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National in Form: Language Reform and Romanization in the Early People's Republic of China

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National in Form: Language Reform and Romanization in the Early People's Republic of China

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by

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Dedicated To Gladys Schmerler Demick (June 25 1929 - March 8 2020)

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Abstract

This project focuses on the period of Chinese romanization between the 1949 Communist Revolution and the 1958 Great Leap forward. During this nine year period, Mao and Chinese officials endeavored to come up with a romanization system that could both educate the Chinese masses and reaffirm CCP (Chinese Communist Party) interests. The process of romanizing the Chinese script began long before the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949, with efforts to reform the Chinese language being seen as critical to national emancipation since the beginning of the 20th century. These efforts would result in the development of Hanyu Pinyin, a romanization system that is still in use today. There are three dimensions of romanization worthy of discussion over the course of this project: (1) firstly, the process by which the CCP came to embrace Sin Wenz and Latinization; (2) secondly, the politicization of Hanyu Pinyin education; and finally (3) the role of Pinyin in constructing a new Chinese national identity. This nine year period of modern Chinese history illuminates the development of Chinese romanization as we know it today, and gives us some insight into its new political connotations.

Introduction

China has long lacked a phonetic system for its character-based language. While the

Chinese relied on traditional index systems to understand the phonetics of their

language, the onset of foreign imperialism in the early modern period highlighted the

absence of any Chinese equivalent to the western alphabet. China over the course of

the 20th century began to develop a romanization system which has worked as a tool

for educators and linguists to teach the Chinese language. This system is known as

Hanyu Pinyin, and its origins lie in the period of the 1950s wherein Mao Zedong's

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) searched for a system to help phoneticize and break

down the Chinese language. As a result of the tireless efforts of CCP linguists and

educators, Pinyin has become the premier system for communication of the Chinese

language to the outside world. William Wang discusses the supremacy of this system in

his article "Chinese Characters": "The hegemony of [Pinyin] being so great that

sometimes even educated readers consider alternative ways of rendering Chinese into

Roman letters as somehow erroneous or inauthentic."[1] This monopoly on Chinese

language romanization was not brought about through linguistic expertise and

knowledge, but through the efforts of CCP officials to seek out a romanization system

which best suited the party's agenda. From looking at the events surrounding the

implementation of Pinyin as a national romanization system, we can see that its

establishment was rooted in the CCP's agenda of constructing a new national identity

for Communist China. While China's linguistic structure remained heavily fragmented up

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[1] Wang, William S—Y. "CHINESE CHARACTERS." *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 6, no. 2 (1978): 268–71.

until the 1950s, as we will later see, the implementation of Pinyin was part of a broader scheme by the party to unite China's fragmented linguistic structure. By connecting the dots of different events, we can see that Pinyin crystallized in the 1950s because of the CCP's political goal of constructing a new national language which integrated Hanyu Pinyin and Mandarin Chinese.

The first question is why Pinyin, among the countless romanization systems pioneered in the 20th century, was ultimately picked out by the CCP and made into China's national romanization system. The answer to this question lies in examining the various romanization systems that came to fruition prior to the existence of Pinyin. As we will soon see, romanization was nothing new to China, as it had long had a tradition of western missionaries learning the Chinese language and trying to bridge the gap between East and West. This process accelerated as China began to undergo a series of revolutions in the early 20th century. From this political unrest, there would emerge three major romanization systems of prominence in the Chinese linguistic sphere; these were Zhuyin Fuhao, Gwoyeu Romatzyh and Sin Wenz. These three romanization systems, which we'll later look in more detail, each highlighted a different element of the Chinese language. Pinyin would emerge as a derivative of the Sin Wenz system, and would be modified by the CCP through the early 1950s. During this period, party policy on latinization would go back and forth according to the directives of the party leadership, however, the party's eventual embrace of latinization allowed it to move forward with the implementation of *Hanyu Pinyin*.

Once the party had accepted *Hanyu Pinyin* as its official romanization system, it would move forward with the implementation of the romanization system. The implementation of *Hanyu Pinyin* in schools would be different from the implementation of earlier romanization systems, as it would be heavily influenced by the party's political goals. There were three major goals the party hoped to achieve through its process of implementing Pinyin in schools: (1) Firstly, the party hoped by implementing Pinyin alongside Mandarin in schools it would achieve a measure of spoken language unification; (2) secondly, the party hoped to impose a degree of northern influence on the southern provinces by implementing northern-based romanization and spoken language systems; (3) finally, the party hoped to create a new language vernacular through romanization, which would allow the party to assert its national identity. The creation of a new language vernacular would allow the party to consolidate its power, and to resist western influence on the Chinese language. These three items on the party's agenda dictate the way in which Hanyu Pinyin was taught in schools.

These aforementioned three measures highlight an important aspect of Hanyu Pinyin's implementation, namely, the broader role it has in underpinning Chinese nationalism. The implementation of Hanyu Pinyin occurred alongside a number of changes in the Party's policy toward intellectuals and other non-Communist elements, particularly as the party came to emphasize the importance of mass line education. This is to say that the implementation of Pinyin was part of a larger shift moving into the late 1950s where language reform was becoming far more aggressive. These events serve to highlight how the process of language reform served as a kind of nationalist

endeavor, and how these reforms played an integral role in shaping the new national language of the PRC.

Before moving forward however and taking a look at the more specific policies of the 1950s, we should take a look earlier at the events leading up to the establishment of the PRC and its language reforms.

Chapter 1: **Pre-Communist Language Reform**

China in the early 20th century was a hotbed of revolutionary activity that produced many scholars and intellectuals with an interest in changing the Chinese language. Language reform was part and parcel with political reform, as many spectators viewed mass literacy as a valuable tool for political emancipation. Western influence in China had brought in an influx of new ideas, and these ideas had altered the discourse around Chinese language reform. Jing Tsu, in her new book *Kingdom of Characters* tackles many of the reforms that occurred in this period. She says, "progressive and sometimes Western-friendly in their outlook, the reformers advocated moderate institutional and policy changes that would help return China to a more stable footing, especially in the wake of the disastrous military defeat in the Sino-Japanese War."[2] As China's traditional structures began to unravel, it paved the way for major reforms to occur in the linguistic sphere.

China is a linguistically diverse nation with dozens of dialects, some of which are not mutually intelligible. The official language of Mandarin is based on the Beijing dialect, *beijinghua*. It is used as a lingua franca in contemporary China and has been used like so for the majority of the 20th century. China's written language, however, has remained staggeringly uniform across both time and space. The language script of Chinese antiquity, known as Oracle Bone Script, is a direct ancestor of the modern Chinese script. The Chinese script is non-phonetic, instead being based on ideographs made up of individual radicals. This non-phoneticism is the foundation of many of the

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[2] Jing Tsu, "Kingdom of Characters: The Language Revolution That Made China Modern," (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2022), 8.

problems plaguing the Chinese script in the 20th century. Without a scheme for organizing the vast number of Chinese characters, the Chinese script is difficult to learn except through a comprehensive education. Thus, at the turn of century only 10% of the Chinese population was literate.[3] For a century, Chinese intellectuals and politicians would grapple with a solution to this mass illiteracy.

Efforts to reform the Chinese language would often come into conflict with Chinese nationalism, which decried efforts to modernize the Chinese script as infringing on China's sovereignty. Under the nationalist party's rule in the 1920s and 30s, for example, initiatives made by ruling officials to simplify written Chinese was met with enormous resistance by the party's elders, whose pleading delayed the process for another few decades. Conflicts such as these serve to illustrate the difficulty associated with reforming the Chinese script. In an increasingly latinized world, the Chinese script was not only a symbol of Chinese culture, but a vestige of the old Confucian ruling class. Nonetheless, moderate reformers viewed the process of reform as necessary if regrettable. The *New Youth Journal*——a liberal outlet——declared this in one of their editions: "If China had to shed the dead weight of all past tradition to compete with the outside world, so be it"[4]. Statements such as these show how interlaced the struggle for language reform was with China's foreign relations.

In the early 20th century, China was suffused with anti-foreign activity. Foreign countries by this time had formed enclaves, or "concessions" in China, that became symbols of foreign power. While these concessions were isolated to port cities like

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[3] Judy Heflin, "'The Single Greatest Educational Effort in Human History'," *Language Magazine*, May 12, 2015.
[4] Tsu, "Kingdom of Characters," 134.

Shanghai, they nonetheless gave foreigners diplomatic immunity within these areas, a

controversy that appeared to infringe on Chinese sovereignty. To make matters worse,

China bore significant foreign debt from reparations and trade. This foreign debt created

fears of partition or worse. In response to this, a number of Chinese protested China's

debt, at times using strongarm methods to get foreign states to absolve China of its

debt. Anti-foreign sentiment, a staple of 19th century China, retained its violent qualities.

Revolutionaries such as Chen Tianhua, who was known for his anti-Manchu stances,

advocated that foreigners be killed on site. According to Joseph Esherick, the violently

revolutionary character of the early 20th century can be attributed to reforms happening

outside the Manchu court: "In 1898-1900 and perhaps again again in 1910-11,

frustrated elite reformers turned against the Manchu court which stood in their way, and

these reformers became revolutionaries."[5] These changes were brought on by changes

within the education system: "The wholesale educational reforms of 1902-05 produced

hundreds of schools, and a highly volatile student class whose radical anti-imperialist

movement acquired openly revolutionary dimensions."[6] Moderate reform had

snowballed into a nationalist revolution in the context of the Manchu court's

degeneration and the foreign countries' infringement of Chinese sovereignty.

To provide a rough timeline of the late Qing's foreign relations, from 1839-42

China was engaged in the Opium War where foreign powers fought for the right to

continually import Opium into mainland China. From 1894-95, China fought in the

Sino-Japanese War, which was fought largely over influence in the Korean peninsula. In

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[5] Joseph Esherick, "Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei," Michigan Studies on China, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 7.
[6] Esherick, "Reform and Revolution," 7.

1905, China carried out an anti-American boycott over the Exclusion Act, a federal law that targeted Chinese laborers. This was succeeded in 1906 by the beginning of a campaign to eradicate opium production in China. In 1908, another boycott took place, this time against Japan over the *Tatsu Maru* case.[7] These events all served to aggravate China's relations with foreign powers in the late Qing period, further cementing the necessity for reform. Chinese intellectuals were at this stage presented with a two way road. There was the path of modernization, by which China would reform its crumbling ancient infrastructure, and then there was the path of revolution. For some intellectuals, these paths were one and the same. Nothing less of a total overhaul of China's internal politics as well as its relationship with the West would save China from fragmentation.

One of the inherent weaknesses of early 20th century China was its lightly regulated provincialism. Even while Chinese reformers exercised anti-foreign, anti-imperialist views, China's populace was still very much governed by their own provincial identities. The linguistic diversity of China's people, as discussed earlier, was an outgrowth of this decentralization. The uniformity of the Chinese written language did not much matter in a society where illiteracy was commonplace. In this context, the formation of a common political culture was significantly challenged. In places such as Hunan province, provincial identity took on an even greater role with the decline of the Qing order: "Both the provincial and local elites found their power and authority strengthened by the revolution, the politically progressive aspects of the revolution were

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[7] Mary C. Wright. "China in Revolution: The First Phase 1900-1913." 4. printing. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 31.

easily balanced by its socially regressive aspects."[8] This was a result of the check the Manchus provided on warlordism: "autocracy had not only limited the political freedom and initiative of the Chinese people, it had also prevented the local elite from excessively oppressing the rest of the population."[9] Thus the fear of national fragmentation on the part of reformers was well justified.

National fragmentation came to China in the form of warlordism from 1916-1928. While China has had several warlord periods following the disruption of major power centers, the warlord period of the early 20th century was by far the most significant. Franz Michael and J.A.G. Roberts summed up this phenomenon in the following statement: "Throughout Chinese history there is evidence of recurrent decline in the authority of central government and the development of what he described as 'regional power centres'"[10]. In the absence of a central governing body, the Chinese political structures tended to default to these regional power structures. Warlordism as a phenomenon is loaded with connotations, however its use in the context of this period is to describe the characteristics of the military governors who ruled over parts of China. These governors were often defined by their ability to wage war, and as such Chinese life became suffused with this kind of provincial militarism. If there any points that should be derived from analysis of this period, it should be these two: firstly, that China lacked the underlying infrastructure to hold itself together in the absence of government autocracy; and secondly, that regionalized concentrations of power remained strong and were a direct threat to the formation of a modern national identity.

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[8] Esherick, "Reform and Revolution," 8.
[9] Esherick, "Reform and Revolution," 9.
[10] Roberts, J. A. G, "Warlordism in China." *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 45/46 (1989), 27.

Government autocracy could not reign in Chinese regionalism forever. Long-term changes needed to be made in the political, cultural and linguistic spheres in order for the Chinese people to form a more cohesive whole. Efforts therefore to simplify or modernize the Chinese language continued to bear a markedly political slant in the early 20th century. Nowhere was this cultural/linguistic idiosyncrasy as strong as it was in Hunan province. With its own dialect and culture, Hunan had long since developed an identity separate from the rest of southern China. In addition to this, Hunan had some of the highest levels of revolutionary activity in China. These two trends combined together made Hunan an interesting case study on the significance of local identity in geopolitics.

The impetus behind this resurgence of Hunanese identity was the decline of the Qing and the central government autocracy. This is evidenced in the proclamations of Hunanese intellectuals like Yang Yulin, who advocated that "Hunan [belonged] to the Hunanese" as a result of disappointment with the "Qing's inability to defend China's sovereignty and local order"(1212).[11] The 1923 Changsha Incident demonstrated that these provincial elites had significant power when it came to influencing governmental affairs, particularly when it came to the diplomatic sphere. The Changsha Incident involved conflict between the Japanese military and the Hunan Society to Support Diplomacy (HSSD), who were harassing a group of passengers who had just disembarked off a Japanese ship. This event on the surface was another one of many Sino-Japanese confrontations that occurred throughout the early 20th century. The incident however was unique insofar as the conflict was between provincial authorities

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[11] Wei Shuge, "Stalemate within Stalemate: The 1923 Changsha Incident." *Modern China* 48, no. 6 (November 2022): 1208–37, https://doi.org/10.1177/00977004221108324, 1212.

and a sovereign power. According to author Wei Shuge, this event marked a significant event in the modern history of Chinese provincialism: "Self-government became a strategy for the local elites to establish their authority, to overcome the foreign coercion that the weak central government tacitly, albeit reluctantly, allowed, and to deter the militarists from draining local resources with the power of the gun."[12] In summation, Hunanese provincialism was necessitated by the environment it came to fruition in. And while, according to Wei, Hunanese leaders were "keenly aware of the limits of their diplomatic capacity, Hunan remained a prime example of how deeply entrenched provincial allegiances still were in China." The provincialism of Hunan——the home of future CCP leader Mao Zedong——would inform the CCP's project to construct a new Chinese national identity through reform of the language and education system.

One of the major themes of Chinese provincialism has been the conflict between north and south. This conflict is largely the result of cultural differences between the two regions that during the early 20th century was compounded into political division. Hunan was key to this struggle as according to author Wei Shuge, "the centrality of Hunan made it natural prey for the north-south rivalry."[13] The Hunanese constitutionalist movement was a direct reflection of these regional rivalries. During the 1920s, Hunan was thrust into a battle between north and south. This battle entailed the drafting of a Hunanese constitution that would further support the province's autonomy from the northern government. South China had been awash in a tide of federalism——a movement that supported a unified government made up of independent states. This

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[12] Wei, "Stalemate," 1212.
[13] Wei, "Stalemate," 1212.

new constitution, which was promulgated on January 1, 1922, lent diplomatic powers to the Hunanese government.[14] This clause would elicit great distress from both the Beijing government and even elements within the Hunanese bureaucracy. The newly consecrated diplomatic power of the Hunanese state lent the province a degree of autonomy that was unprecedented in Chinese revolutionary history. Hunan continued throughout the warlord period to be a political football fought over between northern and southern political forces. If the Hunan situation and the north-south rivalry was indicative of anything it was that a political solution was not enough when it came to solving China's fragmented political structure. The regional cultural boundaries were too vast to support a unified political system. In the midst of revolution, a separate undercurrent of scholars and officials began to pay attention to this intense regionalism. As they focused on these elements, the need to homogenize the Chinese nation became increasingly urgent. However, it wouldn't be until the 1950s that the Chinese state had the resources to implement this homogenization.

According to author Jing Tsu, the first-century scholar Xu Shen was one of the first individuals to take on the "mammoth task of surveying the different forms of everyday speech." She says, "this early lexicographer worked for twenty-seven years, listing around nine thousand entries."[15] On the ground, China's cultural-linguistic landscape was extremely diverse. While in contemporary affairs we tend to view language and politics as two completely separate spheres, in the case of early 20th century China language defined politics in a sense. This is to say, provincial identities

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[14] Wei, "Stalemate," 1214.
[15] Tsu, "Stalemate," 16.

were often formed along these linguistic lines, particularly as Mandarin developed out of

northern China, while the south was home to a large number of non-Mandarin dialects,

including Wu, Yue and Hakka Chinese. The central government of China, furthermore,

has played an important role in both meditating and at times exacerbating the

north-south dispute. This came to a head particularly during the warlord era, as the wall

of government autocracy could no longer hold back the tide of provincialism: "The

authority of the central government waned significantly when local powers failed to

pledge allegiance and became embroiled in the civil war between the northern and

southern military factions."[16] The situation of the central government Beijing also

affected its influence over southern provinces, making government attempts to

administer its people appear like northern encroachment. The scant resources of the

Chinese state would exacerbate these problems, as provinces felt the need to defend

themselves against internal and external threats. The lack of protection these provinces

received from the central government made them more reliant on autonomous

measures. Wei Shuge lays it out clearly in his evaluation of provincialism:

"Provincialism, in contrast to its obvious connotation of division and separation, was

seen as a means of enhancing security and integration, either at the local level to

prevent internal exploitation and external intervention, or to form the basis of federalism

at the national level."[17] Provincialism is not the problem, the lack of consistent

government policy is. In the long term, for any central government of China to endure, it

would have to pay attention to the long-established cultural divides in China.

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[16] Wei, "Stalemate," 1209.
[17] Wei, "Stalemate," 1210.

The first step in the healing of regionalism in China was the shoring up of its educational system. The traditional Chinese educational system puts emphasis on elevating scholars into officialdom, requiring them to pass a standardized test called *jinshi*. Elements of the traditional Chinese curriculum include knowledge of the Confucian classics and other foundational works. This all changed during the Sino-Japanese war. According to Qingsheng Tong, "[China]'s defeat in the Sino-Japanese war [of 1895] shocked the literati class into a reluctant conclusion that the examination system that had defined them was a catastrophic failure."[18] With this shaking up of China's education system, new forms of education became necessary to ensure the survival of China's literary classes. This led to the revival of the educational system known as *guoxue* or "National Learning." This system, according to Tong, had been in place for a long period of time, its use dating back 2000 years.[19] National Learning de-emphasized the classical language or *wenyan* in favor of *baihua* or the new vernacular. This was the start of a general trend in Chinese education where traditional Chinese education would be sidelined and eventually eradicated in favor of alternative ways of learning.

In the absence of a well-established educational system in China, China grappled with the decision of implementing a new educational system. At the dawn of the twentieth century, western learning had become more prevalent in western new schools (*xuetang).* Following the 1911 revolution, China's traditional education system no longer had an imperial structure to lean back on. Considering that one of the

[18] TONG QINGSHENG, "National Learning, National Literature, and National Language", *China Perspectives*, no. 1 (85) (2011), 34.
[19] TONG, "National Learning," 33.

overarching goals of the traditional education system is to prepare students for a career in the imperial civil service, there was little use for this traditional education in a modern nation-state.

Western influence on Chinese education during the early Republican period (1912-1928) was more than tangible. According to E-tu Zen Sun, schools during the early Republican period adopted an American-style curriculum. Furthermore, western educators like John Dewey had an influence on Chinese educational thought, on "men such as Hu Shih, Ts'ai Yuan-P'ei and Chiang Meng-lin… people concerned not only with the educational system, but with the entire process of Chinese modernization."[20] The prevalence of western learning during these early years of the republic made it clear among nationalist intellectuals that China needed to reorganize its education system. Educators such as Fu Sinian "prophesied in 1919 that China would follow the Japanese example and that in ten years it would witness the emergence of a new national literature written in a new vernacular."[21] Efforts were also oriented against the establishment of a westernized education system. Tong mentions in his article how *guoxue* as a system was at least partially developed to combat western influence: "*Guoxue* was invented in response to the pressures created by modern Western knowledge, which began to unsettle and displace forms of classical learning in the early twentieth century."[22]

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[20] Sun, E-tu Zen, "CHINESE SCHOOLS IN A REVOLUTIONARY CENTURY", *The Journal of General Education* 26, no. 3 (1974): 180.
[21] Tong, "National Learning," 36.
[22] Tong, "National Learning," 34.

Beginning in 1928, the nationalist government under Chiang Kai-Shek began to consolidate China's educational system into a structure that took elements from both Chinese classical learning and Western education, while emphasizing the role of education in fostering Chinese national identity. Sun gives us one example of this, he says: "After 1928, all school principals had to be Chinese."[23] This indicates that China was undergoing a renationalization of its educational system. According to him, China's new educational system had strong political slant: "Under the nationalist government (1928-1949), political training and the educational system were closely dovetailed."[24] Considering the lack of national identity in the preceding warlord era, it was only logical that the nationalist government would try and impose national identity onto the school system. While the new nationalist education program sought to educate the next generation of Chinese for the future, it also sought to promote Chinese national identity. This is summarized in this statement about the relationship of education to the nation: "The student was shown that the needs of the modern nation, not traditional virtues, must claim his devotion."[25] While this educational system was successful in instilling nationalism in its students, it lagged behind when it came to promoting literacy and overall transforming the impoverished parts of China. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese illiteracy was at ninety percent. By 1943, Chinese illiteracy had been curtailed to around eighty percent."[26] Even though this was a major improvement over illiteracy rates in previous years, it was clear that the Chinese education system was still

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[23] Sun, "Chinese Schools," 180.
[24] Sun, "Chinese Schools," 180.
[25] Sun, "Chinese Schools," 182.
[26] Sun, "Chinese Schools," 182.

highly limited in its scope. The population being educated were largely urban and elite,

the vast majority of Chinese people, those who lived in the countryside were still unable

to access educational resources.

In order to improve the general literacy of the Chinese population, beginning in

the nationalist era, China began to institutionalize the Beijing dialect of Chinese as a

lingua franca. This transformation would be significant as it would occur concurrently

with the evolution of China's written language systems. As Jeffrey Weng states in his

journal article, "the creation of a Chinese standard language, therefore, was a state-led

nation-building project, meant to mold a motley collection of peoples into a unified

national society."[27] Statements such as this re-emphasize how heavily politicized the

process of language reform had become——a trend that would be further entrenched

following the Communist takeover. Mandarin served to replace *Guanhua,* or "official

speech" which served as the traditional lingua franca of the literati and the civil service.

Mandarin's appeal lay in its accessibility to the masses, for whom the classical language

of *Guanhua* was difficult to master. It wouldn't be until the Communist takeover of 1949

that Mandarin would come into official use; however its development as a language took

place over the span of half a century. According to author Zhou Youguang, "taking

Beijing pronunciation as the standard for Putonghua is the historical result of more than

100 years that Beijing has been the capital of the Liao, Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing

dynasties and the following regimes."[28] This enshrinement of *Putonghua* as a

quasi-official language continued into the Nationalist Era. Journals such as the *Guoyu*

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[27] Jeffrey Weng, "What Is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language Standardization in Early Republican China." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 77, no. 3 (August 2018): 611–33. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911818000487, 611.
[28] Weng, "What is Mandarin," 619-620.

Yuebao (National Language Monthly) emphasized the need for a unified national language to consecrate the Chinese national spirit and its interconnectedness.[29] This push for the nationalization of Mandarin reflects the climate of language reform in this period and serves to foreshadow the more sweeping changes that were about to happen in Chinese language reform.

The nationalist enshrinement of *Putonghua* as the national language would be an important preface to the romanization efforts that took place underneath the communist government. The use of Putonghua would be carried out adjacent to the teaching of *Hanyu Pinyin*——a system that uses the Beijing dialect's phonetics to romanize the Chinese language.

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[29] Weng, "What is Mandarin," 626

Chapter 2: History of Romanization Systems

One of the most salient questions that has been raised about the Chinese pinyin revolution is why it didn't take place earlier than it did. This is to say, why did the Communist Revolution lead to such sweeping changes in the language reform field, and how did the circumstances of the revolution lead to the consecration of Hanyu Pinyin as the official romanization system of China. Before we can fully answer this question we must take a look at the number of romanization systems that had taken root in Chinese language reform circles prior to the adoption of Hanyu Pinyin.

Three main romanization systems were developed over the course of the 20th century to deal with the problem of the Chinese language's inherent inaccessibility and decentralization. These three schemes were Zhuyin, Gwoyeu Romatzyh and Latinized New Characters (or Latinxua Sin Wenz). Among these three schemes, Pinyin would emerge from Sin Wenz as the official romanization system of the PRC under Mao Zedong. The eventual selection of Pinyin was borne out of a vast variety of concerns that encompassed both the political goals of the Chinese Communist Party and linguists' interest in producing a romanization scheme that could best ameliorate illiteracy throughout China. Prior to the invention of Pinyin however, Chinese intellectuals argued over which romanization system would best suit the needs of the Chinese nation. This process of deliberation would continue through the establishment of the PRC, and would help define the state of modern Pinyin.

The first of these systems, Zhuyin Fuhao, is a notation system which uses symbols similar to Chinese character radicals to phoneticize the Chinese language.

Zhuyin is also known as ㄅㄆㄇㄈ (Bopomofo), after the names of its first four symbols.

Zhuyin is currently still in use in Taiwan, where it is taught in schools and can be used to

type out Chinese characters. Zhuyin emerged as a romanization system in 1918 and its

use would continue on into the century despite the 1926 and 1949 revolutions and the

eventual supremacy of Pinyin. Even in the 1950s, Zhuyin persisted as a romanization

system taught in the Chinese education system in the PRC. An education bureau notice

from this period reads: "Starting from the 1956-1957 school year first semester on,

except for in minority districts, all first grade students will be taught the Beijing dialect

using Zhuyin… this won't change the learning of pinyin, so as to not increase the

burden [on the educational system]."[30] This statement shows that while Zhuyin was not

the primary romanization system of Communist China, it was still considered valuable

enough to be included in the curriculum of Chinese schools. Zhuyin was significant

among the romanization systems for being one of the few systems not to use the Latin

alphabet to phonetically notate Chinese characters. This was conducted in a manner

consistent with the nationalist spirit of Chinese language reform, where using a

character-derived script served to reinforce China's sovereignty.

Gwoyeu Romatzyh (GR), or National Language Romanization is the second of

the major language romanization systems to emerge in the 20th century. Gwoyeu

Romatzyh was created in the nationalist revolution of 1926-27. Like Pinyin and Sin

Wenz, GR is written in the Latin alphabet, making it at least cosmetically similar to

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[30] Zhang Honggui, "Pinyin Jiaoxue Jianghua," Tongsu duwu chubanshe (1957), 4.

modern Pinyin. Here is an example from an essay published in the *Gwoyeu Romatzyh*

Weekly:

> Turkey (土耳其) de germinq shyhyeh lii tzuey linq women ganndaw yeou
> shinqchiuh erlchiee inggai "wen feng shingchii" de, jiowhshy, tamende wentzyh
> gershin… feychih jiow wentzyh, tsaeyonq Romatzyh pinin.
>
> The aspect of the Turkish revolution that we find most interesting that should
> cause us to rise up in response is their script reforms… which abandoned [the
> old] script and adopted romanized spellings.[31]

Gwoyeu Romatzyh is notable for its incorporation of tonal spelling. Unlike Pinyin,

rather than using accents to notate changes in tone, tonality varies in GR based on the

spelling of individual words. Because of this feature, GR gained much traction among

intellectuals and language reformers during the Nationalist period (1926-1949).

According to John DeFrancis's 1972 book *Nationalism and Language Reform in China*,

GR took root in China as one of its "native orthographies" and "is highest on the list of

those Chinese who insist on indicating tones by changes in the spelling of the syllable

itself."[32] While GR plays an interesting role in the history of Chinese romanization

schemes, it would ultimately lose out to pinyin and Sinwenz——scripts which used

alternative mechanisms to indicate tonality.

The last and most significant of the pre-1949 romanization systems is Latinxua

Sinwenz (拉丁化新文字) or Latinized New Characters. As the name suggests, Latinxua

Sinwenz is also constructed using the Latin alphabet. Sin Wenz can be thought of

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[31] Michael Gibbs Hill, "New Script and a New 'Madman's Diary," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*
27, no. 1 (2015), 85.
[32] John DeFrancis, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1972),
204-207.

alongside GR as a precursor to modern Pinyin. Here is an example of Sin Wenz being

used to transcribe Lu Xun's short story *Diary of a Madman:*

> Igian shcing, iding iao sisidii iangiu, cai xui mingbai. Gushxou changchang
> chrhen, wo ie huan gide, kosh bu shfen cingcu.

> You must carefully research something before you will understand it. People
> were often eaten in ancient times; I still remember this, but am not really clear
> about it.[33]

> This can be compared with a Hanyu Pinyin transcription of the same sentence:

> Yijian shiqing, yiding yao shishide yanjiu, cai xue mingbai. Gushou changchang
> chiren, wo ye huan jide, keshi bu shifen qingchu

Sin Wenz was supported by Communists such as Mao and Wu Yuchang in the

years leading up to the 1949 revolution, with Mao being a member of the

Shen-Kan-Ning Sin Wenz Border Region Society as early as 1940.[34] Sin Wenz was

pioneered by linguist and Communist intellectual Qu Qiubai, whose work on Sin Wenz

was carrying on a tradition of Chinese intellectuals who believed that nothing less than

the abolition of the Chinese script could save the nation. The CCP formally adopted Sin

Wenz in 1937, a decision that would have a reverberating impact on the direction of the

CCP's romanization policies for years to come. Sin Wenz represented the first major

attempt within the CCP to incorporate latinization into the process of language reform.

The genesis of the preference for latinized Chinese scripts goes back to 1920,

when Qu Qiubai illustrated how the Chinese latinized script was perfectly suited for the

Chinese language. Qu Qiubai argued: "These characters have to be usable by China's

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[33] Hill, "New Script and a New 'Madman's Diary," 92.
[34] C. Martin Wilbur, Joshua A. Fogel, and William T. Rowe, eds, "Perspectives on a Changing China: Essays in Honor of Professor C. Martin Wilbur on the Occasion of His Retirement," Westview Special Studies on China and East Asia, (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1979), 138.

different peoples, modern, multisyllabic, must include endings, and must incorporate

latin characters."[35] The multifarious demands imposed on a new Chinese script made

the process of seeking one out highly arduous, as Qu Qiubai would strive to emphasize.

Qu Qiubai noted that "the tones used by China's average person, depending on where

they're from, will be completely different. Beijing's four tones, Zhejiang's seven or eight,

Guangdong's nine… one can use letters to naturally express these."[36] These quotes

from Qu Qiubai show that he also was considering how to bring together a Chinese

latinized script with the Beijing dialect. In this sense, there were two different trends

being advocated for here: (1) the romanization of the Chinese script and (2) the

propagation of the Beijing dialect as the common language of China. These two trends,

though parallel to one another, are rooted in different issues. For example, when

discussing why the Beijing dialect is best suited for the simplification of the Chinese

language, he says that "one dialect must be qualified to serve as the foundation for the

national common language, this dialect must be the center of the economic culture, as

well as the center of the government. China doesn't exactly have this center."[37] This

geopolitical uncertainty can explain why during Qu Qiubai's era the unification of the

Chinese spoken language seemed like an impossible endeavor. Furthermore, Qu

Qiubai's aversion to the use of force in language reform would clash with the policies of

the future Chinese Communist Party.

Early Communist language reformers like Qu Qiubai and his successors also

differed when it came to the scope of Chinese language reform. While Qu Qiubai

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[35] Ni Haishu, "Zhongguo pinyin wenzi yundong shi jianbian," Shidai shubao chubanshe (1948), 116.
[36] Ni Haishu, "Pinyin wenzi yundong shi," 116-117
[37] Ni Haishu, "Pinyin wenzi yundong shi," 118.

supported full-scale Latinization, the post-1949 CCP believed in using it as an auxiliary tool. Qu Qiubai believed that the Latinized Chinese script would render the old system of Chinese characters obsolete. He says, "the Pinyin-formulated new Chinese language ought to completely remove the shackles of Chinese characters, using Romanized script."[38] In Qu's eyes, the introduction of the Latinized Chinese Script and the nationalization of the Beijing dialect was a springboard for a much larger overhaul of the Chinese written language system. For the CCP, these latinized scripts were a tool to help improve general literacy: "The CCP had supported the use of the Latin alphabet-based *Ladinghua Xin Wenzi* in the areas under their control before 1949… yet once they were in power their policy changed, and Pinyin was once again reduced to the status of an auxiliary notational system."[39] This statement illustrates how for the CCP, Latinized scripts were never going to supplant the Chinese language outright, even if it played a significant role in their language reform agenda.

The dominance of Sin Wenz and Pinyin was accompanied by the nationalization of Mandarin as the main language being taught in Chinese schools after 1949. This represented a shift wherein the CCP went from supporting dialect-based language reform, to supporting spoken language unification. While Mandarin had existed for a long time prior to its imposition in the 1950s, Mandarin could not itself take root as the "national language" without broader reform of the Chinese written language. Even in the 1930s the Chinese Communist Party's lacked the ideological impetus to completely nationalize the Mandarin language, as they still "adhered" to federal nationalism, "which

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[38] Ni Haishu, "Pinyin wenzi yundong shi," 118.
[39] Zhou, Minglang, and Hongkai Sun, eds. "Language Policy in the People's Republic of China: Theory and Practice since 1949," Language Policy, vol. 4. (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 25.

entailed promoting a unified 'common speech' while at the same time championing

dialect standards of readings and writing as legitimate…"[40] This subtle embrace of the

local dialect-based cultures of China by the pre-1949 CCP was logical considering the

party's absence of central governing authority. After 1949 however, with the concrete

means to realize a nationalized language, the CCP changed their course of action. De

Francis points out that "even the possibility of separate alphabetic treatment for regional

dialects became a 'virtually tabooed subject' after 1949."[41] This shows that the CCP

was taking a new hardline when it came to using Mandarin as the foundation for

reforming the Chinese language. The consecration of Mandarin as the language of the

state would have implications for the development of Hanyu Pinyin, as it is deeply tied

to the phonetics of the northern-based Mandarin.

The formation of the CCP bureaucracy after 1949 also led to another change in

their language reform policies——it made many of their policies more agenda-driven.

This is to say that while linguists and professional educators had dominated the CCP's

language reform ideas up until this period, a new group of state actors began to take

over the CCP's language reform policies. According to Glen Peterson, there were three

main groups of state actors involved in the crafting of language policy after 1949: the

first were professional education circles (*jiaoyu jie*), based primarily in the Ministry of

Education; the second were CCP education officials such as Lu Dingyi and Hu Qiaomu,

based mostly in the party's propaganda apparatuses; and third, were linguists and

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[40] Glen Peterson, "The Power of Words: Literacy and Revolution in South China," *1949-95*. Contemporary Chinese Studies, (Vancouver: UBC Press), 1997.
[41] Peterson, "The Power of Words," 114.

philologists, based in the Committee for the Reform of the Chinese Written Language.[42]

The creation of an official Communist bureaucracy, especially present within the Central

Committee, suffused language reform activity with a more distinctly political slant. For

example, according to Peterson, one of the factors driving Mao's decision to reject Sin

Wenz as the sole Chinese writing system was Chinese "embroilment" in the Korean

War. [43] The anti-Western sentiment dredged up by the Korean War made it such that the

CCP needed a more definitively "Chinese" romanization system, which would surface in

the form of Pinyin. The entrenchment of CCP educators in the language reform process

would set the stage for the harsh anti-illiteracy campaigns of the late 1950s and early

1960s, especially as linguists and other educational professionals were confined to a

more limited role. The centralization of power into the hands of these CCP educators

would help solidify the uniformity of Mandarin——as well as its written adjunct of

Pinyin——as the national language of China.

The implementation of Mandarin and its Pinyin adjacent is deeply tied with the

situation of the north-south divide in China. Especially in the pre-1949 CCP, when it still

hadn't relinquished its federalist leanings, the inaccessibility of Mandarin to Southern

Chinese made it such that dialect-based romanization systems were necessary.

According to Peterson, "dialect speech was also strengthened in early-twentieth century

Guangdong as a result of efforts to develop romanization schemes that would aid

literacy acquisition for local dialect speakers."[44] The eventual supremacy of Pinyin as a

romanization scheme illustrates the triumph of northern-based romanization systems

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[42] Peterson, "The Power of Words," 43.
[43] Peterson, "The Power of Words," 109.
[44] Peterson, "The Power of Words," 105.

over these local systems. It is arguable that for the Communist Party, by reigning the

provincialism of these southern states, they were asserting the legitimacy of their

government and its ability to impose a new national standard. More significantly

however, the CCP up to 1949 had been a northern-based movement, having been

based in Yan'an in the north of China. The northern cultural hegemony of the CCP was

refined as the CCP consolidated its power. According to one source, "in 1954, it was

proposed to develop two writing systems, but at a conference a year later, it was agreed

to develop a single system based on the more common Northern dialect."[45] Even

despite the Communist Party's pretension to standardizing the language across the

country, it was clear that the dual implementation of Mandarin and Pinyin imposed

northern cultural authority on the southern provinces.

This reality of the north-south divide in China would mean that, despite the

party's goal of unifying the Chinese language, China's internal geopolitics would

continue to influence language reform policies through the 1950s. This would be

transparent in looking at some of the policy statements made by officials in the

mid-1950s: "In his 1955 speech on the literary movement, Lin Handa suggested that

pinyin should be used in areas 'where dialect conditions permit,' implying that the use of

pinyin and Mandarin in the literary campaign ought to be confined to Mandarin-speaking

parts of the country."[46] Lin's statement reflects the uncertainty within the party as to to

what degree Mandarin and Pinyin by extension should be imposed on the Chinese

population. The vast number of phonetic schemes that were proposed in this period

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[45] Bernard Spolsky, "Language management in the People's Republic of China", *Language* 90, no. 4
(2014): e165-e179. doi:10.1353/lan.2014.0075, 171.
[46] Peterson, "The Power of Words," 112.

should also been seen as an indication of the ambiguity plaguing the party's language reform efforts. Despite the CCP's drive for national unity, language education remained practically tailored to the provinces in which it was taught.

While Pinyin and its Sin Wenz precursor emerged as the primary language tools of the Communist party, the use of Pinyin was not without its critics in the early post-1949 period. *Zhongguo Pinyin Wenzi Yundong Shi*——a publication from this period——quotes Francis Corta in saying that Pinyin limited the degree of transformation possible for the Chinese language, that "[Pinyin] forces the Chinese language to remain monosyllabic."[47] In this point of view Pinyin was limited by confining the Chinese language to a series of monosyllabic characters. This concern over how Pinyin would change the Chinese language extended to concerns that it would be too confusing to distinguish individual characters in pinyin, considering the vast number of homophones in both Chinese and European languages. Furthermore critics warned against imposing a system like pinyin on the Chinese language, arguing that "spoken language is finalized over time, as a result perfect rules are established"[48] and that in the case of Chinese a phonetic system like Pinyin could not be superficially grafted onto the rest of the language. Fears that Pinyin would cause more problems than it would solve would remain active into the 1950s. However this would remain one opinion among many in the larger echo-chamber of party linguists, policymakers and educators.

While the bureaucracy of the CCP and the dysfunctional nature of the new Chinese nation made it difficult to assess exactly how the language reform process was

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[47] Ni Haishu, "Pinyin wenzi yundong shi," 200.
[48] Ni Haishu, "Pinyin wenzi yundong shi," 202.

being undertaken, Sin Wenz and Pinyin had become significant tools of language reform for the CCP after 1949. These tools would come to have a profound effect on the language reform movement and would coincide with a larger trend of character simplification. It is because of Pinyin's role in this early-CCP language reform process that Pinyin would become synonymous with spoken language unification efforts.

Chapter 3: Implementation of Pinyin Romanization in Education

The implementation of Pinyin romanization in the 1950s took cues from a number of party figures, but the individual with the most influence in dictating the CCP attitude toward language reform——and more specifically, romanization——was Mao Zedong. Mao's directives on language reform are famously conflicting and uncertain, with DeFrancis directly alluding to his proclamations being "selective and incomplete."[49] These contradictory views regarding romanization produced conflicts within the language reform process. Much of the contradiction in Mao's statements stems from his desire for a system that was both based on the phonetic Latin alphabet and which retained the characteristics of the existing Chinese language. According to the minister of education Ma Xulun, "the Chairman also instructed us: the writing system must be reformed, it should take the phonetic direction common to the languages of the world; it should be national in form, the alphabet and system should be elaborated on the basis of the existing Chinese characters."[50] Statements such as these shaped much of the Chinese Language Reform Community's efforts to find a suitable phonetic system throughout the 1950s. The Committee for Research on Chinese Writing Reform issued these inaugural points, that (1) the Chinese language should have some kind of phonetic representation; (2) that an alphabet based on the Chinese script——that is, a system national in form——should be developed; and finally (3) that writing reform should give priority to simplified characters. Although this second point was later dropped in favor of a Latin-based phonetic scheme, these points show how Mao's

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[49] Wilbur et al., "Perspectives on a Changing China", 152.
[50] Wilbur et al., "Perspectives on a Changing China", 140.

proclamations on language reform had a direct impact on the subsequent policies and schemes developed by linguists and party officials.

During the 1950s, Mao and the CCP followed the Soviet example in emphasizing the establishment of a single national language. According to DeFrancis, following 1949, the party's "official support [was] given to Stalin's views… concerning 'the necessity of a single national language, as the highest form to which dialects, as lower forms, are subordinate.'"[51] A 1958 proclamation by Mao that "'all cadres should learn *Pǔtōnghuà*'" is indicative of his official support for the nationalization of Mandarin, and would set the stage for the broader rejection of dialect-based romanization systems.[52] This institution of Mandarinization made the necessity of an adjacent romanization system ever more apparent within party circles, and would influence their process of selecting a phonetic scheme.

In further illustrating the influence of Mao on the language reform process, we can examine how Mao's early critical attitude towards latin-based phonetization prevented the possibility of full-scale Latinization While Mao had supported Ladingxua Sin Wenz to a certain extent prior to 1949, following the CCP's rise to power full-scale Latinization was no longer a realistic part of the party's agenda. Mao spoke on the impossibility of this: "Owing to the particular conditions (the compromising character of the bourgeoisie and the thoroughgoing character of the proletariat) there has never happened in the country before such an easy-going affair [as Latinization]."[53] This shows how in Mao's eyes, latinization was not compatible with the political realities of

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[51] Wilbur et al., "Perspectives on a Changing China", 150.
[52] Wilbur et al., "Perspectives on a Changing China", 151.
[53] John DeFrancis, "Nationalism and Language Reform in China," (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 242.

China——that is, the conditions of mass illiteracy and class struggle. Other CCP

members would elaborate on Mao's criticisms of Latinization, with Chang Tifei attacking

the Latinxua school: "the creation of separate regional scripts so as to develop

independent regional cultures is either a manifestation of backwardness… or an act of

reaction."[54] This statement not only excludes the possibility of full-scale Latinization, but

associates it with the broader effort to create dialect-based scripts.

Despite Mao's apparent distaste for Latinization, latin-based phonetic systems

would gain gradual acceptance as a state educational tool. DeFrancis explains how this

shift came to be: "This idea that Mao's request for phonetic symbols 'national in form' …

took a variety of forms, including the notion that any system, even one based on the

Latin alphabet, was national in form by the simple fact that it represented the Chinese

language."[55] This highlights the openness of many of Mao's proclamations, and how

their open-endedness allowed the language reform process to develop freely in the

early 1950s. In January 1956, Mao clandestinely endorsed the use of Roman letters in

the new phonetic scheme.[56] Mao's gradual acceptance of the Latin alphabet as an

educational tool would solidify the central role it would come to play in the reform of the

Chinese language.

Through the 1950s, the CCP would constantly go back and forth with their

relationship to latinization and phonetization in general. While this was reflected in

statements made by Mao, the broader CCP in general also was unsure of exactly how

the party would approach these language reforms. These uncertainties primarily

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[54] DeFrancis, "Nationalism and Language Reform in China," 238.
[55] Wilbur et al., "Perspectives on a Changing China", 145.
[56] Wilbur et al., "Perspectives on a Changing China", `146-147.

revolved around decisions such as the usage of latinization, policy on regional and

minority languages and the level of party involvement in language reform. To map out

the period of the 1950s, we can take a look at some of the key events that unfolded

during this period:

1950s Language Reform Timeline[57] [58] [59]

- September 29 1949: *The Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference* is adopted
- October 1 1949: PRC (People's Republic of China) is established
- October 10, 1949: The Chinese script reform association (Zhongguo Wenzi Gaige Xiehui) is established
- February 5 1951: *Several Resolutions on Ethnic Affairs by the State Council*
- November 1951: Formation of the Trial Scheme, with two Roman schemes and one Cyrilic formulated for language planners
- June 1950: Outbreak of the Korean War
- **February 1952: *Committee for Research on the Reform of the Chinese Written Language* established with Ma Xulun as Chairman**
- June 1952: A list of 2,000 characters is promulgated as the basis for literacy
- November 15 1952: Establishment of the *Anti-Illiteracy Work Committee* (Saochu Wenmang Gongzuo Weiyuanhui) by the State Council
- February 1953: First national conference on illiteracy education
- May 1954: Beijing endorses the use of Latin script by minority groups
- February 1955: Phoneticization Subcommittee is set up as part of the Reform Committee to "draft phonetic proposals"
- July 1955: First Five Year Plan is articulated
  - **Ministry of Education begins the direct promotion of the Peking Dialect in schools**
- **October 1955:** Ministry of Education holds the national conference on script reform (*Quanguo Wenzi Gaige Huiyi*) and the symposium on the standardization of Modern Chinese (Xiandai Hanyu Guifanhua Xueshu Huiyi)
  - **Beijing decides that Pinyin should be based on the Latin Alphabet**
  - Nationwide dialect survey is conducted

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[57] Zhou et al., "Language Policy in the People's Republic".
[58] Peterson, "Power of Words".
[59] Tang, Peter S. H., and Joan M. Maloney, "Communist China : The Domestic Scene*," 1949-1967*. Research Institute on the Sino-Soviet Bloc. South Orange, N.J.: Seton Hall University Press, 1967.

- December 6 1955: The First National Scientific Conference on minority languages and scripts
- January 1 1956: Periodicals and newspapers set their type horizontally
- January 24 1956: Mao reverses decision vis-a-vis latinization, secretly endorses the use of latinized character in the new phonetic scheme
- January 28 1956: State Council approves the first scheme for Chinese Character Simplification (*Hanzi Jianhua Fang'an*)
- February 6 1956: State Council issues directives concerning the promotion of *Putonghua*
- **February 11 1956: The draft scheme for Hanyu Pinyin is approved**
- 29 March 1956: Anti-illiteracy decree issued to rid China of illiteracy
- April 1956: Chinese Academy of Sciences the State Ethnic Affairs Commission jointly organize a large-scale language survey
- November 29 1957: State Councils decrees that minorities should use the Latin alphabet to write their native languages
- May 1957: Blossoming and Contending campaign
- **February 1958: The Great Leap Forward is Approved**
  - Phoneticized system approved for instruction in primary school in the fall

Following the establishment of the PRC in 1949, on October 10th 1949 the Chinese script reform association (*Zhongguo Wenzi Gaige Xiehui*) was established. This shows how script reform was an integral part of the party's agenda from the outset. In February 1952, the Committee for Research on the Reform of the Chinese Written Language was established with Ma Xulun as its Chairman. This event coincided with the same year that the Anti-Illiteracy Work Committee (*Saochu Wenmang Gongzuo Weiyuanhui*) was established. In July 1955, after several years of deliberation, the Ministry of Education began to articulate its first five-year plan, with the Peking dialect being directly promoted in the Chinese school system. Finally on February 11 1956, a draft scheme for Hanyu Pinyin was approved by the CCP, an event marking the establishment of Hanyu Pinyin as the official phonetic system of the PRC. This

coincided with a decree issued the next month to rid China of illiteracy. This era of language reform would come to an end in February 1958, with the approval of the Great Leap Forward, and the beginning of a new era wherein anti-illiteracy campaigns would become more aggressive and the implementation of language reforms would be more severe.

The implementation of Hanyu Pinyin in education during the 1950s was complicated by the party's process of searching for a proper phonetic scheme. According to Glen Peterson, "Between 1950 and 1958, no fewer than 1,700 different phonetic schemes were proposed."[60] The vast number of phonetic schemes being deliberated over was part of a larger process of determining what China's linguistic future would look like. Especially during this period, a tension had emerged between spoken language unification and the efforts to promote mass literacy, especially as Hanyu Pinyin and Mandarin were developed from the language reform process.

Throughout the 1950s, Pinyin was seen as a means to enact Mandarinization in the education system. This type of education entailed both teaching the Beijing language and *Hanyu Pinyin*, the latter of which was still undeveloped. One CCP publication from this period reads: "You must integrate practical language into teaching, you cannot teach pinyin alone."[61] This statement illustrates a shift away from theoretical discussion and more towards the practical implementation of a Mandarin-Pinyin-based national language. Publications like this also clarified the party's thinking in adopting a Latin-based phonetic system: "The goal of teaching pinyin is…. 4. To spell out syllables

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[60] Peterson, "Power of Words", 109.
[61] Zhang Honggui, "Pinyin jiaoxue jianghua," 28.

according to the Beijing language's syllable structures."[62] This explicitly cements the connection between Pinyin and the Beijing dialect, and reinforces the role of Pinyin in promoting Mandarin as the new national language.

These educational documents also integrate the party's legacy of federalism into their construction. This is to say that the party, in acknowledging China's linguistic diversity, compromised its policies of pinyinization by tailoring to local needs. This document, for example, acknowledges that while "in the beginning, requirements for northerners should be higher, requirements for southerners should be lower."[63] This shows that although the party had cast off its earlier federalist policies and dialect-based language reforms, it still had to contend with the realities of China's linguistic landscape. In continuing its acknowledgement of the difficulty of implementing language education on a national scale, this document says "Especially those students whose dialects don't have [pinyinated] sounds, while pinyinating are more likely to make a mistake."[64] In this transitional period, these compromises allowed the party to promote both spoken language unification and mass literacy.

Despite these accommodations, the party nonetheless stipulated that Chinese education should promote the Mandarin-Pinyin-based national language, and that they should work to slowly erode these local dialect influences in Chinese language. The same document says that "dialect influence is very tenacious, if one doesn't frequently practice using the Beijing dialect for communication, even if one knows how to say

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[62] Zhang Honggui, "Pinyin jiaoxue jianghua," 27-28.
[63] Zhang Honggui, "Pinyin jiaoxue jianghua," 8.
[64] Zhang Honggui, "Pinyin jiaoxue jianghua," 56.

words in the Beijing dialect, it still won't prevent the exposure of dialect footprint."[65] This

goes to show that dialect influence, rather than being seen as compatible with the

usage of a national language, was seen as antithetical to it. With this sentiment in mind,

the party perceived many of their educational reforms during this period as working to

undermine the influence of dialect on the Chinese language. This initiative is described

in the document as "standardization training."

These reforms, in addition to purging dialect influence, also helped expedite

communication in an educational setting. Reading further into a CCP publication, we

can see that the process of streamlining communication was in itself explicitly political:

"[For] those who speak with a heavy accent, they should firstly learn those words that

might affect [overall] meaning or could prevent the communication of ideals."[66] In other

words, the process of forming a national language was suited to the party's political

ideals, as it expedited the communication of party ideology across dialect lines. It is

through these documents that we can see the way in which the process of building a

national language was tailored to the party's political agenda.

The explicitly political nature of the party's educational goals became more

transparent as the 1950s went on. During this period the CCP had multiple educational

objectives. One of which was to make education "serve as the tool by which

revolutionary ideology could be disseminated among the masses."[67] This policy goal

characterizes the aforementioned political nature of implementing a national language.

However there is a secondary goal, which is described as "[providing] training

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[65] Zhang Honggui, "Pinyin jiaoxue jianghua," 6.
[66] Zhang Honggui, "Pinyin jiaoxue jianghua," 8.
[67] Sun, "Chinese Schools," 183.

manpower for industrialization and reconstruction."[68] Labor education was a major component of the CCP's educational program in the 1950s. It further reinforces how educational reforms were being implemented for political ends, a trend that would be further cemented in the late 1950s.

During this period of the mid to late 1950s, Chinese education was being transformed, as a response to the lack of a long-term education plan tailored to China's industrial development needs. According to Joel Glassman, "changes in educational policy to meet growing manpower needs in 1956 fell into two general categories: efforts to universalize educational opportunity and efforts to increase the number of specialists."[69] This forecasted the future of Chinese education under the Great Leap Forward, wherein literacy and communication was deprioritized under transforming students into a source of manpower. This shift in educational planning——part of the CCP's initial 1953-1957 "Five Year Plan"——would occur simultaneously with efforts to reform the national language. The CCP's new educational model would be promulgated in July 1955,[70] the same month that the Ministry of Education began the direct promotion of a Peking Dialect in schools. The simultaneous occurrence of these policies goes to show how labor education and the standardization of the national language were both driven by the same political interests, and that soon enough the ability of the education system to transmit the party line would be the bedrock of language reform, as well as for broader changes in the education system.

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[68] Sun, "Chinese Schools," 183.
[69] Joel Glassman, "Educational Reform and Manpower Policy in China, 1955-1958," *Modern China* 3, no. 3 (1977), 271.
[70] Glassman, "Educational Reform and Manpower Policy," 265.

These broad shifts in CCP policy extended to minority languages, as the CCP sought to promote Pinyin among minority groups. According to Anran Wang, "In May 1954, Beijing decided that while in principle non-Han peoples should adopt the Latin script when creating or reforming their writing systems… those living along the border with the Soviet Union and the MPR could adopt the cyrillic script."[71] This measure indicates a degree of tolerance the CCP reserved for the language practices of ethnic minorities, perhaps in recognition of the fact that language reform for these groups would be a far more arduous process. This further rehashes the issue of the tension between literacy and spoken language unification, as by endorsing the use of cyrillic script by ethnic minorities, the CCP in 1954 seemed to be leaning more towards the promotion of literacy among ethnic minority groups. This seeming tolerance for ethnic minority languages would change as the 1950s went on, with Zhou Enlai expressing in January 1958 these changes in policy: "Many brotherly peoples have expressed their wish to achieve unanimity with the Han people on writing systems in order to facilitate cultural communication…therefore, formulating the Pinyin system must not be further delayed."[72] This serves as an indication that the party never truly intended to allow minority groups to maintain their own language systems, and that it was only with the creation of *Hanyu Pinyin* that the CCP finally had the means to impose linguistic uniformity on these groups.

The question of how to revise ethnic minority languages presented a challenge to the CCP as far as it presented an obstacle to unifying the nation. While with dialects the

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[71] Anran Wang, "Between Communist Doctrines and Nationalist Agendas: Writing Reforms in Inner Mongolia, 1954–1980." *Modern China* 47, no. 6 (November 2021), 863.
[72] Wang, "Between Communist Doctrines," 874.

CCP could rely on the common cultural connection between speakers of non-Mandarin dialects and the new speakers of the national language, with ethnic minorities this connection was far more tenuous and therefore presented a whole host of challenges. According to one source, "the official communique says that it was determined to establish a system of standard sounds which could be used not only in noting the correct pronunciation of Chinese characters in Chinese texts but which, with slight modifications, could be applied to the work of transcribing all local dialects and minority languages."[73] This implies that the question of how to handle ethnic minorities' language differences played a major role in the development of the new Mandarin-Pinyin-based national language in the early 1950s. This makes sense of course considering how much like with speakers of local dialects, whatever language system the party came up with would have to not only perform its basic functions, but would also have to introduce ethnic minorities to the new national language. It's reasonable to say that the question of minority language reform possessed a broader relevance to dialect integration and the establishment of a new national language.

The changes to the CCP's ethnic minority policies through the 1950s begs another question: to what extent did the party's 1956 embrace of *Hanyu Pinyin* change its policy goals regarding language reform? This is most immediately relevant with regards to spoken language unification, as whereas the CCP long had lacked the tools to impose a national language, they now had the capability to promote unification, even if it may have been at the expense of literacy. One could even question to what extent

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[73] Harriet C. Mills, "Language Reform in China: Some Recent Developments," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (August 1956), 533.

the party distinguished between spoken language unification and literacy efforts. With the possibility of a dialect-based language system out of the way, the realization of a national language and efforts to shore up mass literacy became inextricably linked. In answering the question of how Pinyin's implementation affected language reform, we can say that the party's invention of Pinyin assured the establishment of a Mandarin-Pinyin-based national language.

The implementation of language reform in the 1950s underwent drastic changes as the decade went on largely as a result of changes in the party's political philosophy, as well as changes drawn from the process of reforming the education system. The events that occurred from 1949 to 1958 scaffolded the events of the next decade, wherein language reform was implemented far more severely, and where the party's previous pretenses of ideological heterogeneity were tossed aside in favor of a more aggressive political approach to language reform. The party's choice to adopt *Hanyu Pinyin* was reflective of its ideology and policy goals, and forecasted a shift in the CCP's policy direction.

Chapter 4: Language Reform and Nationalism

Language Reform in China is deeply and innately tied to the broader nationalist discourse. The reforms implemented by the CCP would have a profound effect on shaping China's national identity for the next several decades of CCP rule. It is important to interpret the evolution of the CCP's language reform process as reflecting the evolution of the party's ideology itself and therefore instrumental to understanding why the party chose to pursue more aggressive reforms after 1958. The dynamics surrounding the implementation of pinyin romanization show that pinyin was not a niche aspect of language reform, but that it had a broader impact on the policies of the CCP.

Language Reform in China had taken on such vast dimensions by the end of the 1950s that it's important to look at how these policies were regarded by common people. According to one author, "in 1950, the CPC defined literacy as the mastery of 1,000 characters——a goal which was increased to 1,500 in 1956 for the peasants, and to 2,000 for the urban workers."[74] This evolution in the party's policy imposed enormous demands on both the rural and urban workers who were subject to the party's new policies. The *People's Daily* of October 5 1956 expressed some of the reactions of teachers to these new policies. According to *the People's Daily,* "widespread complaints from teachers concerning the poor quality of facilities, and particularly of the constant interference of untrained Party cadres in educational matters."[75] This reaction to the overhaul made to the Chinese education system shows that on the ground level educators were unable to meet these demands of the party. As the party transitioned

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[74] Tang, "The Domestic Scene," 539.
[75] Tang, "The Domestic Scene," 542.

into the 1960s, its educational system exited its previously held experimental phase and started to more directly reflect the party line.

In further examining the relationship between language reform and the people, we can see that the roll-out of Mandarin and Pinyin-based reforms was met with both consternation and interest. According to the *Wenzi Gaige Wenji,* in the initial period of reform implementation around 1956, "the masses started to regard pinyin script with suspicion, they recognized it as western language, [they believed] learning it had no use, and were also not used to practicing the pronunciation."[76] This goes to show that Pinyin, while embraced by the Communist state apparatus as a necessary adjunct to the Chinese script, was seen by the common people as an unnecessary foreign imposition——one that had little connection to the lives of ordinary Chinese people. In addition to this, there were broader concerns about how these policies would strengthen the anti-illiteracy campaign. According to the same source, "there are some people who have misgivings towards zhuyin-based anti-illiteracy, they think you both have to study the script, and study the characters, and are afraid it will increase the burden on the masses, that it will extend the time to eliminate illiteracy."[77] Although this particular criticism addresses Zhuyin instead of Pinyin, it shows how despite the CCP's resolution to integrate romanization with anti-illiteracy reform, there were still those within the party who questioned the necessity of these learning tools. As the implementation of language reform continued, the positive impact of Pinyin and Zhuyin-based reform had on the people became increasingly apparent. According to educator Wu Yuzhang,

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[76] Wu Yuzhang, "Wenzi Gaige Wenji," Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe (1978), 210.
[77] Wu Yuzhang, "Wen Gaige Wenji," 212.

Pinyin was leveraged to improve the effectiveness of teaching, with the provinces of "Shandong, Hebei and Jiangsu all [recognizing] pinyin as 'the magic weapon of learning characters.'"[78] This goes to show that despite criticisms of Pinyin, it was viewed by the party as a useful learning adjunct to the teaching of characters.

The major impetus behind this shift from a more pluralistic educational system to a system that directly transmitted the party line was the implementation of Hanyu Pinyin as a national romanization scheme in 1956. This implementation, which occurred together with the standardization of Pinyin and the simplification of the language, gave the Communist party the tools it needed to establish the new national language.

One of the most important obstacles educators faced in the pre-language reform era of Communist China was the north-south divide among the Chinese people. This divide often turned popular sentiment against the party and made it difficult for them to implement reforms. This begs an important question, how did the north-south dynamic of Communist China change with the implementation of *Hanyu Pinyin as a* national romanization system? The implementation of Hanyu Pinyin as a system brought into focus some of the long-held conflicts between northern and southern language reformers. For example, in 1957, following the initial onset of Beijing's harsh literacy campaigns, "a leading Shanghai educational journal published an article that took direct aim at the principle of 'people teaching people.'"[79] This effort by a southern newspaper to criticize Beijing's language reform efforts showcases how these language reforms had accentuated the north-south conflict in the public arena.

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[78] Wu Yuzhang, "Wenzi Gaige Wenji," 212.
[79] Peterson, "Power of Words," 100.

When answering how the implementation of Hanyu Pinyin affected the north-south divide in China, it's important to consider how *Hanyu Pinyin* was deeply tailored to the northern-based Mandarin dialect. This northern aspect of Pinyin was such that the party had designated certain "Mandarin districts." According to a party educator, "From 1959 onwards in the 'Mandarin districts' cities and counties they started prioritizing trial teaching…gradually making it such that the the youths and middle school students of China were learning Pinyin script."[80] This indicates that the designation of an area as a "Mandarin district" made it a target area for the teaching of Pinyin. This system put particular emphasis on the literacy capabilities of northerners, with a party article discussing how "one-third of the young and adult peasants in the suburbs of Peking have become literate" and how "from 1949 to the spring of 1957, 25,374 people in Nianan [county], [Heilongjiang] Province, were able to read and write, constituting 60 percent."[81] This emphasis on the burgeoning literacy capabilities of northerners shows how Chinese language reform emphasized a northern hegemony, and how this northern bias had taken root in the CCP's mission to establish a new national identity.

In looking at language reform as a strategy of nationalism we can take a look at how the party came to view these reforms as their ideological property, and how they abandoned a more pluralistic approach towards reform. Looking at China's magazines from the period we can see this process unfold. This magazine article from the year 1958 speaks on this: "The rightists, however, alleged that the reorganization of the

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[80] Wu Yuzhang, "Wenzi Gaige Wenji," 140.
[81] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China), "Extracts from the China Mainland Magazine," 1952.

colleges and departments was a terrible mess and that higher normal education came through reorganization very much the loser."[82] The same article specifies where these rightist accusations are coming from: "Some people… demanded the abolition of the unified teaching plan and teaching outline, contending that such a unified plan and outline would hamper expedient measures required by particular localities."[83] This statement identifies proponents of a decentralized education system as the primary sources of these "rightist" criticisms. It shows that by the year 1958, the more pluralistic system of language and education reform that had existed earlier in the 1950s was no longer in place, and that the party was attempting to impose a greater degree of ideological uniformity upon the education system.

To illustrate the changes in party policy, one need only look to compare the policies of 1958 with the 1953 First National Conference on Higher Normal Education, where it was stated: "To strengthen the leadership and control of normal colleges and bolster local enthusiasm for promotion of education, such institutions should be placed under the unified leadership of the Central Authorities and direct control of local authorities in accordance with the principle of unified leadership and control at separate levels."[84] The contrast between this declaration and the party line of the late 1950s rehashes an earlier point about language——that the party had gradually rejected a decentralized model of reform. However it also goes to show that issues of language and education reform had become incorporated into broader issues of ideological struggle. This same ideologically-infused atmosphere influenced the implementation of

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[82] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China), "Extracts," 33.
[83] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China), "Extracts," 35.
[84] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China), "Extracts," 34.

Pinyin, which——rather than being a neutral educational tool——was integral to the party's construction of a new national identity.

As the issues of language and education reform became more ideologically infused in the late 1950s, intellectuals were gradually phased out of the reform process. These intellectuals were seen as bourgeois and a threat to the ideological intent of the party's reforms. One reason for this transformation was the intent behind Beijing's language reforms; as we had found in earlier chapters, the communication of party ideology was a priority for reformers, with one reform book saying: "Those who speak with a heavy accent, they should firstly learn those words that might affect [overall] meaning or could prevent the communication of ideals."[85] This highlighted importance of propagating ideology within language reform re-emphasizes the party's commitment to political education. In earlier chapters, we also discussed the role intellectuals played in the basic organizational structure of language reform——we had noted cooperation between professional education circles, CCP education officials and linguists and philologists. The conundrum of needing intellectuals for the reform process, was touched upon by Zhou Enlai in this statement on latinization: "But all those who had received an education, and whose services we absolutely needed to expand education, were firmly attached to the ideograms."[86] In the experimental period of the early 1950s, the party needed the services of intellectuals to realize its goals. In the late 1950s this changed as the party shifted away from "bourgeois" intellectuals and leaned more into mass line education.

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[85] Zhang Honggui, "Pinyin jiaoxue jianghua," 7.
[86] Wilbur et al., "Perspectives on a Changing China," 147.

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The program to phase intellectuals out of the reform process began in 1956, the same year that *Hanyu Pinyin* was implemented and Mandarin was formally promulgated in schools. A communist magazine from 1958 reflects on this, saying that "it was not until 1956 following the hightide of socialist transformation… that the bourgeois intellectuals lost their economic foundation and dependence, and began to reveal their true face."[87] In a sense, this declaration is saying that with the broad implementation of reforms to China's economic and educational structure, intellectuals without the proper party credentials could not remain in the reform environment. This phasing of intellectuals out of the reform process was therefore, in the eyes of the CCP, part of a broader effort to eliminate the vestiges of bourgeois ideology.

The acceleration of the language reform process and the implementation of *Hanyu Pinyin* coincided with the broader anti-rightist campaign of the Communist party. While simplified characters were approved in late January 1956 and *Hanyu Pinyin* in February of the same year, prior to the approval of either scheme, the party was in the middle of a detente with the intellectual classes. The January 12th *People's Daily* addresses this issue: "While CCP policy towards intellectuals was in general sound, many party cadres did not attempt to help the intellectuals with their complicated political problems… and looked down on them; secondly many improvements were needed in the intellectuals' living and working conditions…"[88] This attitude towards intellectuals would shift with the beginning of the anti-rightist campaign in May. Mao,

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[87] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China), "Extracts," 8.

[88] MacFarquhar, Roderick, "The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*," 3: The Coming of the Cataclysm, 1961 - 1966 / Roderick MacFarquhar*, Studies of the East Asian Institute, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press [u.a.], 1997), 33.

while involved with the detente with intellectuals, had simultaneously endorsed the anti-rightist campaign and shown his disapproval of intellectual criticism: "Our party has a large number of new members who are intellectuals (there are even more such members in the Youth League), and some of them actually possess rather grave revisionist ideology."[89] This shift from prior approval of intellectual criticism of the party to the ideological war of the anti-rightist campaign goes to show that the party had changed its attitude significantly towards intellectuals. While these campaigns tackled issues far broader than language reform, the party's stringent anti-rightist stance goes to show how intensely they sought to protect their ideological property.

In addition to signaling a change in the party's attitude towards intellectuals, the anti-rightist campaign highlighted certain divisions within the upper echelon of the party. Most importantly among these was the divide between Mao and his CCP comrade Liu Shaoqi. According to Roderick McFarquhar, "When discussing… the problem of work versus rectification at the Higher Party school, [Liu Shaoqi] said the students should read books (i.e. their normal theoretical work) and rectify their style of work, in that order"[90] Liu Shaoqi's intellectual sympathies constituted a breach with his relationship with Mao, who in his famous speech to the 3rd Congress of the Young Communist League (YCL), made the following statement: "All words and actions that depart from socialism are completely mistaken."[91] This coupled with Mao's denouncements of "revisionist" intellectuals paint him in direct support of the rectification movement, and in opposition to figures like Liu Shaoqi. This political division harkens back to the divide in

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[89] MacFarquhar, "The Origins of the Cultural Revolution," 224.
[90] MacFarquhar, "The Origins of the Cultural Revolution," 241
[91] MacFarquhar, "The Origins of the Cultural Revolution," 220.

the Communist party between linguists and educators, or more broadly speaking, between CCP cadres and intellectuals. In the aftermath of Pinyin reform, with the conflict between the anti-rightist movement and its opponents, the gap between the CCP and intellectuals would continue to widen.

In this process of phasing out intellectuals, the party redefined its goals vis-a-vis education, and made it such that ideological correctness and expertise were one and the same. In the pre-1956 environment of China, the distinction between party affiliation and intellectual ability was self-explanatory, as evidenced by the pluralistic implementation of language reform——a process in which the Ministry of Education, the CCP's propaganda apparatus, and the linguist-run Committee for the Reform of the Chinese Language were all involved. It was clear in this period that academic expertise was needed to revise something as complicated as the Chinese language. Following 1956, the problem of ideologically-questionable intellectuals was more thoroughly addressed: "It is quite true that today, many well known scientists in new China have 'become an expert' from the days of the old society. Some of them have become considerably 'red,' others are not very 'red,' others cannot be considered 'red' at all."[92] This description of "scientists" can be applied broadly to the specialists who helped construct China's educational system in the first half of the 1950s. The same article goes on to say that "[bourgeois individualists] separate 'becoming red' from 'becoming experts,' and put them in opposition to each other."[93] In this statement the article repudiates the necessity of intellectuals in the reform process, and elevates the position

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[92] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China), "Extracts," 7.
[93] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China), "Extracts," 9.

of party affiliates in guiding the reform process. The article states that as a departure

from the use of intellectuals in the reform process, "the Central Committee…calls on the

old cadres to study and become well versed in the tasks under their leadership. They

very rapidly become 'experts' in a new trade, that of socialist construction."[94] On one

hand this shows that the pluralistic structure of reform had ceased to exist, on the other

hand it shows that the party viewed the reform process itself as inherently a task of

"socialist construction," and therefore party cadres were valued over intellectuals.

Accompanying this shift, in the late 1950s, the party began to reframe education

as self-education, establishing a distinct new mass line approach. While prior to 1956

the party viewed education as a system in which learning was instituted from the top

down, after a certain point the party reframed its vision in terms of self-education: 'When

a people's state has come into being, then it will be possible for the people to apply…

the democratic method to educate and reform themselves in order to enable themselves

to shake off the influence of the reactionaries."[95] This type of commentary shows that

the party, while providing a comprehensive education to a certain extent, had also taken

an interest in creating the circumstances for self-education. Self-education was

emphasized alongside labor education in the Communist education system after 1956.

As we'd previously discussed, the Communist demand for labor was gradually eclipsing

the need for a more comprehensive education system around this period, and "in 1956

and 1957 China already had begun experimenting with many of the ideas which formed

the core of the Great Leap Forward."[96] These ideologically-driven changes to China's

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[94] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China), "Extracts," 8.
[95] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China), "Extracts," 8.
[96] Glassman, "Educational Reform and Manpower Policy," 279.

education and labor system are indicative of the diminished role of intellectuals in the party apparatus, and show how the party seemed confident in its ideological groundwork. On this topic, an extract article comments: "[When] the objective of self-education and reform is attained, there can come into being in our country a political status characterized by democracy, centralism, freedom, discipline, unified will…"[97] This goes to show that the program of self-education was thought by party officials to account for the absence of intellectuals in the reform process.

The emphasis on self-education within the party not only was at the expense of the intellectuals but also was levied towards foreign elements of its education system. According to Vilma Seeberg, the party took particular care to eliminate traces of American influence on the Chinese education system: "...vestiges of capitalist western influence, such as stress on individual talent, were being excised from education as China became involved in the Korean War, though the structural pattern of pre-tertiary education from the 1922 reform based on the American model remained undisturbed until the late 1950s."[98] This rejection of western influence reinforces the underlying political goals of the CCP's project to establish a new national language. It suggests that the CCP's reforms of the Chinese language through the creation of Pinyin as well as simplified characters allowed the party to resist western influence by creating a new language vernacular. Furthermore, Chinese efforts to remove foreign influence from the system was an integral part of pinyin policy. According to one party educator, "In foreign language publications… all Latin transcriptions of Chinese names, since they continue

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[97] United States Consulate General (Hong Kong, China). "Extracts," 11.
[98] Vilma Seeberg, "Literacy in China: The Effect of the National Development Context and Policy on Literacy Levels, 1949-79*,"* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1990), 59.

to use old romanization, are very unreasonable; one should consider changing [them] to the new Pinyin scheme."[99] This drive to universalize Pinyin even in foreign language publications shows that the Party viewed its language reform activity as being a tool to counteract the mark of western influence on the Chinese education system.

This emphasis on self-education also served to diminish the influence of the Soviet Union in Chinese education, which during the formative years of the CCP was particularly prevalent. According to Seeberg, "1952-57/58 were the years commonly known as the period of Soviet borrowing…"[100] Despite the heavy influence of Soviet policy on Chinese education, as the Sino-Soviet split intensified party members such as Mao would begin to speak out against Soviet education: "Some comrades simply don't pay attention to dialectics and are not analytical. They say all things Soviet are good and they transplant them mechanically."[101] This resistance towards Soviet influence in Chinese education showed how the party prioritized the development of its own national identity in the formation of its education system.

The Chinese antagonism towards foreign influence over its language is indicative of how in language and education reform the party sought to consolidate its own national language and identity. It further goes to show that mass literacy and spoken language unification were for the party instruments of this broader quest to create a unified Chinese nation.

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[99] Wu Yuzhang, "Wenzi Gaige Wenji," 141.
[100] Seeberg, "Literacy in China," 58.
[101] Seeberg, "Literacy in China," 59.

Conclusion

In looking at the events of the 1950s, we can see that Pinyin reforms were part of a much larger trend of language and education reform, and that these reforms themselves signified the party's transition from state-building into consolidating its political power. The crystallization of Pinyin as the official romanization system of the PRC can be broken down into three main components: (1) firstly, the CCP's embrace of Sin Wenz and Latinization; (2) secondly, the politicized teaching of Hanyu Pinyin alongside Mandarin Chinese; and finally (3) the role of Pinyin in the formation of a new Chinese national identity. This last point is particularly important as it ties the first two together, it highlights how the CCP's process of seeking out a romanization system was heavily informed by its broader political goals. These political goals involved the construction of a new national language, through which the party could consolidate its political power and dispense with the use of linguists and intellectuals who it had previously relied on to construct its pinyin romanization system.

In the aftermath of the 1950s we can see that the process of language reform slowed down significantly, particularly as the cultural revolution began to pick up steam. According to one source, "virtually no substantive work was issued between 1966 and 1976, with the exception of the Spelling of Chinese personal names in Hanyu Pinyin letters in May of 1975."[102] This lack of development in the language reform sphere is indicative of how the energetic period of the 1950s had come to an end. The party's

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[102] Zhou et al., "Language Policy in the People's Republic," 27.

radical new implementation of a mass line approach had been taken to an extreme and was no longer beneficial for the cultivation of language reform.

In the modern day, Pinyin has become an everyday, taken-for-granted component of Chinese life. It is used as the primary input system for the typing of characters in mainland China, and has spread overseas as well as a dominant system in the teaching of Chinese to foreigners and Chinese alike. The international nature of Pinyin has been increasingly emphasized alongside China's liberalization over the past few decades, and has played an important role in facilitating China-West relations. In the midst of this, it is important to keep in mind that Hanyu Pinyin had its origins in the CCP's efforts to unify the Chinese nation and create a new national language. In the modern-day, where China has reinvented itself as a global power engaged in cultural exchange with the west, Pinyin has retained its role as the instrument of Chinese identity. For example, in western news media and outlets, Pinyin is used as the primary phonetic script for the pronunciation of Chinese names. The hegemony of Pinyin in the west is indicative of the CCP's success in propagating its national language to the rest of the world.

While conceptualizing Pinyin as an international system, we can also take a look at the way Pinyin fits into the relationship between the PRC and Taiwan. Taiwan, also a globalized state in open cultural exchange with the west, uses the traditional Wade-Giles script as its primary phonetic tool, and retains usage of the *Zhuyin Fuhao* system as a learning tool in the teaching of Mandarin Chinese. The competition between the PRC and Taiwan in this regard reflects how politically sensitive the issue of

romanization remains, and how the use of Pinyin or an alternative system in overseas communities can give us an indication of one's national affiliation. It should also be considered the role in which early Imperialist influence in China played a role in these phonetic systems, with Wade-Giles being a foreign-derived system, whereas Pinyin was internally developed. The use of romanization systems, due to the innately political nature of the Chinese language reform process, will remain a greatly politically infused issue for the time to come.

Throughout this project, I've touched on the significance of Chinese character simplification in the Chinese language reform process. In terms of Chinese mass line education, and the streamlining of the education system, simplification is just as significant as romanization if not more so, with the CCP's efforts at simplification creating fundamental alterations to a long-standing script. Simplification, unlike romanization, is not entirely a radical addition to the language reform process, with certain simplified characters coming into circulation long before the CCP took control. Simplification, similar to romanization, is a highly politically-infused topic, as to a certain extent simplification was also part and parcel of the CCP's efforts to create a new national language. That said, simplification was not as radical as romanization in that it drew on an already well-established system of Chinese characters, and was being instructed to peasants illiterate in the traditional Chinese script. Simplification is also a subject of much conflict between the PRC and its neighbors, as Taiwan and HK both retain their use of the traditional script, and pundits from either country have argued in

favor of their respective systems. In other words, the conflict between the CCP and the Nationalist KMT lives on through the issue of simplification.

The universalization of technology and pinyin has also produced a generational split among contemporary Chinese, with younger generations gaining proficiency in the typing of Pinyin while older generations lag behind. This goes to show that Pinyin has not only sewn divisions politically, but within the Chinese household itself. It also shows that Pinyin has expanded beyond the domain of the CCP itself, and continues to play a role in the development of broader Chinese identity.

These issues highlight how the process of Chinese language reform in the 1950s has held huge consequences for the contemporary Chinese language and politics. The universal use of Pinyin has generated a split between those in the CCP and those from without, and has prompted us to look back on the process of language reform as it occurred parallel to the CCP's revolution. For the future, it will be curious to see how Pinyin evolves as China's populace becomes increasingly technologically savvy, and as they are exposed to ever greater amounts of western culture. These events illustrate how even though the 1950s may have been the golden era of language reform, Chinese language reform has been a continual process since the PRC's inception.

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