McNair, Amy, "Public Values in Calligraphy and Orthography in the Tang Dynasty", in: *Monumenta Serica* 43 (1995), 263–278, see 263.
- 62 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Hānzì jùbù gāizāo de wèntí – jiāntìzìbiāo, jiāntìzìdiān hé biāozhūn xīngshū shūpíng" (2001), 170.
- 63 Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 33.
- 64 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Hānzì jùbù gāizāo de wèntí – jiāntìzìbiāo, jiāntìzìdiān hé biāozhūn xīngshū shūpíng" (2001), 178.
- 65 See Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, "Hānzì jùbù gāizāo de wèntí – jiāntìzìbiāo, jiāntìzìdiān hé biāozhūn xīngshū shūpíng" (2001), 173. As well, during the PRC simplification discussions, keeping different styles in handwriting and printing was debated. For example, some argued that the cursive forms like 东 or 车 (car) should be confined to handwriting, while 東 and 車 should be printed. The cursive variants were only officially adopted in 1964. Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 138.

omissions and contractions.<sup>66</sup> His sources were historical *suzi* and *caoshu*.<sup>67</sup> Wei summarizes Rong's concept of script development as a straight line beginning from the ancient script (*guwen* 古文) and progressing towards the future in different stages: the small seal script (*xiaozhuan* 小篆), the clerical/official script (*li* 隸), standard/regular script (*kai* 楷), semi-cursive (*xing* 行), and cursive (*cao* 草), and finally simplified (*jiantizi* 簡體字).<sup>68</sup> Wei juxtaposes his own view on script development, presenting a two-dimensional model where *lishu* and *caoshu* existed synchronously, while *xingshu* split off from *lishu* before the establishment of *kaishu* and hence existed in parallel to both. From *kai* over *xing* to *cao*, he sees a gradual decrease of complexity (*fan* 繁) and increase of simplicity (*jian* 簡) while they also coexist(ed). He furthermore claims that Xu Shen's *liushu* do not apply for the characters after the seal script, which comprise all scripts from *lishu* onwards.<sup>69</sup> While Wei is aware of the limited explanatory power of the *liushu*, he neither mentions Tang Lan's 唐蘭 (1901–1979) theory of three character types (*sanshu shuo* 三書說) that was published in 1935<sup>70</sup> nor does he propose his own idea.

As well, Huang Zhongming's *xingshu* shows a discernible overlap with the already mentioned simplification schemes. It entails, for example, *men* 門 - 门 (door) and *bei* 貝 - 贝 (shell).<sup>71</sup> They are characterized by a contraction of strokes and variants that would be adopted in the PRC in the 1960s. However, Huang concentrated on character components, some of which do not have the capacity

66 For a list of the characters, see: Zhao Ping'an 赵平安, "Rong Geng he ta de *jiantizi dian*" 容庚先生和他的《简体字典》[Rong Geng and his 'dictionary of simplified characters'], in: *Yuwen Jianshe* 语文建设 [Language construction] 1 (1997), 42. See also: Xuan Jiancong 禰健聰, "*jiantizi dian* he Rong Geng de hanzi jianhua yanjiu" 《简体字典》和容庚的汉字简化研究 [The 'dictionary of simplified characters' and Rong Geng's research on the simplification of Chinese characters], in: *Zhongguo wenzixue bao* 中国文字学报 [Journal of Chinese graphemics] 7 (2017), 34–44. An example of omission is *hao* 號 - 号 (number, appellation, et al.). It must be noted, however, that 号 was probably the older variant as both appear in the *Shuowen jiezi* and the entry 號 makes reference to 号. See: Li Leyi 李乐毅, *Jianhuazi yuan* [Origin of simplified characters], Beijing 北京: Huayu jiaoxue chubanshe 华语教学出版社 [Sinolingua], 1996, 97.

67 Xuan Jiancong 禰健聰, "*jiantizi dian* he Rong Geng de hanzi jianhua yanjiu" (2017), 34.

68 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Hanzi jubu gaizao de wenti - jiantizibiao, jiantizidian he biao zhun xingshu shuping" (2001), 179.

69 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Hanzi jubu gaizao de wenti - jiantizibiao, jiantizidian he biao zhun xingshu shuping" (2001), 180.

70 Tang Lan proposed the *sanshu* theory in his *Guwenzixue daolun* 古文字學導論 (Introduction to paleography): (1) "graphs depicting figures" *xiangxing wenzi* 象形文字 (2) "graphs depicting concepts" *xiangyi wenzi* 象意文字 and "graphs depicting sounds" *xingsheng wenzi* 形聲文字, Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 [translated by Mattos, Gilbert and Norman, Jerry], *Chinese Writing* (Early China Special Monograph Series 4), Berkeley: University of California, 2000, 163. It was further developed by Chen Mengjia and then by Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 (\*1935) into three widely accepted categories today, summarized by Wilkinson as: "(1) the form indicates the word and hence the sound; (2) a character is used for its phonetic properties; and (3) the character combines (1) and (2)." Wilkinson, Endymion, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (2013), 36. Cf. also Ba Zhe 巴哲 and Luo Na 罗娜, "Hanzi leixing lilun yanjiu lüelun - cong 'liushu shuo', 'sanshu shuo' dao 'xin liushu shuo'" 汉字类型理论研究略论——从“六书说”、“三书说”到“新六书说” [A Brief View on the Study of Chinese Character Type Theory - From 'Six Types Theory', 'Three Types Theory' to 'New Six Types Theory'], in: *Pingxiang xueyuan xuebao* 萍乡学院学报 [Journal of Pingxiang University] 36.2 (2019), 82–85.

71 Huang Zhongming 黄仲明, "Biao zhun xingshu zhi yanjiu" (1936), 205.

(unlike the two examples) to stand on their own. The components are presented in *xingshu* handwritten style; they are not *kaiti*-ized. Huang's work is foundational research, not a direct reform proposal. He sees *xingshu* as a suitable middle way between the complex *kai* and the simple *cao*.<sup>72</sup>

However, this approach that starts with foundational research before calling for concrete reforms was exactly Wei Jiangong's wish. They were by far not the only ones rummaging through the vast Chinese historical script inventory. There was not only a vogue for short forms. Similar to other movements of the time (such as the folklore movement already described in 3.1.2, page 57), the script reform movement proceeded hand in hand with a movement to systematize or reorganize (*zhengli* 整理) the traditional inventory.<sup>73</sup> Wei summarized his conception that not only must all possible reform schemes be carefully considered but also that they must have a strong philological foundation in his 1936 essay "Making a plan for the Chinese characters" (Wei hanzi anpai jiyi 為漢字安排計議).<sup>74</sup>

Concluding his review of simplification ideas, Wei presents the way (*tujing* 途徑, or procedure) to a partial reform:

順先民之常軌，立繁簡之兩綱；  
視日用之切要，辨省變之多方。<sup>75</sup>

Follow the practice of the ancients, establish two outlines for complex and simple;

discern what is most necessary in daily life, discriminate the many ways of omitting and changing.

For Wei Jiangong, the approaches to the "partial reform" of the characters were neither thorough nor systematic enough. They were still far from a new system of shape and sound. He would be proven wrong: the PRC reforms two decades later would adopt a large part of these partial reform ideas. He was right because phoneticity would play a larger role and many new *xingshengzi* would be adopted. Before the PRC reforms are examined in the next chapter, a list of examples from the ROC is provided.

### 7.2.3 List of Simplified Character Examples from the Republican Period

- The traditional character *biao* 標 (sign, mark) appears as 标 only on the *shoutouzi* list and not the official *Jiantizi biao*. The variant, created by omit-

72 Huang Zhongming 黃仲明, "Biaozhun xingshu zhi yanjiu" (1936), 195.

73 *Zhengli* can also be "to put in order". I take the translation of "reorganization" from Schwarcz, Vera, *The Chinese Enlightenment* (1986), 71, 346, 352. Schwarcz refers to the reorganization of the national heritage that began during the May Fourth era.

74 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Wei hanzi anpai jiyi" 為漢字安排計議 [Making a plan for the Chinese characters], in: *Wei Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮興, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 160–168.

75 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Hanzi jubu gaizao de wenti – jiantizibiao, jiantizidian he biaozhun xingshu shuping" (2001), 186.

ting the component *ya* 𠂔 (cover) appeared first on a 1934 table of *suzi*.<sup>76</sup> Li Leyi argues that the short form could also be a result of the contraction of strokes in the *caoshu* version.<sup>77</sup> See figure 3.

- By proposing to replace the complex form of *cong* 從 (follow) by 从, and actually omitting two of three components, both the *Jiantizi biao* and the *shoutouzi* list reinstate the earliest character form. It was found on oracle bones from Yin 殷 (today Yinxu 殷墟), capital of the Shang dynasty.<sup>78</sup>
- The short form for *deng* 燈 (light), 灯, also on both lists, saves strokes by introducing the phonetic *ding* 丁. It appeared during the Yuan dynasty in block printing to ease the carving of the blocks.<sup>79</sup> It is one example of the *xingsheng* approach in which the new component is not only introduced because it is simpler, but also because it has a suitable phonetic value.<sup>80</sup> This approach would be increasingly employed during the PRC reforms.
- An example of the replacement of the *kaishu* variant by a cursive variant, which is also an important technique to contract the shape, is *dong* 東 (East), shortened to 东. Its cursive variant actually dates back to Han dynasty cursive, also called *zhangcao* 章草. The rounded, interlinked strokes of *caoshu* had to be “*kaiti*-ized”. Just like Wei, also other reformers considered using it only for handwriting but not for printing.<sup>81</sup>
- *Dui* 對 (correct, toward, et al.) is one example where the complex component on the left is contracted or replaced by a component chosen for its simplicity but not for its phonetic value to create the short form 对. This was first done by Yuan block printers.<sup>82</sup>

76 Xu Zemin 徐則敏, “550 *suzi biao*” 550 俗字表 [Table of 550 non-standard characters], in: *Lunyu* 論語 [The Analects] 45 (1934), 1005–1007, see 1005. In the table, the *suzi* are handwritten, presumably for a lack of printing types. See also: Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 57.

77 Li Leyi 李乐毅, *Jianhuazi yuan* (1996), 19.

78 Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 102.

79 Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 117.

80 The same is the case for *yuan* 遠 - 远 (garden) and *yuan* 園 - 远 (far); both appear on both Republican lists and have their origins in Yuan variants. Li Leyi 李乐毅, *Jianhuazi yuan* (1996), 288–289. Why do especially many phonetic simplified characters go back to that time? Because the language at the time was considerably closer to nowadays’ Standard Chinese. However, some simpler phonetic variants are actually the older ones, such as the case of *da* 达 - 達 (reach, arrive, attain) dating back to Yin oracle bone inscriptions. The signfic *yang* 羊 (sheep) was added in Zhou times. Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 105.

81 Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 128; Li Leyi 李乐毅, *Jianhuazi yuan* (1996), 64; 东 also appears in Rong Geng’s *Jianti zidian*, cf. Zhao Ping’an 赵平安, “Rong Geng he ta de *Jiantizi dian*” (1997).

82 Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 134.



Figure 3: *Biao* 標 written in *caoshu* 草書. Image source: Li Leyi 李乐毅, *Jianhuazi yuan* 简化字源 (Origin of simplified characters), 1996.



## Chapter 8

# The Script Reform in the PRC

Wei Jianguo returned from Taiwan to Beijing and took up a professorship at the Chinese Department of Peking University in the beginning of December 1948. In February 1949, the Communists took Beijing. In July, Wei was appointed head of the Chinese Department.

While the shape of the characters was the main issue of the script reform, I argue below that the pronunciation also played an important role especially in the eyes of Wei Jianguo. His two main concerns were what I call phoneticization<sup>1</sup> and popularization. Although a Marxist, or even Maoist rhetoric<sup>2</sup> replaced the Republican nationalist rhetoric in the PRC, continuity cannot be denied, since the linguists still tried to realize a convergence of writing and speech, and the script reform techniques were tried out in the ROC.

While language planning continued to play an important role, the focus of the PRC policies shifted in comparison to those of the Republic. Fighting illiteracy among the people was highlighted much more,<sup>3</sup> and it was to be achieved through

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1 “Phoneticization” is usually understood as “phonetic representation”. I propose using this term as “making [a script] more phonetic”.

2 Here, I mean that all public discourse had to be framed in a Marxist worldview with certain key terms, such as “class struggle” (*jiejī zhāndòu* 階級戰鬥). Mao Zedong as a political leader and thinker was tremendously influential on the language use in the PRC, see Lu, Xing, *The Rhetoric of Mao Zedong: Transforming China and Its People*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2017. See also Ji, Fengyuan, *Linguistic Engineering. Language and Politics in Mao’s China*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004. “Maoism” in China is synonymous with “Mao Zedong Ideas”, which are an adaptation of Marxism to the situation in China. See Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, Susanne, “Mao-Zedong-Ideen und Mao-Kult”, in: *Länderbericht China*, ed. by Staiger, Brunhild, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000, 273–286, see 274. The rhetoric in totalitarian regimes is an important topic which can unfortunately not be discussed in detail here.

3 Glen Petersen describes literacy campaigns in rural China in the 1950s in: Petersen, Glen, “Peasant Education and the Reconstruction of Village Society”, in: *Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-Century China*, ed. by Peterson, Glen, Ruth Hayoe, and Yongling Lu, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001, 217–237. In the Introduction to the volume, the editors recapitulate that when Petersen remarked a certain discrepancy between euphoric political rhetoric and the actual outcomes of the campaigns, a Russian scholar commented that the people in both China and Russia were very idealistic and enthusiastic about this kind of campaign. See Petersen, Glen, and Ruth Hayhoe, “In-

script reform.<sup>4</sup> This script reform, however was set out to be less radical or at least very different from the abolition of the characters that Wei Jianguo and Qian Xuandong had envisioned in 1923 and 1925, respectively.<sup>5</sup>

The American Linguistics Delegation<sup>6</sup> to the PRC in 1974 summarized the aims of the language reforms as following:

The Language reform movement has three aspects (1) the simplification of characters, that is, reduction in the number of strokes in Chinese characters and elimination of variants and unnecessary characters; (2) the popularization of the common speech, Putonghua; and (3) the creation and popularization of a national phonetic alphabet.<sup>7</sup>

Wei Jianguo became one of 26 members of the Chinese Script Reform Association (Zhongguo wenzi gaige xiehui 中國文字改革協會) in October 1949 and began his work on the script reform.<sup>8</sup> These activities included participating in the Symposium on frequently used characters (Changyongzi zuotanhui 常用字座談會) that compiled a list of frequently used characters. In parallel with script planning activities, Wei Jianguo became the head of the New China dictionary society (Xinhua cishushe)<sup>9</sup> and “specialized member” (*zhuanmen weiyuan* 專門委員) of the Chinese Academy of Science (Zhongguo kexueyuan 中國科學院) in 1950 and a member of the Jiusan society (Jiusan xueshe).<sup>10</sup>

The name Jiusan society is derived from Japan’s defeat on September 3, 1945. Wei Jianguo’s membership hints at his role in the PRC vis-à-vis the Communist Party of China. The Jiusan society, as well as other “democratic parties and groups” (*minzhu dang-pai* 民主黨派) were founded before the ascension of the CCP to power. During the second “United Front” (1936–1945) they cooperated with the CCP. After 1949, they were “redesigned for individuals for whom vio-

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roduction”, in: *Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-Century China*, ed. by Peterson, Glen, Ruth Hanyoe, and Yongling Lu, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001, 1–21, see 7.

4 The promotion of a standard language and of Hanyu Pinyin also need to be seen in the context of increasing literacy. Vilma Seeberg demonstrated that language policy was only a tiny aspect in the education policy of the PRC. Political and socio-economical factors actually played a much more important role in the success of schooling. During the government of radical factions (1958–1962 and 1966–75), less than one percent of all primary school students attained functional literacy. In other time periods, 55–57% attained functional literacy. It also must be added that definitions of literacy can vary. See Seeberg, Vilma, *Literacy in China: The Effect of the National Development Context and Policy on Literacy Levels, 1049–79* (1990), 274, 278–279.

5 See Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Cong Zhongguo wenzi de qushi lun hanzi (fangkuaizi) de yingai feichu” (2001), and Qian Xuandong 錢玄同, *Hanzi geming* (1923). This was discussed in Chapter 2.

6 The Delegation was dispatched by the Committee on Scholarly Communications with the People’s Republic of China (CSCPRC) after an agreement between the CSCPRC and the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST, Zhongguo kexue jishu xiehui 中國科學技術協會).

7 Lehmann, Winfried P. (ed.), *Language and Linguistics in the People’s Republic of China*, Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1975, 41.

8 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 15.

9 As already described in chapter 6.2 on page 179, this happened at Ye Shengtao’s invitation. Wei Jianguo approached Ye with his plan to compile a dictionary, and Ye convinced him to take on the compilation himself. The individual idea of Wei Jianguo to compile a new reference work produced the most influential and widely used dictionary in the PRC: The *Xinhua zidian*. See chapter 6 beginning on page 157.

10 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 16.



lent repression could presumably be avoided.<sup>11</sup> United front work, i.e. rallying allies of the CCP for a common cause, became a core characteristic of Chinese socialism, and the Jiusan society, like the other “minor parties and groups”, became institutionalized within the framework of the CCP government.<sup>12</sup> The members of the Jiusan society were mostly scholars, intellectuals and academics. Li Jinxi, for example, was a member too; membership could be acquired through recommendation. By organizing the scholars in the Jiusan society, the CCP simultaneously kept them close and at arm’s length, acknowledging their importance for policy-making as well as a threat as potential critics.<sup>13</sup>

In the following years, Wei Jianguo participated in many conferences, meetings and activities concerning the script reform and a transcription scheme for the characters. He was also involved in drafting the plans for the simplification, and he was also involved in creating a new phonetic transcription. For example, in June 1951, he participated in the Symposium about the problem of phonetic transcription of the Chinese characters (Hanzi zhuyin pinyin wenti zuotanhui 漢字注音拼音問題座談會). The endeavor to construct a new phonetic transcription led to the official promulgation of Hanyu Pinyin in 1958.<sup>14</sup> The symposium was organized by the Chinese Script Reform Research Committee (Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiuhui 中國文字改革研究會), one of the numerous committees Wei Jianguo was a part of. Heading this committee was the minister of education, philosopher and philologist Ma Xulun 馬敘倫 (1885–1970).<sup>15</sup>

11 Seymour, James D., *China's Satellite Parties*, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1987, 25.

12 Groot, Gerry, *Managing Transitions: The Chinese Communist Party, United Front Work, Corporation and Hegemony*, New York & London: Routledge, 2004, 14-15.

13 I am very grateful to Dr. Henrike Rudolph for her advice and for directing my attention to literature about the Jiusan society.

14 Zhou Youguang 周有光 [translated by Zhang Liqing 张立青], *Zhongguo yuwen de shidai yanjin* (2003), 104.

15 The philosophy professor Ma Xulun played an important role in the development of Peking University in Republican times. He opposed Yuan Shikai's government together with his teacher Zhang Binglin (Taiyan), and supported Cai Yuanpei's bid to become Peking University chancellor. He was also one of the leading negotiators in the negotiations with the Duan Qirui government for the funding of the university in 1921. Weston, Timothy B., *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898-1929* (2004), 112, 113, 217. Ma took part in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 1949 as founding member of the China Association for Promoting Democracy (Zhongguo minzhu cujin hui 中國民主促進會). He subsequently held several PRC government positions, such as minister of education (1949–1952) and minister of higher education (1952–1954). Boorman, Howard L., “Ma Hsü-lun”, in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 465–468.

The committee's vice-head was Wu Yuzhang 吳玉章 (1878–1966);<sup>16</sup> Wei Jianguo was one of the dozen members. Opening addresses at the inauguration of the Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiuhui were published in the first edition of the magazine “Chinese language and script” (*Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文) from July 1952.<sup>17</sup> The magazine became an important mouthpiece for official language planning and linguistics. This first volume, for example, included articles from Li Jinxi, Luo Changpei, and others. It covered a vast range of linguistic topics from the script reform, folklore, grammar studies to transcription.

The opening addresses of Ma Xulun, Wu Yuzhang and Guo Moruo can be read as official guidelines for the committee members. They explicitly convey the directives of Mao Zedong for the script reform.<sup>18</sup>

Ma Xulun begins his speech at the inauguration of the Chinese script reform research committee (*Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiuhui*) by stating why a “script reform” is necessary (‘文字改革’的要求):

[...] 象形文外已經有了形聲字，這就證明它已向聲符方面發展。因為象形文的本身有限制性，所以它的發展也收到限制。到現在，各方面已感到漢字不能適應新文化的需要和發展 [...] <sup>19</sup>

[...] apart from pictographic script, there were already phono-semantic compound characters (*xingshengzi*) and this proves that it [= the script] already developed in the direction of phonetic signs (*shengfu* 聲符).<sup>20</sup> As pictographic scripts in general have their limitations, their development has limits. Until now, it can be felt in all areas that the Chinese characters cannot adapt to the requirements and developments of the new culture.

Ma Xulun continues, stating the script reform cannot be achieved too quickly and that characters cannot be abolished at once.<sup>21</sup> As it is a great task of cultural

16 Wu Yuzhang was a member of the Tongmenghui and of the early Kuomintang, studied abroad, especially in Japan and France, and he was involved in the work-study movement as an educator that enabled Chinese students to go to France between 1919 and 1921. He joined the Communist Party in 1925 and also stayed in Yan'an. See Levine, Marilyn A., *The Found Generation: Chinese Communists in Europe during the Twenties*, Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1993, 11, 236. Wu Yuzhang's leading role in PRC language and script policy cannot be overestimated, since he may have directed Mao Zedong's attention toward alphabetic, preferably roman spelling as early as in 1949. See Zhou, Qingsheng, “The Creation of Writing Systems and Nation Establishment: The case of China in the 1950s”, in: *Language Policy in the People's Republic of China: Theory and Practice Since 1949*, ed. by Zhou, Minglang, Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004, 55–70, see 59–60. He studied in Moscow and participated in the First Conference on the Romanization of Chinese in Vladivostok in 1931. Boorman, Howard L., “Wu Yü-chang”, in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, vol. 3, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 465–467, see 466. Wu is discussed again below in section 8.2 on page 230.

17 I am very thankful to Prof. Chang Lung-chih for helping me locate it in Academia Sinica.

18 There is no direct record of Mao's words; they are always indirectly quoted. I return to the issue below on page 217 and on page 231.

19 Ma Xulun 馬敘倫, “Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui chenglihui kaihuici” 中國文字改革研究委員會成立會開會辭 [Opening address at the founding session of the Chinese script reform research committee], in: *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文 [Chinese language and script] 1 (1952), 4.

20 *Shengfu* can also denote the phonetic component of a character or the initial. However, here, Ma Xulun refers to the whole script.

21 Secondary literature often perceives it as a failure that the original aim of replacing the characters with an alphabetic spelling was discarded over time. Compare Martin, Helmut, *Chinesische Sprachplanung* (1982), 81, 84, 95.

reconstruction (文化建設上的大事), they (“we” *women* 我們) asked Chairman Mao for instructions (*qingzhi* 請指). Mao instructed (*zhishi* 指示) the linguists to:

文字必須改革，要走世界文字共同的拼音方向；形式應該是民族的，字母和方案要根據現有漢字來製定。<sup>22</sup>

The script must be reformed, [it] must go into the direction of phonetic spelling, like [all the] world’s [scripts] have in common. Its form should be national, its characters and scheme must be made on the basis of the existing Chinese characters.

Furthermore, Ma addressed two difficulties to which Mao Zedong provided instructions about how to ease them: the difficulty of writing and the difficulty of remembering the pronunciation of the characters. To the first issue, Mao ordered the “reorganization” and “simplification” (*zhengli jianhua* 整理簡化) and that the printing types (*yinshuati* 印刷體) should employ the standard script (*kaishu*). He also stated that the cursive script (*caoshu*) can be used in handwriting. On the second issue, great success was already achieved with Zhuyin; however, the issue of Zhuyin being used as the general transcription will still have to be discussed.

The Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiuhui formed sub-groups, and Wei Jianguo was present in two of them. One was the group for a phonetic transcription scheme (*pinyin fang’an* 拼音方案), while the other was to “reorganize” or “put in order the Chinese characters” (*hanzi zhengli* 漢字整理).<sup>23</sup> The idea to reorganize or systematize the characters went back well into Republican times, and it left a notable trace in Wei Jianguo’s publications and in his manuscript collection. When Wei Jianguo worked for the Guoli bianyiguan 國立編譯館 (National Institute for Compilation and Translation)<sup>24</sup> in Baisha, he presented in 1940 a plan that showed the aims of this reorganization: a systematic overview and analysis of all characters. *Suzi* and *jiantizi* were also among them. As was argued in the preceding chapter, ideas central to the PRC reforms are rooted in the ROC, such as the important place of *suzi* and *jiantizi* in the development of the Chinese script. Another idea that dates back to the Republican era was the idea that not only many of them were “established by custom” (*yue ding su cheng*) but that it would also be an important legitimization for “new” characters by showing that they are actually not new at all.<sup>25</sup>

Among Wei’s manuscripts, there are many character lists in which he collected variant graphic forms from the entire history of the Chinese script and printed lists that were presented to the members for discussion.<sup>26</sup> Wei Jianguo’s

22 Ma Xulun 馬敘倫, “Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui chenglihui kaihuici” (1952).

23 Cao Da 曹達, “Wei Jianguo nianpu” (1996), 16.

24 The Guoli bianyiguan was established in 1932 and is located in Taiwan today. It compiles and publishes education tools.

25 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Hanzi zhengli gongzuo jihua” 漢字整理工作計畫 [Plan for the reorganization work of the Chinese characters], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 馬鎮, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 224–251, see 250.

26 Many of these copies were made with a spirit printer (or Ditto machine, German: Matritzendrucker), and the spirit master was written by hand. Many characters did not have a type. (This was also the case for new ideas of simplified characters, of course.)

expertise in graphemics played an important role in this project, which is also visible in his notes. As a full-fledged Chinese philologist, his research on the Chinese characters covered the entire history of writing, including oracle bone inscriptions (*jiaguwen* 甲骨文). The aim of this work was to also identify characters that were used frequently and the variant forms of a specific character. Wei Jiāngōng, Lǐ Jīnxi, and others already formulated a rule they wished to implement in the simplification. The “signifier” or semantic component of a character, *xingfu* 形符,<sup>27</sup> should be conserved, while the phonetic component should be replaced with another phonetic component with the same pronunciation as the character being simplified.<sup>28</sup> This will be discussed below (see page 222).

In the first half of 1952, on the basis of 2000 frequently used characters, the third and fourth drafts of the simplification of the Chinese characters (*Hanzi jianhua fang'an* 漢字簡化方案) were completed. Wei Jiāngōng, Wei Que 韋慤 (1896–1976)<sup>29</sup> Ye Gongchuo 葉恭綽 (1881–1968),<sup>30</sup> Ding Xilin 丁西林 (1893–1974),<sup>31</sup> Ye Shengtao, Lin Handa 林漢達 (1900–1972)<sup>32</sup> and Cao Bohān 曹伯翰 (1897–1959)<sup>33</sup>

27 There is a certain overlap between “semantic signifier” (*xingfu*), i.e. a character component transporting meaning, and “classifier” (*bushou*, see page 170), i.e. the component used to locate the character in the dictionary. The classifiers have often been perceived as key to the meaning of a character, which is actually often not the case. Therefore, the two terms should be used distinctly. *Xingfu* is used independently from dictionary arrangement considerations.

28 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 16.

29 The educator Wei Que (Pengdan 捧丹) studied in England and the USA and received a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He held numerous government positions both in the ROC and in the PRC. Apart from the simplification of the characters, he was also involved in the promotion of *putonghua*. See: Bartke, Wolfgang, *Who was Who in the People's Republic of China*, vol. 1, München: K. G. Saur, 1997, 496.

30 Ye Gongchuo looked back on a career as KMT government official specialized in railway administration. In the PRC, apart from serving in several script and language reform committees, he was a member of the National Committee of the Chinese Peoples's Political Consultative Conference in 1954 and 1959. See: Boorman, Howard L., “Yeh Kung-cho”, in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, vol. 4, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 31–33.

31 Ding Xilin was most renowned as playwright, even though he was actually trained in physics (with a M.Sc. degree from the University of Birmingham) and became a physics professor of Peking University and member of Academia Sinica. After 1949, he not only participated in the script reform, but also served as vice minister of culture. Boorman, Howard L., “Ting Hsi-lin”, in: *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, vol. 3, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, 116–117. Wei Jiāngōng included one of Ding's plays in the *guoyu* curriculum of National Taiwan University in 1947. See: Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Guoli Taiwan daxue yi nianji guoyu kecheng zhiqu” 國立臺灣大學一年級國語課程旨趣 [National Taiwan University first year national language course objectives], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 388–391.

32 The script reformer and educator Lin Handa had studied in the USA and taught as professor at Yenching University and other institutions. He became the vice head of the Central committee for wiping out illiteracy (Zhongyang saomang weiyuanhui 中央掃盲委員會) in 1952, vice chief editor of the journal *Zhongguo yuwen* and served as vice minister of education (1954–1957). Fang Yuqing 房玉清, “Lin Handa” 林汉达, in: *Zhongguo xiandai yuyanxuejia* 中国现代语言学家 [Modern Chinese linguists], ed. by *Zhongguo yuyanxuejia bianxiezu* 《中国语言学家》编写组 [‘Modern Chinese linguists’ compilation group], vol. 2, Shijiazhuang 石家庄: Hebei renmin chubanshe 河北人民出版社, 1982, 119–124.

33 Cao Bohān had been an early CCP member from 1925 onwards and was imprisoned by the KMT from 1930 to 1934. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, he taught at several middle schools and

each organized a group to work on proposals for the fourth draft of the simplification of the Chinese characters, now on the basis of 4000 most frequently used characters. They proposed to simplify 803 characters. In October 1954, the Script reform committee (*Wenzi gaige weiyuanhui* 文字改革委員會) was established, with Wei Jiāngōng as member. In the same month, it organized the drafted simplified characters in three tables:

1. *798 ge hanzi jianhua biao caoan* 798 個漢字簡化表草案 (List of simplification of 798 characters (draft))
2. *Ni feichu de 400 ge yitizi biao* 擬廢除的 400 個異體字表草案 (List of 400 variant characters intended to be abolished (draft))
3. *Hanzi pianpang shouxie jianhua biao* 漢字偏旁手寫簡化表草案 (List of simplification in handwriting of character side components (draft))

The draft was printed in newspapers, targeting a greater audience step by step. On January 7, 1955, the Script reform committee printed the “Plan for the simplification of the Chinese characters (draft)” (*Hanzi jianhua fang'an (caoan)* 漢字簡化方案 (草案)) and distributed it all over the country to obtain feedback. About 200,000 reactions were gathered, and Wei Jiāngōng helped to find a way to respond to this huge amount of input.<sup>34</sup>

On January 8, Wei Jiāngōng became vice-chair of the unit to organize the characters (*Hanzi zhengli bu* 漢字整理部副主任). At the second Plenary conference of the Script reform committee in February, he put forward ideas reminiscent of his *guoyu* planning days in the Republic. They showcased his concept of standard language vis-à-vis the dialects. He wished that more research would be carried out on the Beijing pronunciation, as well as its connection with other dialects, to ensure future transcription schemes would consider the dialects. The exact form of the transcription was of second importance: at this point, he put forward that the phonemes (*yinsu* 音素) should be determined first.<sup>35</sup>

While enumerating all revisions of the “List of simplified characters” and committee meetings would go beyond the scope of this work, the connection to the standard language will be pointed out briefly. At the Nationwide conference on script reform (*Quanguo wenzi gaige huiyi* 全國文字改革會議) in Beijing, the decision was made that the State Council (*Guowuyuan* 國務院) would implement the “Plan for the simplification of the Chinese characters” (*Hanzi jianhua fang'an* 漢字簡化方案) after its completion. The State Council would also actively promote the common language *putonghua* nationwide, whose pronunciation standard is based on the Beijing pronunciation (在全國大力推廣以北京語音為標準

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participated in the editorship of various journals. In Hong Kong, he participated in the promotion of *Latinxua Sinwenz*. After the establishment of the PRC, he participated both in the script reform and in the work on Hanyu Pinyin. See: *Bianjibu* 編輯部 [Editorial department], “Aidao Cao Bohan tongzhi” 哀悼曹伯韓同志 [Mourning the death of comrade Cao Bohan], in: *Wenzi gaige* 文字改革 [Script reform] 3 (1959), 2. His bibliography reveals that he already commented on the *shoutouzi* in Republican times. H R, “Cao Bohan tongzhi yuwen fangmian yizhu mulu” 曹伯韓同志語文方面遺著目錄 [Catalog of linguistic writings bequeathed by comrade Cao Bohan], in: *Wenzi gaige* 文字改革 [Script reform] 2 (1960), 22.

34 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 17.

35 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 18.

音的普通話). Wei Jiāngōng was furthermore member of the Committee for the determination of the pronunciation of the standard language (Putonghua shēnyīn wēiyuánhui 普通話審音委員會) of the Language Institute (Yuyansuo 語言所) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.<sup>36</sup> The “Plan for the simplification of the Chinese characters” (*Hanzi jiǎnhuà fāng'àn* 漢字簡化方案) was implemented in 1956.<sup>37</sup>

Like in Republican times, Wei Jiāngōng participated in the discourse about the reform and wrote articles to legitimize the policies, i.e. the simplified characters (*jiǎntizi* or *jiǎnhuàzì*). I argue that his concept of script led him to follow two principles in the script reform. While it is clear that he was one of many linguists involved in the reform, and that in the 1950s, a rhetoric conforming to Mao Zedōng’s concept of Marxism had to be practiced, Wei Jiāngōng nonetheless articulated his own views. These two principles are phoneticization and popularization. “Popularization” can be understood as increasing the adoption of an idea, concept or object by the general population. In this case, it refers to enhancing its popular character and re-establishing the popular aspect that Wei Jiāngōng argued had always been in the script.

## 8.1 Phoneticity of the Simplified Characters

The first principle is phoneticity, or phoneticization. As phonologist and paleographer, Wei Jiāngōng knew that most characters carried explicit phonetic information. They have components that indicate (at least approximately) the pronunciation. If this information is obscure, it is due to the historical change of pronunciation. Baxter and Sagart clearly state that the majority of characters are either loan characters (*jiǎjièzì* 假借字) or phono-semantic compound characters (*xíngshēng zì* 形聲字, also called *xièshēng zì* 諧聲字).<sup>38</sup> Loan characters are characters that originally designate one particular semantic unit and that are borrowed to designate another semantic unit with the same pronunciation. William Boltz describes how in the past, in order to “resolve the semantic ambiguity” that naturally arises from this technique, “an aphonetic graph was attached to the original, resulting in a distinct compound graph [...]”.<sup>39</sup>

What did this mean for the reform of the script in the 1950s? On March 25, 1952, at the Group for putting the Chinese characters in order (*Hanzi zhěnglǐ zǔ* 漢字整理組; Wei Jiāngōng was a member), Lin Handa presented the following opinion of Ma Xulun, head of the Committee for the research on the Chinese script reform (*Zhōngguó wénzì gāigē yánjiūhuì*):

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36 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng niǎnpǔ” (1996), 18.

37 Martin, Helmut, *Chinesische Sprachplanung* (1982), 88f. See also: Spaar, Wilfried, “Die Diskussion um den ‘Entwurf zur zweiten Schriftreform’” (1986), 155.

38 Baxter, William H., and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese – A New Reconstruction* (2014), 26ff.

39 Boltz, William G., *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society, 1994, 67.

漢字大部分是形聲字，最好能有規律地簡化，簡化後做好保留形符，聲符也應該和原有符號讀音相同。<sup>40</sup>

The majority of the Chinese characters are phono-semantic compound characters; they should best be simplified according to a rule. They should keep their signifier after the simplification. The [new] phonetic component should have the same pronunciation as the original sign.

In October of that year, Wei Jianguo's article "The status of the simplified characters in the developmental history of the Chinese characters" (Hanzi fazhanshi shang jiantizi de diwei 漢字發展史上簡體字的地位) appeared in *Zhongguo yuwen*. It shows how Wei refocuses his script reform concepts, shifting away from the mere graphical approach of the 1930s and moving towards a synthesis with the phonetic approach he had originally pursued in the 1920s.

Wei first describes how characters have been made either more complex or simpler. On the one hand is the determination of semantic value by adding significant components, as Boltz described above. On the other hand, some characters have been made simpler by omitting strokes or contracting shapes to increase speed and convenience in writing, giving rise to script types like *caoshu*. However, he then brings the pronunciation into play and evokes his concept of script as a tool to represent the spoken language:

毛主席指示我們：“文字必須在一定條件下加以改革，言語必須接近民眾，須知民眾就是革命文化的無限豐富的源泉。”<sup>41</sup>文字本是為語言服務的，為了為人民服務，我們就必須把文字跟語言結合起來更加接近民眾一些。 [...]

我們看出漢字的發展是在“形”“音”“義”三方面矛盾之中進行着的。它聯繫漢語表現了兩個要求：突破形式，密切表音。<sup>42</sup>

Mao Zedong instructs us: "The script must be reformed under specific circumstances. Language must be close to the masses; [we] must know that the masses are an infinitely rich source for revolutionary culture." The script itself serves language. In order to serve the people, we must link up script and language to bring it closer to the masses. [...]

We see that the development of the Chinese characters takes place within the contradictions of the three aspects "shape", "sound" and "meaning". To link them up with the Chinese language, two requirements must clearly be met: surmount the shape and closely express the sound.

The result of prioritizing pronunciation whenever possible (while still retaining much shape and meaning, Wei also argues) would be that "the finalized simplified character should actually be a different new character" (改定的簡體字就應該

40 Cui Ming-hai 崔明海, "Zhonghua renmin gongheguo chengli chuqi hanzi jianhua gaige yanjiu" 中华人民共和国成立初期汉字简化改革研究 [Study on the Simplification of Traditional Chinese Characters in the Early Years of the People's Republic of China], in: *Shilin* 史林 [Historical Review] 1 (2020), 181–196, see 185.

41 This quote from Mao Zedong is from 1940. See: Mao Zedong 毛泽东, *Xin minzhuzhuyi lun* 新民主主义论 [New democracy theory], Beijing 北京: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1975, 62.

42 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, "Hanzi fazhanshi shang jiantizi de diwei" 漢字發展史上簡體字的地位 [The status of the simplified characters in the developmental history of the Chinese characters], in: *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文 [Chinese language and script] 4 (1952), 15–17, see 17.

當做另一個新字). The Republican ideal to “adopt the existing [characters] and not create new ones” (*shu er bu zuo*) must be replaced by “create new [characters] and adopt existing ones” (*zuo er you shu* 作而有述).<sup>43</sup>

Wei Jiāngōng, Li Jīnxi and other colleagues pursued this principle. While the “signifier” or semantic component(s) of a character (*xingfu*) should not be changed, the phonetic component can be replaced. The phonetic component *yinfu* then determines the pronunciation of the character. In 1955, Wei wrote that the script should be reformed into a set of “signs that indicate the ‘sound’” (表“音”的一套符號). The evolution to a phonetic script was the natural tendency of all scripts and inevitably also the path the Chinese characters would take.<sup>44</sup>

One year later, in 1956, Wei Jiāngōng co-authored an article with Wang Li, Zhou Zumo and Liang Donghan 梁东汉 (1920–2006) that expanded on this idea and set it in a larger context:

汉字是属于表意文字体系的历史范畴的，它的特点就是以无数独立的符号来代表语言里的词，语言的词彙非常丰富，非常纷繁，文字也就成千累万，非常复杂，使人难学，难认，难记。<sup>45</sup>

The Chinese characters belong to the historical category of the system of ideographic writing. Its peculiarity is that it represents the words in the language with an innumerable number of individual signs. The lexicon of the language is extraordinarily abundant and extremely numerous and complicated. Also the characters are thousands upon thousands, utterly complicated, and this makes them hard to study, hard to recognize and hard to remember.

However, Wei, Wang, Zhou and Liang indicate that more than 90% of the characters are *xingshengzi*: these types of characters contain a phonetic component. Nevertheless, due to pronunciation changes over time, these characters completely lost their phonetic nature (至于形声字虽然带有表音成分，可是由于语音的变化，也使得原来有标音作用的形声字完全丧失了标音作用). As a result, 90% of the *xingshengzi* no longer represent how they are pronounced. The same applies to “ideograms” *biaoyizi* 表意字<sup>46</sup> which no longer represent

43 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Hanzi fazhanshi shang jiantizi de diwei” (1952), 17.

44 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Hanzi jianhua de lishi yiyi he hanzi jianhua fang’an” 漢字簡化的歷史意義和漢字簡化方案 [The historical significance of the script simplification and the Chinese character simplification scheme], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 466–71, see 466. Wei said this as early as 1925, discussed above on page 195.

45 Wang Li 王力, Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 and Liang Donghan 梁东汉, “Hanzi gaige de biyaoxing he kenengxing” 汉字改革的必要性和可能性 [The necessity and the possibility of the Chinese character reform], in: *Beijing daxue xuebao* 北京大学学报 [Peking University journal] 4 (1956), 67–80, see 67.

46 Or “semantic characters”. Here, the linguists hint to all characters of more or less pictographic origin. The term “ideogram” or “ideograph” is highly problematic, as it neglects the fact that all characters have a specific reading and represent specific units of the *spoken* language. For more information about the idea that Chinese writing could be ideographic, see: Boltz, William G., “Ideographic Fallacy: Historical and Conceptual Issues”, in: *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 2, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 404–409. For the reception of this concept and its implications, see: Erbaugh, Mary, “Ideographic Fallacy: Sociolinguistics and Political Impact”, in:



the meaning with a recognizable pictographic shape. Furthermore the “square characters” (*fangkuaizi*) as graphic units do not necessarily represent a language unit, which makes them inferior to a phonetic script (*pinyin wenzi* 拼音文字) that would be capable of doing that.<sup>47</sup>

However, the existence of the *xingshengzi* indicates that the script has been evolving in the phonetic direction:

可见表音是汉字本身發展的必然趋势。人对于自然法则不是無能为力的，我們掌握了事物發展的規律，就可以促进它的發展。<sup>48</sup>

One could say that phonographic spelling is the inevitable tendency of the development of the characters themselves. It is not the case that humans are helpless when faced by the forces of nature: if we master the rules that govern the development of things, we can accelerate this development.

According to Wei, Wang, Zhou and Liang, the convergence of some homophonous characters would already be a step in the right direction. They use the example of *miao* 淼 - 渺 (vast expanse (of water)) to illustrate how a phonetic character (*biaoyinzi* 表音字) could replace a non-phonetic character. To the authors, this would be not only progressive, but also utterly feasible.<sup>49</sup>

When the “square characters” were created, the Chinese language was largely monosyllabic and the creation of monosyllabic *xingshengzi* completely satisfied the need of that time to record language (*manzu dangshi jilu yuyan de xuyao* 满足当时记录语言的需要). Had the language been polysyllabic, the need to create alphabetic spelling would have arisen. Today, however, there are more and more polysyllabic words (*fuyinci*) in the Chinese language. Therefore, a phonetic script (*pinyin wenzi*) would be better suited to represent the spoken language.<sup>50</sup>

At that point, the general aim was still to abolish the characters completely and introduce a phonetic spelling. This meant simplification and phoneticization of the characters and the eventual introduction of a solely phonetic spelling. This aim would eventually not be realized. The speech of Zhou Enlai at the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference in 1958<sup>51</sup> marks the watershed of abandoning the aim to abolish the characters and of pursuing a transcription of

*Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, ed. by Sybesma, Rint, et al., vol. 2, Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2017, 409–414. While the authors of the *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics* call the idea a “fallacy”, John DeFrancis calls it a “myth”: DeFrancis, John, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984, 133.

47 Wang Li 王力, Wei Jianguo 魏建功, Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 and Liang Donghan 梁东汉, “Hanzi gaige de biyaoxing he kenengxing” (1956), 69, 71. Compare to the above-discussed issue of wordhood starting on page 166.

48 Wang Li 王力, Wei Jianguo 魏建功, Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 and Liang Donghan 梁东汉, “Hanzi gaige de biyaoxing he kenengxing” (1956), 71.

49 Wang Li 王力, Wei Jianguo 魏建功, Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 and Liang Donghan 梁东汉, “Hanzi gaige de biyaoxing he kenengxing” (1956), 72.

50 Wang Li 王力, Wei Jianguo 魏建功, Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 and Liang Donghan 梁东汉, “Hanzi gaige de biyaoxing he kenengxing” (1956), 73.

51 Zhou Enlai 周恩来, “Dangqian wenzi gaige de renwu” 当前文字改革的任務 [The current tasks of writing reform], in: *Zhou Enlai xuanji* 周恩來選集 [Selected works of Zhou Enlai], ed. by Zhonggong Zhongyang wenxian bianji weiyuanhui 中共中央文獻編輯委員會 [CCP Central documents editing committee], vol. 2, Beijing 北京: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1984, 280–294. It was first published in *Renmin ribao* 人民日報 (The People’s Daily).

national form. Zhong sees this turn away from character abolition in connection with the Bandung conference 1955 and the beginning of the Non-Aligned Movement and as “ethnocentric antidote to Western ethnocentrism”.<sup>52</sup>

If one examines officially promulgated simplified characters, it is clear that the phonetic component was replaced in many of them. We will take a look at the “General list of simplified characters” (*Jianhuazi biao* 简化字总表), which involved Wei Jiāngōng. This list was approved and published by the State Council in 1964,<sup>53</sup> after the preceding simplifications still left ambiguities. For example, readers/writers were expected to simplify characters that were not on the list by means of analogy. This new “General list” now included also a list of simplified “classifiers” (*bushou*).<sup>54</sup>

If we compare the 1954/1955 “Plan for the simplification of the Chinese characters” and the 1964 “General list of simplified characters”<sup>55</sup> to the simplifications of Republican era described in the preceding chapter, we see that:

1. Many simplifications from the Republican era were adopted.
2. The simplification involved two steps. The “Plan” left *bushou* and components like *yan* 言 (speech) or *bei* 貝 (cowrie, shell) unabridged. The 1964 “General list” introduced graphic contractions that were also already proposed in the Republic: 讠 and 贝, respectively.
3. While ROC philologists concentrated on reducing strokes by simply altering the shape of the characters (leaving out components, contracting components by adopting cursive or semi-cursive shapes), the PRC reformers now sought to replace components with others that carried phonetic information according to *putonghua* pronunciation standards .

To illustrate the last argument, Table 4 (page 225) lists character examples and demonstrates how the old shape was transformed into the simplified shape by leaving out the semantic component and combining it with a phonetic component that reflects the *putonghua*-pronunciation.<sup>56</sup> It bears mentioning again that the clear majority of phonetic simplified characters have a historical precedent.<sup>57</sup> *Yun* 運 - 运<sup>58</sup> (to transport) and *qian* 遷 - 迁 (to move), for example, were found in block

52 Zhong, Yurou, *Chinese Grammatology: Script Revolution and Literary Modernity, 1916–1958* (2019), 7–8.

53 Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jiāngōng nianpu” (1996), 21.

54 Martin, Helmut, *Chinesische Sprachplanung* (1982), 93–94.

55 Zhongguo wenzi gaige weiyuanhui 中國文字改革委員會 [Chinese script reform committee] (ed.), *Jianhuazi zongbiao* 简化字总表 [General list of simplified characters], s.l. s.n., 1965. Reprints of the pamphlet are included in many publications, such as Yuwen chubanshe 语文出版社 (ed.), *Yuyan wenzi guifan shouce* 语言文字规范手册 [Language and script planning handbook], Beijing 北京: Yuwen chubanshe 语文出版社, 1986. See also Wang Jun 王均 et al. (ed.), *Dangdai Zhongguo de wenzi gaige* 当代中国的文字改革 [The script reform of contemporary China], Beijing 北京: Dangdai Zhongguo chubanshe 当代中国出版社, 1995.

56 For dialect speakers, the phonetic connection was not always evident, as Bökset explains at the example of *chu* 礎 - 础 (base, foundation). *Chu* 出 is pronounced with a final stop consonant or a glottal stop in many southern dialects, and sounds very different to 礎. Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 93.

57 While many phonetic abbreviations can be traced back to Song and Yuan times, simpler shapes actually date back to pre-Qin and Han times. Li Leyi 李乐毅, *Jianhuazi yuan* (1996), 4.

58 Li Leyi 李乐毅, *Jianhuazi yuan* (1996), 292.

printing from the Song dynasty. 迂 appears on both the *shoutouzi* list and the *Jiantizi biao* of Republican times. It is, like *li* 歷 - 历, a productive character. The short form is used in other characters analogically: *xian* 跣 - 躩 (*xianxian* = twirl); *li* 壙 - 圻 (hole, pit). *Li* and also *zheng* show the convergence of formerly distinct characters: *li* 歷 (history, undergo) and *li* 曆 (calendar) both became abbreviated as 历,<sup>59</sup> and *zheng* 證 (to prove) and *zheng* 証 (remonstrate, admonish, appearing for example in the *Shuowen jiezi*) both became 证.<sup>60</sup> *Zheng* 證 - 证 is also an example of how the signfic component (and classifier) 言 - 讠 was simplified according to the cursive script. Only few characters, such as *bi* 畢 - 毕 (to finish), seem to really have been newly created in the PRC.<sup>61</sup>

Table 4: Complex ('traditional') and simplified characters and their components.

Compl.	Simpl.	Pinyin	Meaning	Signific	Phonetic
歷	历	lì	history	hǎn 厂 (cliff)	lì 力 (strength)
遷	迁	qiān	to move	辶 (from chuò 辵, walk)	qiān 千 (thousand)
運	运	yùn	to transport	辶	yún 云 (cloud)
戰	战	zhàn	war	gē 戈 (halberd)	zhān 占 (fortune telling)
證	证	zhèng	to prove	yán 言 - 讠 (speech)	zhèng 正 (correct)

Existing cursive variants of characters were also used for simplification. Wei Jianguong describes how the research on the script history was insightful for the script reformers: section two of his text “The historical significance of the simplification of the Chinese characters and the historical basis of the Plan for the simplification of the Chinese characters” (*Hanzi jianhua de lishi yiyi he hanzi jianhua fang'an de lishi jichu* 漢字簡化的歷史意義和漢字簡化方案的歷史基礎)<sup>62</sup> describes how many of the simplified characters were modeled on character variants with a long history.<sup>63</sup>

One important concept that Wei used is the “popular characters” *suzi* 俗字. In the PRC, a suitable English equivalent for *su* would be “popular”, which has a positive connotation. This is in contrast to the Republican era, where the term had a pejorative connotation. That is why I translated it as “vulgar”. According to Wei, these characters have existed since Han times as variant graphic forms of characters and were included in dictionaries like the *Shuowen jiezi*. However,

59 Li Leyi 李乐毅, *Jianhuazi yuan* (1996), 153.

60 Li Leyi 李乐毅, *Jianhuazi yuan* (1996), 303.

61 That *bi* 毕 really had no historic predecessor or had previously been in use was debated by the reformers. Bökset, Roar, *Long Story of Short Forms: The Evolution of Simplified Chinese Characters* (2006), 53.

62 The “Chinese character simplification scheme” (*Hanzi jianhua fang'an* 漢字簡化方案) was published in 1952; Wei Jianguong's text was published in 1955 in the journal *Zhongguo yuwen* vol. 2. He became member of the editing board of the journal in February 1955. See Cao Da 曹达, “Wei Jianguong nianpu” (1996), 17.

63 Wei Jianguong 魏建功, “Hanzi jianhua de lishi yiyi he hanzi jianhua fang'an” (2001).

they acquired the meaning of being non-standard and vulgar (in the negative sense, *bili* 鄙俚), and their use was discouraged among the educated. This will be further explained in the following section 8.2. Wei Jiangong explicitly said that they were the basis for many “simplified characters” *jiantizi*.<sup>64</sup>

Wei Jiangong made reference to the introduction of Li Jinxi’s *Guoyu yundong shigang*, in which Li had already explained certain principles that now were in accord with character simplification. Apart from the cursive script (*caoshu*), in which components are written without elevating the brush from the paper to reduce the number of strokes and increase the writing speed, he mentioned the change and simplification of the phonetic component: *gaijian yinfu* 改簡音符. As examples he listed *yuan* 遠 - 远 (far), *deng* 燈 - 灯 (light),<sup>65</sup> they are composed just the way it is demonstrated in Table 4.

Despite political campaigns breaking with tradition and introducing a socialist modernity being underway in the 1950s, such as land collectivization or the Great Leap Forward, the script reformers were still deeply rooted in Chinese tradition, notwithstanding “high” culture or popular culture. They employed purely philological methods to simplify the characters. As a result, the outcome was new traditional characters: these characters were created entirely using traditional character creation methods. By making them phonetic *again*, they actually resembled their predecessors from pre-imperial times. In that era, the script was much more dynamic (“fluid”): many graphs were actually used for their phonetic value and a scribe could use them freely to represent his spoken language. This had come to a halt with the first script standardization efforts in the Qin dynasty.<sup>66</sup>

## 8.2 Popular Characters as Progressive Creation of the Masses

During his campaign to legitimize *guoyu* in Taiwan, Wei argued that a standard would bring progress for the nation, and this standard should be based on the center of political power and the historical supremacy of Beijing, the Beijing dialect, and the language of the scholar-official elite, *guanhua*. The key concept he used to legitimize this claim historically was “elegance” (*ya* 雅) which he equated with “general”, “standard” and “correct”. The opposite to this concept was the “vulgar” (*su* 俗), associated with the “local” or “marginal”.<sup>67</sup>

64 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Hanzi jianhua de lishi yiyi he hanzi jianhua fang’an” (2001), 469.

65 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, “Hanzi jianhua de lishi yiyi he hanzi jianhua fang’an” (2001), 470.

66 This view is also held by Wei Jiangong, Baxter, William H., and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese – A New Reconstruction* (2014), 63–64.

67 Some of the aspects discussed in this section also appear in a paper that I presented at the Deutsche Vereinigung für Chinastudien (DVCS) conference in Bochum in 2015. I am very grateful to Dr. Rüdiger Breuer and Prof. Dr. Heiner Roetz for their feedback and suggestions. See: Münsting, Mariana, “Sprachpolitik als Selbstzensur. ‘Elegante Sprache’ (*yayan*) und ‘volkstümliche Zeichen’ (*suzi*) bei Wei Jiangong (1901-1980)” (2018). Compare also Wei Jiangong’s deliberations during his stay in Taiwan which I present in section 5.2.1 on page 143.

Wei Jiāngōng's legitimization of the simplified script reads very differently. He wrote that many of the *jiāntizi* are actually *suzi*, popular characters. While I translated the term *su* as “vulgar” in section 5.2.1 on page 143, and the characters *suzi* as “vulgar characters” in section 7.2.1 on page 202, I use the term “popular” here to emphasize Wei's different framing of the term. Wei Jiāngōng understood *su* in a positive way when he was living in the PRC.

Wei Jiāngōng argues that while *suzi* were not officially recognized, they were widely used (*liúxíng* 流行) since they could be written faster. Wei Jiāngōng pointed out that Xu Shen already included them in his *Shuowen jiezi* in the Han dynasty and marked them with *suzuo* 俗作. The juxtaposition of *su* with “correct” *zhèng* 正 only happened later, causing *su* to be associated with “wrong” (*wu* 誤). The term *suzi* was then used by the ruling classes to discredit the popular characters created by the broad masses (*renmin dàzhòng* 人民大眾):<sup>68</sup>

這少數的人利用文字的繁複以便把持，所以他們要反對便於勞動人民的簡字，他們把簡化的字稱為“俗字”，俗字不能取得合法地位。<sup>69</sup>

These few people used the complexity of the script to monopolize it; this is why they were against the abbreviated characters of the working people. They called the simplified characters “vulgar characters”, and the vulgar characters could not achieve legitimacy.

According to Wei Jiāngōng, this monopolization entrenched social inequality, since the ruling classes decided on the orthodoxy of the script.

Both Wei's advocacy of the *suzi* and the criticism of how they were wrongfully labeled as “vulgar” are not new. As early as in 1909, Lufei Kui published the article “Common education should employ popular characters” (Putong jiaoyu dang caiyong sutizi 普通教育當採用俗體字) in the “Education magazine” (*Jiaoyu zazhi* 教育雜誌).<sup>70</sup> Lufei wrote that script (*wenzi*) is a sign (*fuhao*) to represent (spoken) language (*yanyu* 言語). The simpler (*jian* 簡) it is, the easier it is to remember. He continued that the Europeans and the Americans indicate the pronunciation with an alphabet (*yi zimu qieyin* 以字母切音) and that the Japanese use the *kana* scripts (*jiaming* 假名) to indicate the readings of the characters. These are very easy (*yi* 易) scripts that facilitate the spread of education.

In China, however, the characters are mainly pictographs (*xiāngxíngzì* 象形字): each has a shape (*xíng* 形) and a pronunciation (*yīn* 音). This is really complicated and difficult. If more people should become literate, an easier writing system should be adopted: “popular-shape characters” *sutizi* 俗體字. They are written with uncomplicated (*jiandan* 簡單) strokes. Lufei supported his claim with examples: *ti* 體 - 体 (body), *deng* 燈 - 灯 (light), *gui* 歸 - 归 (return), *wan* 萬 - 万 (thousand) and several more. Characters like these should be employed in

68 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Hanzi jianhua de lishi yiyi he hanzi jianhua fang'an” (2001), 468–469.

69 Wei Jiāngōng 魏建功, “Dui ‘wenzi gaige’ de tifa he kanfa de wenti” 對“文字改革”的提法和看法的問題 [Problems about the wording and the views of the “Script reform”], in: *Wei Jiāngōng wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiāngōng], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 472–80, see 472.

70 Hu Shi also published his above-quoted “The history of the national language movement” (*Guoyu yundong de lishi* 國語運動的歷史) in this magazine in 1921. See section 2.3 on page 42.

common education (*putong jiaoyu* 普通教育) to efficiently use the brain capacity of the learners and lead to an increase of literacy.

Furthermore, Lufei Kui wanted to do away with the negative image of the *sutizi*. Given that writing is a mere symbol for the spoken language, it is not natural (*fei chuyu tianran* 非出於天然, not God-given), but man-made (*renzao* 人造). Nonetheless, teachers nowadays regard the standard or regular characters (*zhengtizi* 正體字) as *ya* (elegant) and the *sutizi* as not *ya*.<sup>71</sup> However, this conception is faulty. Using the examples of *wan* 萬 - 万 (ten thousand) and *suàn* 算 - 祿 (to count),<sup>72</sup> Lufei demonstrated that the simpler *sutizi* may actually be the older graphic variant. In these cases, Lufei claims, the so-called *sutizi* should actually be called *zhengtizi*; the so-called *zhengtizi* were actually forms that were developed much later and should therefore be called *sutizi*.<sup>73</sup>

Wei Jianguo adds the dimension of class struggle to Lufei's concept of simplicity:

由於少數人的壟斷文字，若干世紀以來勞動人民大部分不幸成為文盲。<sup>74</sup>

Because of the monopolization of the script by a few over centuries, the majority of the working people unfortunately became illiterate.

Fighting illiteracy was already an aim during the Republic. However in the PRC, attaining universal education became a policy with higher priority, and script reform would help achieve this goal.<sup>75</sup> Blaming the low literacy among the Chinese people on the elites was a good fit for the communist class struggle rhetoric encouraged (or even at times made mandatory) under Mao. The language in the PRC became not only politicized but also formalized.<sup>76</sup> Wei Jianguo and other linguists, as well as scientists of other fields, had to make reference to important theories of Marxism, such as class theory. Wei Jianguo referred to Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) to explain the relation between language and class:

斯大林說：“人們個別的社會集團、個別的階級對於語言遠不是漠不關心的。他們極力想利用語言為自己的利益服務……那些脫離人民並且仇視人民的有產階級上層，如貴族，資產階級的上層分子等表現得特別厲害，他們‘創造’階級的習慣語、同行語、雅語。……”我們的“雅語”

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71 Lufei Kui 陸費逵, “Putong jiaoyu dang caiyong sutizi” 普通教育當採用俗體字 [Common education should employ popular characters], in: *Jiaoyu zazhi* 教育雜誌 [Education magazine] 1.1 (1909), 1–2, see 1.

72 “Variant characters” *yitizi* 異體字 can be looked up online in: Zhonghua Minguo jiaoyu bu 中華民國教育部 (Ministry of Education, R.O.C.) (ed.), “Yitizi zidian” 異體字字典 [Dictionary of Character Variants], 2017, URL: <https://dict.variants.moe.edu.tw/variants/rbt/home.do> (visited on Sept. 29, 2021).

73 Lufei Kui 陸費逵, “Putong jiaoyu dang caiyong sutizi” (1909), 2.

74 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Dui ‘wenzi gaige’ de tifa he kanfa de wenti” (2001), 472.

75 Martin, Helmut, *Chinesische Sprachplanung* (1982), 88.

76 Schoenhals describes how the state exerted power via a formalized rhetoric, and that this formalized language also meant that the language was impoverished. Cf. Schoenhals, Michael, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics: Five Studies*, Berkeley: 1992. Ji Fengyuan argues that a veritable Orwellian “newspeak” was established to transport government ideology. Cf. Ji, Fengyuan, *Linguistic Engineering. Language and Politics in Mao's China* (2004).

跟壟斷文字的階級是分不開的，是漢語跟漢字特別分家的結果，可是漢字跟漢語本身始終還是對全社會服務的。<sup>77</sup>

Stalin says: “[But] people, the various social groups, the classes, are far from being indifferent to language. They strive to utilize the language in their own interests, [...] The upper strata of the propertied classes, who have divorced themselves from and detest the people – the aristocratic nobility, the upper strata of the bourgeoisie – particularly distinguish themselves in this respect. “Class” dialects, jargons, high-society “languages” are created.<sup>78</sup> Our elegant language (*yayu* 雅語)<sup>79</sup> cannot be separated from the ruling class that monopolized the script; it is the result of this special separation between Chinese [spoken] language and Chinese characters. However, the Chinese characters and language *per se* should completely serve the entire society.

Wei Jianguo took this quote from Stalin’s article “Concerning Marxism in Linguistics” published in *Pravda* on June 20, 1950.<sup>80</sup> Wei Jianguo also quotes it on other occasions. In that article, Stalin legitimizes the Russian national language and says that language itself does not have “class character”. According to Stalin, language is neither suprastructure nor basis. Therefore, a national language is a realistic and proper thing to be implemented. The classes have their own jargons and dialects, but these do not have the status of a full-fledged language.

Stalin’s statement marked a turning point in Soviet language planning. Until then, the theories of Nicholas Marr (1865–1934)<sup>81</sup> were very influential. Marr claimed that not only all languages have developed from one proto-language<sup>82</sup> but also that they would develop into a future socialist world language.<sup>83</sup> He connected this linguistic theory with Marxism to claim that language was a class phenomenon and that the languages of the each social class in different countries bore more similarity to one another than the language used by the different classes within one country.<sup>84</sup> Stalin, however, pursued Russification and the promotion of Russian as the national language of the Soviet Union.<sup>85</sup> National

77 Punctuation as in source. Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Cong hanzi fazhan de qingkuang kan gaige de tiaojian” 從漢字發展的情況看改革的條件 [Looking at the conditions for reform from the circumstances of the Chinese character development], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇兴, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 436–441, see 437.

78 I take the English translation of Stalin’s words from: Stalin, Joseph V., *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics*, Cabin John, MD: Wildside Press, 2008, 11.

79 Remember that *ya* was used to legitimize a standard language in Republican times, see chapter 5.2.1, page 143.

80 Stalin’s article was swiftly translated into Chinese: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社出版 (ed.), *Sidalin Makesizhuyi yu yuyanxue wenti* 斯大林馬克思主義與語言學問題 [Stalin: “Concerning Marxism in Linguistics”], Beijing 北京: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社出版, 1950.

81 Nikolay Yakovlevich Marr (Николай Яковлевич Марр) was born in Georgia.

82 Rubenstein, Herbert, “The Recent Conflict in Soviet Linguistics”, in: *Language* 27.3 (Jul. – Sep., 1951), 281–287, see 282.

83 Y., D. B., “The Stalin-Marr Philological Controversy in the U.S.S.R.”, in: *The World Today* 6.8 (Aug. 1950), 355–364, see 360.

84 Rubenstein, Herbert, “The Recent Conflict in Soviet Linguistics” (Jul. – Sep., 1951), 283–84.

85 Parry reports at the time how the use of Russian was promoted or even enforced in many regions in the Soviet Union. See Parry, Albert, “The Language of Stalin’s Empire”, in: *The Georgia Review* 5.2 (Summer – 1951), 183–192.

coherence took on a more significant role than international class solidarity, and the science of language had to follow this path.<sup>86</sup>

Wei Jiangong was not the only Chinese linguist to refer to Stalin's "Concerning Marxism in Linguistics"; the text was mandatory reading. It also appears in Wu Yuzhang's "Speech at the founding session of the Chinese script reform research committee", in which Wu Yuzhang connects the dismissal of Marr's theories with an agreement and praise of Mao's ideas. While stating that he had not read Marr (Ma'er 馬爾), he admitted that he made the same error as him and previously thought that the script was part of the suprastructure, just like art, religion and literature, and that it had class character. Only after reading Stalin's article, he realized that he was wrong.<sup>87</sup>

By wanting to replace the characters with a phonetic script (Wu Yuzhang had been involved in the promotion of Latinxua Sinwenz),<sup>88</sup> Wu continued his self-criticism; he did not take into account the habits of the people and separated himself from practice (*tuoli shiji* 脫離實際). Given that the people are used to their old writing system, its reform needs to be undertaken gradually.<sup>89</sup>

This gradual reform should begin with a simplification of the characters.<sup>90</sup> A phonetic alphabet would need "national form" (*minzu xingshi* 民族形式). Zhuyin has been proven usable and could be employed as the basis for further developments. The idea that it cannot be done without Latin or Cyrillic letters should be dismissed. A writing system close to the Chinese characters and capable of representing Chinese phonetics is required. The most important immediate task is to research the simplification of the characters and improve and promote Zhuyin.<sup>91</sup>

86 Ulrich Lins describes how the linguistic theory of Marr, especially his "Japhetic theory" of the common origin of languages, was still the leading framework for most Soviet linguists. Stalin eliminated this theory to legitimize his promotion of Russian as national language. See Lins, Ulrich [translated by Tonkin, Humphrey], *Dangerous Language – Esperanto and the Decline of Stalinism*, vol. II, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 89.

87 Wu Yuzhang 吳玉章, "Zai Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui chenglihui shang de jianghua" 在中國文字改革研究委員會成立會上的講話 [Speech at the founding session of the Chinese script reform research committee], in: *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文 [Chinese language and script] 1 (1952), 5.

88 Simmons called Latinxua Sinwenz a "mixed vernacular orthography": it did not necessarily represent a thoroughly Beijing-based speech but can be seen as "conservative heterogeneity". See Simmons, Richard VanNess, "Whence Came Mandarin? Qīng Guānhuà, the Běijīng Dialect, and the National Language Standard in Early Republican China" (2017), 63, 66. Above, on pages 36 and 161, the role of an eclectic pronunciation is discussed. Furthermore, it must be stressed that Sinwenz could be used to spell to any dialect. It was created by Wu Yuzhang, Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899–1935) and others in the Soviet Union and in cooperation with Soviet linguists. Seybolt, Peter J., and Gregory Kuei-ke Chiang (ed.), *Language Reform in China*, New York: Sharpe, 1978, 19. Zhong gives examples of Sinwenz spelling of Shanghainese and Cantonese: Zhong, Yurou, *Chinese Grammatology: Script Revolution and Literary Modernity, 1916–1958* (2019), 74–75.

89 Wu Yuzhang 吳玉章, "Zai Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui chenglihui shang de jianghua" (1952).

90 Wu Yuzhang 吳玉章, "Zai Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui chenglihui shang de jianghua" 在中國文字改革研究委員會成立會上的講話 [Speech at the founding session of the Chinese script reform research committee], in: *Wenzi gaige wenji* 文字改革文集 [Collected works on script reform], Beijing 北京: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe 中国人民大学出版社, 1978, 89–90, see 89.

91 Wu Yuzhang 吳玉章, "Zai Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui chenglihui shang de jianghua" (1978), 90.



The call for a “national form” of a Chinese phonetic spelling was the catchphrase for all language reformers. At the founding session of the Script reform research committee, Guo Moruo, Ma Xulun and Wu Yuzhang state in their speeches, published in the first edition of *Zhongguo yuwen*, that this was Mao Zedong’s instruction.<sup>92</sup>

The linguists and language planners refer to a dialogue about language and script between Mao Zedong and Josef Stalin that allegedly took place in 1949. Mao indeed traveled to Moscow and met Stalin on December 16, 1949.<sup>93</sup> The Russian meeting minutes, however, do not indicate that the subject was discussed.<sup>94</sup> Neither does Mao’s *nianpu*.<sup>95</sup> It is possible that the issue was discussed before or after the official part of the meeting.

The evidence we do find, however, is quite scant. Hu Qiaomu 胡乔木 (1912–1992)<sup>96</sup> covers this issue retrospectively. He states that Mao originally favored latinization of the Chinese characters: replacing them with a Latin script. However, after speaking with Stalin, Mao changed his approach and instead supported the simplification (*jianhua*) of the characters and the promulgation of Hanyu Pinyin as auxiliary transcription. Stalin told Mao that the Chinese characters were too hard to learn (*tai nan ren* 太难认) and asked if it would be possible to develop a “nationalized” (*minzuhua* 民族化) transcription scheme not based on the alphabet of another country.<sup>97</sup>

The most quoted source for this elusive dialog is Zhou Youguang<sup>98</sup> who clearly states only unofficial internal communication reached language reformers at the time. Apparently, Mao asked Stalin how to approach Chinese script reform, and Stalin replied that since China is such a great country, it should use its own script. As a result, Mao advocated a transcription scheme with national form (*minzu*

92 Guo Moruo 郭沫若, “Zai Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui chengli hui shang de jianghua” 在中國文字改革研究委員會成立會上的講話 [Speech at the founding session of the Chinese script reform research committee], in: *Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文 [Chinese language and script] 1 (1952), 3. Ma Xulun 馬敘倫, “Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui chenglihui kaihuici” (1952). Wu Yuzhang 吳玉章, “Zai Zhongguo wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui chenglihui shang de jianghua” (1978).

93 Wingrove, Paul, “Mao in Moscow, 1949–50: Some new archival evidence”, in: *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 11.4 (1995), 309–334, see 315.

94 Rozas, Danny [trans.] (ed.), “Record of Conversation between IV. Stalin and Chairman of the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China Mao Zedong on 16 December 1949”, URL: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111240#document-1> (visited on Apr. 4, 2022). (Archive of the President, Russian Federation (APRF), fond (f.) 45, opis (op.) 1, delo (d.) 329, listy (ll.) 9–17., record ID: 111240)

95 Pang Xianzhi 逢先知, Feng Hui 冯蕙 (et al.) (ed.), *Mao Zedong nianpu (1949–1976)* 毛泽东年谱 (一九四九——一九七六) [Chronological biography of Mao Zedong (1949–1976)], vol. 1, Beijing 北京: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文献出版社出版, 2013, 58ff.

96 Hu held several high ranking government positions in the PRC and was also Mao’s personal secretary and president of the Xinhua 新華 News Agency.

97 Hu Qiaomu 胡乔木, *Hu Qiaomu huiyi Mao Zedong* 胡乔木回忆毛泽东 [Hu Qiaomu remembers Mao Zedong], Beijing 北京: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1994, 23.

98 Zhou was a veritable language reform veteran and “main architect and early advocate of Hanyu Pinyin”, Mair, Victor H., “Zhong Youguang 周有光 (January 13, 1906 – January 14, 2017)”, in: *The Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 45.2 (2017), 500–507.

*xingshi de pinyin fangan* 民族形式的拼音方案).<sup>99</sup> After three years of discussing different spelling schemes and not having reached a final decision on any of them (including the Cyrillic alphabet), Wu Yuzhang approached Mao Zedong, who then agreed to proceed with a latinized transcription.<sup>100</sup>

Wei Jianguo also referred to the “national form” as early as in May 1950, when his take on the class character had been slightly different. The change of attitude demonstrates how political winds changed the direction of scholarship. In *Guangming ribao* 光明日報 (Guangming Daily),<sup>101</sup> Wei postulates that using the Latin alphabet would mean succumbing to imperialism (*diguozhuyi* 帝國主義). For him, the spoken word reflects the national form, and while language has class character (Wei would later have to rethink this), the national form does not.<sup>102</sup> The Chinese characters represent feudalism (*fengjianzhuyi* 封建主義) and destroy the true structure of (spoken) language with their square shapes. Wei ends with an enthusiastic call for script reform, namely to overthrow the feudalist Chinese characters (*fengjianzhuyi de hanzi* 封建主義的漢字).<sup>103</sup>

Wei Jianguo used the *Pravda* article “Concerning Marxism in Linguistics” by Stalin to demonstrate that the Chinese language and script exist for all members of society in all classes. “Elegant speech” (*yayu*) is a “jargon” connected to the ruling class that monopolized the script. According to Wei Jianguo, the existence of *yayu* was caused by the separation of language and script. This recalls a congruence of language and writing (*yan wen yizhi*) and the call for the abolition of the characters mentioned above (for example on page 67). Retrospectively, Wei Jianguo provided a Marxist explanation for the phenomena already discussed in the early 20th century.

While the May Fourth intellectuals criticized Chinese language and script as a whole, Wei Jianguo now puts the blame on the ruling class. While the script itself is indifferent to class, the ruling class nonetheless instrumentalized the script and incapacitated the lower classes by depriving them from their access to writing:

- 99 The term *pinyin* here does not refer to Hanyu Pinyin, but “to spell sound” in general. Zhou Youguang 周有光, *Wo suo duguo de shiguang: Zhou Youguang bainian koushu* 我所渡過的時光: 周有光百年口述 [Zhou Youguang: One Hundred Years in Oral Narrative], Hong Kong: Xianggang zhongwen daxue chubanshe 香港中文大學出版社, 2015, 306. In many interviews, Zhou presented the same views, such as those quoted in Li, Yan, *China’s Soviet Dream: Propaganda, Culture, and Popular Imagination* (Routledge Contemporary China Series), London; New York: Routledge, 2017, 69–70. See also Hessler, Peter, *Oracle Bones: A Journey through Time in China*, New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2007, 417.
- 100 Zhou Youguang 周有光, *Wo suo duguo de shiguang: Zhou Youguang bainian koushu* (2015), 307.
- 101 *Guangming ribao* was founded in 1949 as the mouthpiece of the Chinese Democratic League (one of the later termed “democratic parties”). In 1953, it became the joint organ of China’s eight democratic parties; in the course of the Anti-Rightist Movement, it was taken over by the CCP because it published the fiercest criticism against the CCP in the Hundred Flowers Campaign. Zhao, Yuezhi, *Media, Market and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998, 17, 21, 199.
- 102 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Yuwen de minzu xingshi” 語文的民族形式 [The national form of language and script], in: *Wei Jianguo wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jianguo], ed. by Ye Xiaochun 叶笑春, Rong Wenmin 戎文敏, Zhou Fang 周方 and Ma Zhenxing 马镇, vol. 4, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001, 410–411, see 410.
- 103 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Yuwen de minzu xingshi” (2001).

所以一般壟斷文字的人動不動要說由人民大眾創造出來的新生字是“俗字”。……“俗”本是“通俗”、“大家慣用”的意思。但是這些人向來不這麼理解。他們看不起這些來自民間的新體字，把“俗”對著一個抽象的“雅”。“雅”的古義是有規範、正軌的意思。這樣一來，提到“俗字”就跟“不規範”、“非正軌”的概念聯在一處了!<sup>104</sup>

Therefore, the people who monopolized the script often called the new characters that were created by the masses “*suzi*”. [...] *Su* actually means “popular”, “what everybody constantly uses”. But those people have not understood it like that until now. They looked down on these new characters from the people and juxtaposed an abstract *ya* to *su*. The old meaning of *ya* is “normed / standardized”, “correct”. In this way, the popular characters were associated with the “non-standardized” and “incorrect”!

According to Wei Jianguo, the script reform enabled the rediscovery of this historical material of the *suzi* and the use of it as the basis for the simplified script. People should overcome the misconception that anything that is popular or vulgar is incorrect.<sup>105</sup>

### 8.3 The Script Reform in Comparison to the *Guoyu* Movement

The discussion of the script reform in this dissertation functions as an antithesis to the national language promotion. By describing the relationship between the script reform and the *guoyu* project, I would like to point out differences as well as similarities. Class struggle rhetoric replaced nationalist rhetoric. While the “elegant” *ya* was said to be the standard during the promotion of the national language and *su* was discarded as “vulgar” in the ROC, *ya* was seen as oppressive in the PRC. The source of the standard became *su*, which can be best translated as “popular”.

At first glance, both concepts seem to oppose each other. However, they also provide a dimension of continuity. In the 1920s, during the “Tiger debate” (see page 74 ff), Wei Jianguo criticized the notion of the “refined” *wenya*: he perceived it as exclusive and as a cover-up for misanthropy. The rise of communism is sometimes seen as a result of the May Fourth movement, and if we look at the PRC devaluation of *ya* we find clear similarities.

If we take the concept *su* into consideration, which Wei Jianguo claimed to be unsuitable as a standard when he was in Taiwan, we will see that it also provides a different perspective if we consider the May Fourth era. Back then, *suhua* under the new label *baihua* was advocated. If we go even further back in history, we find Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), who saw the vernacular in the concept *su*, which enables the teachings to be directly accessible, not clouded by excessive “elegance”.<sup>106</sup>

104 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Wenzi gaige wenti he zhengzifa (wenzi guifan) wenti” (2001), 620.

105 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Wenzi gaige wenti he zhengzifa (wenzi guifan) wenti” (2001), 620.

106 Vetrov, Viatcheslav, “Zhu Xi’s Sayings in Search of an Author: The Vernacular as a Philosophical *lieu de mémoire*”, in: *Monumenta Serica* 59 (2011), 73–98.

On pronunciation, we also find important continuities. The basis of both *guoyu* and *putonghua* is the Beijing dialect. *Guoyu* research and reference material development was grounded on traditional philology, as was the script reform. In both cases, Wei Jianguo and other linguists used traditional methodology and adapted them to the challenges of the modern situation. He used rhyme books to propagate the “national pronunciation”. Not only did he use existing cursive characters, but he also advocated the creation of new characters with traditional methods.

He brought together the phonetic and the popular features of the simplified characters in 1952. The obscure reading of many characters was caused by the monopolization of the script by the “privileged class” (*tequan jieji* 特權階級). The aim of the script reform was to “surmount the shape and closely express the sound” (*tupo xingshi, miqie biaoyin* 突破形式, 密切表音).<sup>107</sup>

The Republican simplified characters sometimes are overlooked for a few reasons: maybe the CCP claimed all credit for a progressive script, or the KMT in Taiwan does not want to acknowledge that it engaged in similar activities as the “communist criminals” (*gongfei* 共匪).<sup>108</sup> However, the roots for the PRC script reform can be traced to Republican times. The motivation to dissociate oneself from the respective other regime went to extremes: For example, the PRC adopted the term *jianhuazi* instead of *jiantizi*. Furthermore, the standard of the ROC in Taiwan of today is not always simply the discarded complex character of the PRC simplification tables.<sup>109</sup> Taiwan has seen standardization efforts of the script too: in the case of “bone” *gu* 骨, it restored a shape preceding the *Kangxi Dictionary* and actually reflects the etymology more closely, namely with the “meat” (*rou* 月, from 肉) instead of the “moon” (*yue* 月) signfic. In the case of “temple” (*si* 寺), the Taiwanese standard diverges from the Mainland standard as well. The top component was originally written 𠂇, an ancient form of 之 (compare the *Shuowen jiezi*: 𠂇). While the PRC standard has “soil” (*tu* 土) as top component, the Taiwanese standard has “scholar” (*shi* 士).<sup>110</sup>

107 Wei Jianguo 魏建功, “Cong hanzi fazhan de qingkuang kan gaige de tiaojian” (2001), 440.

108 See this publication: Guojia jianshe yanjiu weiyuanhui 國家建設研究委員會 [Nation building research committee] (ed.), *Gong fei wenzi gaige zhi yanjiu* 共匪文字改革之研究 [Research on the communist criminals’ script reform] (*Wenhua lei: Zhuanti yanjiu baogao zhi ershiwu* 文化類: 專題研究報告之二十五 [Culture: Monographic study report 25]), s.l. [Taiwan]: 1980.

109 Cheng Rong 程榮, “Liang an san di hanzi zixing wenti tantao” 兩岸三地漢字字形問題探討 [A comparative study of Chinese character glyphs among Chinese regions of Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong [orig. transl.]], in: *Zhongguo Yuwen* 中國語文 [Chinese language and script] 358 (2014), 3–13.

110 The Taiwanese standard was first published in 1982 and it is accessible online at: Jiaoyu bu Zongshen jiaoyu si 教育部終身教育司 [Ministry of Education, Department of Lifelong Education], “Changyong Guozi biao zhun zitibiao” [Table of standard forms of national characters], URL: <https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/%E5%B8%B8%E7%94%A8%E5%9C%8B%E5%AD%97%E6%A8%99%E6%BA%96%E5%AD%97%E9%AB%94%E8%A1%A8> (visited on Apr. 11, 2021). Variant characters and excerpts from the *Shuowen jiezi* can be looked up in the online dictionary of the Taiwanese Ministry of Education. Zhonghua Minguo jiaoyu bu 中華民國教育部 (Ministry of Education, R.O.C.) (ed.), “Yitizi zidian” (2017). For 寺, see: [https://dict.variants.moe.edu.tw/variants/rbt/word\\_attribute.rbt?quote\\_code=QTaxMDU4](https://dict.variants.moe.edu.tw/variants/rbt/word_attribute.rbt?quote_code=QTaxMDU4) (visited on Oct. 5, 2021).

## Chapter 9

# Conclusion

To conclude, I refer to my three claims from the introduction:

1. Language planning was implemented based on the existing language situation. On the one hand, this meant legitimizing the status quo. On the other hand, it meant legitimizing change by constructing or overemphasizing the historical legacy.
2. Language planning was carried out on the basis of traditional Chinese scholarship.
3. Wei Jianguo's language concept stayed the same, even if its phrasing in the People's Republic of China was different from that of the Republic of China.

Claim 1 refers to the national language movement on the Mainland. My discussion illustrated how the legacy of Northern Mandarin as standard language was constructed or at least overemphasized to legitimize it. The promulgation of the "old national pronunciation" in 1913 was not successful: it contained more characteristics from Southern Mandarin, while during the 19th century, the Beijing pronunciation had slowly acquired more prestige than that of Nanjing. Additionally, Northern Mandarin, as an amalgam of the dialects spoken in the North (with Beijing as most prominent reference point), had the significant advantage of being associated with vernacular literature, such as the Ming and Qing dynasty *baihua* novels. Therefore, according to Wei Jianguo, it had historical legitimacy and was a living tradition found in folk performing art, with Wei especially emphasizing the Peking opera. This shows how the May Fourth language reform project shifted the focus of the linguistic sciences toward popular genres and means of expression, reflecting a greater visibility and inclusion of what was formerly perceived as vulgar.

Although the Beijing dialect was accepted as representative for the northern dialects, its implementation was difficult. It was hard to realize discourse in reality. What is required to turn an idea in the heads of an intellectual into reality for the populace? As the history of the 20th century shows, political power, the ability to institutionalize and authorize, played an important role. In the case of

Taiwan, the promotion of *guoyu* went hand in hand with claiming supremacy over the island.

Claim 2 was proven in my discussion of both the national language movement and the script reform. Phonology and graphemics were not the only tools used to legitimize the language planning measures historically; other methods included traditional philological methods. Wei Jiāngōng's 1941 *Zhōnghuá xīnyūn* was basically a traditional rhyme book, and it was used to spread the standard language of the modern Republic. Lexicography, arguably the linguistic field with the most innovation, turned to traditional Chinese scholarship. The phonographic sorting of free morphemes as lexical items found a compromise between sound and shape. The majority of the simplified characters in the PRC then were either existing shorthand forms, which Wei Jiāngōng and his colleagues extracted from the enormous pool of China's historical characters, or they were newly created characters that followed the character-creation rules from ancient times. Qiu Xigui exemplifies this by treating the script reform as one of many processes in the development of the Chinese script.<sup>1</sup>

Claim 3 is tied to my theoretical considerations. I stated in the introduction that Wei Jiāngōng's concepts of language (including language-related concepts, such as script and language evolution) will be the focus of my work. I conclude his core language concept comprises the following: language is a tool to facilitate communication between the people, nobody should be left out, and that all members of society should be able to understand it. This means that language can be reformed to ensure inclusion and communication. This tool exists in the dimension of sound: the spoken word comes first, and the script is just a secondary, graphic representation of this sound. The script then, according to this concept, can also be reformed if it does not fulfill its task.

This utilitarian concept of language was framed differently in the Republic and in the PRC. In the Republic, Wei Jiāngōng emphasized historical legitimacy and nationalism. In the PRC, he projected the class struggle narrative on script development. In addition to their extensive knowledge of traditional Chinese philology, Wei and his colleagues became increasingly proficient in Western linguistics as well. This enabled Wei to frame his unchanging main concept in many ways. Contemporary Chinese linguistics is built on the work of these scholars: contemporary Chinese linguistics would not exist without traditional rhyme books, graphic etymology, latinized phonetic transcriptions, or a grammatical analysis with word classes. The dangerous dominance of Western powers not only prompted the radical questioning of the Chinese language and script but also induced a pathbreaking reorientation. It has been argued that contact with the West brought with it a phonocentrism that seemed more progressive and attractive, but that was ultimately discarded in favor of preserving Chinese characters.<sup>2</sup> I would, however, like to offer the reading that the phonocentric idea was not discarded, but that the phonetic characteristics of the characters were rediscovered.

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1 Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 [translated by Mattos, Gilbert and Norman, Jerry], *Chinese Writing* (2000).

2 Zhong, Yurou, *Chinese Grammatology: Script Revolution and Literary Modernity, 1916–1958* (2019).

The self-assertion that took place illustrated how the Chinese script cannot do less than the Latin alphabet, but more.

To conclude, I refer to my claim that the concepts function as the nexus between the discourse and the material world. The concepts formulated in the language discourse had to correspond to the material world to be successfully implemented, as seen in the comparison between “old” and “new national pronunciation”. Additionally, a solid basis of political stability and popular and institutional support was required to support language and script reforms.





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# 提要

音、义、形

语言研究和语言规划之间的音韵学家魏建功（1901—1980）

穆玛瑞

作为 20 世纪中国激进派语言改革的主要倡导者，魏建功在西方仍是一位相对鲜为人知的人物。本书描述了魏建功这位具有深厚中国传统语言学（小学）基础的学者，他将语言概念化为一种工具，并探讨了他如何帮助实施了汉语标准化，如何领导编纂了全世界最畅销的字典，以及如何推动了文字改革。虽然这些措施曾被视为对汉语领域的粗暴干预，但这类举措已是魏建功在语言学描述和政治性表述之间谨慎平衡的结果，或有助于中国实现语言自立。

本书标题正指涉中国语言文字的三个层面，即传统语言学（小学）的研究对象。书名中将“形、音、义”的传统顺序以符合魏建功的生平进行了重新排列。



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**One of the leading proponents of the radical linguistic reforms in 20th century China, Wei Jiangong remains hardly known in the West. This book describes how Wei, who was rooted in traditional philology and conceptualizing language as a tool, helped to promulgate a standard language, led the compilation of the world's most popular dictionary, and helped to drive script reform. While these measures were characterized as violent intervention in the Chinese language sphere, Wei's careful negotiating of linguistic description and political prescription illustrates how they also may have been steps that helped to achieve linguistic self-determination.**

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