

Romanization Movements in Japan and China: Reforming National Language, or Universalizing “Tokens of Exchange”?

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ABSTRACT

Echoing the concepts of “translingual practice” and “tokens of exchange,” both brought up by literary critic Lydia Liu, this paper examines the development of Romanization movements in Japan and China from a sociological framework based on Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualization of practice. Although neither of the movements was successful in achieving their final goal of an overall language reform, they both played active roles in universalizing Roman script as common tokens of linguistic exchange that were circulated worldwide. In the Chinese case, the newly developed pinyin system even achieves a hegemonic status that has changed foreigners’ linguistic practice of using Roman script to a considerable extent. Just as the universalizing process of modernity cannot be understood in a single term, struggles over commensurability should not be thought of in mere dichotomies such as domination vis-à-vis resistance or colonization vis-à-vis de-colonization. Rather, such struggles can be better analyzed in terms of the conversions of different kinds of capital and changing linguistic practice on both the national/local and the international/global levels.

KEY WORDS

translingual practice, transliteration, commensurability, Roman script, modernity



Introduction

As cross-cultural interactions appear to be omnipresent in the age of globalization,¹ translation has become an issue that is drawing more and more scholarly attention in different disciplines. I use the umbrella term “translingual practice,” borrowed from Lydia Liu’s illuminating book title (Liu 1995), to refer to those lingual practices that cross the “boundary” of one language to another.² The term “translingual practice” as used by Liu is meant to “raise the possibility of rethinking cross-cultural interpretation and forms of linguistic mediation between East and West” (Liu 1995: xv). As a literary critic, Liu wisely borrows the concept of practice from French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, but she does not seem to take the concept seriously enough to provide a systematic analysis of practice as Bourdieu does. Besides, the rising interests in translingual practice have been mainly focused on some limited issues such as cross-cultural communication and translation.³ However, relatively little attention has been paid to another widely observed but easily gone unnoticed translingual practice—that is, transliteration. It is the latter type of translingual practice that forms the focus of the current study.

As previous studies have suggested, translation is by no means a transparent practice; rather, translation has transformed the language itself and has thereby constructed subjectivities of new kinds (Liu 1995; Sakai 1997). By the same token, transliteration is not merely an instrumental act of switching between two different writing systems; in some cases, it involves the transformation of the language from within, as translation sometimes does. In both China and Japan, transliteration

originally occurred as a functional prerequisite in the context of cross-lingual communication, as the initial attempts to transliterate traditional scripts into Latin alphabets were made by Christian missionaries in the 16th century. However, during the later development in the 19th century, transliteration was turned into an issue of transforming the traditional writing system into Roman script, known as the “Romanization movement,” during the nation-building process. In these two cases, Romanization movements were motivated by similar incentives, took different shapes, and ended up with different results. How to understand these similarities and differences forms in part the focus of the current inquiry. To be sure, Romanization movements in both China and Japan emerged in the context of language reform, which, complicated as it was, has been extensively examined and well documented in previous studies.⁴ Thus, instead of providing a comprehensive account of Romanization and/or language reform on each side, the scope of this paper is rather limited. By drawing on the analytical strength of translingual practice, which is apparently indebted to Bourdieu’s celebrated theory of practice, this paper aims to tackle the following questions: how transliteration, a seemingly “neutral” or “instrumental” practice, evolves into a value-laden movement towards an overall Romanization of the script? Why do people regard a certain form of script as superior to others? How did it happen, and what is its consequence? Moreover, as there exist both similarities and differences between Romanization movements in China and Japan, how can we account for such differences and similarities? And finally, what can we learn from such a comparison?

Echoing the points raised collectively by the authors in another groundbreaking volume *Tokens of Exchange*, also edited by Lydia Liu (1999), this study will probe the struggles over commensurability in terms of transliteration in the so-called “global village” or “world society” that consists of a variety of linguist communities.⁵ The term “token” is used here in a more literal sense than it is used in Liu’s edited volume. In other words, the globally circulated tokens of linguistic exchange—which refer to Roman script here—are not merely a trope; instead, Roman script is being literally used as the “tokens of

exchange” widely adopted in transliteration, serving as a means of commensurability among different linguistic communities. The current study is a modest attempt to scrutinize the universalizing process of these linguistic tokens.

Before we proceed further, a few words have to be said about the terms and vocabulary used in this paper. The Japanese script consists of two elements: kana and kanji. Kanji, literally meaning “Han Characters,” refers to Chinese characters that have been borrowed into Japanese, while kana refers to phonetic symbols created by the Japanese themselves based on the inspirations from kanji. The script used in the Chinese language is called “hanzi” in Chinese, literally meaning “Han characters” as well. As a matter of fact, kanji and hanzi are merely two different pronunciations (hence transliterated differently) of the same characters. Thus, in my discussion, “Chinese characters” will be used interchangeably with “kanji” and “hanzi” in the Japanese and Chinese contexts, respectively. In the same vein, “rōmaji” and “romazi” are respectively Japanese and Chinese terms for “Roman script” (sometimes put otherwise as “Latin alphabets”). Readers should bear in mind that these terms will appear interchangeably in the following discussions and they basically refer to the same thing. Unless otherwise specified, the transliteration for Japanese in this paper is in the Hepburn style, while that for Chinese is in pinyin.

Analytical Framework and Historical Background

Linguistic Field, Conversion of Capital, and Levels of Analysis

Let us begin with the concept of the translingual practice, with focus on “practice” itself. The sociological analysis of practice has been brought up to its full strength by Pierre Bourdieu, whose conceptualization of practice can be succinctly expressed in the following formula (Bourdieu 1984: 101):

$$[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

This formula indicates the relations between “systems of variables” that can be decomposed sociologically. In order to understand its practice, we need to take into account at least three elements: habitus, capital, and field. As is now well known, habitus refers to mental dispositions that are simultaneously “structuring structures” and “structured structures.” “Field” and “capital” are mutually constitutive through what Bourdieu calls the “hermeneutic cycle”: to construct a field, we need to find the capital circulating in such a field; reversely, to construct a certain form of capital, we need to know the logic of the field in which such form of capital is operating (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 103, 108). Bourdieu further distinguishes a number of different fields: economic, cultural, political, symbolic, among others. Just as capital in one field can be “converted” to other forms of capital in different fields, so habitus can be “transposed” from one field to another. So far as language is concerned, we need to understand the formation and reformation of habitus and capital in the linguistic field. As with other forms of capital, linguistic capital can be converted to economic, political, and cultural capital, and vice versa.

While Bourdieu’s theory of practice seems to be quite self-sufficient, its limitation lies in the fact that Bourdieu’s conceptualization of these fields tend to presume the boundaries of a given society, which, in most cases, correspond to the nation-state. Such a limitation makes his theory hardly applicable to those practices that are of the “transnational” sorts (Ong 1999:89–93). The same holds true to the translingual practice we intend to investigate in this paper. According to Bourdieu’s theory, translingual practice entails a translingual field, translingual capital and translingual habitus. How are all of these possibly formed?

I have pointed out elsewhere that “field” has to be analyzed on at least two levels: the one national, the other international, as succinctly schematized in Table 1.⁶ Translingual practice can be understood under the same framework as well. Just as political, economic and cultural fields can be analyzed on both national and international levels, so the linguistic field can be analyzed on the two levels.⁷

Table 1 Civic-territorial and Ethno-cultural Institutions of Nationhood on National and International Levels

	Civic-territorial institutions (Political fields)	Ethno-cultural institutions (Cultural fields)
International/ Global level	International organizations	International cultural grammar of nationhood* (Lofgren 1989)
	International law	International epistemic communities* (Haas 1992)
	Transnational arbitration system	
National/ Domestic level	State sovereignty, territoriality, and citizenship	“Traditional/indegenous culture”
	Signifying institutions (national title, flag, anthem, etc.)	Language
	Military	Cultural patrimonies
		“Nation-view” and knowledge systems (History, literature, etc.)**

Note: * On the concepts of “international cultural grammar of nationhood” and “international epistemic communities,” see Wang (2004a).

** On the concepts of “nation-view” and “History” with a capital H, see Duara (1995).

With such an analytical framework, let me proceed to analyze the commonalities and differences between these two cases. The analysis will start with a brief historical sketch of Romanization movements on both sides, followed by the analysis on the national and the international levels respectively. It has to be noted, however, that the following historical sketch, which runs the risk of oversimplifying the story on both sides, is for heuristic purpose only. Those who are already familiar with the Romanization movements in both Japan and China may simply skip this part and go directly to the discussions in the next section.⁸

Romanization Movements in Japan and China: A Brief Historical Sketch

The earliest record of Japanese being transcribed in Roman alphabets can be traced back to the 16th century when Christian

missionaries from the West were proselytizing in Japan (Kayashima 2000:195). Romanization at that time, however, was used mainly in an instrumental sense for language learning and mutual communication between missionaries and local folks. It was not until the later half of the 19th century, when the Meiji Restoration was launched, that Romanization became a political issue of language reform. It was advanced at a time when an overall reformation of the Japanese language was under way. During the 1860s, it was almost a consensus among elites and officials that the Japanese language needed a thorough reform, generally referred to as the “national language and national script problem” (*kokugo kokuji montai*)⁹; the only questions remaining were how and to what extent. Generally put, the problem concerned two levels. For one thing, there was a need to standardize the language in terms of lexicons, grammar, pronunciation, orthography, the agreement between colloquial expressions and written texts, etc. This is what has been known as the “standardization” of national language that we have seen in most cases of nation-building. For the other, it was also widely held that the writing system of the Japanese language needed an overall reform because the traditional written form—namely, the mixed use of kanji and kana—was found too complicated and inconvenient for ordinary people. Kanji, above all, was found guilty for handicapping people’s ability to read and to write. Romanization emerging in this context aimed first and foremost at tackling the second question.

By and large, there were three positions concerning the question as to how to deal with kanji: on the conservative pole, there were people who agreed with the proposal to limit the use of kanji, but it was considered unnecessary or even undesirable to abandon the use of kanji as a whole. In the middle, there was the stance which held that kanji should be gradually replaced by kana, and the ultimate goal was the overall abolishment of kanji. On the most radical pole, we found the Romanization movement which aimed to replace both kanji and kana with Roman script.¹⁰ Nabu Yoshiya’s “On Fixing National Language” was perhaps the first to call for using rōmaji as the national script of Japan. Since then, there had been sporadic articles in various

magazines that proposed the same thing, and it was not until 1885 that Rōmajikai (The Romanization Society) was established to become the first organization of the Romanization movement in Japan.

Regarding language reform, the second and the third positions shared a common ground in that they both proposed the overall abolishment of kanji, but they split on the issue as to what kind of script was to be used after kanji on the whole was replaced. The former maintained that kana was good enough for use, while the latter insisted that only Rōmaji could serve the purpose of completely reforming the Japanese language. According to Kayashima (2000), there have been three movements for Romanization in Japan. The first began in the 1870s and lasted until 1880s; the second between 1920 and 1930, and the third was during the American Occupation after World War Two (WWII). While there were numerous rounds of debates between the Rōmaji-supporters and Kana-supporters, and despite the fact that the Japanese government established an ad hoc committee to investigate the problem, the issue had never been settled. In 1900, Ministry of Education published a report on the use of Rōmaji (*Rōmaji kaikata no hōkokusho*) in an attempt to popularize the use of Rōmaji, but such an attempt was eventually given up due to strong objections from conservatives.

Quite unexpectedly, the issue was given a new life during the American Occupation period after WWII. Under the supervision of the Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E) of GHQ, an experiment with Romanization took place in a few selected schools, and it was asserted that the effects were much better than many would have expected. It was even believed that, if the experiment had not been interrupted due to the end of the Occupation, it would have become possible for the overall Romanization of the Japanese language to have been actualized (Unger 1996). After the end of the Occupation, issues concerning Romanization once again fell back to the previous situation. It was once an acutely debated issue in the Council for National Language (*Kokugo shingikai*), but it gradually vanished from the agenda and became a pending issue because no consensus could be reached between the supporters and critics (Kurashima 2002: 60–73).

On the Chinese side, the story has been quite similar, although there exist some significant differences in terms of the path and the outcome. As with the case of Japan, "Romanized Chinese" first appeared in the 16th century when the Jesuit missionaries were preaching in China. The Romanization movement in the sense of language reform emerged also in the 19th century, but it emerged considerably later than its Japanese counterpart. Unlike Japanese, which employs both kanji and kana in a mixed way, the writing system of Chinese is constituted solely by hanzi (Chinese characters). For this reason, it is often regarded as an ideographic language, as opposed to a phonographic one.¹¹ In 1892, Lu Zhuangzhang imitated Japanese kana and developed the first phonographic script for the Chinese language. During the New Culture Movement in the 1910s, radical writers such as Lu Xun and Qian Xuantong wrote in *New Youth* (Xin Qingnian) to advocate the abolishment of Chinese characters. However, it was as late as 1923 when a group of cultural elites, known for their participation in the New Culture Movement, published articles on *National Language Monthly* to advocate replacing hanzi (Chinese characters) with romazi.¹²

As with the Japanese case, even within the camp of the Romanization movement itself, there were different factions developing different Romanization systems that eventually became rivals. In China, the dividing line between these factions corresponded to political chasm.¹³ Two main systems have therefore developed: the one was *guoyuluomazi* (shorthand as *guoluo*), prescribed by the Nanjing government led by the KMT (*Kuomintang*, literally "National Party"), the other was *beifangladinghua xinwenzi* (shorthand as *beila*), developed by activists of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in collaboration with specialists in the Soviet Union.

The Romanization movement reached its peak after 1949 when the CCP won the civil war and established the People's Republic of China (PRC). Zealous efforts were invested in the development of a new, better form of Romanization for the Chinese language. An ad hoc committee, first named the "Chinese Script Reform Association" (*Zhongguo wenzi gaige xiehui*) in 1949 and later reorganized as the

“Committee for the Reform of Chinese Script” (*Zhongguo wenzi gaige weiyuanhui*) in 1954, was established to devise a program for an overall script reform. The major tasks of the committee were basically divided into two parts: to simplify Chinese characters, on the one hand, and to design a scheme of Romanization, on the other. The former, namely, simplifying Chinese characters, was originally conceived as a mere transitory phase towards the ultimate goal of overall Romanization. In 1958, the PRC promulgated *Hanyu pinyin fang’an* (shorthanded as pinyin) as the Romanization system for Mandarin Chinese. As with its Japanese counterpart, the final goal of an overall Romanization of the writing system vanished quietly from the agenda of language reform. The reason was more practical than political. As pointed out before, prior to the overall Romanization, there was a transitory phase of simplified characters. While the first round of Simplified Chinese Character Scheme was promulgated in 1956 and successfully implemented, the second round of simplified characters, announced in 1977, soon proved to be a failure and was officially abolished in 1986. By that time, people had realized the impracticality, if not impossibility, of the overall Romanization of Chinese characters. Even the leaders of the reform committee admitted that they had made some mistakes in previous attempts to Romanize Chinese script on the whole.¹⁴ Nonetheless, one cannot jump into the conclusion that the Romanization movement was a complete failure. As a final product of the Romanization movement, *Hanyu pinyin fang’an* can be said to have been successful in that it replaced the formerly existing transliteration system—the Wade-Giles, that is—to become an international standard. Owing to a variety of institutional measures and factors, which will be further analyzed in the following sections, the “hegemony,” so to speak, of pinyin was gradually established and has been maintained to date.

Complicated as it was, the politics of Romanization was deeply embedded in the context of language reform on both sides, each of which deserves a separate study because of the complexities of the issue; therefore, the scope in the following discussions is cautiously limited and only partial. I shall simply limit my inquiry to the following question: “Why do people regard a certain form of script as superior to

other forms?" The answers can be explored by analyzing factors on both national/local and international/global levels.

Nationalism, Anti-Traditionalism, and Totalistic Iconoclasm: Analysis on the National/Local Level

As can be seen from the above, Romanization movements in China and Japan were both deeply embedded in the context of the nation-building process on each side. To understand its development, it is essential for us to examine the relations between language reform and nationalism at some further length.

History of nationalism is intertwined with the rise of modernity, as it is now widely acknowledged that the nation-state is a newly invented political community in the modern era. As language often serves as a key marker for ethnic distinction and national identity, the standardization of an official/national language has played a key role in forging modern nations (Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1990, Bourdieu 1991: 43–65). Moreover, in Western Europe, where the nation-state was born, tradition was “invented” to enrich the stock of national culture (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). For those latecomers such as Japan and China, however, it was their imperative to emulate the model established by their Western precursors. In such circumstances, anti-traditionalism often emerges as a major theme in the nation-building process. It was in this context that language in both places was found “backward” and hence in need of modernization. Language reform in these two cases was therefore yoked with double tasks: to create a standardized national language, on the one hand, and to modernize the traditional language, on the other. It was against this backdrop that Romanization emerged as a solution.

Romanization was regarded as a desirable solution for at least two major reasons. First, since most “Westerners” (to be sure, West Europeans) used Latin alphabets as the written script for their languages, it had been “proven,” as it were, that Latin alphabets were more likely to generate modern scientific knowledge. Indeed, the alphabets themselves were deemed as more “advanced” and more

“scientific.” In contrast, the traditional script used in either China or Japan were “backward” and “unscientific,” hence impeding the development of scientific knowledge in both places. If the script was transformed into Latin alphabets, it would become easier, they believed, for Chinese and Japanese people to absorb new scientific knowledge from the West.¹⁵

Moreover, Chinese characters were found unfavorable to the development of science because of the difficulties of learning it. In primary education, students had to spend tremendous amounts of time in the class just learning how to read and write. Such a learning process was not only inefficient, but also disadvantageous to the learning of other kinds of “practical” knowledge (science in particular) because much of the time had already been occupied with the learning of language itself. Indeed, the rōmaji experiment during the American Occupation Period after WWII was aimed to prove this. In other words, it was intentionally designed to prove that students who were instructed with rōmaji only would learn more efficiently in other subjects (such as mathematics and science) than those who had to undergo conventional education through learning kanji and kana (Unger 1996).

Along with science, technology is another factor that should not be underestimated. Before computers and word-processors became popular, typewriters were the most popular technological means by which written scripts could be reproduced without handwriting. Most advocates of Romanization on both sides could only imagine the future of their language through this lens, and hence it was no surprise that they converged to find that Romanization was the best solution for typing. Although typewriters for Chinese characters and kana were also developed, they were considered too bulky, clumsy and very difficult to use. What advocates of Romanization had in mind was the QWERT typewriters using Latin letters on the keyboard. This also served as an important reason as to why Romanization was regarded as a necessary precondition not only for the development of science and technology, but also for the more efficient way of dealing with commercial and economic activities (Hasegawa 1932).

Nevertheless, the development of word-processors and computers

has changed people's habit of using Chinese characters to a great extent. Since the main motive to reform Chinese characters was that Chinese characters were too difficult to learn and too time-consuming to write, the first step in language reform on both sides was to limit or simplify the use of Chinese characters. In China, it was the invention of "simplified characters" (*jiantizi*), which was considered a transitory phase towards the ultimate goal of overall Romanization; whereas in Japan, it was the promulgation of "tōyōkanji," which was intended to limit the number of kanji used in daily Japanese. However, when the development of technology has reached a point where people no longer rely on handwriting to produce these characters, the "utilities" of both simplified characters and *tōyōkanji* will seem to have dropped dramatically. In Japan, this results in the "return" of difficult kanji because these characters can be easily produced by computer/word-processors instead of hand writing. Such a result has caused different reactions. For conservatives, it indicates that previous efforts in limiting or even abolishing kanji have now proven to be unnecessary if not completely wrong. To reformers, however, the return of kanji is deemed as a backward, reactionary movement that will impede Japan's progressive pace forward in human civilization (Umesao 2004). The situation in China is subtler. Only a handful of commentators (most of whom are outside the PRC) argue that the progress in technology has proven that the PRC's previous policy of simplifying Chinese characters is wrong. However, with the ever growing popularity of simplified characters both within and outside the Chinese territories, simplified Chinese characters seem to have consolidated their legitimacy and popularity. Although there have also been a "revival" of traditional characters in the PRC, it is officially banned to use "complex characters" (*fantizi*) in the public except for some particular situations, while simplified characters can retain its orthodoxy.¹⁶

Another main reason why traditional script was found to be in need of an overall reform involved the relations between literacy and democracy. The difficulty of learning Chinese characters was blamed, by both liberalists and socialists, for low literacy rate. To reformers in

both Japan and China, Chinese characters had strong “feudalist” (as opposed to “modern”) inclinations, since it was viewed as a tool for the ruling class to maintain their domination over the lower class, who could not afford the luxury of learning Chinese characters. For liberalists, enlightened citizens equipped with the minimum qualities to participate in public affairs were essential to the building of a modern nation; if the majority of the people remained illiterate, a modern nation could hardly be formed, and democracy could hardly be exercised.¹⁷ For socialists, on the other hand, Chinese characters were no doubt a tool of domination for the ruling class. By maintaining a writing system that was difficult to learn for the ordinary people, they precluded the ruled from the opportunities of getting empowered by literacy. Conversely, if the lower class was to be liberated, then Chinese characters, an alleged tool of domination, should be abolished first.

As indicated above, Romanization movements in both Japan and China were a constitutive part of the larger project of building a modern nation. Such an intention, in turn, was a result of the transposition of the structures in political, cultural and economic fields, in which most “western nations” had proven superior. However, language is often considered the most essential element of the nation; in numerous cases, we have seen that language serves as a marker for national identity (Laitin 1992), as the consciousness of language is often intertwined with the consciousness of the nation. In both China and Japan, the consciousness of language has played an important role in shaping the imagination of the nation.¹⁸ How did supporters of the Romanization movement reconcile such a tension? How could a nation be built when its “essence” was to be overthrown, especially in cases that had long, old history of civilization such as China and Japan?

To solve such a tension, advocates of Romanization movements in both Japan and China converged to “appropriate” Latin alphabets by claiming that these alphabets were not monopolized by any (western) countries; rather, as a “common heritage of humankind” that is used internationally, these alphabets could be freely appropriated by anyone who would like to use them. When the pinyin system was officially

promulgated in 1958, an active participant in language reform went so far as to proclaim that Latin alphabets had become an “*integral part of the Chinese language*,” and that the history and the knowledge about Latin alphabets would “*naturally become part of the history of the Chinese language*” (Zhou 1961, italics added). Zhou Enlai, the Prime Minister at the time, put it more explicitly in front of the assembly of national representatives:

Latin letters cannot be said to belong to any country; rather, they are common symbols used internationally. We cannot say that the English use French letters, just as we cannot say that the French use English letters. We can only say: what the French use is French letters, while what the English use is English letters. By the same token, once we adopt Latin letters, which have been adjusted for the need of Mandarin Chinese, they have become our own Mandarin phonetic letters; they are no longer letters of the old Latin language, nor do they belong to any foreign country. (Zhou 1984)

By the same token, advocates in Japan saw Roman script as a universal script that had been widely adopted internationally. Main supporters of the Romanization movement such as Hasegawa (1932), Miyazaki (1930), and Tamaru (1914), among many others, maintained that only Roman script can help to build a bridge for better communication between Japanese and other foreign languages.

Despite the similarities and commonalities discussed above, however, Romanization movements in China and Japan differed significantly in terms of strength and duration. To begin with, the Romanization movement in China emerged a little bit later than its counterpart in Japan, but its dynamism appeared to be much stronger. Two factors may account for such a difference. The first lies in the language itself. The basic creed of the Romanization movement was that phonography was superior to logography; therefore, traditional Chinese script, which was logography in the main, should be transformed into phonography. In Japan, however, phonography had

already existed in the form of kana. That is to say, even if the entire writing system has to be transformed into a purely phonographic one, there is kana that can serve the purpose. In such circumstances, the dynamism of the Romanization movement in Japan was offset to a considerable extent by the supporters of *kanamoji* (kana script). In China, in contrast, no such alternatives had existed by the time when the Romanization movement emerged. Although there were also a good number of newly invented forms of phonographs that were meant to replace Chinese characters, they were as “fresh” (if not “exotic”) as roman script. Thus advocates of the latter maintained that, now that Chinese characters had to be transformed anyway, it would be better to adopt a “universal” one—which was commensurable with other countries—than to invent a new system that could be circulated only within the Chinese speaking population.

The second reason for the difference of strength between two Romanization movements lies in different paths of nationalism in the two countries. Although nationalism in both Japan and China rose as a response to the intrusion of Western powers, their paths of building a modern nation-state have been quite different. While Japan had successfully turned itself into a modern nation by the end of the 19th century, China was still jolting badly on its way to modernization. Chinese nationalism since the 19th century has been strongly associated with failures and humiliations; thus nationalism in both cultural and political fields eventually led to what Lin Yusheng (1979) has called “totalistic iconoclasm.” Under such circumstances, the resentment against traditional culture—the Chinese language included—was prevailing and outrageous. When it comes to the evaluation of the traditional writing system, advocates of Romanization launched more ferocious attacks on Chinese characters than their Japanese counterparts did. For instance, Lu Xun, a renowned writer and a leading figure in the new cultural movement, saw Chinese characters as the “tuberculosis of the Chinese civilization” in which “all germs were hiding insides.” Qu Qiubai, one of the founders of the *Beifanghua ladinghua xinwenzi yundong*, stated: “Chinese characters are the dirtiest, the lousiest and the most disgusting latrine in the world”

(quoted in Li and Li 1994: 152). In their view, Chinese characters were almost solely responsible for the backwardness and long-time stagnation of Chinese civilization.

The Romanization movement in Japan, in contrast, was not as radical as its counterpart in China when it came to the criticism of the traditional language. However, a more radical appeal in Japan appears in the early Meiji period and after WWII, which maintain that the Japanese language had to be abolished all at once, to be replaced by either English or other European languages such as French. Such proposals might have affinities, more or less, with a kind of mentality prevailing at the time—a mentality that saw Japan as an advanced nation superior to their Asian neighbors, epitomized in Fukuzawa Yukichi's famous slogan of "Leaving Asia, Joining Europe."

Another tricky factor in Japan's anti-traditionalism was its changing relations with China. As is widely known, both kanji and kana originate from Chinese characters imported from China since ancient times. Before Japan established contacts with the modern West, China had been the "upper center" from which Japan imported numerous things for emulation, Chinese characters being one of them. In fact, literacy in Chinese characters was an important cultural capital through which Japanese elites and warriors distinguished themselves from ordinary people. However, after the Meiji Restoration, the model for emulation switched from China to the West.¹⁹ The traditional was considered "inferior" to the modern (West). What is worse, China did not fare as well as Japan did when it was faced by the challenges from Western powers—in fact, it was even beaten by Japan during the crucial Sino-Japanese war in 1894. There was a landslide change in Japan's perception of China: in the "pre-modern" past, China was an upper center that Japan tried to emulate, whereas in the modern era, China was proven inferior—inferior not only to the West, but to Japan itself. In such a context, preserving the use of kanji and kana implied the preservation of inferior elements from a "backward" nation (namely, China).

The second difference between Japan and China lies in the persistence of the movement. After experiencing some major

difficulties and critiques during its second reform of simplified Chinese, the PRC abandoned the ultimate goal of transforming the Chinese writing system into a Romanized one. Moreover, with its rising political and particularly economic influence, “learning Chinese” has become a global fad nowadays. The writing system of Chinese characters is now being praised for bearing positive values of a distinctive culture, while the pinyin system is only used as a tool of transliteration. The Romanization movement in China can be said to be dead. We will get to this point in a later section.

In Japan, the situation is similar but, again, with significant differences. The value of the Japanese language has been reaffirmed since the 1970s with the boom in learning Japanese by foreigners, but the Romanization movement has not been completely extinguished. Although it has become marginalized to a great extent, the Romanization movement is still kept alive in contemporary Japan. Unlike Chinese, the writing system of Japanese is a mix of logographs and phonographs, which causes confusions from time to time even to native speakers. Thus, even until today, advocates of Romanization movements believe that the persistent use of kanji and kana is a “tragedy” for the Japanese language (Umesao 2004: 196). The Nihon Rōmajikai, relocated in Kyoto, is still quite active in promoting Rōmaji in Japan. The current President of Nihon Rōmajikai is Umesao Tadao, an internationally renowned ethnologist who has had considerable impact on Japanese society through many of his bestsellers. In his recent book, titled “The Future of the Japanese Language,” Umesao (2004) is nonetheless convinced that, in order to achieve a higher level of civilization, the Japanese language has to move towards the Romanized system. As with his precursors, Umesao argues that the Roman script has become the “common wealth” of humankind. Its “ownership” is no longer monopolized by the West; rather, it now belongs to all people around the world.

Why Roman Script?: Analysis on the Global/International Level

The answers to the question “why people considered Roman script superior to traditional script” should be sought not only on the national/local level, but also on the international/global level. It is all too easy for us today to point out the naivety of those reformers who regarded Latin alphabets as superior to other forms (Chinese or Japanese alike) of script. However, it was a prevailing attitude of the time when the Romanization movement was taking place. Indeed, from the 18th century on, there was a widespread prejudice against logograms in favor of phonograms among the Enlightenment philosophers. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who regarded alphabetic writing as representative of the highest stage of the development of civilization, maintained that Roman script was the best writing system in the world (Rousseau 1966). In a similar vein, Hegel stated that “alphabetic script is in itself and for itself the most intelligent” (quoted in Derrida 1976: 3). Such a logocentrism or phonocentrism was the dominant view at that time. Even Christian missionaries who introduced Roman script overseas had a strong logocentric view against other writing systems. A missionary who helped to create a system of Romanization in 19th century China once commented that “Roman script is not merely a pitiful substitute for written languages for those who did not know how to do better; rather, it should be seen as the best contribution that can help each and every nation to develop science and to learn the experiences from the West” (Ni 1948: 13).

One of the reasons why advocates of the Romanization movement regarded Roman script as superior or desirable is that it had become a universal writing system being used worldwide. However, such universality should not be taken for granted; rather, we should take a step back to investigate how this universality has been achieved. As Lydia Liu has warned us, “universality is neither true nor false, but any intellectual claim to it should be rigorously examined in the light of its own linguistic specificity and sources of authority” (Liu 1995: 7). In this regard, the role of Christian missionaries in universalizing Roman

script cannot be overemphasized. In both Japan and China, as with many other cases, Roman script was first introduced to them by Christian missionaries, who were also the pioneers in Romanizing the Japanese and Chinese languages into Latin alphabets. Vietnam, the only case in the “Chinese character cultural circle” that has successfully Romanized their writing system, even directly adopts *Quoc Ngu*, a Romanized form of Vietnamese developed by missionaries, as their standard script.²⁰ Since the early twentieth century, Roman script has been widely adopted in various countries insofar as language reform—to be sure, the standardization and modernization of language as part of the nation-building project—was concerned. For instance, Albania, Romania, parts of Yugoslavia (Croatia) as well as parts of the Soviet Union adopted Latin alphabets as the standard written script for their language. Outside Europe, Turkey also adopted Roman script to replace the existing Arabic one. As these cases indicate, by the early twentieth century, Roman script had gained the status of universality in the linguistic field on the international level. Even the artificial Esperanto, which was created ad hoc to become the universal language for people all over the world, used Roman script as its written form.

Indeed, during the second half of the 19th century when organizations for international communication (such as Universal Postal Union and International Telecommunication Union) were formed, Roman script was prescribed as the standard to be used internationally (Meyer et al. 1987). When the League of Nations was formed after WWI, problems concerning Romanization became an issue to be discussed in several rounds of meetings. Representatives from Japan and China, among others, collectively advanced the proposal titled “Universal Adoption of Roman Characters.” The process took place at a time when the modern world polity was taking shape through vast efforts to institutionalize what sociologist John Meyer and his colleagues have called “world culture” on the global/international level (Boli and Thomas 1999). Such a “world culture” has been constructed with the worldwide spread of science and technology which necessitated standardization, rationalization and (a

certain level of) commensurability across cultural or national boundaries. Roman script under such circumstances emerged as a “common currency” or the “universal tokens of exchange” to be used for various linguist communities.

One should bear in mind, however, that the value of Roman script is not intrinsic to itself; rather, its value stems from the symbolic power that is, in turn, transposed by capital and power from other fields. Here, Bourdieu’s concept of the convertibility of different forms of capital is of particular relevance. As Bourdieu puts it explicitly: “Symbolic power, a subordinate power, is a transformed, i.e. misrecognizable, transfigured and legitimated form of the other forms of power (Bourdieu 1991: 170). As a system of symbols, Roman script also possesses symbolic power that, in fact, is a power of misrecognition, while symbolic capital endowed to Roman script owes its sources to other forms of capital, such as political and economic ones. Conversely, since symbolic power is a power of misrecognition that corresponds to the structures in other fields through the conversion of different forms of capital, it can be expected that, once the structure in other fields—for instance, political and economic ones—has changed, symbolic power of certain language or script might be changed as well. This is particularly true in the two cases.

At first, the most widely accepted Romanization standards used in both languages were originally developed by agents of different nature. In the Chinese case, the ultimate goal of replacing a traditional script with a Roman one was not achieved, but the pinyin system developed by the PRC has replaced the pre-existing Wade-Giles system to become an “international standard,” so to speak, of transliterating Chinese characters nowadays. As a result, “Peking” is no longer “Peking” but has become “Beijing,” and the great leader of the CCP ceases to be “Mao Tse-tung” but becomes “Mao Zedong.” Westerners who are used to Roman script feel somehow alienated when they have to learn new rules of pronunciation in Chinese names such as “Deng Xiaoping,” “Qian Qichen” or “Shenzhen.” When Zhou Enlai, along with other language reformers in the PRC, “appropriated” Roman script by claiming that, with the promulgation of the *Hanyu pinyin fang’an*,

Latin letters had become “an integral part of the Chinese language,” they were not exaggerating. Indeed, the claim is more “practical” than symbolic in that conventional users of Roman script in the West have to adjust their linguistic habitus and practice to a certain extent when faced with pinyin.

In contrast, the later development in the Japanese case has been quite different. The *Kunreishiki* promulgated by the Japanese government has not replaced the preexisting Hepburn style to become an international standard, nor has it achieved a hegemonic status to change the linguist habitus of other users of Roman script. Rather, the Hepburn style—a system deliberately customized for English speakers in general and Americans in particular—remains quite popular today, and even station names and street signs in Japan nowadays use the Hepburn style instead of the *Kunreishiki*. One easy—perhaps the most convenient—way of explanation is to attribute it to the legacy of American Occupation after WWII. But this is perhaps only a partial explanation. We should not forget that pinyin was not developed until 1958, by which time the Wade-Giles system had gained wide popularity both within and outside China. The PRC was determined to develop its own system even though the cost was expected to be high. The PRC’s determination to popularize pinyin was demonstrated in its efforts to promote pinyin to become the standard for transliterating Chinese in such international organizations as the United Nation and the International Organization for Standardization. The United Nations prescribed that pinyin should be the standard for transliterating Chinese characters in 1977. Later on in 1982, International Organization of Standardization also adopted pinyin as the international standard of Romanized Chinese. In addition, the establishment of *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (HKS)—the state-certificated test for Chinese language proficiency, sometimes referred to as the Chinese version of TOEFL—has also helped to popularize the use of pinyin outside the PRC.²¹

On the other hand, it has only taken a couple of decades for the evaluation of traditional writing system—along with the evaluation of the language itself—to be completely reversed. This, as can be

expected by Bourdieu's theory, has a lot to do with the changing status of Japan and China, respectively, in the international/global arena. There has been a boom of learning Japanese by foreigners since the 1970s when Japan became a leading economic power in the world. By the same token, Mandarin Chinese has been experiencing a similar boom in the recent years for the very same reason: China is becoming a rising power, both politically and economically, in the region and on the global stage. In today's China, it can be asserted that nobody would bother to advocate the overall Romanization of the Chinese language; quite the opposite, it is now the value of the Chinese language—including its written forms, of course—that is being emphasized and preserved.²² In Japan, although the Romanization movement is still quite alive, the dominating opinion nowadays is that the Japanese language is beautiful and should be preserved. Kanji and kana are no longer deemed a "vice" but a "virtue," as witnessed by the proliferating discourse of "beautiful Japanese" (*utsukushii nihongo*) since the 1980s. The confidence in the Japanese language is reflected in a widely observed trend. In the past, people in Japan were afraid of talking to foreigners because they thought that their English was not good enough. However, more and more people in Japan now take it for granted that foreigners in Japan ought to speak Japanese. In some circumstances, people go far enough to question why those foreigners are still unable to speak Japanese if the latter have resided in Japan for a considerable period of time. The symbolic power of language, as Bourdieu has acutely pointed out, is indeed a "misrecognized" one, and such "misrecognition" owes its sources to the conversion of political and/or economic capital that the nation has earned, not on the national/domestic level, but on the international/global level.

Concluding Remarks: Rethinking the Universalizing Process of Modernity

In the above, I have analyzed how Romanization movements emerged as part of the nation-building project in Japan and China, respectively, insofar as language reform was concerned.

Anti-traditionalism and totalistic iconoclasm were the background against which the Romanization movement emerged. I have analyzed how advocates in both Japan and China reconciled the tensions between “national essence” and “foreign form” by appropriating Roman script as a “universal heritage of human kind.” On the international level, the construction of world polity through institutionalized world culture has helped to establish the universality of Roman script. Such a translingual practice on the international level, however, has been shaped by political and economic power through the conversion of different forms of capital in different fields. In the contemporary era, the value of traditional script of Japanese and Chinese is reaffirmed, as Japan and China (re)gained their confidence in their own languages even as they earned increasing power/capital in the political and economic fields on the international level.

Such a shift is, indeed, a reflection of the change in the translingual field/translingual capital/translingual habitus triad, and we may examine this by starting with the relations between literacy, efficiency and nation-building.²³ As I have pointed out in the previous section, among the motives of the Romanization movement, literacy and efficiency (under the veil of scientific knowledge) were two major concerns. Advocates of the Romanization movement were convinced that Roman script was the best, if not the only, writing system that could help to eliminate illiteracy and elevate efficiency by way of developing science and scientific ways of doing things. Such a conviction, however, proved to be half true at best and completely false at worst. To be sure, Romanized script was used quite effectively to eliminate illiteracy and to improve learning efficiency both in China and Japan, but it also turned out that Romanization was not the only way of achieving these goals. The implementation of compulsory national education might have been one of the key factors in eliminating illiteracy. Besides, efficiency, along with the development of science and technology, did not seem to have been hampered by traditional script, as the later success in economy and technology in Japan has shown.

My major concern here is not to make a value judgment

concerning the rights or wrongs of the Romanization movement, nor am I trying to evaluate its result in terms of success and/or failure in building a modern nation through language reform. In other words, the normative question as to “whether Chinese or Japanese should be Romanized” is not the concern here, but it is the formation and transformation of (trans-)linguistic habitus that lies in the core of our inquiry. The decline of enthusiasm in Romanization in both countries does not mean that literacy and efficiency are no longer the central concern in the nation-building process; rather, it simply implies that the linguistic habitus has changed to the extent that people no longer deem the Roman script superior to other writing systems. As the current dominating ideology has been shifting to what is called “multiculturalism,” in which different cultural values and traditions should be respected and preserved, it is difference, not identity, that is championed in the contemporary era. Living in a postmodern, post-colonial time, it is all too easy for us to point out the naivety of those advocates of the Romanization movement, who seemed to have fallen victim to the ideology of modernization. Deeply convinced by the claim that Roman script is “better” and more “advanced” than Chinese/Japanese script, they also seemed to subscribe to logocentrism or phonocentrism that theorists of deconstruction such as Jacques Derrida (1976) have been bashing. History has seemed to prove to us that, to become a modern nation—or, to be sure, to be “modernized”—one need not transform a traditional script into a Roman one. Both Japan and China have attested to this point. Advocates of Romanization might insist that, had the traditional script been Romanized, the pace of modernization would have become faster.²⁴ Such a hypothetical question need not concern us here, but it is worthwhile to further examine the role Roman script has played in the configurations of modernity.

As pointed out above, attempts to Romanize traditional script had a strong intention to modernize the nation, which, in turn, constituted a part of the larger “modernity project” that aimed to advance human society to a perfection based on universal reason. However, since the “modernization theory,” along with the single concept of monolithic

modernity, has undergone severe attacks during the past few decades, it seems now fashionable to add a qualification to the concept of modernity in the recent years. Insofar as translingual practice is concerned, Lydia Liu uses the term “translated modernity,” which has been vaguely raised only once in her work, to refer to the situation in which modernity was pursued through a variety of translated terms and translation-related activities. Similarly, in his celebrated study of Manchukuo, a Japanese puppet state in northeastern China from 1932–1945, historian Prasenjit Duara brings up the notion of the “East Asian modern,” which signifies “a regional mediation of the global circulation of the practices and discourses of the modern,” while “the modern” is conceptualized as “a temporal structure centered upon a historical self-consciousness” (Duara 2003: 2, 3). Such a notion of the “East Asian modern” echoes what Gaonkar has called “alternative modernities, which, in turn, runs parallel to Charles Taylor’s advocating of a “cultural notion of modernity.” All these notions of modernity have a qualifier—East Asian, translated, alternative, cultural, etc.—which indicates that modernity, be it in the single or the plural form, have different manifestations and wear many faces. Modernity, generally understood as “an ensemble of cultural forms, social practice and institutional arrangements embodied in capitalism, industrialism, imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, rationalism, the modern state and bureaucratization, etc.,” is often equated with a universalizing process that erases differences and levels all particularities. The tasks of contemporary research, however, should be satisfied, neither with a mere description of, nor with a superficial attack on such a universalizing process. Rather, “What is at stake here is not a rejection of universalism in favor of particularism, but the need for a new type of articulation between the universal and the particular” (Gaonkar 2001: 15; Mouffe 1993: 79).

Issues surrounding Romanization may help us reexamine the universalizing process of modernity through the struggles over the commensurability or reciprocity of linguistic script, as well as the production of globally circulated tokens of exchange among different languages and societies. Although Romanization movements in both

Japan and China did not succeed in accomplishing their final goals, they have left a variety of legacies that are still shaping linguistic practice today. As a matter of fact, almost all languages have a certain form of Romanization nowadays. Roman script has literally become the common “tokens of exchange” in the modern world. Conventional wisdom in sociology tells us that no society can exist without a certain degree of institutionalization. Thus, for the society on the world level, be it called “world society,” “world polity” or “global society,” Roman script has become an institutionalized token of exchange to be circulated internationally. It was fortunate that Roman script had existed long before the nation-state was born; thus its “property right” cannot be claimed by any nation.²⁵ Nevertheless, it has left durable imprints in countless minds and is molding the linguistic practice of numerous people to varying degrees. As Unger (1996: 24) points out, “the vast majority of those who use Japanese script on computers input data in Romanization. To that extent, even though they may refuse to read data in Romanized form, they already, in a psychologically fundamental way, make use of an alphabetic representation of Japanese words and phrases.” The same can be said to be true of the Chinese case.²⁶ In some cases, moreover, on the computers where no Japanese or Chinese script is available, users are left with no choice but to use Romanized script. In some other circumstances where fast typing and prompt response is required (such as online chatting), users directly key-in Roman letters without bothering to convert them into Japanese/Chinese script.

However, one should not jump into the simple-minded conclusion and declare the universal victory of Roman script, nor is it very fruitful to see those who switch from a non-Roman writing system to the Roman one as merely “victims” of the universalism of modernity. The dynamics is far more complicated. The current study shows that modernity pursued through translingual practice involves not only translation but also transliteration, which carried a double task here. On the one hand, it aimed at an overall transformation of the writing system in terms of Romanization. To this end, neither China nor Japan has succeeded. On the other hand, it also involves the process of

popularizing Roman script as universal tokens of exchange. During this universalizing process typical of modernity, both supporters of Romanization movements in Japan and China were not simply passive recipients of a hegemonic power/knowledge apparatus. Rather, they played active roles not only in Romanizing their own writing system on the national level, but also in promoting Roman script as universal tokens of exchange on the international level. Moreover, during such a process, they were even able to turn the table around by making people in other nations change their linguist practice at a rather high cost.²⁷ For instance, after the pinyin system was successfully institutionalized and accepted as an international standard for transliterating Mandarin Chinese, numerous libraries around the world have endowed enormous costs—both pecuniary and non-pecuniary—to change their cataloging systems. What is more, the popularization of pinyin in the Western media has changed the linguistic habitus and practice of using Roman script to the extent that foreigners have to learn how to pronounce letters such as “zh,” “q,” “x,” and “c” in Chinese names—all of these symbols in the pinyin system require the learning of new rules of pronunciation that are alien to the conventional users of Roman script in Europe and America—places where Roman script originated and/or has been used for hundreds of years. In some other cases, pinyin has become another “hegemonic apparatus” of a certain kind that Mandarin speakers in other localities intend to resist.²⁸ Although such phenomena did not take place in the Japanese case, the Nippon style and the Kunrei style, developed by Dr. Tanakadate and the Japanese government respectively, have been popularized to become two alternative transliteration systems to the Hepburn style originally developed by a foreign agent. The point that I want to emphasize here is not the often-raised dichotomies between domination and resistance, colonization and de-colonization, or any other pairs of such kinds. What I would like to emphasize here is that, in order to better understand the universalizing process of modernity, in which actors in the non-Western world were neither passive recipients nor self-colonizers, we need to analyze the transpositions and the conversions of capital in different fields as shown in Table 1. Moreover,

such an analysis should be done not only on the national level, but also on the international one.²⁹ Struggles between universalism and particularism are indeed a perennial theme of modernity, but even particularisms have the problem of commensurability among themselves. Issues surrounding Romanization can help us reflect upon the universalizing process of modernity in which how commensurability has been sought, practiced, and fought for, as the struggles over commensurability and reciprocity remain an unsettled issue that we are still wrestling with in our daily life.

NOTES

¹ A problematic word that signifies various implications to different audiences, “globalization” in this paper is used merely as a loose term to refer to the increasing interactions and interconnectedness of different cultures and localities around the globe.

² As one can expect, the “boundary” of a language can be as arbitrary as that of the nation, as the extent of constructiveness of the former is by no means less than the latter. I shall briefly discuss the relations between language and nation-building in a later section.

³ The rising interests in “translingual practice” can be seen in the emerging literature on what is known as “translation studies.” See, for example, Riccardi (2002), Venuti (2000), Niranjana (1992), among many others.

⁴ Literature in this regard has been abundant in Japanese, Chinese and English sources. See, for instance, Chen (1999), DeFrancis (1950), Fei (1997), Gottlieb (1995), Kurashima (2002), Watabe (1995), and Hirai (1998).

⁵ It has to be noted that the term “global village,” a fashionable cliché nowadays, was first brought up by Marshall McLuhan as a metaphorical image, while “world society” is a concept raised by a group of sociologists—John Meyer and his colleagues in particular, known for their institutionalist approach to the study of society—with more analytical rigor. I shall return to the concept of “world society” in a later section, as the current study also takes an institutionalist approach as those scholars do.

⁶ See Wang (2001).

⁷ To be sure, since National Culture, with capital “C,” is always

constructed to encompass all elements that can be said “cultural” (such as art, literature, music, language, and so on), the “cultural field” schematized in Table 1 can be seen as an umbrella concept that includes a number of sub-fields, the linguistic field being one of them.

⁸ For those who are not satisfied with the brief historical sketch provided here, there are a number of studies for further reference, which deal with the complexities of the problem in much fuller details. For the Romanization problem in Japan, see, for instance, Unger (1996), Kayashima (2000). Not all but most studies on the thoroughly investigated “national language—national script problem” (*kokugo kokuji montai*) have referred to the Romanization movement to varying degrees (for instance, Gottlieb 1995). For that on the Chinese side, see De Francis (1950), Wang (2002, 2004a, 2004b).

⁹ The so-called “*kokugo kokuji montai*” has become a thorny problem since the second half of the 19th century in Japan, and even today there are ongoing debates surrounding what kind of Japanese should be suitable or desirable. For an overview, see Hirai (1998), Yasuda (2003), Watabe (1995), among many others.

¹⁰ In terms of radicalism, some went farther than Romanization movement as to advocate using English (or other European languages such as French) as the national language of Japan. Mori Arinori, for instance, was one of the most famous proponents who suggested using English as Japan’s national language. Interesting though it may seem, it lies outside the scope of the current study, as its aim was to replace the traditional language with an existing one instead of making innovative efforts to reform the old language. Such a kind of radicalism can also be found in China, as Qian Xuantong also once suggested adopting Esperanto to replace Chinese. However, Qian’s appeal did not seem to have attracted as much attention as Mori Arinori did.

¹¹ However, some scholars may argue that viewing Chinese as constituted merely by ideography is a myth. Rather, there are also phonetic elements in Chinese characters. See DeFrancis (1990).

¹² The situation on the Chinese side is further complicated by its wide variety of dialects. Since Romanization transcribes the sound rather than the meaning of the characters, it varies with dialects since the same character may be pronounced differently in different dialects. This involves another complicated issue that will not be discussed here.

¹³To be sure, the Romanization movement in Japan was also intertwined with the politics between liberalists and socialists, although sometimes people changed their stances and the association between certain schools of Romanization with political factions might be merely superficial and even false. For more detailed analysis, see Kayashima (2000: 192–198), Hirai (1998: 312–318), Yasuda (2003: 193–199).

¹⁴For a more detailed account of the development of *Hanyu pinyin fang'an*, see Wang (2004b).

¹⁵Such a view is shared by almost all advocates of Romanization movement in both Japan and China. For instance, see Tanakadate (1938), Hasegawa (1932), Hirai (1951), Miyazaki (1930), Tamaru (1914), and Umesao (2004).

¹⁶There is also cultural politics regarding the naming of traditional Chinese characters. In the PRC, traditional characters are referred to as *fantizi* (complex characters), as opposed to *jiantizi* (simplified characters). However, in the recent years, some people in Taiwan maintain that traditional characters should be referred to, not as *fantizi*, but as *zhengtizi* (orthodox characters), which implies that traditional characters represent the “orthodoxy” of Chinese culture. Under the leadership of Mayor Ma Ying-jiou, it has become an official policy of the Taipei City to change all the references to *fantizi* into *zhengtizi*.

¹⁷To be sure, a necessary condition for the making of a nation is not democracy, but a literate mass, which will constitute the citizens of the modern state. See Gellner (1983).

¹⁸Japan in particular has developed a strong “sense of national language” (*kokugo ishiki*) during the modern era. *Kokugo ishiki* has been playing an important role not only in the building of a modern nation, but also in the expansion of Japanese colonialism before and during WWII. For more detailed analyses, see Lee (1996), Yasuda (1998, 2003, 2004), Komori (2000), and Tani (2000).

¹⁹To be more precise, China’s status as a leading center had declined long before Japan’s contact with the West. The overturn of the Ming Dynasty by the Qing Dynasty was viewed by many Japanese intellectuals as the sign of the decline of China. Indeed, how China was viewed by the Japanese in the pre-modern and modern eras is a complicated issue that has been dealt with in a good number of previous studies. See, for instance, Nomura (1981).

²⁰Romanization of Vietnamese can serve as an ideal contrast to the two cases we are examining here. For a brief analysis see Bianco (2001).

²¹The “spill-over” effect of pinyin’s hegemony outside the PRC is that it created a difficult situation for people in Taiwan when they endeavored to develop their own system of transliteration. For further discussions, see Wang (2004a).

²²However, the issue is complicated by the simplified characters that were artificially invented and implemented by the Chinese government after 1949. If one is to speak of the “traditional Chinese language,” then simplified Chinese characters can hardly stand in the line because it was a rather recent invention during the modern era.

²³I am grateful to a reviewer who brings this issue up, which helps me sharpen and clarify my argument here.

²⁴For instance, both Unger (1996) and Umesao (2004) have implied such a point of view.

²⁵The importance of problems concerning “property right” of certain cultural objects or practice should not be underestimated. It has indeed become a battlefield for national culture even in the so-called global era. For instance, when South Korea successfully registered its traditional Gangneung Danoje Festival with the UNESCO as the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, it ignited bitter reactions from people in China because the latter regarded the festival as originating from the Duanwu Festival (also known as the Dragon Boat Festival) in China. They insisted that it should be China, rather than Korea, that owned the “property right” to register the Festival with UNESCO. When it comes to Chinese characters, similar problems occur. Although it is commonly acknowledged that Chinese characters originate from China, it is also argued that Japan has made significant contributions to the enrichment of Chinese characters. In addition to a couple of Japanese-made characters (called “*kokuji*” in Japanese, which are neither used by nor pronounceable for the Chinese people), Japanese has enriched the stock of modern Chinese vocabulary since the late 19th century, as Chinese intellectuals at the time drew heavily on Japanese terms which, mostly consisting of two Chinese characters, were created by Japanese intellectuals to translate new, Western (hence modern) concepts and terms. See Liu (1995).

²⁶There exist some exceptions, of course. For instance, the majority in

Taiwan, who also speak Mandarin Chinese as well, do not use pinyin when they input Chinese characters on computers. Instead, they use the Mandarin Phonetic Signs, a system developed in the 1920s and later brought to Taiwan by the KMT regime, or other input methods which were developed in a manner to decompose Chinese characters into different logographic parts. In these latter types of input methods, phonetic signs such as Roman script play little or no role.

²⁷The cost was so high that many previous Wade-Giles users refused to switch to the pinyin system until it was considered inevitable. For example, it was not until 1999, thirty years after the birth of pinyin, that the US Library of Congress started switching their catalogue to the pinyin system.

²⁸Such is the case in Taiwan. See Wang (2004a) for further analysis.

²⁹It has to be admitted that, because of the limitations in scope and length, the current study has not carried out such an analysis at full length. For a more comprehensive analysis, see Wang (2004b).

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