

# Cai Peihuo and the Romanisation Movement in Colonial Taiwan

Chhoà-poê-hoé kap **ji-pun chi-tai ti** Tâi-oân ê Lô-má-jī Ūn-tōng

蔡培火與殖民地臺灣的羅馬字運動

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## Introduction

Scholars and students engaged in researching language and linguistic reform in colonial Taiwan (1895-1945) are familiar with the name and figure of Cai Peihuo (蔡培火 1889-1983). Cai Peihuo is known as the ardent proponent of the *Romanization Movement* (羅馬字運動). In postcolonial scholarship it has been generally assumed that his linguistic activism consisted of propagating romanised peh-oe-ji (白話字), analogue with the romanization script system that the Presbyterian Church was using as a medium in educational instruction, church paper publication and other writings related to evangelism in Taiwan since the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Said otherwise, the fact that Cai in 1931 constructed a unique phonetic script system (新式白話字), replacing romanised peh-oe-ji, has been largely unaccounted for. If mentioned, it was lumped together under the conventional term “romanization”.

This essay discusses in more detail the context in which this transition from romanised peh-oe-ji to a Taiwanese phonetic script occurred. In a first instance, this discussion will be set against the background of policies of Japanese linguistic imperialism. From there I move on to an excursion into Cai Peihuo’s personal writings that document his linguistic activism. Special reference will be made to his colonial diary, written between 1929 and 1936. Finally, I shall evaluate non-sinitic orthographies within the broader frame of Chinese linguistic culture. To this end, I shall position the published version of the diary within the workings of current historiographical writings on Cai Peihuo in Taiwan. The significance of this historical research topic to the current sociolinguistic debate featuring Taiwanese mother tongue education and literature will be alluded to in the concluding remarks.

## Biographical Details of Cai Peihuo (1889-1983)

Cai Peihuo was born in 1889 in a lower-level literati family. His great-grandfather had crossed over from Quanzhou (泉州) prefecture in Fujian (福建) and settled in Beigang (北港), presently Yunlin (雲林) County in central Taiwan. The family earned a living in trading and teaching. Cai was the fourth of five children: Jiapei (嘉培), Peichuan (培川), Peiting (培庭), Peihuo, and, Peiding (培頂). He received traditional instruction in writing and reciting Classical Chinese (文言文) at the village school in the Beigang community temple. In 1895, the Japanese moved in.

His father passed away shortly after annexation. The family returned to the paternal clan in Quanzhou, but was forced to return to Taiwan when it faced poverty. In the meantime, the turmoil of the war subdued, and Cai's family accommodated to the imposed directives of the new regime. His two eldest brothers were employed the colonial authorities: Jiapei as a language teacher and Peichuan as a lower clerk in administration. In 1898, Peiting, Peihuo, and Peiding, were sent to the Japanese common school (公學校) in Beigang. In 1906, Cai Peihuo continued his studies at the normal school division of the Government Japanese Language School (台灣總督府國語學校師範部) in Taihoku (Taipei 台北), to be trained as a schoolteacher.

In 1910, he graduated as a member of the first group of sixty-six Taiwanese trained as common school teachers. His first teaching assignment was at the common school in Agongdian (阿公店) village, present Gangshan (岡山). Recommended by the Japanese school principal, Cai was promoted to a position in the Tainan number two common school (台南第二公學校) in 1912. That year he married Wu Suqing (吳素卿). Because of his engagement in the Assimilation movement (同化會), he was fired. The Assimilation Society, set up under the patronage of Japanese statesman Count Itagaki Taisuke (板垣退助 1837-1919), was the first attempt in which local gentry families engaged with Japanese businessmen and colonial officials to call for a more 'humanitarian' interaction between the locals and the colonial authorities. During one of Itagaki's tours down south, Cai was introduced to Lin Xiantang (1881-1956 林獻堂), heir of the wealthy Lin clan (林家族) in Wufeng (霧峰), and asked to interpret. However, the authorities' negative reception of Itagaki touring the island, preaching assimilation and listening to Taiwanese local grievances entailed implications for Cai as well. Branded as a political activist, and potential danger, he lost his credentials with the Tainan local authorities, and was fired from his teaching position in 1914. His temporarily employment as a private Chinese teacher for the Lin clan allowed him to make ends meet.

In February 1915, Cai left for Japan and became one of the first Taiwanese to receive financial support under the patronage of Lin Xiantang. In Tokyo, Cai first entered a preparatory school for English and mathematics, and then enrolled at the Tokyo Higher Normal School (東京高等師範學校) to be trained as a public school teacher in biology and chemistry.<sup>1</sup> Lodging in the Takasago dormitory (高砂寮), Cai befriended the Taiwanese student community, and soon proliferated himself as one of the key members involved in early Taiwanese student activism in Tokyo. He is ranked among the founding fathers of the Taiwanese journal *Tai-Oan Chheng Lian* (臺灣青年), which was the forum for Lin Xiantang's politically inspired New People's Society (新民會), and collorary with it, the organization of the Taiwan Parliament Petition League Movement (臺灣議會設置運動). In 1921, he converted to Christianity and became a Presbyterian. Through the Christian connection Cai expanded his contacts in Japanese political circles, one of which is his friendship with

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<sup>1</sup> This choice of study field was at the instigation of Lin Xiantang, and closely related to the plans to set up a Taichū middle school (台中中學校), a first attempt to improve the educational facilities in the colony for and by the Taiwanese. It was Lin Xiantang's intention to have graduated Taiwanese from Japanese universities become instructors. At the time, the project was under discussion between the colonial authorities and influential Taiwanese of Taizhong and vicinity.

the pacifist Christian Yanaihara Tadao (失內原忠雄 1893-1961).<sup>2</sup>

After his return to Taiwan in 1922, he settled with his family in Tainan, from where he helped expand the local power base concurrent with the Taiwan Cultural Association (台灣文化協會, TCA) in 1921. His activism remained closely linked to the gamut of organized societies, political parties, petition movements, linguistic polemics and *The Taiwan Minpao* (台灣民報) vernacular press throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In early August 1937, after the death of his wife, Cai and his six daughters moved to Tokyo, where he made a living by running a Taiwanese restaurant and teaching Chinese at the side. Through his connections with Japanese pacifists, he obtained a passport and moved to Shanghai (上海) and Nanjing (南京) in 1943, and from there to Chongqing (重慶), where he in 1945 aligned with the KMT nationalist party. He returned in 1946 to Taiwan and accepted several posts in the national and provincial assemblies. The remainder of his career reflects his KMT membership at the higher echelons in society. Examples of which are the presidency of the Taiwan branch of the Red Cross (1952-1983) and presidency of the Danshui Commercial Management School (私立淡水工商管理專科學校), present Aletheia University (真理大學).

### References to Cai Peihuo's Linguistic Activism

What distinguished Cai from his peers was his ardent promotion of romanised Taiwanese script movement (白話字運動), a linguistic mission he had been engaged in since his student years in Japan and which he continued advocating until the mid 1930s. In the preface of his 1969's dictionary Cai narrated that his enthusiasm for the roman script resulted from the simplicity it offered as a medium for written communication:

“My eldest brother first taught himself Romanised Taiwanese used in the Church for spreading the Gospel, later he instructed me. It only took three days to study it, for a boy like me who was only 13 or 14 years old, being able to freely correspond with my eldest brother, relieved me of many difficulties. Later on I found out that the use of Romanised Taiwanese (羅馬式台灣白話字) was of tremendous help while studying Japanese or Chinese.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cai met Yanaihara in 1924 through the introduction of Reverend Uemura Masahisa (植村正久), principal of the Tokyo Theological College (東京神學學院) and also a fervent advocate of pacifism in Japan. For a discussion of Yanaihara Tadao's thought, see, Kevin M. Doak “Colonialism and Ethnic Nationalism in the Political Thought of Yanaihara Tadao (1893-1961)” in *East Asian History* 10, 1995, pp. 79-98.

<sup>3</sup> Cai Peihuo 蔡培火, *Guoyu minnanyu duizhao changyong cidian* 國語閩南語對照常用辭典 [Basic Chinese-Taiwanese Dictionary], Taipei: Zhongzheng Shuju, 1969, p. 1. Other references are Chai Pei-Huo 蔡培火, “Riju shiqi Taiwan minzu yundong” 日據時期臺灣民族運動 [Nationalistic Movements in Taiwan under Japanese], *Taiwan Wen Shian* 臺灣文獻 16.2., (June 1965), p. 183; Chang Yen-hsien (ed) 張炎憲總編輯, *Cai Peihuo quanji* 蔡培火全集 [Complete Works of Cai Peihuo] volume 1, “Jiashi shengping yu jiaoyou” 家世生平與交友 [Family Background, Career and Friendships], Taipei: Wu Sanlian Foundation, 2000, p. 19. I have not found any reference under which circumstances his brother acquired the roman script.

At the time, the roman script system must have impressed Cai, if it were not only for the attraction of its secrecy and immediate privilege over the Japanese language. Later on, Cai situated the idea in the context of his local engagement and early socio-political activism. In his teaching profession, Cai was confronted with the reality of imparting the new language of officialdom – Japanese – whilst standing right in the middle of misunderstandings and blockages of communication in the Japanese-Chinese cultural encounter. It is not until 1914, more in particular during the preparation of the Assimilation Society that Cai first makes mention of the idea to propagate romanised peh-oe-ji. More in particular Itagaki Taisuke’s political speeches on the “humanitarian” ideal of assimilation set Cai Peihuo to thinking. The earliest post-event reference on this is included in his diary recorded on 16 March 1935.<sup>4</sup> Cai makes further references to this moment of self-reflection in one of the essays in honor of Lin Xiantang, written in the early 1970s.<sup>5</sup> In that essay Cai narrates that he envisioned that the problem lay in the general mentality of the population, who at the present stage (in 1914) would not be receptive to the ideal of assimilation. His suggestion was to enlighten the adult population through social education, and to publish journals in Romanised Taiwanese as a first step into the direction to increase their awareness to the need for social change. Using the roman script could be a big help in disseminating new knowledge, necessary to change the minds of the people and make them more receptive to the changing world around them. Cai suggested this to his immediate environment. He also recorded that it was not so well accepted by the Japanese: “Lin Xiantang agreed, but the Japanese official accompanying Itagaki pretended to agree with a smile, and advised me to first become a member of the Association.”<sup>6</sup>

In Japan, the idea to propagate Romanised Taiwanese found a fertile breeding ground as Cai linked contemporary notions of a strong nation, education and instruction to the concept of language standardization. Publishing in the Taiwanese-run journal, his articles added fuel to the ongoing language debates within the context of elevating Taiwan culture (提升台灣文化). In particular, the model of Chinese language standardization in Republican China had become a source of inspiration to include Chinese language reform in the Taiwanese nationalist agenda. Between 1919 and 1922, the colonial administration announced the abolition of Classical Chinese language courses in the educational curriculum. In response to these changes, the politically active Taiwanese student community in Tokyo not only put forward demands for the preservation of the Chinese language in colonial education, but also for its reform along modern Chinese standards. For instance, in “The Establishment of a New Taiwan and the Roman Script (新臺灣の建設と羅馬字)”,

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<sup>4</sup> Cai Peihuo 蔡培火, “Riji, yijiuerjiu nian zhi yijiusanliu nian” 日記 一九二九年至一九三六年 [Diary, 1929-1936] in Chang Yen-hsien (ed.) *Cai Peihuo Quanji*, volume 1, “Jishi shengping yu jiaoyou” 家世生平與交友 [Family Background, Career and Friendships], 日記Diary entry, 16/03/19, p. 292

<sup>5</sup> Cai Peihuo 蔡培火, “Guanyuan xiansheng yu wo zhi jian.” 灌園先生與我之間 [Between Mr Guanyuan and I] In Lin Xiantang xiansheng jinianji bianji weiyuanhui (eds.) 林獻堂先生紀念集編輯委員會 *Lin Xiantang xiansheng jinianji* 林獻堂先生紀念集 [Essays in Commemoration of Mr Lin Xiantang], Vol 3 “Zhuisilu” 追思錄 [Reminiscences], Taipei: Wenhai Chubanshe, 1974, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Cai Peihuo, “Guanyuan xiansheng” 灌園先生與我之間, p. 4

published in *The Formosa* (臺灣) in 1922, Cai went into more detail on what this particular language model had to offer.<sup>7</sup> The roman script was a codified linguistic structure; to be used in instruction to compensate for the inadequate teaching instruction in the schools; ideal for teaching the illiterate adults and to further the goal of self-realization necessary for attaining the same level of modernization as the Japanese empire.<sup>8</sup> There is reason to believe that his first impression of the roman script was very reminiscent of Tokugawa and Meiji Japanese early advocates of rōmaji (ローマ字), who equally could not help noticing the conciseness of the 26-letter Latin alphabet compared with the more than ten thousand characters used in Japan.

In particular, the 26-letter alphabet offered two advantages. First, it was possible to represent simultaneously sound and meaning in one orthographic system. This solved the problem of a phonetic transliteration for Taiwanese (台灣話), and since it was the widespread spoken language, it aided in memorizing the meaning. If teachers and pupils were instructed in Romanised Taiwanese, they could write down the pronunciation and meaning of the subject matter taught in Japanese. The instructors in the common schools were increasingly Taiwanese who graduated from the normal school. Their knowledge of Japanese was at a reasonable level, and unlike the Japanese instructors, they were able to explain the content of the subject matter in Taiwanese. The problem was that there was no means to put down this explanation in writing, so that when the student did his homework or prepared for the examinations he or she could review if forgotten the meaning.

Cai Peihuo held firm to his belief in the advantages of romanised Taiwanese for the elevation of Taiwan culture, and had been successful in including its propagation in the statutes of the Taiwan Cultural Association (TCA). Two points were fundamental to Cai's suggestion for a roman script. First, there was the need to change the traditional mentality, and, second, making use of the roman script could substitute there where the educational system failed. By the educational system, Cai meant as much Chinese traditional learning as Japanese modern schooling. In other words, traditionalism on the Taiwanese cultural part coupled to the new Japanese educational policy was responsible for keeping the people ignorant. Through propagation of the roman script in education, both on the formal and informal level, Cai anticipated that the population at large would develop a critical mind and open their eyes to the changing world around them. Besides, it could be easily integrated into the educational structure without fundamentally altering the structure of the existing order. Cai was not advocating the replacement of Japanese as the medium of instruction with Romanised Taiwanese. He pleaded for an additional tool in education - a mnemotechnical device - and for the preservation of the co-existence of the Chinese and Japanese languages in Taiwanese society.<sup>9</sup>

His first publication in romanised Taiwanese *My Humble Opinion in Ten Points* (Cháp Hāng koán kiàn) appeared in 1925 and was a social critique that expounded his thought on Chinese culture, Japanese modernity and the need for learning (*hak-bun*)

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<sup>7</sup> Cai Peihuo, "Shin Taiwan no kensetsu to romaji" 新臺灣の建設と羅馬字 *The Formosa* 3.6 (Sept 1922), pp. 38-43.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion see, Heylen, Ann. *Japanese Models, Chinese Culture and the Dilemma of Taiwanese Language Reform* forthcoming

in Taiwanese society.<sup>10</sup> The second chapter *The Relation between a New Taiwan and the Roman Script* (Sin Tâi-oân kap Lô-má-jī ê Koan-hē) elaborated on romanised Taiwanese as an appropriate medium to become knowledgeable of the world.<sup>11</sup> Cai repeated these ideas in his 1928 publication *To the Citizens of the Japanese Country* (日本本國民に與ふ). Brief, by 1929, Cai had been propagating romanised Taiwanese for over a decade. His person was correlated with the romanisation effort, and known as such in the circle of Taiwanese cultural avant-garde and amongst Japanese officials in the colonial administration on the island.

Having access to Cai Peihuo's diary (published and unpublished) written between 1929 and 1936 gives us first hand information on the further derailment of his "romanization" movement. Within the overall structure of the diary, his linguistic activism makes up an integral part of the narrative. But by nature of the personal account, the writing style is dense, concentrated, and fragmentary, in need of context and requires reading between the lines. Entries concerning his particular linguistic activism for the years 1929 and 1930 vary from descriptions of his preparation and organization of several roman teaching sessions, running back and fro in applying for permits from the colonial administration, the ordeals of waiting, rejection and related bureaucratic red tape, as well as his efforts in compiling marching songs and didactic materials. Meanwhile, Cai does not dissociate his linguistic activism from his political activism, and this association is not always well perceived and received by his peers. Significantly and of immediate relevance is that until the first months into the year 1931, Cai's linguistic activism was about propagating romanised Taiwanese. After that, the term "romanization" is no longer applicable, because Cai shifts to another orthographic representation. The point I want to make here, is that in the discussion of Cai Peihuo's linguistic activism, few scholars have remarked this shift.

### The Orthographic Challenge

In the first half of 1931 Cai devised a new orthography for writing Taiwanese. In his diary he narrated that during a conversation with Izawa Takio (伊澤修二) in March in Tokyo he gained the insight that the colonial administration, as well as Izawa, had a serious problem with his particular usage of the romanised script, but not necessarily with his efforts in devising a transliteration system that would 'encourage Taiwanese in studying Japanese', and in so doing help reduce the widespread problem of illiteracy in colonial society. Therefore, Izawa had suggested the possibility to accommodate to the Japanese usage of the phonetic kana-syllables (*kanazukai*).<sup>12</sup>

According to Izawa, the problem lay not in the usage of Taiwanese versus Japanese, but in the orthographic representation. Izawa argued that the colonial government would show a much more lenient attitude if Cai suggested to integrate

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<sup>10</sup> Chhòa Pôe-hóe, *Cháp Hāng koán kiàn* [My Humble Opinion in Ten Points], Tainan: Tainan Presbyterian Press, 1925. Cai started writing in October 1923, but was interrupted in December when he spent 65 days in prison for his involvement in the Social Order Incident. He finished the treatise on October 28, 1924. See preface, p. iii.

<sup>11</sup> for a discussion see, Ann Heylen, "Cháp Hāng koán kiàn: Cai Peihuo's Vision on the Cultural Enlightenment of the Taiwanese people", *Ricci Bulletin* 2002, pp. 68-81.

<sup>12</sup> 日記Entry 30/03/1931, p. 167

instruction in Taiwanese through the use of *kana*. Not only was the roman script more complicated than the writing system used at present, moreover, it would drive the people further away from each other. In the same entry Cai indirectly admitted the new insight given to him in the problem concerning the official approval of the romanization movement:

Góa chêng khoà<sup>n</sup> in m-khéng hō<sup>ˊ</sup>, góa phò-kio Lô-má-jī, chiū chhì-m-u giâu-gī in ū phái ì-sù, sī beh chò<sup>ˊ</sup>-tòng iōng Tâi-oân oē kaù-iók Tâi-oân lāng. Ta<sup>n</sup>-I-ték sī í-keng tùi góa bēng-u kóng m- sī chit-ê chú-ì, góa sít-chai ke chin toā an-sim!<sup>13</sup>

This insight fuelled Cai with new hope. So, back in Taiwan in April 1931, Cai set to work. In less than one month he devised a new phonetic system, and praised the Lord that after so many years of impediments by the colonial authorities, the time had finally come to make up his deficit: “A! bān-sū tàn-u lâi bô chit-hāng m-sō beh lī-ek sìn chú ê lāng, chóng-tok-hú sui-jīân chò<sup>ˊ</sup>-tòng góa chia<sup>n</sup> chē nî<sup>n</sup>, chóng-sī Siōng-chú iōng an-ni kā góa pó<sup>ˊ</sup>-chiok, ai! Sít-chāi iáu-kú sī iáu-khah ū chhun!!”<sup>14</sup> In that same entry, Cai also recorded that he had composed *Textbook in New Taiwanese Script* (sin-khoàn ê pè-oē-jī khò-pún) and elaborated on his new phonetic system.<sup>15</sup>

Gò<sup>a</sup> chiàu Lô-má pè-oē-jī ê hoat-tō, lô-khì giàn-kiù, pò<sup>a</sup>-gòe-lit khah-ke, chiū khó-àn Chheng-chhó. Kàu kin-á-lit, iā soah chiòng sin khò-pún ê kó siá liáu, sít-chāi chin kàm-siā Siōng-chú, hō<sup>ˊ</sup> góa lô<sup>ˊ</sup>-lèk liáu ū siōng-tong kiat-kó. Jī-bó chóng-kiōng 28 jī, in-ūi ài siá Choân-chiu-khiu<sup>n</sup> khah ē chheng-chhó, só<sup>ˊ</sup>-í pí Lô-má-jī góa kā i ke-thi<sup>n</sup> 4 jī. Iah 28 jī tióng, 19 jī sī tùi gō<sup>ˊ</sup>-chap im chhái-iōng ê, 5 jī sī tùi Tiong-kok ê jī-bó chhái-iōng ê, chit-jī ㄗ jī sī伊澤修二 chò ê, i-goā 3 jīよ, 夕, ス sī góa sim chò ê. Tùi gō<sup>ˊ</sup>-chap im thè lâi ê jī-hēng; góa iā toā pō<sup>ˊ</sup>-hūn ū kī i piàn-khoán; hō<sup>ˊ</sup> i khah séng pit-oè, khah hó lián-lòk. Piā<sup>n</sup>-chêh ê kī-hō, chheng-im ê sī iōng Lô-má-jī ê, phī<sup>n</sup>-im ê sī chhái-iōng 伊澤氏 ê, chóng-sī long sio-khoá ū kā i kái.<sup>16</sup>

In particular the arrangement of the phonetics caused him concern, as the diary entry

<sup>13</sup> In the past, I had seen that he (Izawa Takio) did not approve of me propagating the roman script, so I was very suspicious and fearful that he had bad intentions and wanted to obstruct using *taiwanhua* (tai-oân-oē) to teach the Taiwanese; but now that Mr. Izawa explained to me very clearly that this was not the main point, I felt very much at ease. 日記Entry 30/03/1931, p. 167. For the citation, see unpublished manuscript version, entry 30/03/1931.

<sup>14</sup> 日記Entry 17/05/1931, pp.172-173. For the citation, see unpublished manuscript version, entry 17/05/1931.

<sup>15</sup> Cai Peihuo, *Xinshi Taiwan baihuazi keben* 新式臺灣白話字課本 [Textbook in New Taiwanese Script], Taiwan Baihuazihui Yexing, 1931. This 20 p. textbook is reprinted in *Complete Works of Cai Peihuo*, volume 6 *Taiwan yuyan xiangguan ziliao, xia* (Materials Related to the Taiwanese Language, part 2), pp. 24-44.

<sup>16</sup> This new phonetic Taiwanese transliteration script integrated 28 symbols taken from the phonetic Japanese *kanazukai* (19), the Chinese phonetic alphabet (5) and newly invented ones (4), completed with 14 different diacritics for the tonal representation, and with a writing order arranged similar to that of Korean *hangul*. 日記Entry 17/05/1931, pp.172-73. For the citation, see unpublished manuscript version, entry 17/05/1931.

reveals: “Jī ê tàu-chhēng pài-liàt ê hoat-tō, chiū-sī gò siāng iōng sim ê só-chhài!”<sup>17</sup> In June, he informed the colonial authorities, and applied for a permit to organize a new session of lectures at the Martial Arts (Wumiao) temple.<sup>18</sup> The lectures were set deliberately at the date of July 16, because it was the double commemoration date of the inaugural issue of the *Tai Oan Chheng Lian* (1919) and the date when the transfer of the *Taiwan Minpao* from Tokyo to Taipei was completed (1927).<sup>19</sup> No permit was delivered that day, but Cai proceeded anyway, and the entry on that day informs the reader of the reason:

Chit-pang ê kang-choh, m nā<sup>n</sup> Iong-kióh the khian-chè, Lô<sup>n</sup> Piá<sup>n</sup>-teng kap Bùn-hoà Hìap-hoē hong-biān kúi ê lāng ū bêng-bêng sì-kè kóng hoán-tùi, kóng góa sī Ki-tok-tô<sup>n</sup> chit-khoán jī nā<sup>n</sup> phó<sup>n</sup>-kìp, ē hō<sup>n</sup> góa khoài thoân-pò<sup>n</sup> góa ê su-sióng, tùi in ê má<sup>n</sup>-khak-su chú-gī kóng sī bô lī-ek, koh chit tiám, chit-khoán sin-lī sī kan-ta han-chì tī Tâi-oân bô lô<sup>n</sup>-iōng, tùi chit lng-tiám kóng hoán-tùi, kiò lāng m-bián ò!<sup>20</sup>

The interesting point is that Cai’s newly devised system met with an ambivalent attitude by his peers. In his diary he recorded that Lin Xiantang had warned him not to overreact in his propagation efforts when reapplying for a permit from the colonial authorities.<sup>21</sup> Lin also had told him that he could see the advantages of the phonetic script compared to its romanised counterpart, but that he (=Lin) would not openly promote it.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, Han Shiquan (韓石泉 1897-1963) showed his approval for the new version and Cai noted that he had also received some letters from people whom he did not know, but who supported his endeavors.<sup>23</sup> Beginning of September the colonial authorities informed him that there were many problems (bùn-tê hui-sióng toā) for a possible approval of his “romanization” movement.<sup>24</sup> On another occasion, the next year in March, Cai met with Lin Panlong (林攀龍 1901-1983), son of Lin Xiantang. Panlong was also a Christian and had just returned from his overseas studies in Germany. Cai narrates how Panlong expressed his optimism and enthusiasm for the popularization of the “vernacular script” (peh-oe-ji), but suggested that Cai had better use the roman script instead of the new phonetic system.<sup>25</sup>

The Japanese personalities with whom Cai was involved in his linguistic mission

<sup>17</sup> 日記Entry 17/05/1931, pp.172-73. For the citation, see unpublished manuscript version, entry 17/05/1931

<sup>18</sup> 日記 Entry 12/06/1931, p.174

<sup>19</sup> 日記 Entry 26/06/1931, p.177

<sup>20</sup> “My work at this stage is not only hampered by the authorities, but also by Lu Bingding and several people from the [Taiwan] Culture Association who are spreading their opposition wherever they can. They say that I am a Christian, that this kind of script that I propagate is no more than a means to preach my thinking; that it is of no benefit to their Marxism; that this new script is only for use in Taiwan, limited in scope and practice, and they tell people not to study it.” 日記 Entry 16/07/1931, p.178. For the citation, see unpublished manuscript version, entry 16/07/1931.

<sup>21</sup> 日記 Entry 12/06/1931, p. 174

<sup>22</sup> 日記 Entry 12/06/1931, p. 174

<sup>23</sup> 日記 Entry 12/06/1931, p. 174

<sup>24</sup> 日記 Entry 04/09/1931, p. 183

<sup>25</sup> 日記Entry 19/03/1932, p. 203

during his visits to Japan were former governor-General Izawa Takio, the Christian intellectual Yanaihara Tadao and from 1932 onwards, Minister Nagai Hiraku (永井拓相).<sup>26</sup> Cai's first encounter with Nagai, which took place in Tokyo on September 8, was instigated by Nagai who informed Cai that he had drawn the attention of the colonial authorities in Taiwan, and to prevent matters from worsening, he had entrusted an administrator named Hiratsuka (平塚) to look after Cai.<sup>27</sup> The next information we gather on Nagai is on May 13 in 1933 when Cai is back in Tokyo for a month: "Today at the minister's office I met Minister Nagai, and like last time he was extremely hospitable. On the first issue of education, I suggested that education should be rapidly popularized, that attention should be paid to a realistic vocational education, that respect be shown for private schools, and that I was making haste with popularizing the Taiwanese script. He told me that he entirely appreciated these points and that I should send him a draft of my Taiwanese script proposal"<sup>28</sup> Cai sends him a copy on June 10, and receives a letter from Nagai on June 25:

"Today I received a letter from Nagai, which was signed by him; it read that he was encouraged by my efforts, respectful of my draft proposal and that he would consider the matter of putting the proposal for its popularization into practice. Receiving this letter made my heart very joyful!! I felt enormously comforted! My happiness is not because I received a letter from a minister, but because I know that I have gained one more supporter for this matter which I have been hopeful for over the past 20 years, and have come one step closer to the promising light".<sup>29</sup>

If Cai kept drawing his strength for the support he seems to perceive statesmen and intellectuals in Japan holding, it was because the opinion of the colonial administration locally keeps moving to the contrary. Cai not coincidentally used the word "problem" when relating another discussion with the Government-General officials regarding the Taiwanese phonetic script:

"During the meeting with Governor-General Nakagawa (中川) and administrator Hiratsuka, I was told that they would consider it. But when I met with Yasutake (安武), chief of the Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs, he told me that the pronunciation of the Japanese language was the clearest, the purest and the best, and suggested it was better to practice a Taiwanese pronunciation similar to Japanese pronunciation, that it was not good to make more changes to it. I replied that Taiwanese speech has its specific pronunciation. If I were to use the [Japanese system with] the 50 sounds without making any

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<sup>26</sup> Nagai Hiraku used to serve in the colonial administration in Taiwan before appointed minister in Japan.

<sup>27</sup> 日記 Entry 08/09/1932, p. 228. It had been Hiratsuka who told Cai in Taiwan in August to pay a visit to Nagai in September.

<sup>28</sup> 日記Entry 13/05/1933, p. 257

<sup>29</sup> 日記Entry 25/07/1933, p.263

changes, it would not sound like Taiwanese and not be distinct. He opened his mouth and told me through gradual practice it will gradually become similar and clearer; the people who can't get used to this practice, who say that it cannot be made similar to the Japanese pronunciation, are the kind of people who cannot assimilate, who do not want to live in Taiwan, and, they had better return to the Chinese mainland!! Ah! This kind of person can still be chief of the Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs. There is no way to deal with them! I immediately walked out.”<sup>30</sup>

Cai recorded one other trip to the government-general offices to discuss this matter around November 18, but no details are included. His December 31 reflection on his preparation work of the Taiwanese phonetic script ends in minor despair: “This matter has not made any progress, it is truly regrettable!”<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, he did not give up, and entered on the first day of 1934: “I do not know what I could be doing this year, but as to the matter of popularizing the Taiwanese phonetic script”, I must be most diligent! And whatever for the other things, Father! In Your appearance I seek Your assignment, I seek Your instructions”.<sup>32</sup> Once more, the attention shifts to Tokyo, where between February and April 1934 Cai makes plans with Yanaihara Tadao to publish a prospectus, accompanied by a petition list. Yanaihara Tadao agreed to write an addendum. Back in Taiwan he rallies support and collects a total of 103 signatures. Han Shiquan and Lin Panlong agree to act as co-writers for the prospectus.<sup>33</sup> Another trip to Tokyo followed in August where the prospectus, entitled *Prospectus for the Popularization of a Taiwanese Script and the Name list of Approvals within the Island* (臺灣白話字普及の趣旨及び臺灣島内賛成者氏名) is printed.<sup>34</sup> In the addendum Yanaihara Tadao elaborated on its usefulness as a tool in the instruction of the Japanese (*kokugo* 國語) language in the colony.<sup>35</sup> For the final decision of its approval, Cai was given an audience with the Governor-General on February 2, 1935. The Governor-General informed him the matter was fairly complex, and that an official endorsement would require a government led research committee to conduct an island-wide investigation asking people their opinion.<sup>36</sup> The next day, Cai celebrated Lunar New Year's Eve at Lin Xiantang's mansion. In reply to Lin Panlong's question of his plans, he recorded: “I am of the opinion that I can no longer proceed with [my work on] the Taiwanese script and I wish to take another road.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> 日記 Entry 25/07/1933, pp. 267-268

<sup>31</sup> 日記Entry 31/12/1933, p. 279

<sup>32</sup> 日記Entry 01/01/1934, p. 281

<sup>33</sup> Han Shiquan was a medical doctor in Tainan, active in the home front mobilization movement and closely befriended with Cai Peihuo. Han and Lin were both Christians.

<sup>34</sup> Cai, Peihuo. *Taiwan hakuwaji fukyū no shuisho oyobi taiwan shimanai sanseisha shimei* 臺灣白話

字普及の趣旨及び臺灣島内賛成者氏名 [Prospectus for the Popularization of Taiwan

Vernacular Script and the Namelist of Approvals within the Island], Tokyo: Shōseisha, August 1934.

<sup>35</sup> Yanaihara Tadao, “Taiwan hakuwaji mondai ni cuite” 臺灣白話字問題について [On the problem of the Taiwanese Vernacular Script] in op.cit., pp. 11-14.

<sup>36</sup> 日記Entry 02/02/1935, p. 317

<sup>37</sup> 日記Entry 03/02/1935, p. 318

Cai described this road as a threefold path: first, to immerse directly into the work of the Taiwanese paper; second, to leave for Tokyo to run a student dormitory and conduct some research; third, to remain in the Tainan vicinity and establish an organization to improve the livelihood and education of the local populace.<sup>38</sup>

On this note Cai's linguistic mission ends. Further references in the diary narrative regarding language pertain to his study of Mandarin Chinese in Japan and on the disturbing news that the colonial administration was going to ban the paper's Chinese language news coverage. His last diary entry is recorded on December 16, 1936.

## Discussing Linguistic Cultures into the Present

The diary narrative states no specific reasons elaborated in great detail why Cai turned away from the roman script and went for this profound and revolutionary orthographic change. Nevertheless, what makes Cai Peihuo's diary unique and particular is the orthographic presentation of the manuscript. The years 1929 to 1931 are written in romanised Taiwanese; the years 1932 to early 1934 in a mixture of Cai's phonetic Taiwanese script and Chinese character writing; and the years 1934 to 1936 in only Chinese characters. The presentation of the manuscript also reveals that the orthography and literary mode in which Cai wrote was not always consistent with the orthography that he was writing about. For instance, Cai writes about the concept and inception of the new Taiwanese phonetic script throughout 1931 in romanised Taiwanese. In January 1932 he starts experimenting with this new Taiwanese phonetic script, but gradually the Chinese character writing pushes to the foreground. Interestingly, in mid-February 1934, Cai switches to full Chinese character writing. The Taiwanese phonetic script now disappears as a form of writing but remains a main topic on language in the diary until early February 1935.

Elsewhere, I have argued how this orthographic code-switching discloses Cai's developing notions on literacy and identity in the colonial context.<sup>39</sup> I feel that the same argument also applies here, and of interest to this discussion remain the entries between 1932 and 1934 in which Cai progressively interchanges phonetic and character writing. At first, he limits this to proper names (place and personal), but increasingly he alternates it with complete sentences. Looking for a controlling pattern in this orthographic alternation reveals that the entries he recorded in Japan tend to be penned in Chinese characters, accounts on the inner-dealings of matters Taiwanese employ mixed scripts, and he uses the Taiwanese phonetic script in confessional entries and prayers, but not consistently. As this suggests, the alternating form captures a structure of feeling prone to a considerable degree of indecision, as he moves between scripts, until he finally settles on using Chinese character writing exclusively in his self-reflexive writing. A tentative answer for these ruptures lies in the mental displacement and spiritual void that Cai may have experienced after a

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<sup>38</sup> 日記Entry 03/02/1935, p. 318

<sup>39</sup> see Ann Heylen, "Realities of Writing in Taiwanese Historiography: An Excursion into Cai Peihuo's Diary (1929-1936)" Thematic Issue, "In their Own Words: Personal Reflections as History. Autobiographical Writings when Japan Ruled the Pacific", *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* (JCCH), vol 6, No 3 (December 2006) forthcoming

longstanding psychological attachment and emotional commitment to the potential of the roman script. The roman script not only introduced a new body of knowledge and a mnemotechnical device, but also represented a new concept of inscription whose transformative power lay in the transparency of its semantic content. In its historical context, the roman script or alphabetic writing was another illustration of the superiority of Western civilization. For this it was far from innocent in the eyes of the colonial administration, and the zero-tolerance attitude to the script's use reflects its challenge not only to the centrality of the Japanese language in ruling the colony but also the superiority of the Japanese script in its civilizing mission tout court. In his personal advance to biliteracy in Chinese and Japanese, Cai internalizes romanised Taiwanese as a viable medium of personal writing, analogous to and juxtaposable with the Japanese language medium then dominant in the public discourse of the new social order.

The Taiwanese phonetic script lacked these cultural-linguistic trappings. Through its enactment in writing, Cai may well have realized that the Taiwanese phonetic script was an appropriate mnemotechnical device to further his linguistic activism within Taiwanese colonial society, but was insufficient to serve as the sole basis for sustaining his own modern self-fashioning. At this juncture, the Chinese character script reappears on his diary pages as the only alternative to restoring his spiritual equilibrium and maintaining continuity with his peculiar two-mindedness. In this way, the orthographic narrative visualizes Cai's cultural crisis with the contested reality of discontinuities in the linguistic universes between Japanese and Chinese enacted within the imperial frame of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan.

In order to better make the link with today, let me first return to the published version of the diary. When judging the diary on its historical authenticity, its value goes beyond the ostensive facts recorded, but draws attention to the linguistic codes that are employed. However, with the published version of the diary, the manner in which the manuscript bears witness to this dilemma enacted through its writing is missing from the picture. The published version has been entirely re-written in Chinese characters, except for the few insertions with Japanese kana syllables. The entries in romanised Taiwanese have been translated into Taiwanese-Mandarin, retaining a strong Taiwanese lexicon and syntax. The entries for the years 1932 to 1934, which Cai at first wrote in his newly devised phonetic system and progressively inserted Chinese characters into the sentences, render a translation which is closer to Mandarin lexicon, especially for the entries which were written in the phonetic system. This rewriting effort being initiated while Cai was still alive and completed by one of his family members, accounts for the Mandarin overtone. Finally, the years 1934 to 1936, entirely written in Chinese characters, retain the complex writing mixture of Taiwanese and Classical Chinese syntax and lexicon. The characters that Cai wrote in shorthand (i.e. the current simplified system used in the PRC) have been replaced with the standard characters used in Taiwan. The use of Japanese semantic markers is retained throughout the translation; grammatical errors, typos and other inconsistencies have been corrected.<sup>40</sup> The contemporary reader is thus presented with a highly diversified linguistic text but orthographically coherent and uniform, ready to work with and from. This is precisely the objective that the publishers had in mind. It is not only one of the characteristics of how the colonial past is re-written into the

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<sup>40</sup> *Complete Works of Cai Peihuo*, volume 1, preface, p.11.

Taiwanese present. Also, it is one of the illustrations that giving in to attempts at devising and/or implementing non-sinitic orthographies do arouse a sentiment of uneasiness in Chinese linguistic culture.

Changing the Chinese script in favor of Latinized or other alternative orthographies are treated with caution, because they problematize the role of the Chinese character script as a unifying factor in forging national identity. The myth of the Chinese language as unifier, as De Francis has put it, functions in view of the large disparities in speech, idiolects and of a fear of losing contact with the culture of the past and its literary heritage.<sup>41</sup> Hence, the writings of late-imperial and Republican Chinese intellectuals that promoted non-sinitic orthographies to meet the needs of China's early 20<sup>th</sup> century modernization remain marginalized in Chinese scholarship and are not given the credit they deserve in the field of Chinese Studies in the Euro-American academic community. For instance, Lu Xun (1881-1936) is one of the internationally renowned Chinese novelists, but few are knowledgeable of his role in the promotion of the Latinization movement in the mid 1930s, and his interest in writing reform is not particularly an issue for public exposure in the Lu Xun museum in Beijing.<sup>42</sup>

The same ideological objectives with Chinese language universalism reproduced the longstanding marginalization of Cai Peihuo's interest in language reform in Taiwanese historiography. It is therefore anticipated that the public disclosure of the diary and the reprint of his publications in the non-sinitic orthographies in the *Complete Works of Cai Peihuo* may pave the way to more profound debates on Chinese language modernization that move beyond the Japanese colonial period and invite for broader narratives that help to bridge the competing interpretations of Taiwanese identity constructed within and outside the realms of Taiwanese historiography.

## Concluding Remarks

Hence we come to my proposed significance of this historical topic to the current sociolinguistic debate featuring Taiwanese mother tongue education and literature as concluding remark to this paper. Individuals like Cai Peihuo in the colonial period and beyond are rare, and so are their language proposals. However, their very existence is not meaningless, not then and not now. Rather, the emergence of these peculiar moments in time points at a specific awareness that the home cultural repertoire in which language is embedded did not offer any or the right kind of options while there was at the same time a perceived accessibility to an adjacent system which did possess these options searched for.

Provided a coordinated effort, island wide, it is entirely possible to codify and standardize written Taiwanese and making use of the character script. And in spite of the cultural argument, it is equally possible to romanise Taiwanese, and use this as the medium for both instruction and literature. However, there is still the issue of Taiwanese attitudes towards questions of social inclusion and exclusion being closely

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<sup>41</sup> De Francis, John. *The Chinese Language. Fact and Fantasy* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984, pp. 284-285.

<sup>42</sup> De Francis, John. *The Chinese Language*, pp. 279-80.

related to the self-image that Taiwanese people have of themselves today. One should therefore inquire the extent to which processes of marginalization and exclusion first and foremost rely on identification of a particular language variety or type of discourse as being typical of a definable social group and different from that of the majority.

Hence, the lesson to be learnt here is that scholarship has indeed come a long way to be inclusive to representing examples of “linguistic symbols of exclusion”, as has been illustrated with reprints and translations of Cai Peihuo’s peculiar linguistic mission on the one hand, and that it is important to emphasize that endeavors towards either romanizing or codifying written Taiwanese in character script should not be understood as a matter of professing democracy in a sense that “anything goes” on the other hand.