MISSIONARY SCRIPTS FROM VIETNAM AND TAIWAN

Wi-vun Taiffalo Chiung
The University of Texas at Arlington

1. Introduction

In 1492, Christopher Columbus encountered the New World, and a few years later in 1498 the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama opened the sea route between Europe and India by way of The Cape of Good Hope. The end of the fifteenth century was the beginning of the great voyages, and the era of 'great discoveries' from the European point of view. In Asia, following the great discoveries were Western missionary activities, international trades between Asia and Europe, and later Western colonialism.

Accompanying missionary activities was the design of romanized systems for local languages. Both Vietnam and Taiwan were introduced to the romanized writing systems by Western missionaries in the seventeenth century. In Vietnam, the romanized *Chu Quoc Ngu* system eventually replaced the traditional *Chu Nom* and Han characters, and became the official national orthography in 1945. However, the use of romanization in Taiwan is still mainly limited to church activities. Moreover, the later imported Han writing system is much more widely spread and has obtained dominant status in contemporary Taiwanese society.

This paper[1] examines the missionary scripts, i.e. Vietnamese Chu Quoc Ngu and Taiwanese Peh-oe-ji, in terms of linguistics and orthography. Due to page limits, this paper focuses on the demonstration of how romanization works for these two isolating languages. For more discussions on socio-political factors effecting the development of romanization in Vietnam and Taiwan, readers may refer to Chiung's paper (2001a).

2. Historical Background

2.1. Vietnamese Writing Systems and Chu Quoc Ngu

Han characters and Han writing were first employed in the writing system of Vietnam when Vietnam was under China's direct domination. Later on, a domestic script Chu Nom (字字喃), which has similar structure as Han characters, was documented in the tenth century. Romanized writing system was introduced to Vietnam by missionaries in the seventeen century, and it eventually became the official writing system Chu Quoc Ngu (literally, national language orthography) in 1945 when Ho Chi Minh declared the birth of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. Since then, romanized Chu Quoc Ngu has reached national status, and is taught through the national education system (DeFrancis 1977, 1996). It was reported that the literacy rate in Vietnam is somewhere between 78% and 88% (Grimes 2000). Nowadays, most Vietnamese people read and write in romanized Vietnamese. Only a few professionals in Han Nom studies still have knowledge of Han characters and Chu Nom.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, and French missionaries gradually came to preach in Vietnam. To get their ideas across to the local people, it was recognized that knowledge of the spoken Vietnamese was essential. Romanized writing was thus devised to assist missionaries to acquire the Vietnamese language. It is apparent that the Vietnamese romanization resulted from collective efforts reflecting the influences of the missionaries' diverse backgrounds (Thompson 1987:54-55). For example, *gi* [z] is borrowed from Italian spelling (Thompson 1987:62), *nh* [ɲ] from Portuguese (Edmondson; Silva; personal communication), and *ph* [f] from ancient Greek (DeFrancis 1977:58). Among the variants of Vietnamese romanization, Alexandre de Rhodes is usually referred to as the person who provided the first systematic work of Vietnamese romanization (DeFrancis 1977:54). In 1624, the French Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes arrived in central Vietnam. He used Roman scripts as a writing system to describe the Vietnamese language and later published the first Vietnamese-Portuguese-Latin dictionary, *Dictionarium Annamiticum, Lusitanum et Latinum*, and a Vietnamese catechism *Cathechismus* in 1651. De Rhodes' romanized system with some later changes became the foundation of present Quoc Ngu, the national writing system of Vietnam (DeFrancis 1977:48-66; Thompson 1987:52-77).

How did Vietnam successfully replace Han characters and Chu Nom with romanized Quoc Ngu? Chiung (2001a) attributes the consequence to two crucial factors: 1) external factor of political interaction between Vietnam and China in the international situation of the first half of the twentieth century, and 2) internal factor of social demand for literacy.

2.2. Taiwanese Writing Systems and Peh-oe-ji

The first written language in Taiwan was the so-called *Sinkang* Manuscripts, a romanized system to write the vernacular of indigenous *Siraya* tribes during Dutch occupation (1624-1661) of Taiwan in the seventeenth century. Nowadays, the language of Siraya has become extinct and along with it, the ability to read the manuscripts written in Sinkang. Thereafter, during the *Koxinga* (1661-1683) and the *Qing* (1683-1895) occupations, the classical Han writing was adopted as an official language by government, and *Koa-a-chheh* was treated as the popular writing for the public. In the nineteenth century, another romanized system *Peh-oe-ji* was devised by missionaries to write Taiwanese[2] and Hakka. Today, there are still a few among the elder generations, especially women, who read only Peh-oe-ji. After Taiwan became a part of Japan (1895-1945), Japanese writing became the official written language in Taiwan. After World War II, Modern Written Chinese (MWC), based on the colloquial speech of Beijing Mandarin, became the orthodoxy of writing under Chinese KMT's occupation (1945-2000) of Taiwan. By year 2000, the MWC was exclusively taught through Taiwan's national education, while written Taiwanese in either Han characters or romanization was not taught in public schooling. Although several grass roots organizations such as *Tai-bun Thong-sin-sia* and *Tai-bun Bong-po-sia* have promoted Taiwanese writing, writing in Taiwanese is currently still far away from mainstream (Ang 1996; Cheng and Cheng 1977; Chiung 1999, 2000, 2001b; Tiu[n] 1998).

The first mission after the Dutch occupation, by James L. Maxwell and his assistants, settled in *Tailam*in 1865. Prior to their arrival, missionaries in southeast China had already started developing romanization for languages such as Southern Min and Hakka. For instance, the first textbook for learning the romanization of the Amoy[3] dialect, *Tngoe Hoan Ji Chho Hak* (Amoy Spelling Book) was published by John Van Nest Talmage in 1852 in Amoy. That romanization scheme was called Poe-oe-ji in Taiwan. It means the script of vernacular speech in contrast to the complicated Han characters of *wenyen* (Lai 1990).

Although Peh-oe-ji was originally devised for religious purposes, it is no longer limited to religious applications after the advent of the contemporary Taibun[4] movement in the 1980s. Peh-oe-ji has been adopted by many *Taibun* promoters as one of the romanized writing systems to write Taiwanese. Well-known Taibun periodicals such as *Tai-bun Thong-sin, Tai-bun Bong-Po,* and *Tai-oan-ji* have adopted Peh-oe-ji as the romanization for writing Taiwanese. In addition, there were recently a series of novels and stories translated from world literatures into Peh-oe-ji in a planned way by the members of *5% Tai-ek Ke-oe* (5% Project of Translation in Taiwanese) since 1996.

In short, the Peh-oe-ji was the ground of romanization of modern Taiwanese colloquial writing. Even though there were several different schemes of romanization for writing Taiwanese, many of them were derived from Peh-oe-ji. Peh-oe-ji and its derivatives are the most widely used romanization even nowadays (Chiung 2001b).

3. A Linguistic Account of CQN and POJ

Because changes have been made to the Vietnamese Chu Quoc Ngu and Taiwanese Peh-oe-ji as time went on after they were devised centuries ago, the demonstration of Chu Quoc Ngu in this paper is based on its contemporary spelling rules, and Peh-oe-ji is in accordance with the spelling of the most popular romanized dictionary in Taiwan *E-mng-im Sin Ji-tian* (A Dictionary of the Amoy Vernacular Spoken throughout the Prefectures of Chin-chiu, Chiang-chiu and Formosa, by William Campbell 1913).

Generally speaking, both Chu Quoc Ngu and Peh-oe-ji can be categorized as phonemic writing systems, in which there is a close relationship, if not one-to-one, between phonemes and orthographic symbols. Both systems made use of the existing roman alphabet to represent consonants and vowels. In addition, a few diacritic marks were devised to differentiate different phonemes in Vietnamese since it has more phonemes than the available roman letters.

Both Vietnamese and Taiwanese are isolating languages, that is, one in which the words are invariable and syntactic relationships are shown by word order. Traditionally, Vietnamese and Taiwanese were regarded as monosyllabic because most of their words consist of single syllables. However, recent statistical studies have shown that there is a clear tendency toward poly-syllabic morphology in modern Vietnamese and Taiwanese (Nguyen 1997:35). Because of the monosyllabic property, syllable plays an important role in their morphological structure, where many poly-syllabic words were derived from monosyllabic words/morphemes. Consequently, this monosyl-

labic property was reflected in their orthographic designs. In Vietnamese Chu Quoc Ngu, a space was added between syllables of a word; however, a hyphen was placed between syllables in the spelling of Taiwanese Peh-oe-ji.

In addition to isolating and monosyllabic properties, tone plays an important role in Vietnamese and Taiwanese. In modern Vietnamese, it consists of six tones; in Taiwanese, seven tones. Tone sandhi is a substantial phenomenon in Taiwanese; however, tone sandhi in Vietnamese is neither substantial nor as rich as in Taiwanese. Both in the designs of Chu Quoc Ngu and Peh-oe-ji, diacritic tone marks are added to differentiate tones.

More detailed descriptions of the Chu Quoc Ngu and Peh-oe-ji are provided in the following sections.

3.1. Vietnamese Chu Quoc Ngu

There are 19 consonants and 11 simple vowels in the Hanoi dialect of Vietnamese, as listed in table 1 and table 2. In addition to the 19 consonants, other dialects may contain retroflex consonants /tr/, /ʃ/, and /ʒ/ (Nguyen 1997:20).

Table 1. Vietnamese consonants in IPA.

		bi-labial	labial-dental	alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
				-asp/+asp			
voiceless	stop	p		t / tʰ	c	k	
voiced	stop	b		d			
voiceless	fricative		f	s		x	h
voiced	fricative		v	z		ɣ	
voiced	lateral			l			
voiced	*nasal*	*m*		*n*	ɲ	ŋ	

The Vietnamese vocalic system is divided into upper and lower vocalics (Thompson 1987:19). The upper vocalics include six vowels, /i ɯ u e ɤ o/. They are formed relatively high in the mouth and characterized by a three-way position (front, back unrounded, and back rounded). Lower vocalics include five vowels, /ɛ ɔ ɐ a ɑ/. They are formed relatively low and characterized by a two-way position distinction (front, back).

Table 2. Vietnamese vowels in IPA.

		front	central	back (-rd)	back (+rd)
upper	high	i		ɯ	u
	upper mid	e		ɤ	o
lower	lower mid	ɛ			ɔ
	higher low		ɐ		
	lower low	a		ɑ	

The symbols for representing Vietnamese consonants and vowels in Chu Quoc Ngu are summarized in table 3 and table 4.

Table 3. Symbols for Vietnamese consonants in the spelling of Chu Quoc Ngu.

Consonants	Chu Quoc Ngu	Conditions	Examples*
p	p	final only	tap 'answer'
t	t		toi 'I'
tʰ	th	initial only	thang 'mouth'
c	ch		chon 'choose' cach 'manner'
	tr	initial only	tre 'late'

k	· k	initial before i, e, ê, y	kia 'over there' ken 'choose' kêu 'call' ky 'to sign'
	q	initial before u	quê 'rural area'
	c	elsewhere	ca 'fish' cung 'likewise' khac 'different'
b	b	initial only	ba 'three'
d	đ	initial only	đi 'go'
f	ph	initial only	phuc 'happiness'
s	s	must be learned	sửa 'milk'
	x	*must be* learned	*xa 'far'*
x	kh	initial only	không 'not'
h	h	initial only	hat 'sing'
v	v	initial only	va 'and'
z	r	initial only	ra 'go out'
	d	initial only	dung 'to use'
	gi	initial only	gieng 'January' giờ 'hour'
ɣ	gh	initial before i, e, ê	ghi 'to record'
	g	elsewhere	gô 'wood'
l	l	initial only	la 'leaf'
m	m		mua 'buy' tim 'to search'
n	n		nay 'this' in 'print'
ɲ	nh		nha 'house' linh 'soldier'
ŋ	ngh	initial before i, e, ê	nghe 'listen'
	ng	elsewhere	ngon 'tasty'

* Tone marks are excluded in the examples.

Table 4. Symbols for Vietnamese vowels in the spelling of Chu Quoc Ngu.

Vowels	Chu Quoc Ngu	Conditions	Examples*
i	i		tim 'search'
	y	Sino-Vietnamese	My 'America'
e	ê		quê 'ural area'
ɛ	e		đep 'beautiful'
a	a		hat 'sing'
ɐ	ă		ăn 'eat'
ɑ	â		dân 'citizen'
u	u		mua 'season'
ɯ	ư		mưa 'rain'
o	ô		không 'not'
ɤ	ơ		cơm 'cooked rice'
ɔ	o		ngon 'tasty'

* Tone marks are excluded in the examples.

Because of the complexity of the vowel system, three dia-critics were devised to distinguish different vowels. The dia-critic ' ' ' was added to vowels /u o/ to indicate un-rounded sounds /ư ơ/; the diacritic ' ˇ ' represents central vowel /ă/; and the diacritic ' ˆ ' has two functions: first, it refers to the upper vocalics /ê ô/ (in contrast to /e o/), and second, it indi-cates back vowel /â/ (in contrast to /a ă/).

There are six tones in modern northern Vietnamese, i.e. *sac, nga, ngang, huyen, hoi*, and *nang*. They are composed of contours of pitch combined with certain other features of voice production (Thompson 1987:20). Different scholars may have different descriptions of these tones. The widely cited descrip-

tions of the Vietnamese tones are given by Thompson (1987:20) as in table 5.

Table 5. Vietnamese tone system (Thompson 1987).

TONE NAME	SYMBOL	PITCH LEVEL	CONTOUR	OTHER FEATURES
Sắc	´	High	Rising	Tenseness
Ngã	~	High	Rising	Glottalization
Ngang	(unmarked)	High-Mid	Trailing-Falling	Laxness
Huyền	`	Low	Trailing	Laxness, breathiness
Hỏi	?	Mid-low	Dropping	Tenseness
Nặng	.	Low	Dropping	Glottalization or *tenseness*

How Chu Quoc Ngu works is demonstrated in the example of ngươì yêu (lover), where diacritic ' ` ' represents *huyen tone, and others are the corresponding symbols for* consonants and vowels.

3.2. Taiwanese Peh-oe-ji

The inventory of Taiwanese consonants and vowels are listed in table 6 and table 7. The symbols for representing the consonants, vowels, and tones are given in tables 8, 9, and 10 (Cheng and Cheng 1977; Tiu^n 2001).

The spelling rules of Peh-oe-ji are easier than the Vietnamese Chu Quoc Ngu. In general, there is a one-to-one relationship between orthographic symbols and phonemes as shown in tables 8 and 9. The only exception is the pair of 'ch' and 'ts' that both refer to the phoneme /ts/ (nowadays, 'ts' has been replaced by 'ch'). The different usages between /ts/ and

/ch/ are based on vowel position. That is, /ts/ precedes back vowels such as 'tso,' and /ch/ precedes front vowels such as 'chi.' After phonemes are represented, tone marks are superimposed on the nuclei of syllables and a hyphen '-' is added between syllables, as in ô·-kóe-khiau (芋粿曲 Taiwanese taro cake). Because Taiwanese is a tone language with rich tone sandhi, there can be several ways to represent tones. In the design of Peh-oe-ji, the base tone or underlying tone of each syllable is chosen and represented by its tone mark. For example, 'Taiwanese taro cake' must be represented by its underlying form ô·-kóe-khiau rather than surface form ò·-koe-khiau (this is the form in actual pronunciation).

Table 6. Taiwanese consonants in IPA.

		bi-labial	alveolar	velar	glottal
		-asp/+asp	-asp/+asp	-asp/+asp	
voiceless	stop	p/pʰ	t / tʰ	k/kʰ	
voiced	stop	b		g	
voiceless	C. fricative				h
voiceless	G. fricative		s		
voiceless	affricate		ts/tsʰ		
voiced	affricate		dz		
voiced	lateral		l		
voiced	nasal	m	n	ŋ	

Table 7. Taiwanese vowels in IPA.

	front	central	back
high	i		u
mid	e	ə	o
low		a	

Table 8. Symbols for Taiwanese consonants in the spelling of Peh-oe-ji.

Consonants	Peh-oe-ji	Conditions	Examples*
b	b	initial only	bun 'literature'
ts	ch	before i, e	chi 'of'
	ts	eleswhere	tsa 'investigate'
ts^h	chh	initial only	chha 'differ'
g	g	initial only	gi 'language'
h	h		hi 'glad'
dz	j	initial only	jit 'sun'
k	k		ka 'add'
k^h	kh	initial only	kha 'foot'
l	l	initial only	li 'you'
m	m		mi 'noodle'
n	n		ni 'milk'
ŋ	ng		ang 'red'
p	p		pi 'compare'
p^h	ph	initial only	phoe 'letter'
s	s	initial only	si 'four'
t	t		te 'tea'
t^h	th	initial only	thai 'to kill'

* Tone marks are excluded in the examples.

Table 9. Symbols for Taiwanese vowels in the spelling of Peh-oe-ji.

Consonants	Peh-oe-ji	Conditions	Examples*
i	i		ti 'pig'
e	e		te 'tea'
a	a		ta 'dry'
u	u		tu 'meet'
ə	o		to 'nife'
o	o·		to· 'map'

* Tone marks are excluded in the examples.

Table 10. Inventory of tone marks in the orthography of Peh-oe-ji.

Tones	君 [kun˦] gentle	滚 [kunˋ] boil	棍 [kun˥] stick	骨 [kut ˑ|] bone	裙 [kunˊ] skirt	-	近 [kun˧] near	滑 [kutˑ|] glide
Peh-oe-ji tone marks		´	`		^		-	I
Peh-oe-ji samples	kun	kún	kùn	kut	kûn		kūn	kút
Traditional tone number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
IPA tone values	˧˥	˥˩	˧˩	˧	˩˧		˧	˧

4. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how Vietnamese and Taiwanese are represented by romanized writing systems, i.e. Chu Quoc Ngu and Peh-oe-ji respectively. Generally speaking, the missionaries' knowledge of Vietnamese and Taiwanese were pretty good so the designs of Chu Quoc Ngu and Peh-oe-ji are pretty accurate and efficient compared to the complicated Han writing system.

In Taiwan and China, many people doubt the capacity of romanization for the Chinese languages. However, the cases of Vietnamese Chu Quoc Ngu and Taiwanese Peh-oe-ji have shown that it is possible for the Han character-based Chinese languages to be written in romanization. What have prevented the Han characters from being replaced by romanization are socio-political factors rather than linguistics factors.

Notes

[2] In this paper, Taiwanese refers to *Taigi*, the language spoken by around 80% of Taiwan's current population. Taigi is also called *Holooe*, *Minnan-yu*, *Taiyu*, or Southern Min.

[3] Amoy was a dialect of Southern Min, and was regarded as mixed *Chiang-chiu* and *Choan-chiu* dialects. The Amoy dialect was usually chosen by missionaries as a standard for Southern Min.

[4] Taibun (台文) literally means Taiwanese literature or Taiwanese writing. It refers to the orthography issue in the Taiwanese language movement since the 1980s. For details of the modern movement of written Taiwanese, see Chiung (1999:33-49).

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