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.[1] 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.[2] 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.

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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 盧戇章 (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 Zhihui 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.[3] Modern linguistics as a discipline emerged in China, and traditional scholarship was questioned and perceived truths re-examined.[4]

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 Jiangong 魏建功 (1901–1980) was involved in all of these fields: linguistic research, language planning and the development of linguistics and adjacent disciplines.[5] 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 Jiangong 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 Jiangong'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 Jiangong, 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.

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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 Jiangong yinxue shuping" 魏建功音學述評 [Review of Wei Jiangong'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 Jiangong 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.[6] 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 Jiangong.

Wei Jiangong 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 Jiangong is a key connector in a network of influential linguists. At Peking University (Beijing daxue 北京大學, Beida), he studied with Qian Xuantong 錢玄同 (1887–1939), Li Jinxi 黎錦熙 (1890–1978), Gu Jiegang and Lu Xun 魯迅 (given name: Zhou Shuren 周樹人, 1881–1936), and continued to work with Qian and Li afterwards. Colleagues during his PRC career include Ma Xulun 馬敘倫 (1885–1970) and Wang Li 王力 (1900–1986). Wei Jiangong 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-

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6 The canonical sequence of the three disciplines of traditional Chinese philology (*xiaoxue* 小學, minor studies) is shape (*xing* 形), sound (*yin* 音), and meaning (*yi* 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 Jiangong 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 Jiangong 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 Jiangong 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.[7]

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 Jiangong'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 Jiangong 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[8] 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

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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 Jiangong 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 Jiangong's texts are the key primary sources in this dissertation. The most comprehensive bibliography of his works[9] was published in 1996 as an appendix to his "chronological biography" (*Wei Jiangong nianpu* 魏建功年谱).[10] The *nianpu* itself already presents the texts of Wei Jiangong published in the respective year. The bibliography then lists these texts by topics, already mentioning the "Collected works of Wei Jiangong" (*Wei Jiangong Wenji* 魏建功文集)[11] as forthcoming. These were published in 2001 and represent the majority of Wei Jiangong's texts. A comparison between the "Wei Jiangong *yizhu mulu*" and the *Wenji*, however, sheds light on the lecture notes of Wei Jiangong that were not published. One lecture note was found in Wei Jiangong's manuscripts, preserved by his family.[12] 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.[13]

Wei Jiangong'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 ligong daxue Renwenxueyuan 华中理工大学人文学院) in Wuhan 武汉, which established a "Wei Jiangong library" (Wei Jiangong *cangshushi* 魏建功藏书室).[14] 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 Jiangong, 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 Jiangong yizhu mulu" 魏建功遗著目录 [Catalog of writings bequeathed by Wei Jiangong], in: *Wenjiao ziliao* 文教资料 [Data of culture and education] 05 (1996), 24–34.

10 Cao Da 曹达, "Wei Jiangong nianpu" 魏建功年谱 [Chronological biography of Wei Jiangong], in: *Wenjiao 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 Jiangong wenji* 魏建功文集 [Collected works of Wei Jiangong] (4 vols.), Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版社, 2001.

12 Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Hanzi shengyunxue" 漢字聲韵學 [Phonology of Chinese characters], Beijing, family possession, 1935 (?), lecture notes from his lecture at Furen University (Furen Daxue 輔仁大學.

13 Wei Jiangong, "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 Jiangong" 被历史烟尘遮蔽的魏建功 [Wei Jiangong, 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 Jiangong and other intellectuals involved in language reform were tremendously productive. I include primary sources of other linguists in my study that heavily influenced Wei Jiangong 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 Jiangong'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 Jiangong" (*Yidai zongshi – Wei Jiangong* 一代宗师－－魏建功)[15] were particularly illuminating. Articles about Wei Jiangong that I have studied are divided into two main fields: Articles of remembrance (from Wei's children,[16] other linguists, students) and specialized studies about a distinct field of activity of Wei Jiangong. All of them are in Chinese. In Western literature, Wei Jiangong 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*.[17]

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[18] and Zhou Youguang 周有光 (1906–2017).[19] 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.[20] 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.[21] Dorothea Wippermann's

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15 Ma Si 马嘶, *Yidai zongshi Wei Jiangong* 一代宗师魏建功 [A great master of a generation: Wei Jiangong], 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 Jiangong xiansheng zhuanlüe" 魏建功先生传略 [Short biography of Wei Jiangong], 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 黎錦熙, *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.[22] In addition to these, DeFrancis' standard work *Nationalism and Language Reform* must be mentioned.[23] 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.[24]

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.[25] In the field of phonology, William Baxter and Laurent Sagart's *Old Chinese – A New Reconstruction* provides valuable English definitions of Chinese technical terms.[26] The same is the case for Jerry Norman's *Chinese*.[27] The recently published *Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics*, edited by Rynt Sybesma and his team,[28] 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 Jiangong'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 Orientální* 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.[29] 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 Jiangong 魏建功

This dissertation does not offer a complete biography of Wei Jiangong. 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.[30] The two most important sources for his biography are the *nianpu*[31] and the biography.[32]

Wei Jiangong 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 Jiangong was born, it was part of Rugao 如皋.[33] The location of Rugao[34] 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 Jiangong 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 Jiangong 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 Jiangong 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

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

30 Münning, Mariana, "Wèi Jiàngōng 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 Jiangong nianpu" (1996).

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

33 Material about Wei Jiangong can be found in the Municipal Archive of Rugao. Rugao shaped Wei Jiangong's linguistic identity: he composed a manuscript on the Rugao dialect where he discussed its six tones (with a tonal spelling similar to Gwoyeu Romatzyh). See: Wei Jiangong 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 bee seen online on Google Maps: 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), CC-BY-SA-4.0.

Figure 1: The location of Rugao 如皋 in China.[35]

marriage promise.[36] Wei Jiangong would marry another woman, Wang Bishu 王碧書 (1905–84) in 1928.

At the age of 13, in 1914, Wei Jiangong 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 Xuantong, Li Jinxi, Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967), Lu Xun and Liu Fu 劉復 (or Liu Bannong 劉半農, 1891–1934). Wei Jiangong 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 choubeihui 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.[37] 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 Jingnong 台靜農 (1902–1990) and He Rong 何容 (1903–1990), remained in Taiwan.

In the People's Republic of China (PRC, established 1949), Wei Jiangong 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 Lu Xun in the 1920s that will be discussed in section 3.1.3 on page 59. He died in Beijing on February 28, 1980.

Wei Jiangong earned the most scholarly recognition in the field of phonology. "Research on the ancient sound system" (*Guyinxi yanjiu* 古音系研究, 1935, based

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36 It is printed with the readers' reactions to it. Wei Jiangong 魏建功, "Wei Jiangong xuangao jiechu yunyue!" 魏建功宣告解除婚約! [Wei Jiangong proclaims the renouncement of his engagement!], 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. 5, Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe 江苏教育出版, 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)[38] 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 Jiangong's language concept stayed the same, even if 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).[39] 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 Jiangong 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 Jiangong 魏建功, "Guyinxi yanjiu" 古音系研究 [Research on the ancient sound system], 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. 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.[40] 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）)[41] 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

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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).⁴² 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 Jiangong'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 Jiangong'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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42 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.