0. Introduction

Written sources occupy a modest position within modern linguistic description. The notion that “speech is central and writing is peripheral” (Sampson 1985: 13) is a broadly accepted maxim in linguistic fieldwork. In the field of Chinese dialectology, written sources likewise lead a shadowy existence. This is due not only to the primacy of speech in linguistic methodology. Because it is commonly held that the Chinese script represents a supradialectal standard, students of Chinese writing have paid relatively little attention to sources in local Chinese languages.

Writing is more than a graphic representation of speech. The cultural and social contexts in which languages are written differ from those of unwritten languages. Writing a hitherto unwritten language presupposes new practical applications and an enhanced prestige of the language to be written. Changes in the status of a language typically occur within socio-political movements and cultural reorientation. Written languages are thus associated with symbolic values hardly ever ascribed to unwritten languages. Symbolic values associated with writing have also attracted much interest from anthropologists, historians, and social scientists. Written Taiwanese1, notably in studies by Fix (1993) and Hsiau (2000), has so far been analyzed chiefly as a social and historical phenomenon embodying Taiwan’s quest for a national identity.

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1 In Taiwan, Southern Min dialects are now collectively referred to as Taiyu, lit. ‘the language(s) of Taiwan, Taiwanese’. Although Taiyu is most widely used, the term has also been criticized as it suggests that Southern Min is the only local language of Taiwan, ignoring Hakka and Formosan languages (Hsiau 2000: 140ff.). Other terms include Hoklo (also spelled Holo; the etymology of these terms is uncertain), Taiwanese Min, and Taiwanese Hokkien. For stylistic reasons it seems reasonable to prefer the benefits of the short term Taiwanese to the political correctness of cumbersome alternatives. I will use Taiyu instead of Taiwanese only when unambiguous reference to Taiwanese as a linguistic variety is required, e.g. when Taiwanese literature, meaning literature produced in Taiwan, needs to be distinguished from Taiyu literature, i.e. literature in the Taiwanese language.
I treat written Taiwanese both as a codification of the Taiwanese language and as a socio-political phenomenon. The linguistic description focuses on the interrelation between graphic units and Taiwanese speech. For the sake of brevity, I confine this aspect to an overview of contemporary sources in written Taiwanese in the first section of this paper, followed by an inventory of employed scripts in section 2. For a linguistic analysis of scripts, I refer to Klöter (2003). In section 3, I analyze the functional distribution of Taiwanese scripts from a sociolinguistic viewpoint. Finally, in section 4, I shortly discuss ideological roots of written Taiwanese.

1. Contemporary sources of written Taiwanese

1.1 Historical background

Since the change of power from the Japanese colonial government to KMT rule in 1945, the official treatment of local Taiwanese languages has shifted from systematic oppression to toleration and, since the 1990s, modest inclusion in the school curriculum.

As Robert Cheng points out, after the withdrawal of the nationalist troops to Taiwan in 1949, to survive as the legitimate government of the whole of China, the ROC government had to maintain Mandarin as the national language. Furthermore, as Mandarin speakers were in the minority, the government had to take steps “to maintain the status of Mandarin against the natural tendency of Mandarin speakers to be assimilated into the Taiwanese majority” (1994: 361). Following these considerations, the government began severely restricting the use of local languages in public settings after the 1950s. According to Feifel, “[t]he more benign attitude which the government had shown towards Minnan Hua in the past was replaced by active hostility. From this time on schooling was conducted solely in Mandarin and the use of any other language variety was punished” (1994: 72). In 1976, new laws prohibited the use of local languages in the media (Shuanfan Huang 1993: 119).

Not surprisingly, the rigorous promotion of Mandarin impeded debates on written Taiwanese. As A-chin Hsiau points out, “postwar debates on literature […] barely addressed the linguistic issue, because the use of Mandarin was taken for granted” (2000: 74). Although this period “did witness the cultural elite’s lively interest in, and enthusiastic inquiry into, local social life and cultural resources,” such trends were “far from a ‘Taiwanese consciousness’ with explicit political implications” (p. 47).
In the 1970s, Taiwan’s political landscape changed drastically. Following its gradual international isolation, the island entered a period of political liberalization and democratization. In the same period, calls for Taiwan’s political separation from China intensified. A conception of Taiwan’s distinctiveness has meanwhile expanded beyond the political arena and it now dominates literary, linguistic, and historical discourses. It was after the arrest of leading opposition figures in the aftermath of the Kaohsiung Incident in 1979 that cultural debates discovered the Taiwaneseness of Taiwan. The Kaohsiung Incident (or “Meilidao Incident” Meilidao shibian) was an anti-government demonstration held on Human Rights Day (December 10) in 1979. In the aftermath of the protest, leading members of the opposition were sentenced to long prison terms. For an introduction to the historical events and the leading opposition politicians involved in the incident, see Geoffroy (1997: 209-216). In Hsiau’s words, after the incident “the history of Taiwanese literature was reinterpreted as a history of searching for a distinct Taiwanese national identity” (Hsiau 2000: 113).

Political decision making gradually adapted to the new intellectual and social trends. Laws and regulations prohibiting the use of local languages in public settings were gradually lifted. In November 1987, for instance, the three government-controlled television stations started to broadcast news in Taiwanese. In parliament, the use of Mandarin was taken for granted without official regulation until the late 1980s. When the legislator Zhu Gaozheng used Taiyu during a parliamentary debate in March 1987, he provoked a substantial scandal. Meanwhile, Taiwanese has become a fully accepted language of the legislature and the dominant language in electoral campaigns.

In 1993, the Interior Ministry conceded that the repressive language policy of the past had been a mistake (Shuanfan Huang 2000: 146). Since then, the “assimilationist [language] policy has been replaced with strong support for multiculturalism and official respect for, even nurturing of, aboriginal languages and other minority languages” (ibid.). Taiwan-centered political reforms were intensified after the victory of the independence-oriented Democratic Progressive Party in the presidential elections of 1996. In 2003, the DPP government announced a new school curriculum aiming to reinforce the study of local languages, including Taiyu, Hakka, and aboriginal languages (Yun-ping Chang 2003).
1.2 Taiyu literature

First attempts to standardize written Taiwanese were made during the Japanese period. These attempts never developed beyond an initial stage. One rudimental blueprint for a Taiwanese orthography evolved out of the debate of a group of young intellectuals associated with the magazine Nanyin ‘Sounds of the South’. The most active contributors of this group were Huang Shihui (1900-?) and Guo Qiusheng (1904-1980). The ideological significance of the movement is generally acknowledged. Most studies agree that the debate on language and writing marks an important ideological turning point in Taiwan’s colonial history (e.g. Fix 1993: 149).

On the other hand, it is emphasized that the proponents of the movement did not reach their goal of creating a literature in the Taiwanese vernacular. This failure is attributed to their inability to agree on a fully-fledged Taiwanese orthography (Fix 1993: 180f., Hsiau 2000: 45). It can also be argued, however, that the participants had shown a clear understanding that the creation of orthography needed a broader organizational framework than Nanyin could provide. Due to political circumstances, these suggestions were never realized.

The use of Taiwan-centered literary images and the Taiwanese language resurfaced in the nativist literature movement of the 1970s. Literary experimentation in Taiwanese was initiated by Lin Zongyuan who in turn inspired the younger poet Xiang Yang (Hsiau 2000: 136; Lin Yangmin 1996a: 19f.). Their Taiwanese dialect poems (fangyan shi) were an important input for the postwar debate on written Taiwanese. This new generation of dialect poets was originally not driven by any political motivations. However, the new theoretical debate on genuine Taiwanese literature and the establishment of a Taiwanese orthography soon became closely linked to the socio-political and cultural movement against the “Greater China” policy of the Nationalist government.

Today, the number of authors writing in Taiwanese has increased considerably. Whereas pioneering collections of prose or poetry were often published at the author’s own expense, recognized publishing houses now include various genres of dialect literature in their programs. The Taipei-based Qianwei Chubanshe (‘Vanguard Publishing House’) for instance, has regularly published series of Taiyu literature, including the Taiyu wenxue congshu ‘Anthology of Taiyu literature’ (Lin Yangmin 1992, 1996b, 1997, Robert Cheng 1990a, Tan Beng-jin 1992, Dongfang Bai 1995) and the Taiyu jingxuan wenku ‘Selected repertoire of Taiyu literature and articles’
The recognition of Taiyu literature by commercial publishers, however, has not contributed to orthographic standardization. As the author and editor of Taiyu literature Lin Yangmin points out, publishing houses do not have internal standards for the writing of Taiwanese. The choice of a script is left to the authors themselves.

Recognized and up-and-coming young writers also publish in literary journals exclusively devoted to the promotion of written Taiwanese. One of the first major journals in and about the Taiwanese language – Tai-Bun Thong-Sin ‘Taiwanese Writing Forum’ – has been published in the United States since 1991. Among major magazines currently published in Taiwan we find Ia-cing ‘Sowing seeds’ and Tai-bun bong-po ‘Casual reports on written Taiwanese’. The former was first published in 1995, the latter one year later. The editions contain announcements, short stories, poems, and historical anecdotes. These journals are usually published by local literary and language revivalist circles. According to Hsiau, twelve such organizations were founded between 1989 and 1995. These groups “were created for the purpose of reviving native languages, devising Hoklo [Taiyu] vernacular writing systems, and promoting Hoklo literature” (2000: 137). For a more comprehensive introduction to recent Taiyu literature, I refer to Zhang Chunhuang et al. (2001).

1.3 Taiwanese lexicography

For decades, the development of Taiwanese lexicography was impeded by legal restrictions on local languages. The most prominent example is the Dictionary of Southern Min by the Canadian Presbyterian missionary Bernard L.M. Embree (1984 [1973]). The publication of the dictionary was prohibited, as the government had strong objections to its use of an alphabetical orthography. Interestingly, restrictions against using romanized transcriptions were directed against Taiyu and Hakka only, and not against Mandarin (Feifel 1994: 73). In view of Mandarin-centered language policies, we may assume that the local languages themselves were the real target of the ban, and not specifically their written representation in the Roman alphabet. Still, further research needs to reveal the extent to which official restrictions account for the fact that major Taiyu dictionaries in the Chinese script were not published in this period.

Once restrictions on local languages were lifted and general interest in local languages had grown, Taiwanese lexicography developed quickly. Most Taiyu

Lacking official authorization and general acceptance, particular character spellings of such dictionaries have remained individual suggestions for written Taiwanese rather than a normative codification. The authors generally adhere to individual principles of character selection and do not feel bound to the prevalence of particular characters in Taiwanese literature. As a result, there is generally little orthographic overlap between written Taiwanese in a literary context and written Taiwanese arranged in *Taiyu* dictionaries. Exceptions are literary works published by the lexicographers themselves, or vice versa, as for instance manifested in the literary works of Yang Qingchu (1999a), the prose of Go Kok-An (1998b), or the dictionary by Huang Yuanxing (1998).

### 1.4 Taiwanese textbooks

Official support for the cultivation of local languages initially came from county governments. Bilingual programs were first offered in Yilan County, which started Taiwanese courses at elementary and junior high schools in 1990. Other counties soon followed suit. In September 2001, mother tongue education became compulsory for all elementary school students. With the inclusion of local languages in the curriculum, compilation of Taiwanese textbooks for obvious reasons received increasing attention from academics and language revivalists: they are the only source of written Taiwanese with a substantial readership outside particular interest groups.

Thus far, textbooks for various levels have been published, viz. for elementary and secondary school students (e.g. Ang Ui-jin, ed., 1998, Dong Zhongsi, ed., 2002, Liu Zhengmei (n.y.), university students (e.g. Yang Qingchu 1999b), foreign learners (e.g. Wu and Bodman 1983, Cheng et al. 1996, Maryknoll 1990-1997), adult learners and general public (e.g. Tiu and Ong 2001, Robert Cheng et al. 1996, Wu Xiuli 1997, Fang Nanqiang (1994, 1996).

School textbooks are typically compiled by municipal or county governments, in cooperation with academics and local language revivalists. Textbooks jointly compiled by groups of authors generally gain more acceptance than those published
by individuals. Still, future research needs to examine the way central and local
government agencies, universities, and private interest groups interact in
implementing language education reforms. For the purpose of this paper it is
sufficient to point out that textbook compilation has thus far not gone along with
orthographic standardization.

2. Scriptal diversity

2.1 Typological overview
Sources in written Taiwanese make use of a variety of scripts. Typologically, these
scripts can be divided into (a) the Chinese character script, (b) alphabetic
orthographies, (c) the use of syllabaries like Japanese kana and Mandarin phonetic
symbols, and (d) mixed scripts.

Character-based writing of Southern Min dialects has a history of more than 400
years. Early popular writing conventions can be found in printed versions of Fujianese
stage plays (e.g. the Li jing ji ‘The story of the lychee and the mirror’ of 1566), local
rhyme books (e.g. the Huiyin Miaowu [1800] and the Shiwu yin [1818], Ang
1993a, b), popular songbooks (Ong 1993), and liturgical texts (Lien 1995). Linguistic
localisms are in these sources represented with semantic and phonetic loan characters
and with dialect characters (see Klöter [2003: 41-87] for details).

Alphabetic orthographies for Taiwanese and other Southern Min dialects were
initially only used by missionaries for church-related publications. In the late 19th and
early 20th century, the use of either script was thus restricted to distinct social groups
and literary genres. The disassociation of alphabetic writing from the missionary
context was first promoted by the political activist Cai Peihuo during the Japanese
period (1895-1945). Since the 1990s, the use of alphabetic writing has gone different
directions within and outside the missionary context. Whereas the Presbyterian
Church has switched to the use of characters, the traditional missionary romanization
system has considerably gained ground among local Taiyu groups not associated with
the church. This new trend has been initiated by two organizations based in the
southern port of Kaohsiung, viz. the Ko-hiong Tai-gi Lo-ma-ji Gian-sip-hoe
‘Kaohsiung Seminar for Church Romanization’, and the Tai-oan Lo-ma-ji Hiap-hoe
‘Association of Taiwanese Romanization’ The former is a rather loose, seminar-like
group established in 1996. It is supported by some 600 people, mostly local
schoolteachers, interested in the cultivation of Taiwanese and its alphabetic
representation. The latter was formally registered with the Interior Ministry in 2001. It comprises about two hundred members from Taiwan and abroad. Among the members are scholars, politicians, journalists, teachers, and priests of the Presbyterian Church.

The first syllabary for Taiwanese was devised by language specialists of the Japanese colonial government. This system is a modified adaptation of the Japanese *katakana* syllabary (for details, see Klöter 2003: 135-151). It was used together with Chinese characters in numerous textbooks, dictionaries, and journals. Similarly, after 1945, different adaptations of phonetic symbols for Mandarin known as *Guoyu zhuyin fuhao* ‘Mandarin Phonetic Symbols’ have been used as auxiliary devices to indicate Taiwanese character readings in dictionaries and teaching manuals.

The fourth common way of rendering Taiwanese expressions is the combination of Chinese characters with romanized transcriptions. Since the 1970s, this amalgam of two different writing systems has chiefly been developed and promoted by the Hawaii-based scholar Robert L. Cheng (Zheng Liangwei). In his numerous publications, Cheng has developed a multi-layered blueprint for this script and has proposed specific political measures for its implementation. For a synopsis of Cheng’s publications, I refer to Buchler (2002). The principle of interspersing characters with romanized forms has meanwhile gained a high degree of acceptance among other Taiyu writers. Thus far, however, no commonly accepted way of applying this principle has emerged. As a result, there is still a considerable degree of diversity among different mixed scripts regarding the selected characters, the proportion of romanized forms and the applied romanization system.

3. The functional distribution of Taiwanese scripts
The existence of different scripts leads us to the question of the functional distribution of scripts. Petr Zima has introduced the terms *digraphia* and *diorthography* with reference to the existence of two writing systems for the Hausa language. His distinction is as follows (1974: 58):

Theoretically as well as practically, we must distinguish clearly between two […] situations:

(a) Either two types of written form of one language co-exist, based upon the usage of two distinct graphical systems (scripts) by the respective language community, or
Two types of written form of a particular language co-exist, using the same script, but they are based upon the usage of two distinct orthographies by the same language community. We shall call the former situation DIGRAPHIA and the latter DIORTHOGRAPHIA.

In the last 25 years, the term digraphia has been applied in several case studies. In these studies, it is mainly applied to two situations, viz. (a) the co-existence of two writing systems for the same language, (b) the change of writing systems for a language (Grivelet 2001a: 3). In Magner’s (2001) analysis of the situation in the former republics of Yugoslavia, co-existence of the Cyrillic and the Latin scripts and the replacement of the former by the latter are both mentioned. Co-existence applies to the situation in Serbia, whereas digraphia has become monographia in Croatia (Magner 2001: 20). Comparable instances of alphabet changes are mentioned in a recent case study on language policy in the former Soviet States Azerbayjan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan (Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001).

Co-existence of two scripts is also exemplified in Mongolia (Grivelet 2001b) and in the Ashkenazic printing conventions among Eastern European Jews (Fishman 2001). The former study distinguishes the use of either the Cyrillic alphabet or the traditional Mongolian script in different scriptal surroundings, such as billboards, advertisements, information posters in the streets, signs for shops, postal materials, etc. (Grivelet 2001b: 88). Fishman points to culturally determined distinctions that account for the usage of either square or Rashi letters in Ashkenazic printing conventions.

To which extent may the present situation in Taiwan be analyzed in terms of digraphia, as for example suggested by Tiu" (1998) and Chiung (2000)? I argue that digraphia is applicable only to a limited extent. Most obviously, written Taiwanese differs from the situations in the above studies in terms of the large number of competing scripts. Furthermore, Taiwanese scripts do not co-exist in either different scriptal environments or culturally-determined niches. Advocates of written Taiwanese rather vie for recognition in various scriptal environments without functional restrictions. The second application of the term digraphia suggests a shift from one script to another. As no script has ever been well-established for the writing of Taiwanese, this definition likewise does not apply. Modifying Zima’s terms, I
hence propose to describe the situation of written Taiwanese as one of POLYGRAPHIA and POLYORTHOGRAPHIA.

4. Ideological roots of polyorthographia

The above description of written Taiwanese in terms of polygraphia and polyorthographia does not include an explanation as to why Taiwanese has been written with different scripts. Arguments in favor of or against particular scripts belong largely to socio-political debates on practical needs and cultural symbolism. A linguistic description of a script without a description of its historical background and practical application would ignore its very raison d’être.

Sociological studies on written Taiwanese analyze the option for a particular script in ideological terms. For instance, comparing ideological convictions of Taiyu activists of the 1930s with those of the present generation, A-chin Hsiau writes (2000: 139):

Comparatively speaking, contemporary attempts to establish a Hoklo [i.e. Taiyu – H.K.] script and establish Hoklo literature has achieved more than the efforts to promote writing in tai-oan-oe and hsiang-t’u literature in the Japanese colonial period. On the one hand, the promoters of the latter in the early 1930s still held a relatively intense Han cultural consciousness. Thus, all of them, with the notable exception of Ts’ai P’ei-huo, advocated using characters to write Hoklo in order to maintain Taiwanese connections with the Chinese Mainland and Han culture. [...] By contrast, devoting themselves to the establishment of a unique Taiwanese culture, the advocates of new writing methods in the last decade have been, almost without exception, Taiwanese nationalists. Most of them do not stick to Chinese characters and freely romanize certain Hoklo morphemes. Romanization makes it easier to write Hoklo and facilitates the development of Hoklo literature. The use of phonetic characters represents a historic step toward local nationalism within an old ideographic area dominated by China, including other bordering countries.

The choice of a particular writing system may generally serve as an indicator for a changing national identity in colonial or post-colonial societies, as for instance in the former Soviet states Azerbayjan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, where the abolishment of Cyrillic writing clearly reflects a cultural trend towards de-russification after the fall of the Soviet empire.

In the case of Taiwan, however, the issue is more complex. It cannot be questioned that in the early 1930s, advocates of literature in the local Taiwanese vernacular had a strong bias towards the Chinese motherland. However, contrary to Hsiau I argue that
it seems overly simplified to map the use of Chinese characters to Chinese nationalism. As opposed to the present situation, the option of using a writing system other than the Chinese script was not really an issue of great contention at that time. As regards the present situation, the choice of a particular system can likewise not serve as a basis for clear-cut distinctions between Taiwanese and Chinese nationalists. Taiyu dictionaries, for instance, are almost exclusively based on Chinese character writing. Despite Hsiau’s claim, we find many ardent advocates of Taiwanese nationalism among the compilers of these dictionaries.

Instead, I argue that written Taiwanese as such epitomizes a significant cultural revaluation of the Taiwanese language. This is arguably true of any form of written Taiwanese, including Taiwanese written with Chinese characters. The creation of character-based Taiwanese orthographies is after all incompatible with the widespread conception of Chinese writing being supra-dialectal and thus by definition resistant against localization trends. Moreover, promoting a character-based orthography of written Taiwanese also shows a sense of sociolinguistic realism with regard to the audience. As previous research indicates (Chiung 1999), a population with a Mandarin/character literacy rate of more than 95 percent is more likely to accept Taiwanese represented with an established script than alphabetic orthographies.

Conclusion
It is axiomatic that written Taiwanese has long steered a course through turbulent social conditions. Taking that into account, I stake my basic claim that the complexities involved in the examination of sources require a complementary approach. Only descriptions of the ways in which various scripts render the Taiwanese language legible enable us to approach the contents of Taiyu literature and lexicography. On the other hand, answers to questions on the diversity of written Taiwanese lie outside the realm of grapheme-morpheme relations. Instead, they are to be sought in the changing ideological patterns which have emerged from Taiwan’s tumultuous past.
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