

makes it very easy for one to do so. *Remapping the Sinophone* is a substantial contribution to the fields of Chinese language film history, Sinophone studies, postcolonial studies, and Cold War studies. If you are interested in any of these areas, you will undoubtedly find something of interest to you in this book.

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Chinese Grammatology: Script Revolution and Literary Modernity, 1916-1958, by Yurou Zhong. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. Pp. 296. \$105.00 (hardcover), \$35.00 (paperback); \$34.99 (ebook).

While Chinese characters have evolved in the past several millennia with changes primarily occurring within its own system, the most radical changes took place about one century ago when China encountered the West and modernity, and when the sinographic writing system itself was challenged by the phonetic, especially Roman-Latin alphabetic, writing systems. Those familiar topics associated with script reform in modern China would include the turn-of-the-century phonetic script reform, the national language movement, the *baihua* 白話 vernacular movement, Gwoyeu Romatzyh (GR), Latinxua Sin Wenz (Latinized New Writing), simplification of Chinese characters, and pinyin romanization. Western scholars usually refer to John DeFrancis' works, especially DeFrancis (1950) and (1984), as well as Ramsey (1987) for detailed and comprehensive accounts of that period of history. Only in recent years have scholars in modern and contemporary Chinese literature and modern Chinese history shown growing interest in language, dialect, and script issues, and have produced an increasing number of interdisciplinary and intellectually informed book-length works in both English and Chinese. As an outstanding, exemplary work in this new field, Yurou Zhong's 2019 book breaks new ground with a new theoretical framework and a rich trove of research and resources, and provides an in-depth, insightful, and refreshing study of the radical script crisis that the Chinese writing experienced in the first half of the twentieth-century.

Different from most previous scholarship that often interprets language reform in modern China in the context of nationalism, Zhong's book charts out a new paradigm by examining the Chinese encounter with a modern, global phenomenon of phonocentrism, which "systematically privileges speech over writing" and is "deeply rooted in Western metaphysics" (5). In the book's introduction, Zhong identifies the two bookends of the Chinese script revolution, 1916 and 1958, as two global moments: "the first global moment of 1916 witnessed phonocentric power, colonial expansion, and the rise of linguistics," and "the second global moment of 1958 beckoned grammatological critique, anticolonial politics, and the return of the science of writing" (15). From this perspective, what happened in China was actually an integral part of

the global dominance of phonocentrism, as similar national script reforms took place in many parts of the world from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, such as “of the Egyptian Arabic script, the Ottoman Turkish Arabic-Persian script, the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, the Vietnamese *chữ nôm*, and the Japanese kana system” (6). In a similar vein, the eventual re-confirmation of a Chinese national form based on characters in the late 1950s can be viewed “as an antiethnocentric ethnocentrism” (8), which again corresponded to a global move toward “decolonization, anti-imperialism, and international solidarity in the immediate wake of World War II” (7). Moreover, the global trend of phonocentrism, which views speech as primary and originary and writing as secondary and supplementary, seems to be localized in China as a “script revolution,” which highlights a radical, collective, and conscious attempt to eradicate and replace the Chinese characters with alphabetic writings, while a “script reform” does not. With this yardstick, the Late-Qing phonetic script movement and even the 1913 “national phonetic alphabet” (*zhuyin fuhao* 注音符號) are not qualified as a revolution, because these phoneticization schemes didn’t “challenge[d] the dominance of characters” (11) and only served as an auxiliary phonetic system for character learning. Taking “script revolution” as “a basic question and a working method” (3), Zhong’s book creates a new compelling delineation of periodization on this topic, as previous scholarly and official accounts either generally use “reform” or use the terms “reform” and “revolution” interchangeably.

With a global paradigm and a comparative methodology, Zhong, in the ensuing chapters, examines the “phonocentric antinomies” (3), the positive and negative forces that dialectically worked in each stage (provenance, transmutation, and containment) of the Chinese script revolution, as well as its intersection and intertangling with the May Fourth *baihua* discourse and literary revolution, the literacy program for Chinese labors in World War I France, the new mass education movement during the anti-Japanese war period, and other significant cultural, social, and political events in the “short twentieth century” (3).

In Chapter One on Yuenren Chao and the Chinese romanization movement in the 1920s, Zhong makes an incisive argument that Chao’s GR system, especially with its embedded tonal spelling, not only marked China’s phonocentric turn and enabled China’s membership into the international community, but also constituted the Chinese bid for “both scientific universality and unique Chinese” by spelling a tonal language (46). Zhong highlights the collaboration and the implicit competition between Chao and the Swedish linguist Bernhard Karlgren, with a detailed analysis of a rarely studied letter from Karlgren to Chao in 1925. Zhong also discovered and discussed a fascinating drama score that Chao “composed” in 1929, *The Last Five Minutes*, in which Chao treated the Chinese language as music and innovatively represented the stage lines in musical scores. However, no matter how meticulously, scientifically, and precisely this writing attempted to transcribe speech sound, it could not compete with the sound spectrograph machine, the most advanced technology to visualize sound at that time, which thus exposed the limits of phonetic writing, and ultimately any human writing.

Just as Zhong argues, “the pursuit of phonocentrism eventually and unwittingly brought about the bankruptcy of alphabetic universalism” (28).

Chapter Two moves to Qu Qiubai and the Chinese Latinization movement in the 1930s. Unlike the transnational alliance between Chao and Karlgren, the Sino-Soviet collaboration between Qu and Kolokolov was friendlier and more productive. With a concerted effort, they created a new system, Latinxua Sin Wenz, for the Chinese immigrants in the Soviet Union. Zhong also provides a highly informative and concise, yet richly annotated account of the Soviet Latinization movement, which shared a striking similarity with the ensuing movement in China, both viewing language and script as class-based and politically and ideologically charged. Although this movement produced a considerable archive of Latinized materials, Zhong points out that they were “conceived less as literary creations than as literacy aids” (74). Moreover, although the phonetic writing was envisioned by Qu and other Latinxua advocates to have democratizing, revolutionizing, and liberating potential to empower the otherwise voiceless proletarian class, with a close reading of Xu Dishan’s novella “Yuguan” 玉棺, Zhong concludes that the Fujian Bible woman’s native dialect was never phoneticized and represented as promised in the so-called “third revolutionary literature.” Therefore, the subalterns still cannot speak.

Asking the question “Can Subaltern Workers Write?”, Chapter Three goes back to WWI and focuses on the first modern Chinese literacy program, which was primarily organized by James Yen for illiterate Chinese laborers in France. Based on invaluable primary sources from her painstaking archival research, Zhong scrutinizes the hybrid, eclectic *baihua* writing style employed essentially by the intellectuals and the laborers alike, although Yen rather characterized this literary language with three other terms: *putonghua* 普通話, *guanhua* 官話, and *putong guanhua* 普通官話. While the program was rooted in character literacy and the writings by both Yen and the laborers are in characters, Zhong makes a strong connection with the script revolution, or rather, its limit. She argues trenchantly that “as *baihua* channels phonocentric imagination of pure orality without actually delivering the unification of speech and writing, it also constitutes an effective transmutation of the script revolution, which legitimizes its roots in characters and promises its growth into an alphabetic future” (114). In this way, the rare piece of an actual laborer’s writing in 1919 is also legitimized to demonstrate that subaltern workers not only can write, but also can think critically, thus “undercutting the enlightenment agenda” (122).

Chapter Four continues to ponder the term *baihua*, and this time compares it with another alternative term *yutiwen* 語體文. Zhong points out that *yutiwen* (“colloquialized written language”) is technically more accurate to describe actual modern Chinese writing, which is based on characters and “a compromise between the literary and the colloquial” (145), but this term exposes “the mutual exclusivity between characters and the Roman-Latin alphabet” (133). By contrast, using a term literally for speech, *baihua* (“plain speech”), to refer to the new written language is a smart strategy. As Zhong incisively argues, “holding the back door open for phonocentrism, the term *baihua*

enabled the coexistence of script and literary revolutions while promising the future domination of speech over writing" (133). Furthermore, at moments of national crisis, Latinxua advocates including Tao Xingzhi, Chen Heqin, and Ye Shengtao consciously conflated language and script and even "willingly composed and promoted *yutiwen* literature as long as it was in conformity with the ideals of Latinization and the New Mass Education Movement" (140). Paying special attention to language and script issues, Zhong renders a new reading of Ye's *Ni Huanzhi* 倪煥之 from the perspective of writing, and gives a detailed analysis of Ye's co-authored novel *Wenxin* 文心, written in and about *yutiwen*, to demonstrate the convergence of Latinization, national salvation, and mass education.

The final Chapter Five moves to the beginning years of the PRC during the socialist fever of script reform, and explores how grammatical critique could be formulated within the phonocentric regime. A case in point is Tang Lan 唐蘭 and his "new ideophonographs" (*xin xingshengzi*) 新形聲字 proposal, which are featured on the cover of this book. Defining the nature of Chinese writing as ideophonography, Tang proposed to further develop the phonetic properties of Chinese characters and to reform the script internally towards the phonographic end. Zhong regards Tang's theory and experiment of "alphabetization of characters" (*hanzi pinyinhua* 漢字拼音化) significant, which "redefined the alphabetization" (169) and questioned the "monopoly of the Roman-Latin alphabet" (170). Despite his stance in favor of pinyin, Tang dialectically voiced out his critique of phonocentrism and reclaimed the disciplinary independence of *wenzixue* 文字學, which Zhong defines as the "emergence of Chinese grammarology," one decade earlier than Derrida's deconstruction of logocentrism. Critically engaging with Derrida's *Of Grammarology* and Rousseau's uneasy treatment of ideophonographs, Zhong theorizes the notion of ideophonography in Western metaphysics, particularly its double convention as "a mixture of signifier and signified" (184), and explicates how an ideophonographic writing like Chinese characters can represent a different grammatical imagination where "phonetic surplus" and "grammatological surplus" could co-exist (188).

To a certain degree, the last chapter best corresponds to the main title of this book. In both the introduction and this chapter, Zhong specifies that the Chinese grammarology emerged in 1958, which is marked not only by Zhou Enlai's speech "Current Tasks of Reforming the Written Language" in 1958 but also by Tang Lan's series of articles around 1958, in which he advocated an alternative and internal solution to alphabetization based on characters. It would be worthwhile to explore the earlier character-format proposals in more detail. Zhong mentioned in passing on page 179 that Tang experimented with character-cum-alphabet and new ideophonograph ideas earlier in 1934 in his *An Introduction to Paleography*. She also mentioned that Du Dingyou 杜定友 submitted a proposal, which was included in the same pinyin compilation with Tang (239, n. 12). As a matter of fact, Du considered a very similar proposal to Tang's 1952 one, called "Chinese new ideo-phonetic alphabets" (*Zhongguo xinti xingsheng zimu* 中國新體形聲字母) in 1932, highlighting the essential, ideo-

phonographic nature of Chinese writing.¹³ So the Chinese intellectuals and elites had started at least from the 1930s to seek a new national form within the Chinese writing itself and to challenge the Western ethnocentrism associated with Roman-Latin alphabets. Moreover, in view of the fact that the May Fourth *baihua* discourse, which Zhong views as “perhaps [the] more lasting transmutation of the script revolution” in Chapter Three (101), predated or at least coincided with the provenance of the script revolution in Chapter One, whether the Chinese grammatology may emerge earlier or be concurrent with China’s involvement with phonocentrism from the very beginning is a question to be answered by future research.

Zhong’s arguments throughout the book are powerful, sophisticated, and critically astute. I spotted several minor issues related to dialect and language. In Chapter Two, Zhong states that Qu Qiubai’s “Draft for the New Chinese Script (1932) chose to transcribe the common speech of *putonghua*, which was based on the Beijing dialect but inclusive of southern dialects” (73), for which she did not provide a reference. But according to DeFrancis, the scheme was not based “on the speech of educated people in Peking” (1984: 246), but instead based on “the Shantung dialect spoken by the Chinese in the Far Eastern Region of the Soviet Union” (1950: 99). As to Qu’s term *putonghua*, although Zhong identifies it loosely equivalent to the old national pronunciation and *lanqing guanhua* Mandarin 藍青官話 (72), it would be desirable to point out the class nature of the term. For Qu, *putonghua* was associated with the new progressive urban proletariat and working class. In this sense, the CCP’s adoption of *putonghua*, instead of *Guoyu* 國語, for the Chinese national language in the PRC is in a direct lineage from Qu’s leftist, politically-charged concept, although Zhong tries to differentiate them from the point of diversity and unity in note 20 on page 198. In addition, for note 33 on page 214, Zhong wrote “it is generally established that the Wu dialects are the oldest, followed by the Hunan dialects, Cantonese, Minnan dialect, and Hakka and Jiangxi dialects.” This may be true only in terms of population migration, as the Han people first migrated to the Wu area during the Spring and Autumn period before moving to other dialect regions. But linguistically speaking, the situations are more complicated and the wording “generally established” is not very accurate.¹⁴ Finally, on page 73, Zhong lists “Chaozhou” separately from “Minnan.” Actually, Chaozhouhua, a representative dialect of the Chaoshan region in eastern Guangdong, is a sub-dialect of Minnanhua.¹⁵

¹³ Du Dingyou, “Zhongguo xinti xingsheng zimu shangque” (A tentative proposal on Chinese new ideo-phonetic alphabets), *Xin zhonghua zazhi* (New China magazine) 新中國雜誌, vol. 2, no.3 (1932): 43-46 and no. 4 (1932): 35-42

¹⁴ The Minnan dialect preserves some Old Chinese acoustic features, and the northern Wu dialects have been much influenced by Mandarin. Some linguists argued that Min is older than most varieties of Wu. See Laurent Sagart, “Chinese dialects classified on shared innovations,” 2011, https://www.academia.edu/19534510/Chinese_dialects_classified_on_shared_innovations.

¹⁵ Yuan Jiahua 袁家驊, *Hanyu fangyan gaiyao* 漢語方言概要 (An introduction to Chinese dialects), Beijing: Yuwen chubanshe, 2001, 237.

Overall, Zhong's scholarship is impressively solid, extraordinarily rigorous, and truly interdisciplinary, weaving together linguistics, philology, history, literature, religion, and other disciplines. She has done admirably comprehensive and intensive research on major Chinese intellectuals, thinkers, and linguists, including Lu Xun, Zhao Yuanren, Qu Qiubai, Yan Yangchu, Chen Heqin, Tao Xingzhi, Ye Shengtao, Chen Mengjia, Tang Lan, and Zhou Youguang, by thoroughly reading their complete work collections (*quanji*) in multiple volumes. It is also laudable that she directly approaches the original, primary materials and develops her own analysis rather than depending too much on the secondary materials. Moreover, the notes from 195 to 248 are more than just the reference citations, but full of rich, informative, yet highly concise analyses and comments. The notes and the main text constitute an organic intertext, and the reading experience is much enriched and broadened with these valuable notes. Last but not the least, a deeply researched academic work is rarely a joy to read, unlike this book. Written in a quasi story-telling style and embellished with eloquent and refined language, the book engages readers with its many riveting biographies, stories, and history. Among others, it was delightful to learn that Zhao Yuanren, Qu Qiubai, and Zhou Youguang all came from the same Qingguo Alley in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, a phenomenon the author used to kick off the rare conversation with Zhou when he was one hundred and ten years old in 2016. I highly recommend this book to scholars and students of modern Chinese literature, history, and language, and to anyone who is interested in the cultural study of language and script.

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Writing Pirates: Vernacular Fiction and Oceans in Late Ming China, by Yuanfei Wang. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021. Pp. 226. US\$75.00 (hardcover); \$29.95 (paperback); and open access.

Conventionally speaking, most studies about maritime piracy of the past take political, economic, or social approaches to the subject. Examining piracy as a cultural phenomenon is relatively rare. While there are several studies that analyze Western piracy through the perspective of literature, Yuanfei Wang's *Writing Pirates* is the first comprehensive study in English to examine Chinese piracy in the vernacular fiction of the Ming dynasty. This book offers a new and welcome approach to our understandings of Chinese piracy, maritime Asia, and the literature of the underrepresented. The Ming period was not only a time of rampant piracy in the seas around China, but also significantly the high point of a burgeoning publishing industry of vernacular fiction that capitalized on growing public interest about pirates, oceans, and exotica. In this book the author also engages current discussions of Chinese diaspora and discourses on Sinophone culture, language, and identity.