

UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Sinography's Allure: Language and Performance in Imperial Japan and Early Colonial Taiwan, 1895–1927

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0gk3z8pg>

Author

Lin, Fang-Ru

Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Sinography's Allure: Language and Performance in
Imperial Japan and Early Colonial Taiwan,
1895–1927

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Fang-Ru Lin

2024

© Copyright by

Fang-Ru Lin

2024

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sinography's Allure: Language and Performance in
Imperial Japan and Early Colonial Taiwan,
1895–1927

by

Fang-Ru Lin

Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2024

Professor Michael D. Emmerich, Chair

This dissertation argues that the lingering influence of the literary Sinitic tradition destabilized the colonial construction of language-based identities while simultaneously precluding further possibilities for localized development. The Literary Sinitic writing system, with its non-phonographic properties, invites a unique form of engagement that differs from the subscription to a specific spoken language. This distinction raises questions about the relationship between writing and speech, and how this dynamic shapes cultural and political imaginaries. Central to the allure of Literary Sinitic is the concept of “immunity to speech”—a fantasy that arises from the writing system’s detachment from direct phonetic representation. By not explicitly representing a particular speech form, Literary Sinitic allows for a certain degree of abstraction and universality in its expression. This distance from the immediacy of spoken language has contributed to a particular politicality, one that promised to transcend the boundaries of regional languages and vernacular forms.

This study argues that the non-phonographic nature of Literary Sinitic had implicit implications for how literary and oral cultures were imagined. It examines how this tradition established a hierarchy in which the written form was elevated as a stable, enduring medium, while the spoken language was relegated to a secondary status, subject to the vagaries of regional variation and historical change. This perception shaped the very concept of language itself, emphasizing the primacy of the written character over the ephemerality of speech. Through the framework of “the first Sinographic sphere” and “the second Sinographic sphere,” the dissertation investigates three main implicit influences during the colonial context: the local reluctance to prioritize spoken languages, the emphasis on sensory and affective dimensions over communicative intelligibility, and the delocalized cultural emphasis.

By situating an understanding of colonial conditions in East Asia within the scope of influence of the literary Sinitic tradition, this work contributes to a more dynamic understanding of regional cultural history. The analysis of the distinct colonial context of Taiwan within imperial Japanese history sheds light on how the Japanese Empire grappled with deconstructing the literary Sinitic tradition and the variations in each colony’s relationship with locality, writing, and language.

The dissertation of Fang-Ru Lin is approved.

Torquil Duthie

Michael Sanford Berry

Anurima Banerji

Michael D. Emmerich, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2024

*For those unmoored from harbors,
may the winds of freedom be eternal guides*

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

Vita

Introduction: Connecting Colonialism to the Past	1
Chapter I: Revisiting Literary Sinitic and the Late Nineteenth-Century Japan and Taiwan	18
Chapter II: Sinography's Dialectic "Other": <i>Dogo</i> as the Dominated Subject	67
Chapter III: The Voice Politic of Sinographic Illiteracy: <i>Dogo</i> (In)Comprehensibility and Its Cultural Forms	128
Conclusion	202
Bibliography	206

List of Figures

Figure Intro. 1: Mei Lanfang in stage costume, <i>Taiwan Daily News</i>	4
Figure 2.1: Covers of Taiwango language magazines, 1899–1903	92
Figure 3.1: The interior of the Tamsui Theater and its audience, 1909	174
Figure 3.2: Advertisement for the theatrical production “A Poor Youth,” 1910	181

Acknowledgements

I owe the deepest gratitude to my advisor, Michael Emmerich, for his unwavering guidance, insightful feedback, and steadfast belief in this project—invaluable contributions throughout the dissertation process. Professor Emmerich's comprehensive understanding of the research landscape and meticulous attention to detail allowed me to find my scholarly voice and navigate the intricate nuances of my work. I am truly grateful for his patience, open-mindedness, genuine enthusiasm for scholarly curiosity as an ideal intellectual mentor, and willingness to read my multiple drafts, observe my wanderings, and offer insightful guidance as I explored different topics. Professor Emmerich's mentorship opened the door for me to enter the world of Japanese literary studies, a journey that has profoundly and transformatively shaped my academic path. Without his support in every way, this dissertation would not have come to fruition.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the members of my dissertation committee: Torquil Duthie, whose insights on writing history inspired me to contextualize the delicacy of Sinography with interconnected themes, and whose ability to present complex subjects with clarity and engagement serves as a model for my future work; Michael Berry, whose knowledge of Chinese Cinema studies and constant encouragement shaped my research; and Anurima Banerji, whose passion for performance and elegant analytical approach served as a constant source of inspiration.

I am grateful to my mentors from the National Taiwan University, An-Chi Wang Wei-Jan Chi and, whose guidance in critical theory and opera theater, respectively, laid the foundation for my scholarly interests and curiosities. I would also like to thank Hsiao-Mei Hsieh and Yu-Hui Fu for their support during my master program.

My gratitude extends to the esteemed faculty at UCLA, including Seiji Lippit, Satoko

Shimazaki, Junko Yamazaki, Christopher Hanscome, Shu-mei Shih, Mariko Tamanai, Andrea Goldman, Sean Metzger, Michelle Liu Carriger, and Suk-Young Kim, whose teachings and mentorship enriched my understanding of various aspects of Japanese literature, performance, and culture. I am particularly indebted to Satoko Shimazaki for her insightful book on Edo Kabuki, which inspired me to reconsider the interplay between performance, print culture, and urban communities. I am also grateful for the opportunity to attend seminars by inspiring guest lecturers, including Toba Kōji, Furukawa Hideo, and Matsuie Masashi, which broadened my vision and imagination.

During my time as a visiting graduate researcher at Waseda University, I had the privilege of working with Toba Kōji, Toeda Hirokazu, Kodama Ryuichi, and Uchino Tadashi, whose support and guidance were invaluable. I am also grateful for the enriching summer workshop co-taught by David Lurie, Satoko Shimazaki, and Michael Emmerich, as well as the exceptional library resources, including access to rare materials at Waseda University's Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, the Young Research Library at UCLA with the assistance of Tomoko Bialock, and historical pictures related to expositions provided by Ishikawa Atsuko from Nomura Kōgei Corporate.

I extend my appreciation to the language instructors who have guided me throughout this journey, including Nogami Yōko, Hayashi Asako, and Kawanishi Yumiko, as well as the staff and instructors at the Japan Foundation Language Training Program for Researchers (Kansai) and the IUC Summer Program.

This dissertation would not be possible without the generous financial support from the Government Scholarship for Overseas Study from the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, Waseda University, the Yanai Initiative, and the Graduate Division at UCLA. Additional support came

from the Terasaki Center for Japanese Studies and the J. Yang Fellowship. I am also thankful for the staff: Yixin Zhu and Elizabeth Leicester at the Yanai Initiative, Jōkō Yumi at Waseda University, and Rianna Chen at Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Los Angeles, for their meticulous support and assistance.

I have been indebted to my colleagues at UCLA for their collegiality and the engaging discussions we have shared: Raiyah bint Al-Hussein, Jonathan Banfill, Spencer Chen, Jinaeng Choi, Julia Clark, Victoria Davis, Philip Hsu, Kazuhiko Imai, Mari Ishida, Kirk Kanesaka, HeeJin Lee, Jiajun Liang, Wangmeng Li, Faye Qiyu Lu, Kanako Mabuchi, Rachele Mansi, Casey Martin, Kim Mc Nelly, Julie Morris, Yuki Nagamine, Ryoko Nishijima, Chiara Pavone, Cameron Robertson, Eric Siercks, Shih-Wei Sun, Suong Thai, Mariko Takano, Danica Truscott, Lin-Chih Tsai, Hsiao-Chu Wu, Jiayin Yuan, Yan Zhou, Meimei Zhang, and Yunshuang Zhang. I am grateful for the positive academic environment and the invaluable opportunities to learn from you all.

I would also like to thank the friendship, camaraderie, and support from Ouyang Yao, Flora Wu, Eve Yuan-Hsiu Lo, Sami, and Ohno Satoshi, for being invaluable companions and refreshing encouragement during the final stages of my dissertation journey. As a first-generation student, I have been indebted to many supportive hands. Each belief in me has been a constant source of strength and inspiration.

Vita

2008 B.A. Economics
National Taiwan University
Taipei, Taiwan

2013 M.A. Drama and Theatre
National Taiwan University
Taipei, Taiwan

2014–2017 Government Fellowship for Overseas Study

2018–2019 Visiting Graduate Research Fellow
Waseda University
Tokyo, Japan

2021–2022 Dissertation Year Fellowship

Translation

Tierney, Robert. “Wushe shijian zhong de baoli yu shenti” [Violence and Bodies in the Musha Incident]. Translated from English by Fang-Ru Lin and Yiyang Hou. In *Wushe shijian: Taiwan lishi yu wenhua duben* [A Reader on the History and Culture of Musha Incident]. Taipei: Rye Field Publications, 2020.

Selected Conference Presentations

“The Perception of Voice in *Shiritsuron*,” Japan Studies 27th Annual Graduate Student Conference, University of California, Los Angeles, May, 2024

“The Discourse of ‘Retrocession’ and the Approach on Coloniality—Another Postwar Story of Taiwan,” Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Asia, Bangkok, Thailand, July, 2019

“Between Asian and Oriental: Wu Hsing-Kuo and Operatic Performances in Taiwan,” Taiwan Studies Lectureship Annual Workshop, University of California, Los Angeles, January, 2016

“The Conversation between *Butoh* and Taiwan,” Performance Studies International Conference (PSi #21), Aomori, Japan, August, 2015

Introduction: Connecting Colonialism to the Past

This dissertation engages with a series of interconnected questions that probe the complex relationship between language, culture, and identity in colonial Taiwan. At the heart of this inquiry lies a puzzling observation: despite the linguistic diversity of the Taiwanese people, there seemed to be a persistent lack of importance placed by the Taiwanese themselves on the cultural and literary value of their spoken languages during the colonial period. This apparent disregard for the linguistic spectrum raises deeper questions about the forces that shape cultural consciousness and how language is intertwined with power, prestige, and political legitimacy.

The apparent disregard for the linguistic diversity and cultural value of local languages in colonial Taiwan raises an intriguing contrast with the colonizer's own experience in Japan during the last decade of the nineteenth century. During this period, the Japanese intellectual community actively probed the nonalignment between language and cultural identities, calling into question the long-established literary Sinitic writing system that had been a cornerstone of Japanese literary and scholarly traditions. This reexamination of the relationship between language and cultural identity in Japan coincided with the country's emergence as a colonial power, following its colonization of Taiwan in 1895. As the Japanese empire expanded, a new notion of a seamless fusion between nationhood and language began to take hold, becoming a powerful political and cultural ideal. This ideal not only shaped the way in which the Japanese people understood their relationship to the nation but also influenced their perception of the broader world and their role within it.

This comparison suggests that the colonial experience not only influenced the cultural and linguistic landscape of the colonized territories but also had a profound impact on the colonizer's

own understanding of language, identity, and nationhood. As the Japanese empire sought to assert its power and legitimacy on the world stage, the notion of a unified national language became increasingly central to its political and cultural agenda, even as it grappled with the complex linguistic and cultural realities of its colonial possessions.

Rather than viewing the Taiwanese and Japanese experiences as contradictory, this dissertation seeks to highlight the common thread that connects them: the struggle to redefine cultural identity in the face of the literary Sinitic legacy and shifting linguistic and political realities. Both the colonized Taiwanese people and the Japanese colonizers are engaging with the same fundamental questions about the role of language in shaping cultural belonging and political legitimacy as former peripheries with the literary Sinitic legacy, even as they arrive at different answers.

To unpack these issues, this dissertation explores the enduring influence of the literary Sinitic tradition, a cultural and linguistic framework that has long privileged a particular form of writing over the multiplicity of spoken languages across East Asia. By interrogating the cultural endorsement of poetry and verse within the logographic literary Sinitic system, this study aims to shed light on the mechanisms that have sustained a sense of “one language” in cultural consciousness, even amidst the coexistence of various spoken languages and a single written form. In engaging with these questions, this dissertation seeks to move beyond reinforcing simplistic dichotomies between a singular Sinicizing force and passive Sinicized regions, as well as the colonized and the colonizer. Instead, it aims to uncover the complex negotiations and contestations that emerge as different linguistic and cultural traditions come into contact and conflict under the conditions of colonialism.

A striking example of how these tensions subtly linger in the colonial context can be seen in the absence of local language opera from major symbolic events even in the last decade of colonial rule, such as the commemorative exposition held for “the Fortieth Anniversary of Taiwan’s Colonial Administration” in Taihoku (now Taipei) in 1935. This large-scale industrial and cultural exhibition, organized by the Japanese colonial authorities, was set to mark four decades since the colonization of Taiwan began in 1895. The colonial authorities might have seen this event as a way to demonstrate the cultural, political, and economic ties between the colonizers and the colonized, consolidate the legitimacy of colonial rule, and boost morale among the colonized subjects.¹ This was particularly important given the anticipation of potential geopolitical conflict between the Japanese Empire and China, the continental power in East Asia.² The exposition was held from October 10 to November 18, 1935.

Amidst the anticipation of the commemorative exposition, a seemingly unrelated figure captured the attention of the Taiwanese public. However, rather than being out of context, this figure’s prominence in the media coverage of the event and the cultural tradition he represented highlight the complex cultural dynamics at play in colonial Taiwan. While the colonial authorities sought to assert their power and legitimacy through the commemorative event, the absence of local language opera and the attention given to this Chinese opera star reveal the

¹ The 55-day exposition attracted approximately 2.73 million visitors. It featured four main sites located across Taihoku (Taipei), including the Taihoku City Public Auditorium (Taihoku Kōkaidō), Taihoku Park (Taihoku Shinkouen), Daitōtei District (Nanpō Bunkan), and Itabashi District (Itabashi Rinkaku). There were around 14 venues in total, including industrial-based exhibition halls and dedicated cultural pavilions such as Aichi, Osaka, Tokyo, and Nara, as well as overseas themed pavilions, such as Manchuria and Chōsen. For official comprehensive record and catalogues, see Shisei Shijisshūnen Kinen Taiwan Hakurankai Kyōsankai ed., *Shisei Shijisshūnen Kinen Taiwan Hakurankai Kyōsankai shi* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 2012), and *Shisei Shijisshūnen Kinen Taiwan Hakurankai shashinchō* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 2012).

² On September 18, 1931, the Mukden Incident broke out as a pretext for the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Some Japanese historians, such as Ienaga Saburō, have traced this incident and the subsequent occupation of Manchuria in northeastern China as the prologue to the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II in the East Asian context. For more information about the geopolitical tensions in the 1930s, see Saburō Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan’s Role in World War II* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010).

underlying tensions and contradictions in the cultural landscape of the time. Through a series of news coverage spanning several months, we can trace the development of a long-standing fascination and its implications for understanding the Taiwanese public's relationship with both the colonial authorities and the enduring legacy of traditional literary Sinitic culture.

On June 6, 1935, loyal readers of *Taiwan Daily News* (*Taiwan nichinichi shinpō*) might have found their attention drawn to a picture of Mei Lanfang (1894–1961), a cross-dressing male actor and representative figure of Peking Opera, when they opened the paper looking for information about the upcoming exposition. Readers would encounter a half portrait of Mei wearing an elaborate traditional Chinese theatrical costume with intricate embroidery and an ornate headdress. The heavily made-up face, with pronounced eyebrows, eyes, and lips accentuated by makeup, presented a stylized, theatrical look typical of Chinese opera performers.



Figure Intro. 1. Mei Lanfang in stage costume, *Taiwan Daily News*.³

³ “*Bairenhō no amoi iki kimareba taihaku no koro*” [梅蘭芳の厦門行き決まれば台博の頃], *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), June 6, 1935: Japanese 2.

In fact, Mei's name had been mentioned in newspaper articles about the exposition since April 19, 1935, as well as on May 24 and 31, 1935.⁴ Although Mei ultimately did not attend the exposition, the recurring appearance of his name and image in the news coverage preceding the event suggests a persistent fascination with the cultural tradition of Peking Opera and an associated aura following it, despite its apparent disconnection from the colonial administration's commemorative event. Furthermore, it suggests a self-imposed devaluing or marginalization of cultural representations closely aligned with the spoken languages of the local Taiwanese population, which is a key issue I aim to address in this dissertation. This interpretation is subtly suggested by the accompanying article on June 6, 1935, the day that readers encountered the portrait of Mei, which is titled "When Mei Lanfang's Trip to Amoy Is Decided, It Is the Time for the Taiwan Exposition":

When Mei Lanfang's Trip to Amoy⁵ Is Decided, It Is the Time for the Taiwan Exposition
Mayor Wang of Amoy Shows Goodwill Towards Taiwan's Eager Invitation

Upon receiving reports that Tan Thian-lai, Koh Tin-sun, Tan Chhin-po, and other members of the Taiwan Exposition's Daitōtei Branch, as well as the general Taiwanese population, are enthusiastically hoping for Dr. Mei Lanfang's performance at the Taiwan Exposition,

⁴ "Kinjōhana o soyubeku nanpōkan no shin shukō" [錦上花を添ゆべく南方館の新趣向], *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), April 19: Japanese 7. "Bairenhō o taiwan e amoi no hōjinkan ni hanashi okiru" [梅蘭芳を台湾へ 厦門の邦人間に話起さる], *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), May 24, 1935: Japanese 7. "Kinjōhana o soyubeku nanpōkan no shin shukō" [劇界泰斗梅蘭芳博士 若得於臺灣博出演 於日華親善影響實大], *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), May 31, 1935: Chinese 4.

⁵ Xiamen (Amoy), located on the southeastern coast of mainland China, is situated just across the Taiwan Strait from Taiwan, approximately 180 kilometers (112 miles) from Taipei. Given the relatively short distance and maritime connections between Xiamen and Taiwan during the Japanese colonial era, if Mei Lanfang were to travel to Xiamen for performances, it would have been logistically feasible for him to extend his tour to Taiwan as well. In other words, the organizers of the Taiwan Exposition had likely capitalized on his potential presence in the nearby region.

the reporter immediately conveyed this message to a close associate of Mayor Wang Gupan. He showed considerable goodwill and said:

“Dr. Mei is currently still touring various parts of Europe, but he will be returning to China soon. If his visit to Amoy is confirmed, the timing will likely coincide with the Taiwan Exposition. It would be truly wonderful if the talks could progress to the point of him attending the Exposition.” Just as the saying goes, “Art knows no borders.” If Mr. Mei’s performance at the Taiwan Exposition becomes promising, it will undoubtedly contribute significantly to the genuine friendship between Japan and China.⁶

While the framework was under the colonial exposition, the local people's excitement seemed to link to this potential visit plan involving Mei, as manifested by expressions such as “eager” (*netsubō*) and “enthusiastically hoping” (*netsunetsuni kibō shite*), and a reference to the “goodwill” (*kōi*) of the Wang Mayor—despite the fact that he did not personally accept the interview, but rather “a close associate” of his did. The political legitimacy for such an invitation was justified by terms such as “transcending borders” (*kokkyō nashi*) and “contribute significantly to the genuine friendship between Japan and China” (*nikka shinzen ni tsukusu*), framing the invitation as a bridge and “Taiwan” as a space where that connection might unfold.⁷ Had this visit plan not vaporized in the air, it could be certain that Mei's news would have continued to captivate the Taiwanese audience for months leading up to the exposition.

The narrative in the June 6 coverage implies a triangular relationship. In this relationship, the picture of the Chinese performer symbolizes a desirable object, while the Taiwanese people

⁶ “*Bairenhō no amoi*,” Japanese 2.

⁷ “*Bairenhō no amoi*,” Japanese 2.

are relegated to a shape of desiring. Their desiring is not intended to fulfill themselves, but is taken as a bridge in service of the bond between Japan and the perceived cultural epicenter of China. This framing suggests that the Taiwanese people's cultural aspirations are subordinated not only to the political and cultural agendas of the colonial power but also to the aesthetic standards that positioned a particular cultural tradition as the center, with local Taiwanese cultural practice being implicitly marginalized or fading from view.

Despite the devastating 1935 Shinchiku-Taichu earthquake and its aftershocks on July 17, 1935,⁸ which received prominent coverage with vivid photographs⁹ and reports of the Showa Emperor's lament,¹⁰ we see the persistent efforts to secure a Peking Opera troupe for the Taiwan Exposition.¹¹ Reports also suggested that funding was prioritized for bringing in a mainland Chinese troupe over local performance troupes like the Taihoku geisha revue, hinting at a subtle tension with local societies and an imbalance in resource allocation.¹² The program's schedule—devoting 30 days to Peking Opera performances while allotting only 7 days each to *geidan* (Taiwanese geisha) revues and other local genres like *jōkyuoppera* (coffeehouse waitress light

⁸ On July 17, 1935, a 6.0 magnitude earthquake struck Shinchiku (Hsinchu). This earthquake was an aftershock of the devastating 1935 Shinchiku-Taichū earthquake that had occurred in April, causing over 3,000 casualties.

⁹ “Shinsaichi yori” [震災地より], *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 18, 1935: Japanese 7. The images depicted collapsed buildings, piles of rubble, and people searching through the debris for survivors.

¹⁰ “Saïdo no shinsai ni ryō heika goshinnen” [再度の震災に両陛下御軫念], *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 18, 1935: Japanese 7.

¹¹ “Nanpōkan shutsuen no kyōgeki ukeoisha kimeru” [南方館出演の京劇請負者決める], *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 18, 1935: Japanese 7.

¹² “Jōen ga ayabumareru gei-cya no rebyūgeki (kanjin no yokyōhi yosan no taihan ga kyōgeki shōhei ni michiterare)” [上演が危ぶまれる 藝姐のレビュー劇 (肝腎の餘興費予算の大半が 京劇招聘にみち充ちてられ)], *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 5, 1935: Japanese 7.

musicals) and spoken drama productions—highlighted the primacy given to this prestigious art form over local productions.¹³

The prioritization of the prestigious Peking Opera within the cultural landscape of colonial Taiwan was embodied by the Nanpō Bunkan (Southern Pavilion/Exhibition Hall).¹⁴ Actively sought by Taiwanese merchant groups and aligned with Japan’s vision of Taiwan as a gateway to the South, this prominent pavilion became a platform showcasing Peking Opera, suggesting a profound connection to the allure of this mainland Chinese art form that transcended the colonial agenda. The merchants’ enthusiasm for hosting Peking Opera at the Nanpō Bunkan revealed its enduring significance and resonance within Taiwan’s cultural milieu.

However, this prioritization marginalized local artistic traditions. While embracing the prestigious mainland opera, the Nanpō Bunkan barely accommodated the Taihoku geisha revue and other local performance arts. This exclusion stood in stark contrast to the widespread popularity of local language opera among the general public in the late 1920s, to the extent that it drew criticism from intellectuals, as discussed in Chapter 3.¹⁵ The juxtaposition between the marginalization of indigenous expressions and the elevation of Peking Opera, supported by both colonial authorities and Taiwanese merchants, underscored the complex dynamics and tensions shaping the cultural landscape. This dynamic would prove to reflect the profound influence of the literary Sinitic tradition and its non-phonographic writing system, which had cultivated a cosmopolitan spatial envisioning and a hierarchy privileging elite, written cultural forms over vernacular artistic expressions.

¹³ “Nanpōkan shutsuen,” Japanese 7.

¹⁴ A more detailed exploration of the spatial layout of the entire exposition can be found in Lu Shaoli, *Zhan shi Taiwan: quan li, kong jian yu zhi min tong zhi de xing xiang biao shu* [Exhibiting Taiwan: Power, Space and Image Representation of Japanese Colonial Rule] (Taipei: Rye Field Publishing, 2011), 250–268.

¹⁵ My choice of ending this dissertation in 1927 also reflects this criticism.

While analyzing the cultural dynamics surrounding theatrical events and visual politics could be an enticing focus for this dissertation, my findings reveal that the theatrical realm cannot be isolated from broader literary and cultural conventions. This is particularly true when examining opera theater. Exoticism alone also proves insufficient to explain the marginalization of local language opera in favor of Peking Opera at the 1935 colonial exposition, as the cultural hierarchy that privileges non-locally associated performances based on style, vocal tradition, and language persists beyond this single event. Although an exotic spectacle reinforced by the framework of a cultural exposition may play a role, I aim to unpack an alternative narrative—a recentering of the “troubled” spectatorship this appreciation invokes, which necessitates a reconsideration of language scrutiny.

The non-phonographic nature of Sinographic writing, allowing for a certain level of detachment from spoken language, has had a profound and intricate interplay with regional dynamics, manifesting itself in the complication of colonial and colonized narratives we have been familiar with. The attitudes toward local language opera in colonial Taiwan are deeply rooted in the complex interplay of language, writing, and cultural identity, stemming from the literary Sinitic tradition’s non-phonographic writing system, its legacy and paradoxes. This intricate interplay has given rise to a privileging of elite, written cultural forms over vernacular expressions, manifesting in the attitudes and sensibilities surrounding opera theater. By examining these dynamics, we can better comprehend the forces that contributed to the sidelining of local Taiwanese operatic traditions within the broader cultural landscape. In other words, by understanding the marginalization of local language opera in colonial Taiwan, we can delve into how the literary Sinitic tradition delicately shaped cultural consciousness and linguistic practices for peripheries.

Complicating the Imposition Narrative

This dissertation was initially conceived as a comprehensive overview of “Theater for Japanization” or “Imperialization” (*Kōminka geki*)¹⁶ in Taiwan during the final stage of the colonial period as well as the wartime era from 1937 to 1945.¹⁷ However, as I delved deeper into the research, I encountered a perplexing question: What exactly was the development of “Theater for Japanization” trying to displace? The conventional answer could be that “Theater for Japanization” aimed to oppress and replace local Taiwanese cultural expressions, effectively “Japanizing” the colonized subjects by forcing them to adopt the colonizers’ culture, thinking, and language. By contextualizing this theatrical practice within the process of assimilation, it was considered a step towards mobilizing the Taiwanese population for the war effort and ensuring their devotion to the Japanese Empire.¹⁸

However, further scrutiny complicates the assumptions often made about this conventional understanding of the *kōminka* model. The model’s polarization inadvertently essentialized the ties between language and culture, assuming a straightforward connection between “the Japanese language” and “Japanese identity,” or between “the Taiwanese languages” and “Taiwanese identity.” This perspective aligns with a teleological view of nationhood as intertwined with

¹⁶ Some primary materials about “*Kōminka* theater” can be found in Nakajima Toshio, Kawahara Isao, and Shimomura Sakujirō. eds. *Taiwan gikyoku kyakuhonshū*. Tōkyō: Ryokuin Shobō, 2003, and a monthly journal *Engeki tsūshin: taiwan engekikyōhō* (Taihoku), October 1942–March 1944.

¹⁷ The “war” here refers to the Second Sino-Japanese War between the Japanese Empire and the Republic of China, which marked a full-scale conflict between the two, and caused Japanese Empire’s colonies to become susceptible to more intense exploitation of economic and human resources. Historians’ discussion on the intersection of the wartime period and the *kōminka* (imperialization) policies can be found in Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie eds., *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

¹⁸ This view can be seen, for instance, in Hamada Hidesaburō ed., *Taiwan engeki no genjō* (Tōkyō: Tansei Shobō, 1943), which provides a context for understanding the role of theater in the process of assimilation and mobilization of the Taiwanese population during the wartime era and, particularly, suggests its connection to language education.

language development, emphasizing the traditional conceptualization of language in East Asia as entirely challenged and overwritten by the dominance of Western linguistics in the early twentieth century.¹⁹ The emphasis on the symbolic value of Peking Opera over the cultural significance of local language opera, however, calls into question this simple equation of language and national identity, revealing the persistence of older forms of cultural identification and the limitations of the teleological narrative of linguistic modernization.

To better theorize the cultural connections and conflicts between Japan and Taiwan, I have come to realize that we must explore how language has long played a marginal role in East Asia, even before the region was integrated into a global context involving multiple nation-states. By treating the *kōminka* period as the sole representation of colonial experience, taking it as an ultimate termination and its emphasis on language as a primary apparatus for the “Japanization of colonial subjects,” we risk obscuring the complexities of linguistic and cultural identities that existed in the earlier decades of colonial rule. In light of these limitations, this dissertation shifts its focus to the early colonial era, aiming to provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and identity in the colonial context by moving beyond and complicating the *kōminka* model. Through exploring the historical notion of language and its marginality in East Asia, I seek to challenge the essentialized connections between language and nation and to uncover the complex dynamics of linguistic and cultural negotiation that unfolded

¹⁹ By the dominance of Western linguistics in the early twentieth century, I refer to the widespread influence and theoretical hegemony of linguistic frameworks and methodologies developed primarily in Europe and North America during this period. This includes the prominence of structural linguistics, as exemplified by the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, as well as the rise of descriptive linguistics championed by scholars such as Leonard Bloomfield and the American Structuralism tradition. While these Western paradigms made significant contributions to linguistic theory, their foundations in the study of Indo-European and other widely spoken alphabetic languages raised certain challenges in fully capturing the intricacies of non-alphabetic writing systems and the diverse linguistic landscapes present in East Asian contexts. For a comprehensive overview of the development of Western linguistic thought during this period, see E.F.K. Koerner, *Toward a Historiography of Linguistics: Selected Essays* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1978). For the introduction of Western linguistics into the East Asian context, see Atsuko Ueda, *Language, Nation, Race: Linguistic Reform in Meiji Japan (1868–1912)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021). Ueda also argues a more nuanced understanding of this introduction.

in early colonial Taiwan. This exploration will shed light on a state of flux, a limbo stage, when legitimacy itself was plural, allowing us to further contextualize East Asian colonialism.

This dissertation explores the complex dynamics of linguistic and cultural modernization at the intersection of imperial Japan and early colonial Taiwan, situating them within the broader context of the literary Sinitic tradition and the changing political and social landscape of the region. By examining how the legacies of Sinographic writing and cosmopolitan spatial envisioning interacted with the modernizing impulses of the colonial regime, I aim to shed new light on the ways in which language and culture were transformed and negotiated in the colonial context. The key factor in connecting colonialism to the past, I argue, is the ideological influence of the non-phonographic nature of literary Sinitic writing, which is often overlooked in current discussions that tend to oversimplify the relationship between language and colonial power.

I argue that the modernization of language in the East Asian colonies involves more than just the imposition of the colonizer's language; it inevitably involves epistemological struggles and aesthetic reestablishment. In the case of early colonial Taiwan, the process of linguistic modernization was deeply intertwined with the complex legacies of the literary Sinitic tradition and the shifting cultural and political landscape of the region. By employing a Sinographic lens, I aim to historicize and restructure the colonial narrative, avoiding the view of the colonizer and colonial situation as pre-existing entities. Instead, I seek to understand the complex relationship between Japan and Taiwan without reducing their languages to predetermined factors.

Through an analysis of a range of epistemological readings of textual and performative practices, from poetry and prose to theater and musicality, this dissertation traces the complex interplay between the allure of Sinography and the assertion of local agency in the face of colonial power. Ultimately, it argues for a more nuanced understanding of the role of language

and culture in the formation of identity, one that attends to the specificities of the Taiwanese experience while also situating it within the broader currents of regional history and global modernity. By examining the politics of language and performance in colonial Taiwan, this study illuminates the ways in which the literary Sinitic tradition both enabled and constrained the articulation of cultural identity, while also shaping the aesthetics and epistemologies of artistic expression.

To address the gap in colonial studies, I draw from researchers whose work focuses on premodern and early modern Japanese writing practices. These scholars offer nuanced perspectives that go beyond the traditional equation of nation and language, highlighting that language and culture nonalignment has existed as a principle. Researchers of early Japanese writing have challenged the traditional equation of writing and language, noting how the non-phonographic nature prompted literary Sinitic writing to function as a “multilingual package.”²⁰ This suggests a relatively weak sense of “linguistic” differences based on spoken languages, with the prevalence of Sinoscript arguably contributing to an overcoming and obscuration of linguistic barriers.

The second trajectory of my dissertation seeks to challenge prevailing assumptions about the alignment between nation and language, as hypothesized by the Western colonial model, by situating our comprehension of colonial conditions in East Asia within the complex dynamics fostered by Sinographic tradition. I suggest that imperial Japan’s interaction with colonial Taiwan serves as a lens to scrutinize its struggle with the Middle Kingdom and, further, with the Sinographic tradition. This dissertation argues that there is a dialectic relationship at play: the

²⁰ David Lurie, *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 203.

colonial context emerges from, reacts to, and brings about shifts in the Sinographic-based worldview, rooted in dynamics distinct from those of Western models of colonialism.

Inspired by literary historian Osa Shizue's temporal vision, which emphasizes the need to reevaluate the role of the early modern period in shaping the modern Japanese colonial condition, this dissertation aims to position the self-interested invention of the Japanese language within a broader context of East Asian history, moving beyond its significance in Japan's national historical narrative. As Osa has astutely pointed out, there is a rupture in interpretation between Japanese literary studies, which tends to take a more "domestic" approach, and colonial studies when it comes to understanding the Japanese language.²¹

In other words, while efforts within modern Japanese literary studies tend to deconstruct national language consciousness, bringing forth a more nuanced perspective on language, the discussion involving the colonial contexts often inadvertently reinforce the notion of national language consciousness when discussing imperial violence and ideological indoctrination. Osa thus argues to be cautions against treating the policy of imperial subjectification in the final decade of the Japanese Empire as a teleological endpoint. This suggests the fusion of nationhood and language in the Japanese context is itself a product of historical construction, and the process is not necessarily a linear, goal-oriented progression but rather contingent on the understanding of the past at a particular moment. By exploring the marginal role of language in the region's past and its impact on the colonial experience, I hope to provide a more nuanced understanding of the cultural dynamics between Japan and Taiwan, one that challenges the assumptions of the *kominka* model and the neat equation of nation and language.

I begin the first chapter of this dissertation with a theoretical foundation for understanding Sinographic writing and its implications. It highlights the politicality of the Sinographic writing

²¹ Osa Shizue, *Kindai Nihon to kokugo nashonarizumu* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998), 5.

system and the need for a more nuanced approach to understanding the relationship between language, writing, and cultural identity in the East Asian context. By examining the ideological underpinnings of the Sinographic Cosmopolis and the ways in which it shaped perceptions of language and writing, this chapter sets the stage for a critical reassessment of the role of Sinographic writing in the cultural and linguistic landscape of East Asia.

This chapter also challenges the conventional understanding of the Sinographic Cosmopolis, which posits that the prevalence of Sinoscript served as a means to overcome linguistic barriers. By drawing on recent scholarship, I argue that it is crucial to contemplate how this prevalence may have obscured the significance of linguistic barriers. I propose that logographic-based Sinographic writing creates an illusion of transcending spoken languages, a “fantasy” supported by certain ideological frameworks.

The second chapter delves into the frameworks in which language is seen as being rooted in writing, as opposed to the modern linguistic perspective that posits speech as the basis of language, and in which the importance of local context is downplayed. I contend that along with the adoption of Sinoscripts, regional societies also embraced the accompanying epistemology of language, which views language as logographic writing-based rather than speech-based.

The aim of this second chapter is to contribute to a more complex and historically grounded understanding of the Sinographic writing system, one that takes into account its interaction with regional contexts, its ideological implications, and its impact on the formation of cultural identities. By challenging traditional assumptions about the universality and neutrality of Sinographic writing, this chapter opens up new avenues for exploring the dynamics of language, writing, and power in the East Asian world.

The third chapter suggests that the primary influence of the non-phonographic paradigm in the literary Sinitic tradition contributed to a cosmopolitan spatial envisioning. This stemmed from its reconceptualization of orality, moving away from an emphasis on linguistic comprehension towards an aural experience expected to evoke a cosmopolitan spatial imagination. This allowed for higher tolerance for detachment from spoken languages. Through this mechanism, audiences could overlook issues of incomprehensibility and instead pursue a symbolic “sound” of literary Sinitic, decoupling oral expression from strict adherence to a comprehensible spoken language. This propels us to pay attention not only to the “language” of culture but also to the “voice” of culture. In this way, I attempt to theorize how the distance between literary Sinitic and speech influenced the conceptualization and sensibilities of “culture.” In other words, the detachment from spoken language not only shapes the intellectual and theoretical understanding of culture but also impacts the subjective experiences, perceptions, and aesthetic sensibilities surrounding culture.

By unraveling the puzzle of how literary Sinitic encourages a mode of thinking and way of appreciation that is less tethered to the concrete realities of everyday speech, we can gain a more nuanced framing of the diverse interactions and negotiations among traditional aesthetics, modernizing impulses, and competing visions of national belonging in the colonial context.

For instance, the imposition of Japanese as the language of administration and education may disrupt the existing linguistic and cultural order, creating new opportunities for the expression of local identities and the negotiation of cultural boundaries. The emergence of new literary and artistic forms, such as the Taiwanese-language literature movement and the rise of local language opera in the 1920s and 1930s, can be seen as a response to the modernizing impulses of the colonial regime and a reassertion of local cultural agency.

On the other hand, the emphasis on a-legibility and the cosmopolitan ideal of a shared written language has also had unintended consequences for the development and appreciation of local languages and cultural forms. In the case of colonial Taiwan, the prioritization of Peking Opera and other forms of Chinese opera over local language opera can be seen as an extension of this cultural hierarchy, where the Sinographic written form and its associated cultural practices are valued over local linguistic and artistic expressions.

To unravel this layer of complexity, it is necessary to develop a counter-narrative that situates the colonial context in relation to tradition rather than solely focusing on the future, as is often the case in conventional historical narratives. By examining how the abstraction propelled by the literary Sinitic tradition facilitated the cultivation of a shared cultural and intellectual space that transcended the particularities of individual languages and dialects, we gain insights into the amorphous cultural sensibilities that informed literary choices. These choices were consistently negotiated through the interplay of language, culture, and identity expression. This analysis provides us with additional tools to analyze the nuanced formation of such cultural sensibilities, which shaped and were shaped by the literary realm.

Ultimately, my research highlights the importance of recognizing the multiple layers of linguistic and cultural practice that shape the colonial experience, as well as the enduring legacies of pre-colonial traditions and cosmopolitan spatial imaginaries in the making of modern identities and communities. By situating the modernization of language within this broader context, I hope to offer a more complex and dynamic account of the ways in which language and culture are transformed and negotiated in the face of social and political change.

Chapter I

Revisiting Literary Sinitic and the Late Nineteenth-Century Japan and Taiwan

However, if we speak of culture in the Sinospheric realm, it would be a culture that circulated through the Sinographic script, and perhaps even more so, a culture that possessed the very nature of grappling with the Sinographs themselves.¹

Even though the writing was handed down from the divine to human hands, it did not immediately become script for the common people. The ability to read and write remained a privilege. The scholar-officials, the lower nobility class permitted to bear arms, gained the ability to participate in governance by seizing the Sinographs from the world of priests and shamans. The written words were recorded and circulated on bamboo slips, wooden tablets, or silk. Unlike oracle bones or bronze vessels, these Sinographs did not lose their meaning when transcribed. One could say that their meaning lay in being transcribed. Documents written in the Sinographic script became the lifeblood of administration. This domain, where the Sinographic script circulated, was indeed the Middle Kingdom² itself, as well as the broader

¹ 「しかし、もし漢字圏における文化を言うのであれば、それは漢字によって流通した文化であると同時に、あるいはそれ以上に、漢字との格闘そのものが文化であるような性質を持つものであろう。」 Saitō Mareshi, *Kanji sekai no chihei: Watashitachi ni totte moji to wa nani ka* (Tōkyō: Kabushiki Kaisha Shinchōsha, 2014), 53

² While referring to the domain of the ancient Chinese empires as the “Central Land” offers a more faithful translation, reflecting their worldview wherein the “central” land was the realm they governed, surrounded by lesser realms, the term “Middle Kingdom” is now more commonly used in current English scholarship.

Sinosphere. The rise of the scholar-officials and the establishment of the Sinosphere were inseparable.³

—Saitō Mareshi, *The Sinographic World's Horizon: On the Meaning of Writing*

David Lurie, a scholar of early Japanese literature, introduces a significant concept he terms “a-legible,” unveiling an intriguing facet of writing that transcends mere legibility. It challenges the equivalence we often assume between Sinographic writing and language. This perspective suggests that, apart from the capacity to be read and understood, writing inherently possesses nonlinguistic qualities that defy straightforward interpretation. These “a-legible” qualities transcend explicit linguistic representation and carry an ultra-signification that can even render the writing more symbolically enticing, aesthetically intriguing, or carry an aura due to its distinctiveness from everyday language. Lurie proposes that the potential for Literary Sinitic and Sinographic characters to traverse diverse contexts, drawing attention and eliciting a sense of subjection from even the illiterate, exemplifies this “defiance of understanding” inherent in writing. In essence, he emphasizes that the technology of writing constructs a framework that extends beyond a mere system of representing speech.⁴ Saitō Mareshi, a scholar who has written

³ 「文字が神から人の手に渡ったからといって、ただちに民衆の文字になったわけではない。文字の読み書きは、あくまで特権であった。武装を許された下層貴族階級としての士は、神官や巫祝たちの世界から文字を奪うことで統治に加わる能力を得た。読み書きされたことばは、竹簡や木簡、あるいは帛に記され、流通していく。甲骨や青銅器とは異なり、その文字は転写されても意味を失わない。転写されることに意味があるのだとしてもいい。漢字で書かれた文書が行政の血流となる。漢字の流通するこの領域こそ、中国であり、漢字圏である。士という階層の台頭と漢字圏の成立は不可分であろう。」 Saitō, *Kanji sekai no chihei*, 43.

⁴ David Lurie, *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011).

on the subject of Sinographic writing extensively for the past two decades,⁵ also opposes seeing Sinographic script in the Japanese context as an “inevitable other,”⁶ arguing that the circulation of writing and speech should be separately and independently considered. Both of them, in other words, see Sinographic writing and its scripts as a system, medium, and technology of writing, rather than merely a written version of the “Chinese language.”

This chapter aligns with this reconsideration of the nature of Sinographic writing and the two scholars’ challenging of conventional interpretations of positing an anachronical linguistic entity. Taking the notion of “a-legible” as a point of departure, this chapter aims to establish a language to theorize the coexistence and grapplings of the ideas of language during the transformation of Sinographic writing. I view the shift in notion from a-legible writing to legible priority as an issue inseparable from many discourses and debates in cultural history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In this dissertation, the first two chapters will focus on how the idea of language is projected by Sinographic writing and its impact on the Meiji Empire and the colonized subjects, proposing that Saitō’s framework can help structure this. The third chapter will suggest that theater can act as a site to observe how the allure of Sinographic writing works not only in the realm of writing and language but also in the aesthetic of voice, which turns it into part of the culture of the illiterate. Although my approach may be unconventional, addressing Literary Sinitic as literature or language, I am convinced that these are precisely the

⁵ For a complete introduction to Saitō, see Ross King and Christina Laffin, “Editors’ Preface: Saitō Mareshi, the ‘Literary Sinitic Context,’ and Literary Modernity in the Former Sinographic Cosmopolis” in Saitō Mareshi, *Kanbunmyaku: The Literary Sinitic Context and the Birth of Modern Japanese Language and Literature*, ed. Ross King and Christina Laffin (Leiden: Brill, 2020), xxi–xxii.

⁶ The notion of “inevitable other” refers to Japanese literary critic Koyasu Nobukuni’s emblematic book title, *Kanjiron: Fukahi no tasha* [On “Kanji”: As an Inevitable Other] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003). Saitō’s objection to applying the linguistic other framework on the regard of Sinography (*Kanji*) can be seen in Saitō, *Kanji sekai no chihei*, 202–6.

aspects that are being “deterritorialized,” to use Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s concept,⁷ by the linguistic concepts familiar to the present.

According to Ross King, the terminology surrounding this Sinographic tradition has been particularly intricate within English-language scholarship.⁸ To my knowledge, this complexity has stemmed from two main factors. First, the multidisciplinary nature of the subject has led to the use of diverse terminology in different regions. Second, finding an English word or phrase that has adequately captured the essence of this tradition, with its intertwined spoken and written languages and without specific national or linguistic connotations, has proved challenging in modern commonly used vocabulary. For the sake of consistency, I have chosen to align with the terminology used in the Brill publication series “Language, Writing, and Literary Culture in the Sinographic Cosmopolis” (2018–22). This choice provides readers with a reference point for understanding the terminology used in this chapter:

1. I have chosen the term “Literary Sinitic” to translate 漢文 (read as *han-wen* in modern Chinese and *kanbun* in Japanese), which is also often referred to in Anglophone scholarship as classical Chinese, written Sinitic, or literary Chinese, among others. In

⁷ The concept of deterritorialization has been widely adopted and applied in colonial and postcolonial studies to examine the ways in which cultural elements, identities, and practices are uprooted from their original contexts and reterritorialized within colonial spaces and power dynamics. What I refer to here is the influence of modern theories on reshaping the understanding of East Asian cultural practices. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), especially the “Introduction: Rhizome” and the plateau “On the Relation of the War-Machine to the State Apparatus.” For further discussion of de-territorialization in postcolonial theory, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁸ Ross King, “Editorial preface,” in Kin Bunkyo, *Literary Sinitic and East Asia: A Cultural Sphere of Vernacular Reading*, ed. Ross King, trans. Ross King, Marjorie Burge, Si Nae Park, Alexey Lushchenko, and Mina Hattori (Leiden: Brill, 2021), x.

Chinese studies, the term “*wenyan*” (文言, literally “written speech”) denotes the same kind of writing but has a different connotation.

2. I use the term “Sinographic Cosmopolis” to refer to 漢字文化圈 (Jp. *kanji bunkaken*, Ch. *hanzi wenhuaquan*), which is also known in English scholarship often interchangeably as the East Asian Cultural Sphere, the Sinic World,⁹ or Sinosphere.¹⁰ However, I follow Zev Handel’s suggestion for “Sinographosphere” or “Sinographic Cosmopolis” to “makes no claims about cultural influence beyond the use of writing itself.”¹¹ It is important to note that this is a retrospective academic concept and may not be a term that was commonly used by people in the past.
3. A concise history of the geographical expansion of Literary Sinitic can be found in Alexander Beecroft’s *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day*.¹²

As the anchor for Literary Sinitic is the writing and the source of authority lies in its script practice, I opt for terms that convey this implication as much as possible, and generally avoid an evocation of an air of ethnic, textual, and linguistic isomorphism or a misleading anachronical association of “national” boundaries.

⁹ Edwin Reischauer, “The Sinic World in Perspective,” *Foreign Affairs*. 52 no. 2 (1974): 341–348.

¹⁰ James Matisoff, “On Megalocomparison,” *Language* 66 no.1 (1990): 106–120. He defines “the Chinese and Indian areas of linguistic/cultural influence in Southeast Asia as the ‘Sinosphere’ and the ‘Indosphere’.”

¹¹ Zev Handel, *Sinography: The Borrowing and Adaptation of the Chinese Script* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 10.

¹² Alexander Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London: Verso, 2015), 121–122.

“The First Sinographic Sphere” and “The Second Sinographic Sphere”

Clearly, since its introduction to the Japanese archipelago in the fifth century, the logographic Sinographic script has been one of the most captivating forms of writing, intertwined with symbolic power and legitimacy. As Lurie points out, “A major argument is that logography remained central even after the emergence of visually distinctive phonographic scripts.”¹³ He advocates a reconsideration of “*kundoku*,”¹⁴ and states that “it is impossible to conceptualize Japanese culture in terms of a linguistic opposition between Chinese and Japanese.”¹⁵ Even with the availability of the phonographic kana script, which allowed for a more phonetically accurate representation of the Japanese spoken language, history told us that the logographic style of Sinographic writing was still a dominant part of Japanese writing practices. For example, the early eleventh-century *The Tale of Genji*, one of the most classic Japanese literary works, was transcribed and circulated with a significant percentage of phonographic kana, yet in the late

¹³ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 11–12.

¹⁴ *Kundoku* (訓読, “reading by glossing”) in Japanese refers to a particular writing pattern to accompany the usage of Sinographic writing. It literally means to add “gloss” (“*kun*,” literally meaning “annotation”) in Sinographic texts to adjust the syntax and grammar in order to match up with readers’ knowledge of Japanese spoken language. The interpretation of this writing practice varies—as it involves how scholars presume the relationship between writing and language, that is, whether *kundoku* means vernacularization (a localization of a cosmopolitan language), translation (between two languages), or interpretation (this notion is particularly supported by the view seeing Siniticized Buddhist sutra as the initial inspiration of *kundoku*). Moreover, it is the gap and coordination between writing and voice that draws attentions from some scholars such as Lurie and Saitō. Furthermore, *kundoku* and *kunyomi* differ in that *kundoku* means a practice of reading Sinographic “writing,” whereas *kunyomi* refers to the reading of Sinographic “words” in accord with readers’ knowledge of Japanese spoken language. For more discussion on *kundoku*, see John Whitman, “The ubiquity of the gloss,” *Scripta* 3 (2011): 95–121; Judy Wakabayashi, “Script as a Factor in Translation,” *Journal of World Literature* 1.2 (2016): 173–194; Rebekah Clements, *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), chap. 3; Kin, *Literary Sinitic and East Asia*; Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, chap. 4; and Saitō, *Kanbunmyaku*, chap. 2.

¹⁵ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 11–12. It should be emphasized that Lurie’s point is more complicated than I present here. His concern is not on a contrast between logography and phonography, but “the *coexistence* of logography and phonography—enables a range of internal aesthetic and expressive effects” (11). *Kundoku* should, therefore, be considered as a creative practice that reflects the coordination between the logographic Sinography and phonographic scripts. What he suggests is to stress the variety and avoid the essentialization of phonographic representation of speech as more “indigenous” and “culturally authentic.”

nineteenth century, Japanese scholars were still debating whether they should abandon Sinographic writing.¹⁶ This phenomenon has not been unique to Japan.

In the context of the Korean peninsula, which played a pivotal role in introducing Sinographic culture to Japan, the fifteenth-century invention of hangul, the modern Korean writing system, was famously commissioned by King Sejong. However, it faced opposition from many Confucian scholar-officials in the Korean court. Vietnam also clung to its full Sinographic writing system until the Romanization movement during French colonization. In summary, the insistence on logographic rather than phonographic styles raises important questions: What precisely constitutes this “a-legibility?” What motivates and compels subjects to persistently invest in and adhere to this technology? And conversely, what factors eventually break this spell? This chapter examines the underlying reasons for the sustained commitment to logographic styles, closely tied to their spatial implications. In essence, it delves into how individuals conceptualize and relate to logographic styles, exploring the mental maps they create and adhere to. This exploration serves to understand both the enduring appeal of logographic styles and the factors that may lead to their declining allure when they fail to adapt to changing circumstances.

The consideration of “the first Sinographic sphere” and “the second Sinographic sphere” together, I argue, may shed light on these questions in relation to Sinographic scripts’ configuration and crisis of legitimacy. By “the first Sinographic sphere” and “the second Sinographic sphere,” I borrow the language from Saitō, who maintains the domain within the Middle Kingdom, or the ancient Chinese empires, as the first stage that usage of Sinographic scripts extended its leverage, which he refers to as “the first Sinographic sphere.” The extension

¹⁶ This depiction is inspired by Konno Shinji, *Kanji to katakana to hiragana: Nihongo hyōki no rekishi*, (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2017), 107–114. Intriguingly, a trend even emerged during the early Meiji era to translate or rescript the iconic Japanese literary work, *The Tale of Genji*, into Literary Sinitic. This phenomenon may further complicate a binary oppositional understanding between the phonographic kana scripts and the logographic Sinoscripts. For more information on the efforts to translate *The Tale of Genji* into Literary Sinitic, see Michael Emmerich, *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 303–308.

goes beyond the Central Land, including Japan, Korea, and Vietnam as the scope for the second stage of expansion, which is referred to as “the second Sinographic sphere.” This second sphere roughly amounts to the contexts where most of the discussion of Sinographic tradition occurs in current academic research. Here, I derive the term “the Middle Kingdom” from early modern studies. The “Middle Kingdom” is a term that carries historical and cultural significance, reflecting China’s traditional view of itself as the center of the world, whereas “China” is a more modern and neutral term used to refer to the country as a geopolitical entity. As historian Kai-wing Chow puts it, “the Middle Kingdom, a name that literally put China at the center of its world *tianxia* (the realm under heaven),” inevitably, is a lexicon that evokes “the Sinocentric geopolitical scheme” and assumes an aura of spatial centrality.¹⁷ As the use of “Middle Kingdom” connotes more specifically ancient and imperial China, reflecting the country’s self-image and its relations with other regions, I opt for this term in my discussion of Sinography, implying a revamping of Sinography’s envisioning when the country turns to be the modern “China.”

Returning to the concepts of “the first Sinographic sphere” and “the second Sinographic sphere,” it should be noted my emphasis lies less on the temporal sequence and more on the spatial division. When Saitō contends that “the first Sinographic sphere” occurs within the confines of the realm of the Middle Kingdom, he in effect challenges the convention that scholars usually would refrain from discussing the Sinographic tradition inside it. Typical themes in the literature deal with the circulation of Sinographic script and its texts outside the Middle Kingdom, as seen in titles such as Joshua Fogel’s *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese*

¹⁷ Kai-wing Chow, “Narrating Nation, Race, and National Culture: Imagining the Hanzu Identity in Modern China,” in *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia*, ed. Kai-wing Chow, Kevin Doak, and Poshek Fu (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 49–50. Kevin Doak’s article in the same book discusses in order to counter “the Middle Kingdom”’s hegemonic connotation, Japan began to use the term “*shina*,” a transliteration of the English word “China.” This happened around the nineteenth century and also reflected one of the phenomena in relation to the traditional Sinocentric world order and modern global order’s intersection and negotiation.

Relations in Space and Time,¹⁸ or a conference proceeding *Brush Conversation in the Sinographic Cosmopolis: Interactional Cross-Border Communication Using Literary Sinitic in Early Modern East Asia* (hereafter *Brush Conversation*). Published in 2022, *Brush Conversation*'s editors describe the conference as an international success, "About two dozen experts from China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam came together to share their insights,"¹⁹ and another contributor sees the symposium symbolizes a "second miracle" after China lost its self-esteem in the mid-1840s—"to the Western power and Japan"—in which context, "sinograms were blamed to be a cause of illiteracy," critiqued and demanded to be abandoned.²⁰ Now, so many international scholars have come to elaborate on the age-old tradition of Sinographic writing in their respective cultures, suggesting the lost recognition resumed and the value of Sinography was justified. Implied in this discourse, a logic of bestowing and receiving comes to the forefront. Sinography is seen in this view as a crystallization of Sinitic culture, and the overseas influence of Sinography represents Sinitic culture's success.²¹ Such a stance could

¹⁸ Joshua A. Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ David C. S. Li, Reijiro Aoyama, and Tak-sum Wong, "Preface," in *Brush Conversation in the Sinographic Cosmopolis: Interactional Cross-border Communication Using Literary Sinitic in Early Modern East Asia*, ed. David C. S. Li, Reijiro Aoyama, and Tak-sum Wong (London: Routledge, 2022), xxiv.

²⁰ William Shiyuan Wang, "Foreword to *Brush Conversation in the Sinographic Cosmopolis: the Second Miracle*," in *Brush Conversation in the Sinographic Cosmopolis*, 2022, xvii.

²¹ Torquil Duthie, in his book *Manyōshū and the Imperial Imagination in Early Japan*, dedicates a chapter to debunking the myth that the overseas influence of Sinography serves as a testament to Sinitic culture's success and prominence. Instead, he argues that the early Japanese imperial court's reliance on Sinographic literacy as a means of governance stemmed from the collapse of the Middle Kingdom's core area, rather than its stability. In other words, the weakening of the central power led to the increased mobility of literate individuals who dispersed from the center, especially scribal labors. For instance, Duthie points to the collapse of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386–535) as a catalyst for the Sinicization of Japan's Yamato court. The resources and space released from the center enabled the peripheries to establish its symbolic authority. In a sense, he proposes a reconceptualization of the tributary relationship and the Sinographic world order, with less emphasis on hegemonic power and more on dynamics and mobility. See Torquil Duthie, *Man'yōshū and the Imperial Imagination in Early Japan* (Boston: Brill, 2014).

inadvertently trap us in the cycle of replicating cultural essentialism and falling into the sphere of Sinocentric thinking, in which civilization is demonstrated through usage of Sinoscripts.

In essence, the perspective reflected in the prologue to *Brush Conversation* disregards the idea that the “Middle Kingdom” results from continuous interactions with various sources, as highlighted by New Qing historians Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton’s criticism of the Sinicization model.²² It essentially treats “outer countries,” a category for regions outside the Middle Kingdom, as entirely “external,” failing to explore deeper connections and interplay beyond “a single civilizing vector.” In the context of the Middle Kingdom, the inner-outer boundary serves a dual purpose. It acts as a conceptual border, preserving the Middle Kingdom’s demarcation from the outside. Internally, as long as they hold on the boundary, local societies and marginalized populations can be encompassed as homogeneous as the state center. In this manner, the inner-outer boundary is essential to both protect the Middle Kingdom’s uniqueness and nurture a sense of unity among its diverse internal regions and populations by urging them to overlook their disparities. Critical research on Sinoscript, however, is frequently conducted outside the boundaries of the Middle Kingdom. This perpetuates a recurring dynamic wherein the Middle Kingdom is seen as the “grantor” of Sinoscript, while those beyond its borders are labeled as “recipients.” Such a perspective unintentionally patronizes and further conceals the internally diverse local societies and their relationship with Sinoscript.

²² “The sinicization model assumed a single civilizing vector directed from a China-based imperial center toward distinct peoples at the margins. This narrative of expansion, migration, and cultural transformation was predicated on irrevocable assimilation in a single direction, short and long term, and elided any characterization of Chinese culture as a product of unceasing convergences of and divergences from heterogeneous sources. It tended to detach local society and indigenous populations from the state-making process, and permitted the history of military conquests by empires based in China to be considered minor, negligible details. In its fixation on ‘the frontier,’ the narrative of sinicization marginalized the very populations it purported to include, and thereby obscured a multiplicity of institutions and networks outside the imperial imagination that were created by and helped condition the consciousness and practice of locals. In short, sinicization posited a special category distinct from acculturation or assimilation, and implied that the causes and effects of change are the same—the inherent charisma of Chinese culture.” Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton, *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 6.

Consequently, the exclusive association of critical Sinography studies with locations outside the Middle Kingdom without investigating the dialectics constituting its own formation reinforces the demarcation as absolute.

Methodologically, the primary intervention of Saitō's work is a form of "writing back": he paves the way for contemporary Sinography studies to engage in a dialogue with the examination of the Middle Kingdom. Saitō does not regard the Middle Kingdom as an a priori cultural entity. Rather, he states, "However, the first Sinographic sphere was the Middle Kingdom. It is the primary Sinographic sphere. The East Asian Sinographic sphere can be understood as its secondary expansion. Moreover, the principle that established it as a Sinographic sphere is rooted in the same principle that established the primary Sinographic sphere, that is, the principle by which the Middle Kingdom became the Middle Kingdom."²³ The Middle Kingdom is not merely a lender to a civilization that exports Sinoscripts. Rather, it is itself a creation of its very product. Sinography operates as a "principle" that constructs the Middle Kingdom to be the Middle Kingdom; at its core, it establishes and imparts an aura of centrality to its spatial status and culture. Moreover, Saitō regards the expansion of Sinoscripts to other regions as rooted in the same fundamental principle that shapes the foundation of the Middle Kingdom. In both the first and second spheres, there is a high chance, as Saitō suggests, that the two spaces involve a similar agenda of managing the allure, consolidating the legitimacy, and repressing the discrepancy through intellectual discourses. This means the fluidity of literacy and speech is promised in the realm of the Middle Kingdom, inspiring neighboring countries to adopt the Sinoscripts as their primary writing system. The possibility of employing Sinographic scripts beyond linguistic boundaries can stem from an equivalent mechanism operating within the first

²³ 「しかし、最初の漢字圏は中国であった。第一次漢字圏である。東アジア漢字圏は、その二次的拡張として捉えうる。そして、それが漢字圏として成立した原理は、第一次漢字圏が成立した原理、すなわち中国が中国となった原理と通底しているのである。」 Saitō, *Kanji sekai no chihei*, 45.

Sinographic sphere in its delicate interplay with voice diversity. The sentiment of linguistic and writing disengagement may not be that different in both spheres; only the sense of foreignness may have been more invisible within the collective memory of the first Sinographic sphere.

By asserting the historical relevance of “the first Sinographic sphere”—the circulation of Sinographic script and its texts within the Middle Kingdom—and “the second Sinographic sphere”—Saitō’s notion disrupts the cycle of repeating the Sinocentric narrative of “the inherent charisma of Chinese culture.”²⁴ Saitō’s notion implies the proximity and continuity between the mechanisms operating inside and outside. In this way, Saitō not only effectively challenges the conventional approach of scholars who typically avoid delving into the Sinographic tradition within the Middle Kingdom, but, more importantly, blurs the designation of the external and internal realms that center on the perspective of the Middle Kingdom. By recognizing that the two Sinographic spheres operate under the same mechanism but with different responses and interpretations, we can conduct a more productive and meaningful analysis. On the premise that the second Sinographic sphere is a derivative of the first expansion, the first sphere is thus essential to excavate the second, and reciprocally, the second serves as a mirror for the first. I contend the interconnectedness of the two spheres may benefit the transparency of the Middle Kingdom, urging us to approach what the Middle Kingdom strives to conceal in its apparatus.

I would like to offer another perspective: Exploring “the first Sinographic sphere” and “the second Sinographic sphere” allows us to examine the cultural history of colonial Taiwan and colonizer or imperial Japan as East Asian imperialism in a new light. From this perspective, the cession of Taiwan by the Qing China, the last descendant of the Middle Kingdom, and its subsequent colonization by Japan, one of the primary role players in the Second Sinographic sphere, provides a natural comparative context.

²⁴ Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton, *Empire at the Margins*, 6.

In this way, I view late nineteenth-century Japan and Taiwan, with their relationship as colonizer and colonized, as a space for “the first Sinographic sphere” and “the second Sinographic sphere” to engage in a conversation. While this relationship reflects colonial control, it also serves as a convergence point for dialogues and ideas about writing, language, and sound. My comparison emphasizes the attitudes and the perceived proximities to Sinographic writing, which serve as an identity marker that reflects the consciousness of individuals living in a Sinitic world. Although relying on classifications such as ethnicity, race, or nationality may seem intuitive to modern readers, these categories were mostly novel and externally imposed on people living in that era.²⁵ To better understand the perceptions and understandings of people living in that time period, it is essential to trace their conceptualizations and identify how they framed their worldviews dependently on the dominant cultural hegemony. The degree to which an individual is influenced by the prevailing cultural narrative can be ascertained by examining their exposure to and indoctrination by the texts that constitute the bedrock of that historical discourse.

The “first Sinographic sphere” may, as the case of colonial Taiwan will show us, not only be understood as a relationship between the so-called “Sinitic languages” and the Sinographic script. Instead, it is likely to have experienced a higher level of forgetting, commitment, and internalization of belief compared to the second expansion. In other words, the idea of “the first Sinographic sphere” highlights how each member within the sphere imagines themselves as part of a collective ownership of writing and literacy, while downplaying the apparent disparities in

²⁵ Primarily because “ethnicity” was, by itself, a developing conceptualization in the broader context of East Asia, and, to a large part, not yet a consequence of substance. See Kevin Doak, “What Is a Nation and Who Belongs? National Narratives and the Ethnic Imagination in Twentieth-Century Japan,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 2 (1997): 283–309.

speech among the members. These members are self-aligned to voluntarily engage with the values and vision promised by the sphere.

If the Middle Kingdom is formed through the Sinographic script, the significance may be placed more on sustaining the script's circulation than mere communicative utility. Beyond inviting people from various regions to share the script, they are also expected to embrace the associated cultural identity. Exploring “the first Sinographic sphere” may shed light on this point and provide insights into the dynamics between the first and second spheres.

By investigating the local margins of the Middle Kingdom, specifically focusing on the peripheral literati and illiterate individuals in Taiwan, we can explore how they conceptualize their relationship with Sinography as a source of cultural value. It is crucial to acknowledge that focusing on this marginal space within a specific timeframe may not suffice for a comprehensive and diachronic exploration of the entire concept, complexity, and history of the first Sinographic sphere. However, precisely the very marginality of this place—an isolated archipelago serving as a sea frontier and on the edge of the Middle Kingdom—and its “insignificance”—the central power could cede it to a foreign country—may provide an intriguing lens through which to observe what motivates people to continuously dedicate themselves into “the first Sinographic sphere”; the allure to staying in rather than withdrawing from the framework.

In contrast to the focus on Taiwan as a lens for the first Sinographic sphere, this project aims to engage with and consider “the second Sinographic sphere” through an investigation of Japan in the late nineteenth century. This exploration seeks to go beyond the conventional view of Meiji Japan (1868–1912) and the colonization of Taiwan (1895–1945) as mere catalysts for the collapse of the Middle Kingdom. It steers away from a power struggle narrative rooted in cultural essentialism. As Lurie notes, the second Sinographic sphere revolves around fissures and

variations in the reception and replication of ideology and writing from the Middle Kingdom.

While the story of “invention and diffusion” is important, the context of reception, including the employment, storage, discard, or destruction of writing as objects, also deserves attention.²⁶

Examining late nineteenth-century Japan can provide insights into the internal workings of the Sinographic Cosmopolis, as Japan engaged in a deep introspective exploration of Sinographic writing’s meaning within its cultural context. The reassessment of “the essence of language” and its discourse and methodology surrounding this topic, developed in modern Japan and facilitated by its interaction with colonialization, is subsequently reintroduced to the first Sinographic sphere, potentially influencing the linguistic transformation of Sinographic writing in its “original” context. This “export back” process highlights the intellectual flow from the second Sinographic sphere to the first, demonstrating how Japan’s introspective exploration of Sinographic writing can have a significant impact on the understanding and evolution of the writing system in a broader East Asian context. In other words, beyond the establishment of national language consciousness in Japan, the ultimate result of their intellectual grappling, I argue, is the potential impact on the linguistic transformation of Sinographic writing.

The central focus of this investigation is on the epistemology of language and the perceiving side's cultural interaction with writing. By tracing the influence of the Sinographic Cosmopolis on theater and the aural aspect of culture, I argue that we can better understand how language is perceived, understood, and experienced within this cultural landscape. As a cultural medium that serves as a bridge between the written and spoken forms of language, theater engages various sensory modalities, shaping and being shaped by the epistemology of language within its context. By examining the experiential perception of spectators, we can gain valuable insights into how language is comprehended and interpreted within this cultural milieu,

²⁶ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 16.

complicating the dynamics of the Sinographic Cosmopolis to extend beyond linguistic considerations and encompass the aural aspect of culture.

Situating “Japan” and “Taiwan” within the second and first Sinographic spheres, respectively, offers a concrete methodology to explore the interdependence between the two spheres and effectively challenges the traditional notion of a language-based model of nation-states as given. By comparing how these regions perceived, understood, and experienced language within their cultural landscapes, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between the core and periphery of the Sinographic Cosmopolis during a time of crisis, instability, and conceptual transformation, capturing the overall tensions within East Asia in the late nineteenth century.

The intersection of the two spheres in this period is not a coincidence, nor did I simply stumble upon this perfect instance for elaborating their intersection. In fact, the process is quite the opposite. I have been curious about how we can study colonial Taiwan’s history beyond the lens of a geopolitical approach, moving away from the binary sentiment of pro-(China or Japan) and anti-(Japan or China) among the residents in Taiwan. Such an approach often presupposes identity as a self-contained and self-sustaining entity. However, the notions that Meiji Japan is incompatible with China or Qing, that the Republic of Chinese people objects to Meiji Japan, or that people in Taiwan must inevitably choose one or the other to belong to, are oversimplified.

Instead, my curiosity lies in discerning new avenues for studying this history—ones that transcend the customary national confines and open up space for a more nuanced understanding of how and what. Beyond the political history of colonization, cultural development is not always straightforward but can swing from side to side, with trajectories that may not align with each other. Studying the troubling relationship that one has with the medium of writing and

languages would thus be more historically empirical. Prevailing narratives often oversimplify the complex relationships between writing and language as national conflicts. In reality, the late nineteenth century is more akin to a dark cave that people search without a map—it is a time when people are engaged in intricate cultural dialogues about how best to navigate their past and present to stay in tune with the wider world.

The Iceberg of Literary Sinitic: Aesthetic or Linguistic

Before exploring the crack of the iceberg in the late nineteenth century, perhaps it would be beneficial from a reconsideration of how the iceberg has been able to stand for so long without melting—or perhaps just because there has been no sun and enough heat. Above all, has this iceberg been particular from other privileged writing or language in history? As we progress through this introduction, we will take a moment, rather than unpacking further arguments, or delving into the first Sinographic sphere in Taiwan and the second Sinographic sphere in Japan, to turn back to how Lurie’s notion of the “a-legibility” of writing specifies the significance to dissociate writing from speech in our exploration of the first and second Sinographic spheres.

I think it is probable to suppose a fantasy of *immunity to speech* as an essential part of Literary Sinitic’s allure invoked precisely by its nonphonetic property. I have primarily taken up an approach on its ideological or aesthetic functioning and asking the following questions: How does not representing speech constitute a particular politicality? How does the distance from speech influence the imagination of literary and oral culture, the concept of language, and the world? To state the conclusion first, the allure of Sinographic writing, I argue, lies in the hierarchization of power, as well as in the form, texture, and composition of writing implied by the characteristics of Sinography and its texts in Literary Sinitic. These characteristics have

leverage on its circulation, adaptation, and localization. I interpret this as an “aesthetic” dimension being pertinent to the configuration of Literary Sinitic, particularly in the context of my discussion regarding the relationship between speech and script. This aesthetic dimension is, in fact, an aspect that may escape our horizon if we simply apply the model of a lingua franca derived from Latin to traditional East Asia.

By “fantasy,” my focus is that even though we may see the formation of Sinographic scripts has a speech behind its emergence, the circulation of Literary Sinitic as a script is buttressed by presenting itself beyond the confines of spoken language. The possibility to surmount various barriers of voice beyond and within the plurality of Sinitic languages serves as its allure. This makes the mobility of the script constitutive of Literary Sinitic’s legitimacy.

There, I argue, are two kinds of “a-legibility” that Lurie proposes for Literary Sinitic. One pertains to Literary Sinitic’s symbolic authority, particularly in its instrumental roles in diplomacy, politics, and religion. This aspect suggests text and symbols have to be associated with the “center” of the power and are closely linked to the legitimacy of a hierarchical structure and a spatially interpreted world order. Not necessarily knowing what they denote, early Japanese rulers, for example, adopted Sinographic characters as a “symbolic expression of the dominance and the legitimacy of the emperor and the submission of peripheral rulers.”²⁷ This symbolic power of writing can also be as banal as signatures or inscriptions used to assert ownership or provide guarantees. However, the distinctiveness of the form of Sinographic writing may also enhance its unusual texture. In sum, this aspect by large considers the relationship between writing and power. As a representation, creation, or mediation, Sinographic writing was often seen as inseparable from the ruling and cultural power of the Middle Kingdom

²⁷ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 8.

and its emperorship. Such a perspective basically echoes the understanding of lingua franca, often epitomized by Latin, seeing circulation and popularity as a result of the authority.

The other, in Lurie's words, pertains to an "aesthetic" dimension. Beyond its role as a means of communication or a representation of language, Lurie underscores that the "a-legible" quality of writing encompasses not only a sense of power but also an aesthetic dimension that local writers seek to adopt and internalize. This "aesthetic" facet appears to be intricately connected to the morphology of Sinographic writing, specifically involving a "formal analysis" of the stylistic characteristics of character-based writing. Writers envision character-based writing not merely as a medium for recording but as a mode of expression, aligning the act of writing with the aesthetic norms established by Literary Sinitic, as the very platform and paradigm of writing itself. As abstract as "aesthetic dimension" can imply, specifically to my discussion, I interpret this relevance to Literary Sinitic's configuration, particularly concerning the relationship between speech and script.

In a sense, Lurie's primary hypothesis is that the spread and long history of the logographic Sinographic writing system serve as proof that the phonetic representative and legible manner of writing is not a prototype but one application. Without prioritizing legibility logographic writing does not lose its status of and function as writing. This distance with legibility and without a clear correspondence of speech may even contribute to the continuity of its aura as writing. As Lurie asserts, "I am insisting that texts were potentially unaffected by such linguistic differences,"²⁸ and "the meaningful category of difference among texts in this period—

²⁸ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 204. Also, Lurie emphasizes that early Japanese writers did not view the switch between Sinography and kana scripts as a translation between languages. Instead, they perceived it as a shift in writing modes, expressed through what he terms "graphic terms." In this categorization, Sinographic script was classified as "mana," or "true letters," sometimes referred to as "men's characters," while kana was termed "fake" or "temporary letters," often associated with "women's characters."

and for a long time afterward—is not linguistic.”²⁹ He suggests when writers try to “write,” they are also trying to engage the system of character writing, approaching its aesthetic way of signifying, more than merely comprehending it as a linguistic representation. The idea is how to subscribe to this particular “writing system” rather than a language. The key aspect is the “form” or formal quality of the Sinoscript and the concept of “a-legibility” as its captivating aspect.

Literary Sinitic and Latin

Patrick J. Geary, a scholar of early medieval Europe, offers a comparison between Latin and Literary Sinitic writing systems in the prologue of the Chinese translation of his book *Language and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, focusing on the qualitative difference between them. This comparison can enable us to better envision the mechanism of logographic writing and how the aesthetic exploration of logography challenges the assumption that its predominance stems solely from its representation of Chinese languages. Geary highlights a significant difference between the Sinographic Cosmopolis in traditional East Asia and the Latin-derived lingua franca model, attributing it to the formalistic difference between logographic and alphabetic writing systems. He emphasizes the significant impact of the explicit versus implicit representation of phonetic relationships on the connection between writing and language, as well as its potential facilitation or obstruction to vernacularization.³⁰ In his words,

²⁹ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 328.

³⁰ While the implications of vernacularization may vary across cultures and societies—and susceptible to the influence of writing system, it generally involves the adaptation of writing systems to represent the spoken vernacular language and the development of a written literature in that language.

European languages are composed of phonetic alphabets, while Sinoscripts are different, being constructed from logograms [...] ³¹ Throughout history, this enabled the possibility of Literary Sinitic serving as a unified elite communication system, and enabled control over vast regions without concern for linguistic differences. This region not only included present-day China with its hundreds of spoken dialects but also the Korean Peninsula, Japan, and Vietnam, whose languages differed greatly from Chinese. To a limited extent, Latin played a similar role in the West from the Roman Empire through several centuries of the Middle Ages. However, because the phonetic alphabets used to write Latin could also be used to record and replicate other language domains, dialects, and languages, it became easier for written texts to be reproduced in speeches using languages markedly different from standard Latin. Moreover, since Latin was not always, nor accepted by all as the sole suitable language for political and religious communication, code-switching, ³² the introduction of dialectal terms, and even writing entire documents in dialects could serve as strategies to attract different communities. ³³

³¹ The term “logogram” suggests that each character represents a word or a morpheme. While this is true for the majority of Sinographic characters, it is equally important to note that some characters also have phonetic components that provide clues to their pronunciation. Also, the original text continues with “which are independent of phonetics.” However, this statement is not entirely accurate, as Sinographic characters can also have phonetic components and are not completely independent of phonetics. However, they do have a less explicit connection to phonetics compared to alphabetic systems, which allows them to be adapted to different linguistic environments. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between Sinographic characters and phonetics, see John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984); Henry Rogers, *Writing Systems: A Linguistic Approach* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); and Insup Taylor, *Writing and Literacy in Chinese, Korean and Japanese: Revised Edition* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014). I will also try to explain this in the subsequent discussion.

³² Code-switching is a linguistic term that refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or language varieties in conversation or within a text.

³³ Patrick J. Geary, *Zhong shi ji zao qi de yu yan yu quan li* [Language and Power in the Early Middle Ages], trans. Linhai Liu (Shanghai: Zhong xi shu ju, 2019), 1–2.

Geary underscores how the alphabetic nature of Latin writing plays a crucial role in its vernacularization process. The close correspondence between written letters and spoken sounds in alphabetic systems facilitates the adaptation of Latin writing to represent vernacular languages. This inherent phonetic adaptability allows for a more seamless transition from Latin to vernacular writing systems, as the alphabet can be modified or expanded to represent the unique sounds of various spoken languages.³⁴ The alphabetic nature can assist, rather than contradict, Latin's potential for vernacularization.

In contrast, the logographic nature of Literary Sinitic writing presents a different set of challenges for vernacularization. The lack of a one-to-one correspondence between characters and sounds means that adapting Literary Sinitic writing to represent vernacular languages requires more extensive modifications and innovations, such as the development of new characters or the use of phonetic borrowing.³⁵ As a result, the vernacularization process for Literary Sinitic writing is more complex and gradual compared to the relatively straightforward phonetic adaptation of alphabetic systems like Latin.

Geary's comparison is valuable to our discussion, as it highlights how the degree of explicit attachment to spoken sounds relates to the aptness for vernacularization and the flexibility or changeability of a writing system. The extent to which a writing system incorporates spoken sounds influences the potential for representing linguistic diversity. Simply put, Latin's alphabetic nature enables greater adaptability in capturing various languages and dialects due to its ability to incorporate and adapt to different linguistic sounds. This maintains a

³⁴ For more on the role of alphabetic writing in vernacularization, see Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982) and Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

³⁵ On the challenges of vernacularizing logographic writing systems, see Peter Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) and Zev Handel, *Sinography: The Borrowing and Adaptation of the Chinese Script* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

strong correlation with spoken language and accommodates diverse tongues through its phonetic alphabets. In this way, Latin is portrayed as an open system capable of assimilating various languages and giving rise to divergent developmental paths. In contrast, Sinitic characters are characterized as a self-contained system, resistant to mutation and impervious to outside influences. Sinographic scripts like Literary Sinitic have a limited capacity to directly represent and transmit spoken language sounds.

The reason I compare Literary Sinitic and Latin is to underscore their unique qualities beyond solely categorizing them as *lingua franca*s. While both have frequently been understood as *lingua franca*s, such a categorization may limit our imagination and comprehension of their distinctive characteristics. Although the framework of *lingua franca* clearly addresses power dynamics of their hegemonic status and circulation across various contexts, it may also constrain our understanding of the other critical aspects of Literary Sinitic, which could be detrimental to discerning its fundamental mechanism. Excavating and examining the essence of Literary Sinitic's writing system, rather than merely categorizing it as a *lingua franca*, is imperative. It guides us to discern how Literary Sinitic interacted with regional contexts, not by transcending and adapting to various cultural settings while maintaining an inherent connection to ancient Chinese civilization, but rather by maintaining an alienation from them. The notion of Literary Sinitic's ability to transcend cultural boundaries while preserving an intrinsic Chinese essence needs to be critically examined. Such a characterization may inadvertently reinforce a Han-centric perspective that overlooks the complex interplay between Literary Sinitic and regional contexts, both within the ancient Chinese empires and beyond, as well as the diverse ways in which it was received, negotiated, and transformed across different cultural settings.³⁶

³⁶ For more discussion about the comparison of Literary Sinitic and Latin, see John Timothy Wixted, "'Literary Sinitic' and 'Latin' as Transregional Languages: With Implications for Terminology Regarding 'Kanbun'," *Sino-*

Abstraction and Veiling in Metaphonetic Writing

It should be noted that I do not suggest a dichotomy between alphabetic and Sinographic writing systems; rather, my focus lies in the recognition that systematic understandings of language may differ. The Sinologist linguist John DeFrancis, who has taken a clear stance against the “ideographic myth” of Sinography, is probably one of the most renowned figures to disagree with and caution against this divide between alphabetic and Sinographic writing systems. In his book, *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy*, DeFrancis has cautioned against excessively emphasizing the visual nature of Sinitic writing, arguing that it is not purely visual, non-phonetic, or ideographic in essence. While DeFrancis’ insights may appear contradictory to Geary’s advocacy of a “qualitative difference” between alphabetic and Literary Sinitic writing systems, his analysis provides a nuanced examination of how logographic scripts interact with sounds. By delving into this interaction, we come to understand that it does not necessarily refute Geary’s perspective.

In the section titled “How Do Chinese Characters Represent Sounds,” DeFrancis offers insights into the relationship between Sinoscripts and phonetics. He discusses the following points:

1. “Alphabetic systems possess an inventory of symbols, called an alphabet, to represent the individual phonemes.”³⁷
2. “The notion of Chinese as an ideographic script, any system of writing not based on actual speech would require feats of memory that are humanly quite impossible.”³⁸

Platonic Papers 276 (2018): 1–14.

³⁷ DeFrancis, *Chinese Language*, 89.

3. “The Chinese syllabary does provide useful phonetic clues in the overwhelming majority of Chinese characters,” and “the Chinese phonetic elements represent not phonemes but syllables.”³⁹

While DeFrancis argued against the emphasis on cultural particularity inherent in Sinographic script, contending that the methods used to study European alphabetic languages could also apply to understanding Sinography, he maintained that in creating Sinography, sound elements were creatively reshaped into a series of symbols. DeFrancis primarily introduced two influential models for understanding the nature of Sinographic characters—the logographic model and the morphosyllabic model.⁴⁰ The logographic model views Chinese characters as logograms that directly represent whole words or morphemes visually, without a phonetic component. It emphasizes the semantic aspect, treating each character as an ideogram symbolizing a unique concept disconnected from speech sounds. This aligns with the traditional Western notion of Chinese writing as a purely idea-based system. However, DeFrancis argued the morphosyllabic model was more accurate. Under this view, characters integrate both semantic and phonetic information simultaneously. Most characters contain semantic radicals indicating meaning alongside phonetic radicals hinting at syllabic pronunciation. Though these phonetic components do not have a strictly alphabetic relationship to sounds, serving more as mnemonic aids. Thus, the morphosyllabic model sees characters as stylized representations of

³⁸ DeFrancis, *Chinese Language*, 163.

³⁹ DeFrancis, *Chinese Language*, 111.

⁴⁰ DeFrancis also noted a “lexigraphic” model that views characters as representing both semantic and phonetic information, but in a more blended way without clearly separating the meaning and sound components like the morphosyllabic model does. This highlights both meaning and sound aspects of characters, falling between the logographic and morphosyllabic models. Since the logographic and morphosyllabic models represent the two ends of the spectrum, this analysis will primarily focus on those two models.

morphemes through their semantic radicals and syllables through their phonetic radicals, capturing the tight historical link between Chinese writing and speech in an abstractly metaphonetic manner distinct from alphabetic systems.

For this matter, a traditional Sinologist would probably allude to the rule of “six classes” proposed by the first-century Middle Kingdom literati Xu Shen, who noted “pictophonetic”—a combination of pictorial and phonetic metamorphosis understanding—as one of the six methods of characters’ creating process.⁴¹ This view suggested Sinitic script consisted of a lexicon of sounds in a coded representation. Chinese scholar Shang Wei, in describing the nature of sound elements within characters, noted it “does not dictate the pronunciation of a character in the way most phonetic scripts do, and the actual pronunciation has evolved across time and space.” Wei Shang referenced Lydia Liu’s notion of “attributed phonetic value (APV),” who coined this term to capture “the fluidity of the abstract phonetic value assigned to the written character as opposed to its actual pronunciation in speech, whether Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese or otherwise.”⁴²

Each of these models involved varying ways in which sound elements were transformed into signs within a word. These symbols followed logics distinct from alphabets in capturing sound. Instead of aiming for a precise representation of linguistic sound, Sinographic words compromised their role as a tool of transcription, meaning the linguistic sounds they “represented” inherently lacked transparency.

In other words, the linguistic approach generally focused on how the creation of Sinographic characters interacted with speech, studying the connection between written characters, especially in nonalphabetic or nonphonetic scripts like Sinographic characters, and

⁴¹ For more discussion of Xu Shen’s classification of Sinographic characters, see Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 334–35.

⁴² Wei Shang, “Writing and Speech: Rethinking the Issue of Vernaculars in Early Modern China,” in *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000–1919*, ed. Benjamin Elman (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 289.

the nuanced ways they represented spoken language or languages. These analyses revealed the existence of phonetic elements, highlighting how they played an essential role in assisting the memorization and categorization of the characters. However, while sounds might be “represented,” they were represented through a metaphonetic transformation rather than through direct phonetic transliteration.

Such “metaphonetic transformation” may be the process that the abstraction of sound stems from. In the latter part of the dissertation, I will focus on how this, entangled with rhyme books and the concept of “proper voice,” elucidates their impact on the oral expression of theater—an aspect that will enable us to observe the influence of Sinographic culture extending beyond language. It reveals that by effectively shaping cultural and linguistic imagination, Sinographic culture encourages individuals to strive for a voice that resonates with the elegance of the past. This emphasis on elegance does not necessarily translate to legible speech; rather, it mirrors their elusive presence within the allure of writing.

In our present conversation, it is crucial to remember that a word’s association with sound elements is not equal to a script’s fixation in one speech. The symbolic transformation of sound elements into one symbol involves using graphical elements to convey phonetic information rather than a direct one-to-one mapping of individual speech sounds. In other words, instead of having each symbol corresponding to a specific sound, as in alphabetic writing, a metaphonetic approach uses symbols to suggest a range of possible sounds, usually involving an abstraction in representing speech. These symbols might indicate a sound category, a group of related sounds, or even certain aspects of sound articulation without necessarily providing a precise phonetic match. Metaphonetic transformation involves a creative process where the graphical elements interact with phonetic elements in a way that captures the essence of speech without adhering

strictly to the specific sound details. This allows for a more versatile representation of linguistic elements within the constraints of the writing system.

This also means that the writing system of Sinography is to provide a matrix of relationality among sounds—the sound value among words are correlative, rather than deictic. Theoretically, as long as you can designate all the sounds in a language corresponding to proper elements, Sinitic scripts can present—note that I deliberately avoid using “represent”—any language. The creation of words can have a very fluid relationship with sound, as DeFrancis depicts, “It underscores the fact that there was no fixed syllabary upon which the Chinese could draw in creating characters. Instead, the characters as a whole formed a sort of grab bag to be dipped into at will by individual creators of new characters who lived in widely different historical epochs and had widely different dialect backgrounds.”⁴³ As a nonlinguist, I know the limits of my ability to analyze in detail how the nonalphabetic writing of Literary Sinitic mechanically interacts with sound. “A sort of grab bag” as a metaphor, I think, is probably sufficient to delineate the Sinographic characters work somewhat independently from sounds, which attests Geary’s notion that individual speech is not explicitly representable.

Essentially, the characters, rather than corresponding to an individual speech, both encompass speech diversity and also veil them. This dual nature stems from the metaphonetic transformation process inherent to Sinographic writing. On one hand, since the characters capture a more abstract representation of sounds, potentially subsuming multiple dialect variations and nuances within a single graphical form, the symbolic elements suggest sound categories, related groups of articulations, or other phonetic qualities rather than precisely transcribing any singular pronunciation. In this way, Sinographic script encompasses a breadth of linguistic diversity—the characters are not beholden to any one regional speech, but can flexibly

⁴³ DeFrancis, *Chinese Language*, 182.

instantiate a range of vowel, consonant, and tonal possibilities. The abstraction of the metaphonetic process allows the writing system to subsume the multitudes of the spoken language(s) it represents.

Yet at the same time, this very abstraction paradoxically also veils and obfuscates the intricate details of each individual variety of speech. By not being moored to exactly denoting one set of pronunciations, the characters introduce an inherent ambiguity—they cannot fully capture the rich phonetic nuances present across the spectrum of dialects and speech communities. The veil of abstraction is what permits subsuming diversity, but also what prevents full fidelity to any single utterance.

This stands in contrast to alphabetic systems derived from aural languages, which aim to more transparently transcribe the phonemes and allophones of speech through their grapheme-phoneme mapping. Sinographic writing navigates linguistic heterogeneity through symbolic approximation rather than precise rendition. The characters are positioned to broadly account for spoken variation while still maintaining an idealized remove from the particulars of any individual utterance.

While the production process of Sinography may have inevitably originated from speech, as linguistic approaches show, the product itself is no doubt characterized by its deliberate detachment from that relationship. Discourses that embody and frame the value of this deliberate detachment have contributed to upholding Sinographic writing's status as a widely written literary form. Understanding how Sinographic writing generates the ideas and notions that, in turn, support its circulation can provide a constructive step forward to better grasp this discourse. Although the conventional discourse on ancient Chinese empires often blurred the lines between spoken and written language, neglecting the complexities introduced by the Sinographic script

and its inscription system, highlighting the ambiguity surrounding the language-based interpretation of Sinographic writing complicates the easy equation of “how Chinese writes” with “how Chinese talks.”

Through this comparison with alphabetic languages and writing, my point is not to highlight distinctiveness but to suggest that concepts like writing, reading, dictionaries, language, vernaculars, and many other “ideas” are subject to varying cultural influences. Rather than viewing Sinography primarily as a linguistic question, I am more intrigued by the values, culture, worldviews, and human interactions it reveals and shapes. In short, the tension between Sinographic writing’s contingency on speech and its deliberate detachment from that relationship is what makes it a widely written form of literature.

This subjective endorsement stimulated in reaction to the mechanism of logographic writing prompts me to interpret it as a “fantasy.” It was not until the late nineteenth century, with the invalidation of this legitimacy, that the script’s mobility ultimately lost its spell. By focusing on this “effect” of sustaining belief, the culturally ecological aspect proves crucial for considering how Literary Sinitic, as a mode of detachment, could consolidate across time, space, and class. It sheds light on Literary Sinitic’s envisioned distancing from speech and explores the time when this quality served as an attraction rather than a deflection. It calls attention to the related practice where people were integrated into this linguistic disengagement and habituated into this sensibility.

The driving force behind the Sinographic tradition’s history is more complex than mere exportation from this perspective. Lurie suggests this tradition must be explored through the lens of the target contexts—what motivates and compels the “practitioners” to invest in and commit to this technology persistently, from the bottom-up rather than top-down. To some extent, by

adopting logography's implicit manner of representing sound as the default system, the dichotomy between foreign and local languages became less apparent in terms of how they were represented and conceptualized. Consequently, even when textual practices combined logographic and phonographic scripts, the scripts were framed more as stylistic differences rather than linguistic distinctions.⁴⁴

From this “aestheticization” of writing and weakened linguistic functionality, as Lurie suggests in understanding Japanese writing, it becomes clear that Literary Sinitic's configuration is intricately linked to the unique interplay it implies between voice and writing. This configuration and obscurity of voice is precisely fundamental to the very formulation of the Sinographic Cosmopolis, including the expansion and persistence of the first and second Sinographic Spheres. Inspired by Lurie's analysis of a-legibility, I suggest the possibility that disengagement of speech representation played an essential role in this a-legibility and in maintaining the Middle Kingdom's cultural authority and unity. Rather than a purely constructive approach, I prefer to contemplate Literary Sinitic's intricacies through a performativity theory lens. This allows us to explore it not merely as “how the Middle Kingdom wrote,” which assumes a stable identity. Instead, we can ask “how writing shaped the Middle Kingdom”—how the distinct relationship between writing and inscription molded cultural identity and catalyzed certain ideas' circulation.

Lurie's concept of a-legibility highlights the allure of logographic Sinographic writing beyond its communicative function and the power structure of the Middle Kingdom as a cultural

⁴⁴ The choice of scripts may depend on various factors and circumstances, a topic outside the scope of this dissertation. However, it is reasonable to suggest that considerations such as vocal nuances, visual imagery, and intended readership could play a role. Another perspective posits that the choice of writing scripts may have mattered more in terms of performance rather than function. This could involve considerations of how authors represented themselves and anticipated reader interaction. For example, whether readers were expected to read aloud, especially in kana-based literature, could have been a factor. Japanese scholar Konno Shinji has pointed out the generic tendency of using Sinography phonetically or phonographic *kana* scripts to present *uta* (song). See Konno, *Kanji to katakana to hiragana*, 85–98.

center, which urges us to reconsider the motivation for so many regional populations to embrace the Sinographic script. I view logography as a quality that evokes an even more powerful fantasy. By fantasy, I would like to highlight not its production and composition but “people” and their willingness to accept its subjection and the tradeoff they made. I aim to explore Sinography’s ability to accommodate various voices and how this fluidity consolidates the imagination of writing as the essential mode of language. Establishing a dimensional difference helps eliminate the threats from phonetic representation by setting writing as a prescriptive form of language and facilitating a total intellectual relegation of speech-related forms. While the emergence of Sinographic scripts undoubtedly had speech origins, a purely linguistic approach might risk oversimplifying it as merely a tool to emulate spoken language by people of the past. Instead of the subjects that Sinologists often focus on, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, or the administrative system, my concern is exclusively literary in the sense of how the ideology of writing acts as the primary vehicle—and its cultural influence.

Fantasized Detachment

By delving into the relationship between Sinography and sounds, my research aims: Firstly, to show how the popularity of discoursing “unheard” speech in Japan and Taiwan’s audience culture centered on spoken languages, helps encapsulate Literary Sinitic’s aesthetic influence in oral culture. Secondly, to historicize the colonial cultural history within the context of the Sinographic Cosmopolis’s transformation and Meiji Japan’s struggle with the Sinitic world. A third aim is a kind of debunking and demystifying of the concepts of Sinicization, as well as colonial and postcolonial nationalism. In particular, my focus lies in how the script’s mobility was seen as crucial to, and constitutive of, Literary Sinitic’s legitimacy.

The pivotal aspect of Sinographic writing concerning how it conceals the significance of language lies between a mere linguistic and a mere literary approach. Modern linguistics, as Lurie points out, is premised on speech-based notions and disciplinary reliance on spoken language. In other words, an essential issue for the Sinographic debate is the disciplinary conflict between modern linguistics as a field, with its presumption of speech primacy, and the epistemological practice of writing in the Sinographic Cosmopolis. As Lurie argues, “Also crucial is the problem of writing and its relationship to language. As illustrated repeatedly, insistence on the primacy of speech is intimately related to claims for disciplinary authority and coherence for linguistics. On the other hand, Asian studies—to be more precise, its East Asian component—stands to inherit the unity conferred by textual otherness that marked its Sinological predecessor: as Joseph Levenson pointed out, ‘the radical difference in scripts doubtlessly strengthened the disposition to see in China not a subject for history in all its many branches [...] but an –ology.’”⁴⁵ This explains why the nature and extent of interaction between Sinoscripts and the materialization of sound has been a key focus for many Sino-linguistics scholars. A linguistic approach therefore aids in analyzing how Sinographic scripts materialize sounds from spoken language into written form, articulating the process of production of those materialized representations. It focuses on the productive side—how the transformations from speech to writing are operationalized through the Sinographic system.

The literary approach, on the other hand, provides abundant analysis of Sinographic scripts’ practical use. While written Sinography evokes linguistic questions, Lurie reminds us this may not be the whole picture. The purpose of writing projected in the Sinographic world is

⁴⁵ David B. Lurie, “Language, Writing, and Disciplinarity in the Critique of the ‘Ideographic Myth’: Some Proleptical Remarks.” *Language & Communication* 26, no. 3–4 (July 2006): 266. The Levenson quotation came from Joseph Levenson, “The Humanistic Disciplines: Will Sinology Do?” *Journal of Asian Studies* 23 no. 4 (1964): 507–512.

not solely to capture the spoken voice entirely. It functions as a language, but through the regime of inscription. As the oft-cited Confucian quote mysteriously and symbolically states, “Without learning poetry, how can one speak?” Recent scholarship echoes similar notions—Japanese theorist Naoki Sakai’s concept of textual-based identity and Meiji researcher Atsuko Ueda’s statement that “*bungaku*” or literature has constituted “language.”⁴⁶ To some degree, my research explores what exactly this notion means and implies—a reflection on the relationship between poetry (literature) and language itself.

The arrangement of inscriptions needs reconsideration more than just as literature (what they contain) or by language study (what they represent), but rather the intersection: how the medium of literature becomes language. In this way, studying logography’s morphology aims to neither mystify nor exoticize Sinography, or to judge as a writing system whether it is an effective tool for literacy and education. The analysis does not seek to determine inherent strengths or weaknesses in different scripts’ accessibility. Neither superior nor inferior, the goal is merely to excavate how systematically and structurally the mechanism of Sinographic writing has worked, in which the logographic texture served as a catalyst, enabling, legitimating, and sustaining the circulation.

Revisiting Sinographic writing beyond a purely linguistic or purely literary approach is a methodology of this dissertation. To revisit Literary Sinitic, we must first imagine how people in the past conceived of and used it. Literary Sinitic, with inscription as its medium, was likely understood as a complicate interplay between the legible and illegible, and comprehensible and incomprehensible. By contemplating what illegibility is discounted and excluded—its very

⁴⁶ See Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On “Japan” and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 23–24; Atsuko Ueda, *Language, Nation, Race: Linguistic Reform in Meiji Japan (1868–1912)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 6; Dennis Washburn, “文学 Bungaku/Literature,” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 25, no.1 (2013): 116–26.

disappearance enables the system's consolidation—we can reveal how the logographic Sinographic script becomes a kind of “literature” that assumes the role of language.

Moreover, Sinography highlights a distinction between writers representing sounds through words, and readers perceiving those words with different internalized sounds. From a creator's view, we may try to trace the “origin” behind words. But in circulation, the implied sound is not necessarily the object of communication. As DeFrancis noted, even lexicographers faced difficulty retrieving consistent sound values across the varying Chinese syllabaries, since what seemed obvious to one may not to another.⁴⁷ Since Sinography does not have a consistent mapping between written forms and speech sounds (between writers and readers, composition and circulation), this complicates how we understand its “transliteration” of other languages. It connects to bigger questions of how languages are represented, framed, and conceptualized within this system. To fully analyze writing's role, we cannot just look at the writer's perspective of creating words from speech. We must also examine the reader's side—how the recipients and even non-scribes audiences perceive and interpret those written forms beyond just speech representations. While rooted in an attempt to transcribing the spoken word, writing's purposes have evolved beyond strictly replicating pronunciation. It has taken on expanded functions distinct from purely mirroring spoken language sounds.

In short, instead of aiming to purely replicate exact speech sounds or restore a single denoted voice, the sound elements in Sinography can serve more as mnemonic aids rather than direct speech representations. Its tendency to depart, to some degree, from the mimetic imperative of writing as pure speech replication potentially influences how Sinography is engaged, facilitating a particular value system and ideology surrounding the writing system itself. Essentially, by preventing an explicit representative mechanism of speech, this form of writing

⁴⁷ DeFrancis, *Chinese Language*, 186.

does not allow its existence to be substituted by spoken languages alone. It is a writing form that asserts its purpose through deliberate detachment from mimicking speech.

This detachment can facilitate an alternative conception of language beyond the traditional mimetic paradigm that presumes writing aims to imitate and transcribe oral language. As Sinologist Stephen Owen has pointed out, “Modern Western theories often call language essentially ‘metaphorical’ because the Western theory of signs is essentially metaphorical: the word ‘stands in for’ the thing.” In contrast, he highlights how “The central assumption in Confucian language theory (excluding those early, failed attempts to develop a theory of signs) is that language is essentially synecdochal: an inner whole manifests a necessarily diminished surface, and through that peculiar ‘part’ the whole may be known.”⁴⁸ Owen argues that in the Sinographic tradition, the crux of “language” does not lie in its ability to represent objective phenomena faithfully. Rather, the focal point becomes the extent to which language can give outward expression to one’s inner experiences and sensibilities. This notion of language externalizing interiority is treated as an “assumption” by Owen, as opposed to an issue requiring rigorous interrogation.⁴⁹

Though Owen’s theory delves into highly theoretical considerations around language’s relationship to inner/outer manifestation, it underscores how mimetic speech replication was not an axiomatic imperative within the Sinographic tradition. What is clear is that mimetic representation of speech was not necessarily the primary pursuit or core assumption of the Sinographic language philosophy. To fully grasp Sinography’s multifaceted interactions with spatial envisioning, culture, and society, as well as its diverse roles, we must re-evaluate our engagement with it through the perspectives of both writers and non-writing audiences.

⁴⁸ Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Boston: Harvard University Asia Center, 1992), 32

⁴⁹ Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, 30.

Specifically, we need to examine how their respective experiences of Sinography's "voice" deviated from the mimetic aim of strictly representing speech. This dual exploration can reveal how Sinography shaped cultural sensibilities not through overt dominance, but rather through the gradual inculcation of particular ideologies and worldviews.

Proposing Sinography as invoking a "fantasy" highlights how this system treated text as a form of language itself, while considering spoken languages secondary. The "fantasy" does not imply fakeness, but rather an "imagined" scenario akin to Benedict Anderson's imagined communities,⁵⁰ where the scripts did not unify speech but facilitated multivocality. The ideological fantasy shaped people politically and culturally, while textual practice was one aspect of this shaping. Analyzing interaction with Sinography as an aesthetic experience is key, prompting audiences to accommodate their ears to the vocalized literary quality rather than prioritizing their own speech. As one scholar notes, "to enjoy music, whether as a performer or as a listener, is to allow it to mold our bodies and sensibilities, to accept certain patterns as pleasurable and to disdain others as unnatural. It is to accept a certain model of what is right and proper in ourselves and in our communities."⁵¹ Sinoscripts might also present a unique approach to representing orally transmittable voices, instilling an altered perspective on the script-voice relationship distinct from modern language assumptions.

In many societies, including Japan and the Middle Kingdom, the use of Literary Sinitic has been prevalent for centuries. It is hard to imagine that this age-old practice (more than ten centuries in Japan and even longer in the Sinitic realm) served merely as a literary tool and

⁵⁰ "All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined." Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

⁵¹ Michael Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-Pop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 5.

medium for transporting knowledge and thinking. Literary Sinitic has undoubtedly influenced the sensibilities and perceptions of acceptable patterns among writers, readers, and oral reciters. It fostered criteria and qualifications seen as legitimate, elegant, and valuable, while denying other “fantasies.”

To better envision how Literary Sinitic virtually characterized a “language beyond language” through its unique fantasy, the next section will delve into the Sinographic Cosmopolis. We will focus on defining the core characteristics of Sinographic culture, Literary Sinitic writing itself, and the extent of its influence across regions. The aim is to reposition the circulation of Literary Sinitic within the context of external and internal diversities of voices. On the grounds proposed above, I argue it is crucial not only to contextualize the writing within the Sinographic Cosmopolis but also to understand how introducing Sinographic writing influenced conceptions of language itself.

Speech Ecology Surrounding Literary Sinitic

By “Literary Sinitic,” I refer to the logographic character-based writing system that circulated in the traditional East Asian Sinographic Cosmopolis. This included ancient Chinese empires’ territories and extended to non-Sinitic linguistic contexts like Japan, Korea, and Vietnam (Japanese archipelago, Korean peninsula, and the northeastern Indochinese peninsula). Unlike alphabet-based systems, Literary Sinitic did not rely primarily on alphabetic or phonetically aligned depictions. Through diplomatic relationships and Buddhist text circulation around ancient Chinese empires, Sinoscripts could be relatively free from rendering speech sounds.⁵²

⁵² For insights on how diplomatic relationships interacted with Sinography’s circulation, see Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, 2011; Duthie, *Man’yōshū and the Imperial Imagination*, 2014. On the circulation of Buddhist texts and their role, see Kin Bynkyō, *Literary Sinitic and East Asia*, 2021. For a focus on Confucian texts and traditions, see

Above all, this system demonstrated that faithful sonic representation was not a necessity for a widespread writing tradition. Preservation of oral speech, while commonly associated with writing, was not the primary mechanism for Literary Sinitic, as many scholars noted. For instance, Wei Shang observed that a major misleading direction was assuming “one-to-one correspondence between script and sound and overall congruence between writing and speech” when conceptualizing Literary Sinitic.⁵³ Moreover, the configuration of Sinographic characters was said to have been standardized during the Qin dynasty in the third century BCE.⁵⁴ The Qin emperor’s factual rule covered an area approximately the size of Europe—a helpful context to imagine the diversified verbal speech across regions under imperial rule at that time.

Some scholars suggested that instead of unifying speech to enable translocal communication, a unification of writing proved much more efficient and practical, and sufficient for administration in the ages prior to modern times. As the comparative literature researcher Alexander Beecroft conceded, “A single vernacular language covering the whole of the Sinosphere was, perhaps, a possibility—except that the huge differences among the regional vernaculars would have made the task of learning any one vernacular not necessarily any easier

Young Kyun Oh, *Engraving Virtue: The Printing History of a Premodern Korean Moral Primer* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

⁵³ Shang, “Writing and Speech,” 256. Wei Shang’s stance lies in that as writing and speech in literary Sinitic is at variance for the most of the cases, it may lead to meaningless discussions if just applying the phonetic-based idea of vernacularization to any of the Sinitic texts made in prior to the twentieth century without a careful evaluation. In the strictest sense, it is probably fair to say the Western concept of “vernacular literature” did not have a counterpart in early modern China. Shang’s observation has inspired me to think that the tracing of the reasons of the acceptance of writing without a belief of its proximity with speech may be a constructive approach to address this phenomenon. The current scholarly discussion of literary Sinitic in East Asia is rich in this regard and could thus help to contemplate the issue inside the realm of early modern China and its internal peripheries as well.

⁵⁴ The standardized script decreed by the Qin chancellor Li Si in 221 BCE and known as “lishu” or clerk script became the basis for the Sinographic characters used today, which was regarded as the foundation for the state formation of the Qin Dynasty.

than the learning of the classical language for many individuals and regions.”⁵⁵ In Beecroft’s view, a pragmatic logic of efficiency might be the reason to undermine the need to learn scripts as purely orthographic spellings, as imposing a singular speech on even the minimum of elite learners across a wide territory could have been more burdensome and demanding.

While the exact reasons behind this development were hard to attest to, what could be speculated is that a unified spoken language proved nonviable until institutionalized education reached broader society in more modern periods. The point that Beecroft made was explicit: It was the script instead of speech that consolidated the regime of Literary Sinitic. The literacy of Literary Sinitic did not amount to readily available communication in spoken languages. The widespread presence did not assume a unified speech—an impractical and unrealistic notion at the time. In other words, in the Sinographic Cosmopolis before the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, writing never seemed to yield its role to speech. The purpose was not to control or project spoken languages through writing. In practice, inside or outside the Sinitic empires, we could observe the circulation of Sinographs paralleling diversified speech ecology. Spelling and phonetic elements of characters were not seen as coded, molded, or inherent in the characters themselves. Rather, they were malleable and subject to variation by users in different speech environments.

To illustrate with a present-day example, the same character written as 生 is linked to the sounds *sheng* in modern Mandarin Chinese, *senn/sing/tseng* in Hokkien, and *sei* (and other kunyomi sounds) in modern Japanese. When we, as modern language learners, question how versatile this character seems, it is helpful to remind ourselves that these manifold readings reflect the relics of speech diversity surrounding the use of Literary Sinitic in the past. Such a

⁵⁵ Beecroft, *An Ecology of World Literature*, 189.

one-to-many practice has been vividly described by Kin Bunkyo in his *Literary Sinitic and East Asia*:

In a time period when the notion of a “state” was still unclear and the knowledge of language structure undeveloped, there was probably no clear awareness of Chinese and Japanese as being mutually foreign languages from different language families. Moreover, the pronunciations of sinographs were different from one region to the next across the vast expanses of China. It is not unreasonable that the ancient Japanese and the ancient peoples of the Korean Peninsula may have conceived of their own languages as being on the same level as Chinese topolects. There is supportive evidence for this idea in the fact that, in later ages, people in Japan and Korea called their languages “方言” (“topolects” or “languages of place”) or “俗語” (“vulgar language; vernacular speech”) in contrast to Literary Sinitic.⁵⁶

Although we might tend to posit the idea of topolects as deviations from a standard language, Kin reminds us that the notion of topolects, as we know it today, is a product of when language structures could be linguistically analyzed, and the concept of “state” aligned with language boundaries. Both these conditions did not thrive until the late nineteenth century when speech identity was seen as essential and embedded in the modern nation-state framework.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Translation from Kin, *Literary Sinitic and East Asia*, 15.

⁵⁷ In a recent scholarship, Ueda Atsuko explains in detail how the essentiality of speech and language was weaved into the world order by which nation-states came into the basic unit to play. See Atsuko Ueda, *Language, Nation, Race: Linguistic Reform in Meiji Japan (1868–1912)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021).

The consciousness of speech differences was definitely felt earlier between, for instance, people in Japan and the Middle Kingdom. However, based on the regions people in the Middle Kingdom came from, a word could be voiced so divergently that speech differences were also strongly felt—lessening the essentiality of Sinitic versus non-Sinitic speakers at the time.⁵⁸ In other words, the idea of topolects or vernaculars in the traditional Sinographic cosmopolis was constructed in response to upholding universal writing as the center of the value system. It is in this sense, of the limitation to one place and time, that suggests their partiality and limited scope served as a foil to the universal writing accessible to a broader Sinographic Cosmopolis readership.

Kin tells us the pattern was not an authoritarian tongue versus regional tongues, but a cosmopolitan *writing* system versus various *speeches*. The internal inconsistency between script and speech within the ancient Middle Kingdom realm, without a unifying spoken language, served as a prototype inspiring the use of Literary Sinitic writing in early Japanese and Korean contexts. Before they developed writing systems representing their speech more closely, the split between writing and speech was more prevalent and taken for granted. History shows forms involving more speech relevancy were prone to being discredited as “vulgar” or “language of places.” At this point, perhaps it also invites us to reassess the ideas of “region” and “vulgar.” By “region” and “vulgar,” it seems to imply not just an aesthetic flaw, but a violation of the conventional writing rule: allowing local speech to become audible, entering the (relatively) silent logographic character-based writing.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ In next chapter, we will discuss the regional dialect of Fujian (“Min” speakers) or Canton tongue might be what Japanese and Korean scholars heard when learning Literary Sinitic.

⁵⁹ To say a complete silence (or without any phonetic implication) will be misleading. While Sinographs do not denote an exact phonetic sound that corresponds to an existing speech, they often entail a phonetic association or imply similar resonances, as we have discussed in the DeFrancis part. We will also discuss how learning these sound resonances would be an important preparation for composing Sinitic poetry, in order to learn rhyme patterns.

The norm set by Literary Sinitic is a kind of aloof writing. By disguising its detachment from practical speech representation, the norm potentially privileges the principle of detachment and disfavoring visualization of vocal elements. While enabling flexible connection with different linguistic contexts, this absence of one-to-one speech correspondence in Literary Sinitic also creates an ideological mechanism that reduces the speed and even prevents speech from entering the realm of writing.

My provisional argument is that both operatic theater and the transcribing systems of phonetic signs in Japanese (kana) and Korean (hangul) writing allowed speech elements to manifest. They could somewhat possess “un-Sinographic” qualities distinct from Literary Sinitic’s conventions. As this writing system emerged dominant, a key characteristic was its digression from transparently transcribing speech sounds. Consequently, an ongoing process of redefining and reinterpreting oral and aural functions was necessitated.

These factors of hearing and orality were then reframed within auxiliary writing systems. On one hand, Literary Sinitic enabled separate language communities to access knowledge transcending geographic boundaries, facilitating intellectual exchange despite speech differences. Yet in practice, we could find books containing Confucian classics and Buddhist sutras that circulated across East Asia historically bore many phonetic syllable annotations on their pages. While cultural elites might not have required such reading “aids,” annotated versions proved essential for the general populace studying Literary Sinitic.⁶⁰ These paratextual syllables, which later developed into indispensable elements of Japanese and Korean writing systems, infused a spectral range of sounds. This gradually brought Literary Sinitic’s logographically oriented style

⁶⁰ For more discussion about annotation practice, see Chieko Ariga, “The Playful Gloss. *Rubi* in Japanese Literature,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 309–35. Pages 310 through 320 particularly provide an explanation of how phonetic syllables in the form of gloss (ruby text) served a tool to assist the process for comprehension among the reading public.

closer, though not entirely, to representing local speech practices. The very existence of these supplementary writing forms left tangible traces of how readers engaged the texts, betraying the palpable distance between the cosmopolitan script and vernacular oral traditions.

The Sinitic regimes, however, functioned even more forcefully internally between Literary Sinitic and the “Chinese topolects” Kin referred to, or Sinitic languages.⁶¹ The written realm offered little chance for regional speech differences to be overtly represented or recorded, even in so-called “vernacular” writing. After all, writing systems imitating readers’ actual spoken pronunciations were still unavailable for most of the time. While regional speech variations seldom found opportunities to manifest visibly or leave tangible traces within the written domain, speech nonetheless left its intangible traces on theater activities. Though not preserved in written forms, local speech might find an avenue for survival through cultural theater artifacts. By “theater,” I do not refer to vernacular scripts, but rather the mostly undocumented oral voices—sung in various regional speeches and their hybrid derivatives—conventionally known as “theater of place.” Within these theatrical traditions, instead of being suppressed, the diversity of regional speech could be voiced, intermingled, and incorporated into presentations for audiences.

In short, an apparent connection between theater and the invention of non-Sinitic phonographic writing scripts is the engagement of orality—one in verballity and one in textuality. Performances might not be phonetically represented in scripts, but in live performance through training and generational recitation inheritance, the phonetic memory of lyric singing could be passed on. No phonographic signs recorded them, yet they provided a space where virtually the very translation between Literary Sinitic and local speech continued to happen.

⁶¹ For the definition of “Sinitic languages,” see Mieczyslaw Jerzy Kunstler, *The Sinitic Languages: A Contribution to Sinological Linguistics* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019) and Francesco Giorgio and Bianca Basciano, *Chinese Linguistics: An Introduction* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2021).

This inherent disfavoring of vocal representation in Literary Sinitic deserves more attention, especially as it did not necessarily entail an apolitical or powerless stance. For postcolonial scholars accustomed to thinking through language identities, the absence of one-to-one sound correspondence in Literary Sinitic has sometimes been viewed as a sign of an alternative, arguably less imposing civilization. Indeed, adopting Literary Sinitic writing did not necessitate abandoning one's native spoken language. Seen from this perspective, the non-phonographic writing system seemed to contribute to reducing risks of imperiling speech identities, benefiting the maintenance of linguistic diversity compared to modern linguistic imperialism.⁶² However, this perspective fails to capture the epistemological paradigms and power dynamics that the Sinographic system was nonetheless implicated in and helped construct.

This postcolonial view exemplifies a perspective that has sometimes idealized the Sinographic tradition. The modern critical theorist Karatani Kōjin, for instance, tended to naturalize the Sinographic tradition in order to present the arbitrariness of Western phonocentrism and problematize the underpinning of phonocentricism in relation to the Meiji language reforms.⁶³ While not entirely contradicting Karatani's critique of modernity, my concern is that such an uncritical attitude towards the Sinographic tradition, even infusing it with certain retrospective allure, may suggest that we have completely parted from past

⁶² See Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and "Realities and Myths of Linguistic Imperialism," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 18, no. 3 (1997): 238–48.

⁶³ In his renowned work *Origin of Japanese Literature*, Karatani dedicates a substantial section to the discussion of Western phonocentrism. He emphasizes how an unquestioning adoption of this concept by Japan's Meiji intellectuals in the mid-nineteenth century led to a harsh condemnation of nonphonetic writing practices. He refers to this phenomenon as an "inversion" in terms of epistemology, as it concealed the influence of the Western model, portraying it as universal common sense. However, in his attempt to demystify this inversion, he also appears to oversimplify the traditional approach, failing to recognize the significance of the gap between spoken and written languages. Crucially, this oversight prevents him from exploring the fact that, similar to the Western paradigm's adherence to phonetic writing, the Sinitic tradition also upheld non-phonetic writing as an essential method. Both approaches had the potential to exert hegemonic influence over local spoken languages. Kōjin Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 1993).

epistemologies. It ignores the space opened up by Sinography's confrontation with the phonocentric paradigm.

One key aspect is the transformation of Sinography's allure through its combination with new paradigms. Another is how peripheries, through such encounters, could employ dialectic strategies. Although the transition seems clear-cut and binary oppositional between Sinography and Western phonocentrism, the framework of the second and first Sinographic spheres can help reveal how local societies undergo their own adjustments and negotiations, much more complicated than simply contrasting between modernization or submitting to the Middle Kingdom's hegemony.

Recent studies suggest Literary Sinitic has a more complex interplay with speech variety. In part, speech variety can be tolerated because it guarantees and consolidates Literary Sinitic's privilege in the traditional cosmology. As Lurie states, in the Literary Sinitic-dominated world, lacking speech fixation "impart[ed] to the written word a venerable aura not shared by spoken words subject to regional and temporal variations."⁶⁴ This absence of direct sound-to-script correspondence does not make Literary Sinitic less political; rather, it is precisely a mechanism allowing it to assume an aura of transcendence.

People before modern times may see Literary Sinitic writing as potentially immune to regional and temporal changes (i.e., parole), which, according to Lurie, consolidates the writing's superiority and authority. It is this claimed immunity from vocals that supports the vision of its irreplaceability. Most importantly, tolerating speech variety without a homogenizing force to unify language's vocals comes at a price: the total relegation of speech-related forms in the

⁶⁴ Conrad Schirokauer, David Lurie, and Suzanne Gay, eds., *A Brief History of Japanese Civilization* (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2012), 19.

intellectual dimension. The difficulty and deferral of reflecting speech varieties in writing has much to do with the cultural aesthetic, perceptions, and sensibilities surrounding the written form.

Perhaps nothing is more evident than a glance at typography, which symbolically invokes a hierarchy between Literary Sinitic and speech practices, words for seeing and words for reading, literal symbolism and sound signification, writing and speaking. If there are sound marks, they often appear as annotations, representing readers' movements in reading more than denoting the meaning—which is the function that only logographic characters serve. The logographic characters of Literary Sinitic take center stage in the main body, while paratextual glosses record sounding syllables in local languages, serving as an additional layer. This layout suggests that Sinographs belong to the text proper, signifying authority, universal absoluteness, while speech practices are portrayed as interchangeable, fleeting, and expedient.

Individuals literate in Sinoscripts could communicate beyond local borders, connect with previous generations' memories through scripts, and develop a sense of anchoring their bonds with the abstract Sinitic tradition. Being illiterate, in contrast, implied an exclusive attachment to local speech. The illiterate had to conjure a connection to written words, picturing them as conceptually enveloping their speech, to encompass themselves into an integral part of the culture. Essentially, the more Sinitic culture relied on separating speech and script, the greater the exclusion of the illiterate, the downplaying of regional linguistic characters, and the disregard for speech authenticity in representation.

Understanding this ongoing practice of diminishing the speech gap's importance, human voice, and illiteracy's role is crucial before delving into the challenges and difficulties faced by knowledge systems related to Sinographic writing in the late nineteenth century. During that

period, the paradigms surrounding Literary Sinitic's relationship to speech varieties and orality began significantly shifting.

In conclusion, it is important to consider that the Sinographic Cosmopolis anchored not only on the Sinographic writing as a form of writing but also generated dependence on the medium of writing. In the model of Sinography, its logographic characteristic constituted a natural barrier to prevent the spoken language from being transcribed into writing. This enhanced the prioritization of writing and consideration of language contingent on the writing medium. If something oral could not be put in written words, in a logographic Sinoscript way, as a language, it was not legitimate enough. It is not that complicated but sometimes, as Lurie reminded us, it is confounded by our current language being restricted in the imagination of the alphabet writing as the paradigm. Nonetheless, we have been influenced by our conventional visions and are required to tear down the defensive mechanism to imagine a world that may defy our intuition.

As a primary written logographic inscription medium, Literary Sinitic encapsulated and was likely understood as a combination of written signs, offering legible texts or sometimes illegible ones, flexible readability or unreadability in relation to sound. As Saitō Mareshi describes, “the worlds of writing and language, that is, the world of strings of written characters and the world of spoken language, were different things, although they were in contact with each other.”⁶⁵ The relationship of people with language in the Sinographic spaces may have involved more nuances than speech-based assumptions suggest.

Hence, this is not a dissertation about the circulation of Sinographic poetry, prose, or how different regions engaged with the same writing genres. Nor is it about liberation from or abandonment of the writing. My curiosity lies in the insistence on its continuity. In his study of

⁶⁵ 「文字と言語、すなわち文字列の世界と話しことばの世界は、接しつつも異なるものであった。」 Saitō, *Kanji sekai no chihei*, 85.

Literary Sinitic culture in Heian Japan, scholar Brian Steininger described the writing's effect operating "across all levels of the representational act."⁶⁶ To me, while these effects might appear as secondary, they were more long-lasting, responsible for shaping perceptions and preparing people to accept writing's central cultural role. In other words, it was the "language of distance"⁶⁷—as literariness was understood across practices—that enabled appreciating a writing form so removed from everyday speaking, "tolerating" its resistance to explicitly represent speech. These "people" included not only writers and readers but also "viewers" and "spectators" without the ability to legibly interpret inscriptions. Hence, the audience's interaction with writing was mediated by "translators," involving the medium transferal between page and voice. It was through interactions with writing, usually involving illegibility, incomprehensibility, and distance from speech, that practically "made" the Middle Kingdom and Sinographic Cosmopolis.

⁶⁶ Brian Steininger, *Chinese Literary Forms in Heian Japan: Poetics and Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017), 12.

⁶⁷ I borrow this expression from Wulf Oesterreicher, "Types of Orality in Text," in *Written Voices, Spoken Signs: Tradition, Performance, and the Epic Text*, ed. Egbert J Bakker, and Ahuvia Kahane (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1997), 190–214. Oesterreicher uses this phrase to describe the sort of text that engaged in least conversational elements, leaning towards more formal expression. While Oesterreicher has not yet considered Sinographic writing particularly, I see there is overlap in terms of the the purported distance from everyday dialogue. I see Literary Sinitic had the same penchant and its distancing from mundaneness contained one more layer by its ambiguous speech-reflection.

Chapter II

Sinography's Dialectic "Other": *Dogo* as the Dominated Subject

Sinographic Cosmopolis—where, as discussed in chapter 1, the authority of Sinoscripts, or logographic character-based “Chinese” writing, is established in a contrastive nature with the local linguistic landscape. As we have explored along the way, the mobility of the script is constitutive of Literary Sinitic’s legitimacy. Presenting itself outside the realm of spoken language, literary Sinitic makes believe a fantasy that it successfully overcomes various barriers of voice within and beyond the plurality of Sinitic languages. To sustain this fantasy, however, both the first and second Sinographic spheres must persistently envision an antithesis between boundless writing and bounded “topolects”—speech without a universal potential. This is the fundamental secret inherent to literary Sinitic’s multivocal potential, in continuously circumventing the substance of spoken languages and denying spoken languages access to the epistemology of language.

In short, the linguistic landscape within the first Sinographic sphere is shaped by a perception grounded in a shared ancestry preserved in logographic writing, placing emphasis on historical communicability despite linguistic evolution. Conversely, the second Sinographic sphere diverges from this pattern. It permits the emergence and concurrent use of phonographic scripts without necessarily actively promoting or encouraging their development. This is partly because, as this chapter unpacks, even though historical communicability is valued, current speech is not regarded as a mere substitute for it within the second Sinographic sphere.

This chapter endeavors to theorize the binary process and dialectic between writing and the local linguistic landscape, offering historical evidence to better situate Imperial Japan and colonial-era Taiwan at the turn of the twentieth century by exploring the intertwined nature of

the first and second Sinographic spheres. In particular, I assert that the conceptualization of the local linguistic landscape is foundational to understanding the notion of “a-legible” and serves as a key element in observing this connection. In essence, I argue that placing faith in “historical communicability” effectively downplays the role of speech and heterogeneous voices in the current environment at the core of the first Sinographic sphere’s envisioning. This means the envisioning of the local linguistic landscape in a perceived ancestral relationship in bygone history may eliminate the need to consider the evolution into mutually intelligible languages among some of the local linguistic landscapes.¹ Since logographic writing provides a more effective “linguistic” medium to embody this lineage, historical communicability is recognized as preserved and registered in logographic writing, viewed as “language” itself. This, in turn, eclipses the unintelligibility, linguistic distance, and experiential spectatorial experience and shapes an environment that discourages the development of phonographic scripts as unwelcome.

Although the notion of the two spheres often pertains most directly to classic writing forms (“literary Sinitic,” *kanbun* and *kanshi* in Japan, or *wenyan* in China), I contend that they also form the basis for a shared understanding of “language” itself that does not accord with the modern equation of language and nation. It is crucial, in other words, to consider the influence from the dominance of character-based writing on the conceptualization of the local linguistic landscape. Interpreting the local linguistic landscape becomes a matrix to legitimate character-based writing, hinder the development of phonographic scripts, or an engine to drive a contrary

¹ Generally, the broadly categorized Sinitic or Chinese languages can be further divided into eight “mutually unintelligible regionalects groups.” Each regionalect may consist of several “mutually intelligible dialects.” In other words, speakers of two languages can understand each other if the languages are mutually intelligible dialects, grouped into a shared regionalect. On the other hand, speakers of “mutually unintelligible regionalects” cannot understand each other. Notably, even languages like Minnan and Hakka, two primary local languages prevalent in Taiwan, are virtually mutually unintelligible. Despite originating from geographically proximate regions, they are regionalectically different (“Southern Min” and “Hakka,” respectively). John DeFrancis’s *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984) provides a self-explanatory diagram (p.132) illustrating how prevalent and implicitly accepted the phenomenon of “mutual unintelligibility” in the language landscapes of the first Sinographic sphere is.

direction. The nuanced insights offered by the notion of the two spheres thus promise to shed new light on the colonial encounter, presenting us with an opportunity to revise and complicate our understanding of the context within which the modern Japanese empire and its Sinographic-dominated colonies are embedded. In a sense, I contend that it is crucial to employ a nontheological approach by considering how the epistemological understanding of the language in the cultural past as a foundational condition that shapes new patterns.

By drawing attention to the close interplay between linguistic interpretation and the writing system in the long history of Sinographic tradition, I aim to shift the focus of East Asian colonialism away from the inherent characteristics of language and toward its underlying framework. Typically, the colonial lens of Japan and Taiwan might invite an interpretation of language primarily as an instrumental and ideological tool, dictated by imperial power and encompassing motifs such as expansion, imposition, and educational obligation.² Focusing on the speakers of languages and posited a dichotomy of colonizers and the colony's spoken languages, exploring "how language contributes to unequal access to societal power and how linguistic hierarchies operate and are legitimated,"³ this perspective has seen the significance of language as predetermined and shifted the emphasis to the purposes behind the scene. Instead of questioning why language has transformed into a focal point, there has been a tendency to essentialize the fusion of nationhood construction and language identity, absolute the relationship

² For more exploration of the inseparable connection between language and colonialism, please refer to Robert Phillipson's work, *Linguistic Imperialism*. In short, the concept of hierarchization surrounded the suppression or eradication of Indigenous languages, also referred to by sociolinguistics, as "language death" or linguicide, and how the colonizers or the postcolonial authorities sought to establish their linguistic and cultural dominance. Also, in postcolonial discourses, exemplified by concepts like Homi Bhabha's mimicry, there is an evident emphasis on language, particularly in the examination of speech and its hybrid nature. See Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Crow's Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1998).

³ Robert Phillipson, "Realities and Myths of Linguistic Imperialism," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 18, no. 3 (1997): 239..

between “*kokugo*” (“national language”) and its representation of Japaneseness in colonial studies. Despite efforts within Japanese studies to deconstruct national language consciousness, bringing forth a more nuanced perspective on language, colonial studies might often inadvertently turn to reinforce the notion of national language consciousness while discussing imperial violence and ideological indoctrination. The question arises as to whether the colonial context has been seen as a derivative to the national project. With the hypothesis on the derivative view, the establishment of national language consciousness is commonly viewed as originating from and resolvable within the internal context of a national framework. Driven by wartime urgency to conscript colonial human resources and loyalty, in the final colonial stage this notion of linguistic dictation might hold true. It is, nevertheless, an aspect of the whole story.

Seeking the reason for placing emphasis on language may be more central to the interaction during the prime colonial period. Otherwise, we would observe Japanese language education as being mandatory in colonial-era Taiwan from the outset. We would not witness extensive documentation and preservation of “languages” that have been marginalized, due to various reasons, in the broader context of the Sinographic world—including the “*topolects*” in the first Sinographic sphere lacking orthographic writing systems for centuries and the twelve different Indigenous languages. If the overarching *zeitgeist* of Meiji Japan, operating within the context of a former second Sinographic sphere, and its imperial project is to gain independence from the traditional Middle Kingdom and Sinographic symbolic power, the approach may not be simply about enforcing the Japanese language. Rather, reevaluating the entire Sinographic context through the lens of the local linguistic landscape proves to be required. This would thus reveal the role of the first Sinographic sphere: After the annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom by Japan in 1879, the Japanese government immediately established a policy of assimilation, which

included the promotion of the Japanese language in Okinawa. The use of Okinawan languages was discouraged in official settings and schools.⁴ In contrast, in the case of colonial-era Taiwan, the task to record the Taiwanese languages turned out to be so crucial that linguists actively promoted using Japanese kana scripts as an orthographic tool to document the local linguistic landscape.⁵

The conventional emphasis on “assimilation” as the fundamental skeleton in colonial studies could have obscured the above aspect. This trend is evident in the titles of numerous works centered around *dōka*, such as *The Different Intentions behind the Semblance of Dōka* (*Dōka no dōshō imu*, 2001), *Becoming “Japanese”: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (2001), or the adoption of Japanese writing by colonial writers (*Colonizing Language: Cultural Production and Language Politics in Modern Japan and Korea*, 2018), to name a few. As for the reason behind this trend, Chen Pei-Feng, the author of *Dōka no dōshō imu*, has attributed to the European mode of imperialism: “there seems to be a tendency in the studies on Taiwan’s ‘assimilation’ that overly emphasizes the universality of Japan’s colonial rule policies while neglecting or even disregarding their peculiarity.”⁷ In his view, the peculiarity lies in that the Middle Kingdom serving as “the common cultural ‘matrix’ for both Taiwan and Japan, but

⁴ Toyoda Kunio, *Gengo seisaku no kenkyū* (Tōkyō: Kinseisha, 1968).

⁵ While there were efforts to record and study the Okinawan language before 1945, these efforts differed from the recording of Taiwanese languages during the Japanese colonial period in several ways. In Okinawa, the documentation of the local language was primarily driven by academic interest and was limited in scope, conducted by scholars such as Japanologist Basil Hall Chamberlain and Okinawan linguists like Miyara Tōsō, who published works on the Okinawan languages in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Okinawan scholars played a crucial role in preserving and promoting their own language and cultural heritage, even in the context of Japanese rule over Okinawa. This stands in contrast to the situation in colonial Taiwan, where the recording of Taiwanese languages was largely undertaken by Japanese linguists as part of the colonial administration’s efforts to understand and govern the local population, especially during the early colonial period. See Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Essay in Aid of a Grammar and Dictionary of the Luchuan Language* (Yokohama: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd., 1895); and Miyara Tōsō, *Miyara Tōsō zenshū 8: Yaeyama goi* (Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1980 [1930]).

⁷ Chen Pei-Feng, “*Dōka*” no dōshō imu: *Nihon tōchika Taiwan no kokugo kyōikushi saikō* [*The Different Intentions behind the Semblance of Dōka: the Language Policy, Modernization and Identity in Taiwan during the Japan-ruling period*] (Tōkyō: Sangensha, 2001), 3.

with whom Taiwan shared a closer cultural affinity.”⁸ To rephrase his observation within the framework we have developed so far: the interaction with colonial Taiwan allows the Imperial Japan to approach the first Sinographic sphere as a lens to scrutinize its relationship with the Middle Kingdom, and, consequently, with the Sinographic tradition. Both Japanese studies and Taiwan studies also tend to observe the shifting patterns of writing, either manifesting as a shift to Japanese scripts or other literary forms, or an insistence on literary Sinitic, primarily focusing on individuals with writing abilities and their selective choices. This approach leads to languages that are unable to develop a stable writing system being largely overlooked.

Attributing assimilation as the primary purpose for the spread of *kokugo* might face a significant challenge in gaining substantial support. In fact, linguistic analyses indicate that the penetration of the Japanese language in Taiwan remained quite restricted until the 1920s. Despite the implementation of elementary education over two to three decades, the spread of *kokugo* was not truly a highly valued metric. As sociolinguist Gareth Price thoughtfully synthesized,

In terms of reach, common schools increased from seventy-four in 1898 to 181 by 1906 (Tsurumi 1979: 619). However, this still meant that only between 2% and 5% of the school-aged populations were enrolled, though this increased to some 15% by 1918 (Tsurumi 1979: 620). Furthermore, despite 70% of timetabled hours being devoted to Japanese language courses (Wu 1992: 310 cited in Hsiao 2000: 35), the proportion of the Taiwanese population able to comprehend and speak Japanese grew to a mere 2.6% by

⁸ Chen Pei-Feng, “Leisi, chayi he hunza: Chongxin sikao Taiwan de Hanwen he Jindai Wenxue” [Similarity, Difference and Hybridity: Rethinking Kambun and Modern Literature in Taiwan], *Chung-Wai Literary Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (March 2015): 145.

1920 (Chou 1995: 119, cited in Hsiao 2000: 34), indicating sluggish progress for language-spread through acquisition planning.⁹

Perhaps we can understand the colonial policy of *kokugo* education as more of a performative act, rather than a compulsory apparatus. For the colonial authority, scholars, and educators, establishing a firm connection between “Japanese” and “language” may already suffice. The display of the importance of language, evident in the extensive timetable hours dedicated to the curriculum, can be more crucial than the actual number of increased speakers. This underscores the performative purpose of *kokugo*, where the emphasis on language takes precedence over tangible linguistic outcomes and its assimilative effect.

Despite the limited substantial effect, the framework of assimilation has fueled an overemphasis on *kokugo*, with its discriminative nature in infliction on the colonial bodies. It is particularly interesting that, in his exploration, Price seemed to pay limited attention to Japanese colonial linguists’ works and their investigation of Taiwanese languages. His emphasis persisted on *kokugo* education as a tool for both elevating literacy levels and reinforcing colonial violence and power hierarchies. This tendency can also be detected in several other recent linguistic works, such as Yoshida Shingo’s *Sociolinguistics of Taiwanese Language and Script*, which examined Taiwanese languages but did not delve into the Japanese development of transcriptive systems for the local linguistic landscape.¹⁰ Other scholarly works might highlight Japanese linguists’ investigations into Taiwan’s linguistic landscape as a contribution to the 1930s local

⁹ Gareth Price, *Language, Society, and the State: From Colonization to Globalization in Taiwan* (Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019), 116.

¹⁰ See Yoshida Shingo, *Taiwango to Moji no Shakai Gengogaku: Kijutsu Teki Daigraphia Kenkyuu no Kokoromi* (Tokyo: Sangensha Publishers, 2023). While Yoshida has explored extensively the transcriptive systems in recording the Taiwanese language and its unending controversies, he intriguingly did not consider the discussion and experiments from the early Japanese linguists.

writing movement in Taiwan. The significance of conducting bilingual and multilingual investigations into Taiwan's linguistic landscape and Japan's *kokugo* has rarely been explored against the backdrop of the Sinographic mechanism.¹¹ Instead, Price noted a nuanced difference between *Nihongo* (Japanese) and *kokugo*:

Nihongo refers to the language spoken by the ethnically Japanese, and thus those who are full citizens of the metropole; kokugo, meanwhile, refers to Japanese for foreigners or, in this case, colonial subjects. As kokugo speakers, therefore, cultivating the 'qualities of Japanese citizenship' in the Taiwanese was not the same as bestowing de jure citizenship. Through this ethnicized and politicized differentiation of terms for the same language, the colonized are viewed not as rights-bearing citizens, but rather subjects who owed certain responsibilities to the Japanese state. This mirrored the logic of colonial rule."¹²

The main concern with this perspective is that it implies the history of the Sinographic Cosmopolis is eclipsed during the period of colonization. While "colonies" are often associated with the occupation of unclaimed territories, the tendency to envision a place without "culture" and "civilization" exaggerates culture as monolithically defined by the European center. It underestimates the ongoing influence of the historical Sinographic context that can be intertwined, negotiated, and conspired with the modern nation-state regimes than existing in a diametrically opposite relationship.

¹¹ See Li Shang-Lin, "Kanji, Taiwango, soshite Taiwan wabun—Shokuminchi Taiwan ni okeru Taiwan wabun undō ni taisuru saikōsatsu," *Kotoba to Shakai* no. 9 (2005): 176–200; and Ann Heylen, *Japanese Models, Chinese Culture and the Dilemma of Taiwanese Language Reform* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012).

¹² Price, *Language, Society, and the State*, 116.

Unlike the contemporary equation that directly links language with spoken communication, the Sinographic Cosmopolis defines “language” not in alignment with local linguistic landscapes or spoken dialects. Instead, the conceptual link between the local linguistic landscape and language has been epistemologically overwritten by the prevalence of logographic writing. By delving into the intricacies of language perception, the framework of the two spheres enables a deeper understanding of how the Sinographic Cosmopolis, with its distinctive understanding of “language,” influenced colonial interactions and power dynamics during this historical period. Without taking into account the Sinographic Cosmopolis framework, which historically underplays language landscapes, subordinating spoken language as “*dogo*” to literary Sinitic, the significance and radical nature of the colonial linguistic exploration of the language landscape in Taiwan may not be readily apparent.

Throughout the existence of the Sinographic mechanism, the colonial narrative in the late nineteenth century is intricately woven into an inquiry into the epistemology of language. In this chapter, I propose that by considering *dogo*, we can revisit the struggle with Sinoscripts as an underlying force within the interaction between the first and second Sinographic spheres during the rise of modern concept of linguistic identity. This enables us to perceive how Meiji Japan’s struggle with the second Sinographic sphere contributes to its imperial project, shaping its emphasis on the significance of diverse speech. However, colonial-era Taiwan serves as a site where the conventional notion of language and new ideas of language intersect and negotiate. In certain instances, colonized people often find themselves hesitant to assert their identities through vocal communication. This reluctance stems from their belief that their everyday speech and associated oral traditions are a surrogate to their cultural heritage, and that by changing into a manner that differs from traditional norms, they would be relinquishing a crucial aspect of their

identity. This apprehension is further exacerbated by the fact that the “language” is defined by Sinographic writing and generations of written culture, which serves to reinforce the idea that vocal communication is somehow less important. This gap between the first and second Sinographic spheres—and sometimes the gaps within the second Sinographic sphere—provides fresh insights into the conventional view of late nineteenth-century Japan and Taiwan.

This chapter shall provide an analysis on how logographic-based Sinographic writing not solely operates in textual forms but furthermore exerts significant ideological influence on language. This influence extends beyond the hierarchization of written literature; more importantly, posing challenges to the legitimization and prominence of spoken languages in general. The Japanese empire’s efforts to bring about an epistemological shift in the perception of language within its colonies, serving as an important clue, could unravel this structure. It is an indication that the Japanese empire is inseparable from the cultural heritage of the historical Sinographic context and, moreover, revisiting and adjusting its orbits. I aim to, in other words, demonstrate a dialectic relationship at play, where the colonial context both emerges from and reacts to the Sinographic-based worldview, causing shifts rooted in dynamics distinct from those observed in Western models of colonialism. This interplay underscores the nuanced nature of the colonial experience in this particular context.

Overall, this chapter reveals that the modernization of the concept of language in the colonies involves more than simply the imposition of the colonizer’s language. This perspective, which underlay much previous research, narrows the notion of language by taking speech as a given, established concept, taking the endpoint as the starting point. With this lens, we may be able to discern how it is the neat equation of nation and language implied in the colonial administration that deeply concerned the local Taiwanese intellectuals, which complicated their

relationship with the language of the colonizers. In order to unravel how our understanding of language in the colonial condition can be complicated by this history, it is important to consider the role of *dogo* played in the transition between the Sinography-based textual practices of the past with the modern linguistic identity of the present. Before Japanese turns to be *kokugo*, it has served as a *dogo*.

The value invested in spoken languages underpins the fantasy of logographic writing. Seen as fleeting, erratic, and thus unreliable, the diversity of spoken languages is used as a way to contrast the longlasting, unfluctuating, and trustworthy power of Sinographic writing. In other words, the more the empire of the Middle Kingdom and Sinography have culturally expanded and spread—ideologically, they have claimed to cover “all under heaven”—the less value would be paid upon to speech. If Sinography evokes an association of heaven, speech is tied to a distinctive scope relatively. The contrast is essential in how the Middle Kingdom is viewed as ideologically transcendental and how “places” is comparatively conceived. This means, conceptually, speech is defined by regionality and there is no speech that can be immune to the constraint of “place.” One exception to this is a “vehicular linguistic medium,” which is a third type of language that serves as a bridge between regions without diminishing the “universal” importance of Sinographic writing. Details about the unusual concept of a vehicular linguistic medium will be further unpacked in the latter sections.

In this way, it is crucial to examine the dialectic between logographic writing and spoken languages. This means logographic writing can be responsible for the lack of attention given to spoken languages, credible for the less importance being positioned on the immediate communication and community. However, the contribution of speech lies in managing the distance of script and speech. This devaluing of speech due to its heterogeneity buttresses the

favor of a sole script. This is best embodied by the derogatory connotation of the term *dogo*, or translatable as “native spoken language”—though the “finiteness” of “place,” rather than an inherent root, finds it difficult to convey in the translation.

Othering *Dogo* in Sinographic Tradition

In a sense, one of my focuses in this project centers on translation choices, such as opting for Literary Sinitic over Chinese writing, in a hope to foreground the Sinographic-based textual practice as a matter of text instead of a linguistic representation. I choose terms that highlight this aspect of text while avoiding any connotations and undertones of ethnic or linguistic isomorphism or misleading associations with “national” boundaries. Despite this effort, *dogo*, as simple as it looks, seems difficult to select a proper equivalent to indicate its texture more than ranking and order. It is often translated as “dialect,” “native language,” or “local language,” but to fully convey its implication involving an epistemological paradigm, I refrain from using these translations. This also means they hardly translate the context in which the textual and linguistic practice ties to the script of Sinography as a determinate hierarchy of authority—“*Dogo*” embodies something that Sinographic writing targets, aiming to command.

Conceived of and assigned as “*dogo*” (or 土語) indicates the matter is subordinate to the cultural center. Furthermore, it is often neglected that the barrier between *dogo* and “language” is seen as irreconcilable—*dogo* is “the *go* of a place” but not a “language.” *Dogo* serves as “*dogo*” based on how it is at odds with writing, while only writing, particularly logographic writing, qualified as language for proper communication. Not belonging to the realm of writing means “*dogo*” is not seen as an effective communicative tool. As noted earlier, it is crucial to resist applying current habitual usage and understanding of language to assess Sinographic culture and

its knowledge system. It is imperative to consider communication and effectiveness has been long seen in the engagement in materiality that can be preserved and transported across time and space. It does not necessarily imply face-to-face direct information exchange. *Dogo*, between the two, is conceived as something that does not fit the mode of communication suitable for remote distances.

Dogo has often been associated with the second Sinographic sphere, encompassing Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Within the first Sinographic sphere, it has been employed to indicate the regional, local, and peripheral contexts. A significant instance occurred during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), when an official of the Middle Kingdom was tasked with compiling a gazetteer about Japan and transliterating its language. In this context, the official Xue Jun (known as Setsu Shun in Japanese) categorized the Japanese language as “regional speech,” read as *hōgen* in Japanese, which was synonymous with *dogo*. This categorization is reflected in his work, *A Brief History of Japan* (*Riben kao liu/Nihonkoku kōryaku*, 1523),¹³ which was crafted out of military defense concerns. In the book, Xue Jun expressed that “Scholar-officials dare not speak any language except the sage’s languages, and dialects are indeed not worth bothering their lips and teeth. Nonetheless, speech is the voice of the heart, and if you understand their speech, you will be able to see through to the sincerity or falsehood of their hearts.”¹⁴ (「士君子非先王之法言不敢言，而方言固不足以煩唇齒。言者，心之聲得其言或可以察其心之誠與偽。」)

¹³ Xue Jun (Setsu Shun), *Riben guo kao liu* [A Brief History of Japan] (*Nihonkoku kōryaku*, 1523), Waseda University Library Digital Collection, accessed June 12, 2024, https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ru03/ru03_03352/index.html; also available at Chinese Text Project, accessed June 12, 2024, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=143765>.

¹⁴ I refer to the version collected in Waseda Collection, in which the sentence appears on p. 27. Modified translation based on Yuanfei Wang and Joshua A. Fogel’s works. To maintain consistency, I have changed “gentlemen” in Wang’s translation to “scholar-officials,” the same way I translate Saitō’s quote. See Yuanfei Wang, *Writing Pirates: Vernacular Fiction and Oceans in Late Ming China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021), 102; and Joshua A. Fogel, ed. *Sagacious Monks and Bloodthirsty Warriors: Chinese Views of Japan in the Ming-Qing Period* (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2002), 69.

My understanding of this quote went like this: If it were not a language that could find its origin in ancient sages' expressions, "speech" generally did not worth any attention—unless it could be used to assess one's allegiance. It is crucial to discern a split between the ancient sages' gracious language and the implied otherness conveyed through the act of taking "speech" as a measure.

Historian Joshua Fogel introduced *A Brief History of Japan* as "Generally considered the first specialized text about Japan" and "the first Chinese book to have the expression 'Ribei' (Japan) in its title."¹⁵ As Fogel has noted, the intellectuals in the Middle Kingdom rarely paid attention to foreign languages unless there was a practical demand. In this particular instance, the threat of pirates served as the motivation for compiling and collecting information relevant to one of the Middle Kingdom's neighboring regions.¹⁶ Essentially, this book marked the first attempt at a "transliteration" of Japanese in the context of the Middle Kingdom's writing practice. The section of "Japanese *kigo*," or "translation of Japanese," included 230 Japanese words with a Sinographic transliteration. With the writing tool of logographic Sinography, however, there was inevitably a difficulty in retrieving the phonology of the language from this historical transcription.¹⁷

Xue's comparison of "sage's language" and "dialects/their speech" resonates the Sino-centric view and its belated attention on the Japanese culture and their language. In this Ming author's view, ancient sages' discourse has held the utmost importance. When it comes to the Japanese language, he refers to it as "regional speech." The statement "speech is the voice of the

¹⁵ Fogel, *Sagacious Monks and Bloodthirsty Warriors*, 68.

¹⁶ More research on Xue's book can be found in *Nihon kigo no kenkyu*, 1965, edited by Department of Literature at Kyoto University. "*Kigo*" here means translation, referred to Xue's translation, or more precisely, transliteration, of Japanese lexicons via Sinographic characters. See also Kyōto Daigaku Bungakubu Kokugogaku Kokubungaku Kenkyūshitsu ed., *Nihon kigo no kenkyū* (Kyōto: Kyōto Daigaku Kokubun Gakkai, 1965).

¹⁷ With regard to the challenge of recovering the phonology, see Kyōto Daigaku Bungakubu, *Nihon kigo no kenkyu*, 1965, which found it challenging to fully restore the phonetic values of Japanese equivalents in these "translations" using Sinographic characters.

heart” might appear as a positive comment. Indeed, Xue is interested in a transliteration of this “regional speech” and aims to promote recognition of the merit of speech. However, it needs a contextualization. In this context, “speech” refers to a language by its nature divergent from the language of sages. Instead of a sage’s heart, it is due to a heart under suspicion that ties to “speech.” In other words, “speech” engages a relational identity, vital to determine whether a person is a friend or an enemy, serving as a benchmark to ascertain the allegiance of a heart. The relational aspect suggests there exists an “other” that is associated with “speech.”

This connection between an implied otherness and speech’s value can also be seen in the discussion of topolects within the Middle Kingdom, where speech is likewise linked to authenticity, particularly when concerning the “noncivil” others. Yuanfei Wang, a scholar of early modern Chinese literature, posited that the depiction of Japanese and regional people in the Middle Kingdom shared common tropes in early modern literature. An example she analyzed was the “Strange Encounter,” a short fictional story by Ming Chinese novelist Feng Menglong (1574–1646),¹⁸ originally titled “The Strange Encounter of Old Eight Yang in the Country of Yue.”¹⁹ According to Wang, the narrative revolved around a captive Chinese merchant transformed into a Japanese pirate through changes in appearance, clothing, and language. In the story, the regional tongue of the Chinese merchant (described in narration rather than phonetically represented) served as a testimony, allowing other characters to discern his “true”

¹⁸ Feng Menglong was a prominent Ming dynasty novelist, poet and editor who is best known for compiling the collection of short stories, collecting folk tales and songs from the countryside. For more information about Feng’s understanding of “language” reflected in his investigation of folk songs, see Ōki Yasushi, *Fū Bōryū “Sanka” no kenkyū: Chūgoku Mindai no tsūzoku kayō* (Tōkyō: Keisō Shobō, 2003) and *Fū Bōryō to Minmatsu zokubungaku* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, 2018).

¹⁹ Feng Menglong, “Yangbalao Yueguo Qifeng” [The Strange Encounter of Old Eight Yang in the Country of Yue 楊八老越國奇逢], in *Yushi Mingyan* [Illustrious Words to Instruct the World 喻世明言], vol. 18, 1624, Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=696452>, accessed June 9, 2024; English translation in Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New: A Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

self behind the pretense of a Japanese identity. The story reflected the historical background of Ming Dynasty's anxiety over pirates and otherness. It was noteworthy that the linguistic shift and regional tongues were not phonetically represented in the fiction, given its exclusive use of Sinographic writing, which restricted the phonetic representation of linguistic differences. What stood out in Wang's analysis was the observation that speech was particularly intertwined with the representation of others, encompassing both the Middle Kingdom's internal other (regional tongue) and external other (Japanese).²⁰

Both forms of identity are linked to speech rather than writing. As Wang has stated, "Nonetheless, the association between regional dialects and personal authenticity in 'Strange Encounter' accords with the philological philosophy evinced in the compilation of Sino-Japanese dictionaries and *waka* poetry—learning the barbarian tongue through dialectic phonology is to know the mind of 'the other.'"²¹ Speech holds significance primarily due to its role in representing the uncivilized "other." This relativity of uncivilization is transferable, serving as a trope applicable to various forms of "otherness." In this manner, the ways the first Sinographic sphere relativizes its lower class and regional contexts can be identical to the ways the Middle Kingdom relativizes the second Sinographic sphere. This interchangeability has been brought to light by a depiction of a "catch-all symbol of barbarism," termed by early modern Japanese literature scholar Satoko Shimazaki. It indicates the fluidity in the category of "barbarous others" within the Sinocentric worldview, which typically lacks historical and geographical precision to identify a specific other within the category.²² For me, this emphasizes the need to understand

²⁰ Further discussion can be seen in Wang, *Writing Pirates*, 109–17.

²¹ Wang, *Writing Pirates*, 135.

²² Satoko Shimazaki, "Fantastic histories: The Battles of Coxinga and the Preservation of Ming in Japan." *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 9, no. 1 (2015): 17–53, particularly pp. 37–38.

the framing and the basis for comparison—specifically, how the emphasis on speech ties to otherness—rather than to pinpoint the referent.

There seems to be a difference between whether the identity or collective understanding of a group is closely tied to written language (script) or spoken language (speech). In contrast to the “sage’s” language, the regional speech is constructed as restrained in its scope and symbolic value. The contrast suggests a difference in the cultural or linguistic foundations that shape the sense of belonging or identity for civilized and less-civilized groups. This construction of otherness via speech proves to be effective. This also means: while Sinographic writing presents itself as transcending speech and has actively operated this fantasy within the literary class, the Middle Kingdom does not ignore speech entirely. Speech as a notion allows the literary class to imagine their rival. The interplay of speech and logographic writing, which may stem from their irreconcilable gap and inability to integrate completely, conversely plays a foundational role that consolidates the power of writing.

Even today, we use a similar language to emphasize the contribution of overcoming the diversity of language to characterize Sinographic writing. In doing so, we continue the notion of the antithetical rivalry between boundless writing and finite language. The foil of the enclosure of language serves the exhaustiveness of Sinography. *Dogo*’s limitedness in a fixed scope provides a perfect Achilles heel. It is not an exaggeration to say: in order to uphold the notion that Sinographic writing possesses a fantastical quality, a less noticeable but necessary point is to perpetuate the idea that spoken languages remain distinct and separate, serving as a contrasting counterpart that needs to be surpassed.

The issue of language and communication has been a complex and multifaceted one. Although more and more scholars have begun to address the Sinographic tradition beyond the

framework of either linguistics or literature, one aspect that remained underexplored was the dynamic that undergirded Sinographic writing as the ideal language and how it impacted the social relationship that “language” entailed. It was often neglected that in Sinographic-influenced culture, the prioritization of writing over speech could lead to the minimization of communication difficulties due to the distance and barriers among spoken languages. This ideology could also imply a sort of victim blaming, as it minimized the problems that might be carried by speech barriers and envisioned the lack of competence in reading and writing Sinographic writing as the problem of incorporation. In short, a writing-based view of communication was a double-edged sword, inclusive in the sense that the mother tongue could have less influence in one’s learning and potential social status one could achieve but discriminative in the sense that nonliteracy could imply more than a functional deficiency, but rather a lack of cultural standing. *Dogo*, in other words, did not connote an ownership of a given disposition but rather an insufficiency in an acquired cultural asset.

Destablizing *Dogo*’s Otherness

We have seen how “*dogo*” engaged a delicate interconnection between the first and second Sinographic spheres. This review of the emphasis on *dogo* as a representation of otherness is essential to untangling Imperial Japan and its colony’s continuity. Conceptually, when Japan strives to establish a nation-state among its Sinographic neighbors, logographic writing may have to be domesticated into a service to represent *dogo*. The aim behind reexamining the relationship between logographic writing and the *dogo* is to explore the potential elevation of the *dogo* as a representation of nationhood. As a result, the understanding of “*dogo*” has found itself at the nexus of change in the late nineteenth century. To delve into how the elevation of *dogo* acts as an

umbrella covering Imperial Japan's construction of a national language and the new colony's "language" for the imperial others, it is crucial to discern that the language used to describe the Japanese language and the languages in Taiwan originates from the same lineage of *dogo*.

Take an example, the term "*dogo*," which denoted the Japanese language in Yano Ryūkei's (1851–1931) 1886 work *New Theory of Japanese Writing*,²³ rapidly transitioned to referring to the languages in Taiwan merely a decade later in colonial publications like *Taiwanese Local Language Magazine* (*Taiwan dogo sōshi*, 1899–1901). This striking continuity in the usage of *dogo*, despite its transition from the Japanese context to situating comprehension of colonial conditions in East Asia, suggests an underlying similar framework at work.

As a visionary Meiji intellectual aiming to establish a modern nation-state in Japan, Yano Ryūkei grappled with determining the position of logographic writing in his 1886 work.²⁴ This work, which Yano wrote while traveling to London to study modern elections, consciously employed the term *dogo* for the Japanese language while being acutely aware of its associations with Sinographic traditions. In employing *dogo*, Yano challenged traditional interpretations by introducing nuanced juxtapositions that oscillated between the Sinographic view of speech as subordinate and a more direct representation of nationhood through the spoken vernacular. His unusual combination of *dogo* and "the sound of our country" proved to complicate the "othering" mechanism imposed on *dogo*, subverting its positioning as a diminished spoken "other" within Sinographic textual hierarchies.

The original text in *New Theory of Japanese Writing* is written as follows:

²³ Yano Ryūkei's 1886 *Nihon buntai mōji shinron* joined debates on writing reform by developing a novel theory to reserve Sinographic character use, advocating *Kanbun kundokutai* as the proper Japanese written form. See Atsuko Ueda, *Language, Nation, Race: Linguistic Reform in Meiji Japan (1868-1912)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021).

²⁴ I am indebted to Atsuko Ueda's *Language, Nation, Race* for contextualizing the significance of Yano's 1880s writing on this topic.

支那字の我国に入るに当てや 我々の祖先は訳せらるるだけは 我が土 語 ^{クニコトバ}にて支那字に訓
を付してゐる。²⁶

When Sinographic characters entered our country, our ancestors, to the extent they could translate them, affixed readings (*kun*) to the Sinographic characters using our country's language (*dogo/kuni-kotoba*).

Here, I would like to focus on the double meaning of *dogo* presented by characters and *kuni-kotoba* presented as the phonetic reading. Ruby text serves various functions, which can indicate the phonetic form of a word (pronunciation) or intentionally combine indirectly aligning words to create parallel meanings. It is part of the flexibility of the notation system in Japanese writing; as literary scholar Konno Shinji puts it, “Japanese has no correct way of writing.”²⁷ This notation system offers writers various options, with logographic characters, phonographic kana scripts (including katakana and hiragana), and ruby text to expand expression and the spectrum of nuance. In this context, the term *dogo* exemplifies an unusual case to create parallel meanings. It should be noted that *New Theory of Japanese Writing* generally omits ruby text. If the aim is to help readers understand the pronunciation of a particularly obscure word, the writer can annotate the character compound 土語 with a phonetic form read as *dogo*. However, Yano plays with the

²⁶ Yano Ryūkei, *Nihon buntai mōji shinron* (Tōkyō: Hōchisha, 1886), 4.

²⁷ Konno, Shinji, *Kanji to katakana to hiragana: Nihongo hyōki no rekishi* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2017), 17.

use of annotation here.²⁸ The phonographic kana script presents a different word: *kuni-kotoba*, meaning “the sound of our country.”

The combination of *dogo* and “the sound of our country” (*kuni-kotoba*) complicate the interpretation of the word *dogo* itself. While the character compound representing *dogo* continues to invoke the traditional worldview and hierarchies of the Sinographic writing-speech structure, the phonographic kana script read as *kuni-kotoba* invokes a more grounded, localized representation of the spoken vernacular within the national boundaries. This juxtaposition destabilizes the marginalized positioning of *dogo* as merely a subordinate, dialectic other unassociated with logographic characters in Sinographic cosmologies. By intertwining *dogo* with the somewhat idealized notion of *kuni-kotoba*, Yano may have aimed to ascribe significance and valorizes the local spoken language as an authentic expression of national identity and belonging.

The *dogo* + *kuni-kotoba* synthesis challenges the long-held Sinographic tendency to diminish and “other” realms of speech that lack logographic inscriptability. Instead, it asserts *dogo*’s centrality as the primordial sonic embodiment of the nation itself. This discursive maneuver subverts *dogo*’s peripheral status, reframing it as the essential kernel from which a modern national language and corresponding textual practices must emerge.

Most importantly, Yano’s deployment of this *dogo* + *kuni-kotoba* juxtaposition plants the seeds for a paradigm shift—one that decenters the Sinographic preoccupation with writing as the sole legitimate conduit of linguistic and cultural representation. It opens up avenues for renegotiating the relationship between speech and script in forging new grammars of national belonging. However, for Yano, this does not entail a wholesale rejection of established scribal

²⁸ More similar cases can be found in Chieko Ariga, “The Playful Gloss. *Rubi* in Japanese Literature,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 309–35.

traditions. Rather, it is the strategic coexistence of logographic and phonographic script-types, holding dual visions of textual and oral regimes in productive tension.

This calculated employment of multiple script-ideology complexes allows Yano to navigate and sharpen his understanding of the inherent tensions between speech and writing, without being forced into an either/or binary. Instead of discarding the Sinographic textual order, he dialectically synthesizes these seemingly incompatible realms. Ultimately, Yano's approach hints at the struggles and contingencies inherent to all acts of language reform and nationalist language institutionalization, especially within the East Asian context. Here, the relationship between speech and language has not been self-evident, given the historicized disjuncture between spoken vernaculars and linguistic norms rooted in Sinographic writing traditions. Yano's negotiation reflects the complexities of linguistic modernization in this scribal sphere—carving a middle path between cosmopolitan textual frameworks and the legitimation of local speech registers.

The dual meanings of *dogo* and *kuni-kotoba* provide a lens through which to examine the comprehensive reevaluation of the Japanese language unfolding at this time. Driven by the pursuit of developing a more contemporary national language for the emerging modern state, this reevaluation was fundamentally grounded in critical reflections on the Sinographic tradition itself. Specifically, it involved scrutinizing the ideological hierarchies between script and speech inherent to that cosmological framework. Interpreting *dogo* narrowly as merely a dialect obscures crucial context—the dialectic framing of *dogo* originated from the implicit rivalries and fissures between the written and spoken realms within Sinographic scribal regimes. Understanding these tensions is paramount for exploring the dimensional gulf separating text and talk that lies at the heart of any substantive discussion about Sinographic language traditions.

The pivotal question of whether *dogo* could transform into a unified “national” language ultimately hinges on whether the criteria of legitimation resided more in the domains of writing or speech. This core inquiry underscores the profound, enduring impact of the Sinographic ideological complex in shaping modern notions of linguistic identity and belonging.

Some may express doubt or surprise about the connection between “*dogo*” and the Japanese language in the 1880s. This skepticism, as Atsuko Ueda’s analysis suggests, can be partly rooted in the prevalent framing of the studies of Meiji Japan within a specific paradigm. This paradigm often posits the nation as the ultimate goal and a pre-existing entity, attributing the impulse to nationalize as the primary catalyst for change. As Ueda points out, discussions following this formula, which seemingly trace the nation-building process, often result in self-fulfilling prophecies.²⁹ This perspective, especially familiar to those versed in early twentieth-century East Asian history, directs attention toward the link between Japanese and “national language” (*kokugo*) during the 1890s and onward. The teleological focus put on *kokugo* creates an atmosphere as if the Sinographic tradition is no longer in the background, assuming an air of independence. The nuanced complexity and coexistence with the Sinographic tradition in the 1880s, as evident in Ueda’s work about a nuanced departure from the norms of Literary Sinitic, bring to light that the negotiation with the Sinographic Cosmopolis serves as a source from which the self-construction of a national language emerges and stems.

In a similar but distinct manner, my exploration of the connection between *dogo* and the Japanese spoken language in the 1880s resonates with Ueda’s observation. It also reflects the significance of the adjustment and negotiation of the Sinographic Cosmopolis, which may be no less important than a teleological path of nationalization. With the context of the Sinographic

²⁹ See Ueda, *Language, Nation, Race*; and Atsuko Ueda, “Sound, Scripts, and Styles: *Kanbun kundokutai* and the National Language Reforms of 1880s Japan,” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 20 (2008): 134–56.

Cosmopolis in mind, encountering a site in the first Sinographic sphere for the 1890s Japan illuminates different meanings.

Sinographic Core Interrupted: *Dogo*'s Paradigm Shifts from Meiji to Taiwan

Observing this paradigm reflection around *dogo* being rapidly applied to Taiwanese languages within just a decade is equally fascinating. The continuity in *dogo*'s usage across the Japanese metropolitan context and Taiwan's colonial periphery reveals more than just linguistic transitions. Its extension from "the second Sinographic sphere" of Japan into "the first Sinographic sphere" anchored by China as the Middle Kingdom, disrupts the very core of Sinographic language ideologies. This shift of employing *dogo*'s dialectical framing to comprehend and represent the spoken realms of the Sinographic heartland itself, sheds critical light on the fundamental tensions between speech and writing that have long underlied textual-scribal traditions. By emphasizing Taiwan's spoken tongues over long-established unifying textual practices, the paradigmatic ripples become unavoidably visible.

One likely decisive factor that facilitates a confrontation of the first and second Sinographic spheres lies in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), triggered by Chosŏn Korea's internal political struggles and fueled by the diplomatic tension between the Qing China and Meiji Japan.³⁰ Following Qing China's ceding of Hong Kong to the British in 1860 and predating American colonialization of the Philippines in 1898, the Empire of Japan, amid these Western predecessors and comrades, acquired its initial colony after defeating Qing China on the first Sino-Japanese War. The diplomat Li Hongzhang (1823–1901), facing an assassination attempt,

³⁰ For research that discuss more on the role of Korea played in this military conflict between Qing China and Meiji Japan, see Satoko Koketsu. "Japanese Diplomacy and the Sino-Korean Suzerain-Vassal Relationship before and after the First Sino-Japanese War," in *A World History of Suzerainty: A Modern History of East and West Asia and Translated Concepts*, ed. Takashi Okamoto (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 2019), 151–173.

effectively negotiated with the Japanese military to achieve a ceasefire. He subsequently signed the Shimonoseki Treaty, bringing an end to the war, at the cost of significant concessions, including the cession of the outskirts of Qing China's southeastern coast: Taiwan and the Penghu Islands. The occupation, rule, and administration of Taiwan involved two main ethnic groups, the migrant "Chinese" who were under the leverage of Sinographic tradition, and the Indigenous people who were detached from the Sinographic tradition. It was the spoken languages of the former, particularly the languages of southern Fujian province (Hokkien and Hakka) that arguably played a special role in the reflection of the Sinographic sphere on the Japanese side. In other words, they were particularly focused on the kinds of language that the descendants of migrant "Chinese" or "Han" in Taiwan used.

The encounter with the first Sinographic sphere likely prompted the Japanese side to further reflect on the Sinographic tradition and the concept of *dogo* in a broader context. The unbinding of *dogo* from the Japanese language was likely necessitated by a discursive adjustment to accommodate the colonial other's language as a new participant. Colonial-era Taiwan, in this sense, marked persistent efforts by the colonizers to raise awareness of *dogo*'s potential double meaning in this new territory. Within the Sinographic lexicon, *dogo* connoted submission to the Sinocentric order. The "*do*" represented an uncivilized, uneducated status—the antithesis of one versed in Sinographic writing. It rejected spoken language as a legitimate communication tool. However, the "new" meaning developed by Meiji intellectuals like Yano gradually legitimated *dogo* not as an othering concept, but as "native."

It is no exaggeration that *dogo* became a keyword in colonial Taiwan, although this symbolized a challenging approach for locals. It prompted them to leave the comfort of the first Sinographic sphere, urging recognition of their status as *dogo* speakers rather than "authentic"

writers of logographic writing. Their self-association with literary Sinitic became overshadowed to an extent. This ambivalence complicated *dogo*'s further transformation into the “Taiwanese language.” In other words, the colonial occupation led to a significant decrease in using *dogo* concerning the Japanese language, while notably increasing its mention in the Taiwanese context. This amounted to a reverse exportation of *dogo* reconceptualizations, transmitting them back into the first Sinographic sphere, highlighting the speech ecology of the first Sinographic sphere rather than the scribal unification centered on the Middle Kingdom. The transition of the term “*dogo*” is clearly evidenced by the series of magazine covers shown in Figure 2.1.

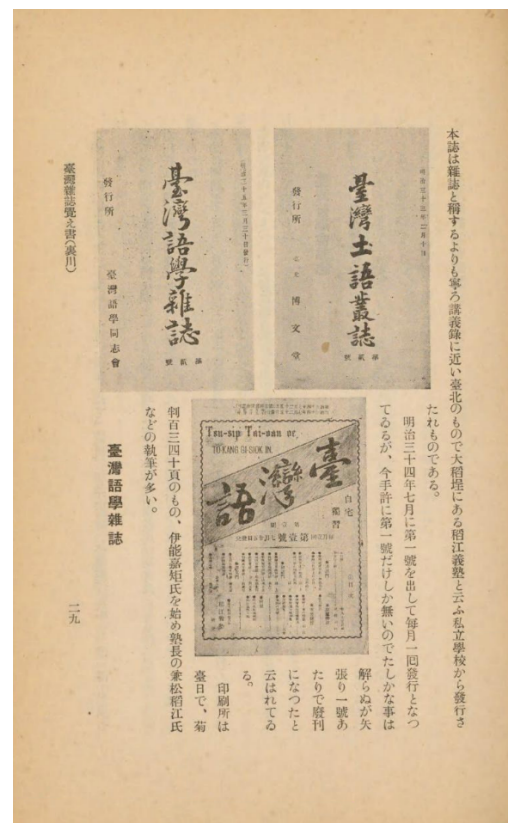


Figure 2.1. Covers of Taiwango language magazines, 1899–1903, illustrating the terminological evolution of “dogo” from referring to Japanese to Taiwanese languages. Titles shown: *Taiwan dogo sōshi* (1899–1901), *Taiwan gogaku zasshi* (1902–1903), and *Taiwan go* (1901).³¹

To underscore the perceived significance of *dogo*, I will examine the congratulatory messages featured in the inaugural issue of *Taiwanese Local Language Magazine*. For instance, Kimura Tadashi (1860–1940), the head of the document department at the civil affairs bureau, stated:

In the countries of the world that are organized according to the principle of survival of the fittest, there are many countries that are proud of their civilization, and in those countries where the power of the nation can be expanded to the point where it can be said in other languages, how do you look back on the state of language study in those countries? [...] Therefore, we are in a position to study the Taiwanese language regardless of whether or not we possess Taiwan, and we must study the Taiwanese language as a means of indoctrination and as a spearhead for assimilation, and we must realize that studying the Taiwanese language is a preparation for introducing the Japanese language.³²

³¹ Uchigawa Daigo, “Taiwan zasshi oboe sho,” *Aishō*, no. 2 (August 1934): 29. Although the initial “language magazines” like *Taiwan dogo sōshi* and *Taiwan go* were short-lived publications spanning only 1899–1903, the later arrival of *Go-en: Taiwan gogaku zasshi* in 1908 marked a transition to a long-running and consistently published monthly journal dedicated to language topics in Taiwan, remaining in print until 1941.

³² 「優勝劣敗ノ原則ニ依テ組織セラル宇内各国中文明ヲ以テ誇ルノ国、他ノ語ヲ以テ云ヘヘ自国ノ勢力ヲ出来ヘキ丈擴充セントウルノ各国ニ於ケル語學ノ研究ノ情形ハ如何顧フニ／歐洲各國ハ常ニ東洋各國ヲ以テ文明ノ伍班ニ列セシムルヲ忌避スル傾向アルニ拘ラス自國ニハ殖民學校又ハ東洋語學校ヲ設ケ又ハ商業學校ニ東洋各國ノ語學科ヲ設ケ以テ東洋各國ノ言語ノ研究ニ怠ラナルヲ見ル／是主外交、商業、宗教其他各般ノ必要ヲ充為チリト雖一言以テ之テ掩ハ至ノ勢力ヲ扶植スル手段トシテ語學ノ研究ヲ勉ムルニ外ナラサルナ夫レ然リ東洋ニ雄飛スルノ臺灣ヲ領有セント否トル拘ラス臺灣語ノ研究ヲ勉ムヘキ位地ニ在ルモノナリ況ヤ已ニ領有ス感化ノ手段トシテ同化ノ先鋒軍トシテ臺灣語ヲ研究セサルカラス蓋臺灣語ヲ研究スルハ邦語ヲ傳フルノ準備タルコトヲ悟ラサルヘカラス」 Kimura Tadashi 木村匡, “Shukushi,”

Similarly, contributor Daitō Gakuji (penname³³ of Kinoshita Shinsaburō 1867–unknown), Chief Editor of *Taiwan New Paper* (*Taiwan shinpō*) and *Taiwan Daily News* (*Taiwan nichinichi shinpō*), also emphasized the significance of learning *dogo*. He suggested language as a key to understand the situation in Taiwan and wrote:

The owner of *Hakubundō* is deeply concerned that those in charge of Taiwan’s affairs have yet to learn the truth about Taiwan, and that those who discuss Taiwan’s affairs are worried about this unclarity. As a means to eliminate this problem, it is hoped that languages on both sides of Japan and Taiwan can be studied and situations can be understood.³⁴

Contributor Sasagi Yasugorō (1872–1934),³⁵ instead of directly addressing the studying of Taiwan’s *dogo*, framed his account with the language situation in China. He highlighted that each of China’s twenty-one provinces spoke its own distinct language. By emphasizing the nation’s immense linguistic diversity, he drew a direct connection between the absence of a unified, common language and its fragmented state at the time. In other words, his observations

Taiwan dogo sōshi, no. 1 (December 1899): 1.

³³ I found 大東學人 as Kinoshita Shinsaburō 木下新三郎 by his signature, “Kinoshita Shin,” signed along with a calligraphy collected in the preface of Andō Motokazu ed., *Taiwan Taikan* (Tokyo: Nihon Gōdō Tsūshinsha, 1932).

³⁴ 「博文堂主人深く慨する所あり、臺政に當る者、未だ必ずしも臺灣の真相を審にせず、臺政を議する者、亦其の事情を明にせざるの傾あるを憂ひ、此の弊根を絶つ手段として、彼我の言語を？究し、事情の疏通を計らんと欲し」 Kinoshita Shinsaburō, “Shukushi,” *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, no. 1 (December 1899): 2. The owner of *Hakubundō* refers to the publisher of *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, Japanese Buddhist Yuuki Yoshifumi (unknown).

³⁵ Sasagi Yasugorō 佐佐木安五郎 was known for his involvement in local politics, language education, and criticism of colonial policies during the late 19th century in Taiwan. He has served as an interpreter during the First Sino-Japanese War and, after leaving Taiwan, became an active supporter of the Chinese republic revolution:

about linguistic diversity across China's provinces positioned the lens of language not just as a diagnostic tool, but as a direct threat to the ideological foundations upholding China's coherence and centripetal forces. By highlighting the lack of a unified linguistic medium, he aimed to subvert the hegemonic Sinographic textual order that had long served as the bedrock of imagined communal belonging. His framing posited language heterogeneity as an existential rupture undermining the Sinocentric ideology of a tightly bound, symbolically integrated pan-Chinese ecumene. The cruciality of the lens of language, he suggested, lays in its ties to the very roots of China's imagined unity, proving it as fragmented than cohesive throughout history. He wrote:

The unification of a nation is rooted in the unification of the people's hearts, and the unification of the people's hearts is embedded in the unification of language... Look at the current situation in China! Not only do the 400 million people all consider the hearts of the 400 million people as their own, but also the 21 provinces all speak the languages of the 21 provinces.³⁶

Another contributor, Isakawa Genichirō, a journalist for the *Taiwan Business Paper* (*Taiwan shōhō*) and *Taiwan Daily News*, likewise, focused on the lens of language—but from the perspective of reshaping interpersonal interaction and cross-cultural understanding. In his view, merely imposing Japanese unilaterally as the dominant language would prove inadequate for bridging communicative gaps between colonizers and colonized. He criticized the Japanese impartiality in terms of understanding local languages, suggesting mutual understandings instead

³⁶ 「國家ノ統一ハニ民心ノ統一ニ基因シ民心ノ統一ハ言語ノ統一ニ胚胎ス...支那ノ現勢ヲ顧ミヨ／四億萬人悉ク四億萬人ノ心ヲ以テ心トスルノミナラズ／廿一省亦皆廿一省ノ語ヲ以テ話トセザルハアラズ」 Sasagi Yasugorō, "Taiwan dogo sōshi hakkō shukushi," *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, no. 1 (December 1899): 3.

of the one-way imposition of the colonizer's language as the ultimate solution for better communication. He wrote:

As a result of the people from the mainland arriving on the island with the lingering prestige of victory, they not only hold themselves high as conquerors but also look down on the islanders as subjects. This leads to the feeling that it is extremely despicable to imitate the language of the subjects. On the other hand, the subjects believe that even in terms of language, they are still expressing subservience. Therefore, they strive to make us learn from them, while we do not bother to learn from them... There is no other way to know the people's feelings, observe their customs, and understand their habits than through language. The lack of communication in language often invites strange misfortunes, causes people to suffer unjustly, and leads the people to feel apprehensive. What is the root cause of this problem? It is none other than the failure to spread the local language, the failure to encourage the use of the local language, and the problem of despising and ignoring the local language with a cold eye.³⁷

Examining how Japanese colonizers envisioned the place of this colonial *dogo* within their imperial identity is crucial. Their ambition to emulate European powers by expanding Japanese linguistic influence appears subtly entangled with valorizing *dogo*. There is a nuance that this

³⁷ 「戦勝の餘威を挟んで本島に蒞める我内地人は、自己を征服者として高振ぶると同時に、本島人を服従者として見下ぐるの結果、服従者の話を似ぬる事の甚だ賤劣なるが如き感情を生じ、一方には服従者は言語の上にも猶は服従を意味するかに考え従て彼をして我に習はしめんとを勉めて、又我進んで彼に習ふとを屑とせざるに至れり...民情を知り、風俗を察し、慣習を知るの方法は一に之に依るより他なき言語の疎通せざる弊は往々奇禍を招き、冤を被るの人を出し、民をして危惧の念を生ぜしむるに至れり、之れ抑も何に起因するの弊ぞや、他なし土語を普及せざるの弊なり、土語を奨励せざるの弊なり、土語を卑しむで冷眼看過するの弊なり。」 Isakawa Genichirō 石川源一郎, "Shukushi," *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, no. 1 (December 1899): 5.

elevated status for colonial vernaculars could either elevate Japanese in return or solidify “language” as vital for trans-regional communication.

These colonizers’ remarks reveal layered ideologies—their imperial ambitions partly shaped, and were shaped by, their envisioning process concerning *dogo*. However, the unique aspect lies in their excessive attention to colonial *dogo*, worrying about neglecting its significance. This concern is implicitly revealed by the rapid terminological change, equating *dogo* with “the Taiwanese language”—a shift tying closely to the framework of the first Sinographic sphere.

These quoted accounts provide insight into the prioritization of spoken languages in Taiwan, emphasizing the significance of *dogo* in administration. Spoken language is viewed as a means of accessing society’s reality, a gateway to understanding southern China (due to linguistic similarities among certain regions), and preparation for future circulation of Japanese. According to these accounts, the colonial *dogo* serves as a counterpart to the language of Japanese that deserves a formal studying, bridged with Japanese, and included as a subject in magazines, dictionaries, and schools for interpreters training.⁴⁴ It is worth noting that the equivalence here is drawn between two former *dogo*. Traditionally, in writing practices rooted in the Sinographic tradition, this might not have necessitated a “translation,” as the logographic writing system would have been sufficient to offset the differences in speech. The logic of the Sinographic spheres suggests that, instead of translating diverse languages—except for an urgency to understand others—it is more economical to teach each region a shared writing system. The rationale of “knowing others” also constitutes part of the Japanese accounts quoted above, but “being known” also relies on the level of speech for mutual understanding. Viewing it

⁴⁴ Okamoto Makiko, “Shokumichi tōchi shoki taiwan niokeru hoōin tsūyaku nojinji—seido sekkei ninyō jōjyō ryūdōsei,” *Shakai Kagaku* 48, no. 4 (2019): 79–106.

this way, establishing equivalence between Japanese and Taiwan's spoken language is a particularly intriguing concept. The framing of a pair of *dogo* in linguistic distance can be somewhat revolutionary, challenging the privileged logographic writing medium in favor of the notion of translation.

Translation scholars Naoki Sakai and Lydia Liu have examined how the act of translation can create an impression of equivalent subjects.⁴⁵ While their works have focused mainly on the regime of translation between Western and East Asian languages, my approach is to explore the schema of translative configuration between a pair of *dogo*. In other words, configuring the colonial *dogo* as a language requiring translation and documentation, which elevates activities typically deemed unworthy of public attention by the colonized themselves, serves to consolidate the idea that *dogo* as an unsung factor overshadowed by logographic writing. This consolidation of colonial *dogo* as a language subject to translation, in turn, underpins the colonizers' self-construction of a national language. It differs from the model framed on borrowing the Western language as a solid foundation to establish the prioritization of speech and the faith in translatability; rather, it builds upon a reciprocal relationship with the colonial *dogo*.

The primary target "learners" of the devices of magazines and language education systems on the subject of "*dogo*" (the Taiwanese language) were Japanese governmental officials. As historian Okamoto Makiko pointed out, learning the colonized language has been essential for public servants, including police officers, legislator workers, and medical interpreters, who were generally expected to assist the elite officials deployed by the central government who spoke no colonized languages. According to her perspective, since elite bureaucrats had more voices in

⁴⁵ Interested readers may refer to Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). See also Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

policymaking, their support of assimilation or national language (*kokugo*) usually received more attention from researchers. This, in turn, has reinforced the dichotomy of domination and resistance in scholarship. The multiple language encounters of government officials, who have imposed their language on the colonized and facilitated documentation through their learning of colonial *dogo*, offer valuable insight into the intricate language dynamics of the empire.⁴⁶

The unacknowledged work of translation and implicit language gap within the first Sinographic sphere has been made explicit by the development of translator-interpreters fostering and their employment. It could be said a direct encounter with the first Sinographic sphere dispelled the communicative fantasy of a unifying textual regime. This connection linked the endorsement in the significance of *dogo*'s instrumental use to a manifestation of the Middle Kingdom's internal multivocality. Traces of attention to linguistic diversity within the first Sinographic sphere are evident in the realization of inapplicability of linguist Isawa Shūji's (1851–1917) *Japanese-Sino Character Pronunciation Dictionary* (*Nissin jion kan*, 1895).⁴⁷ In hopes of understanding colonial *dogo*, Isawa compiled this dictionary but quickly realized the divergence was too great.⁴⁸ However, in order to communicate with locals in Taiwan, colonizers found it necessary to use duet interpreters: from Japanese to “Peking Mandarin,” and then from

⁴⁶ Okamoto Makiko, “Nippon tōchi zenhanki taiwan no kanryō soshiki niokeru tsūyaku ikusei to zasshi ‘go en’: 1910–1920 nendai o chūshin ni,” *Shakai Kagaku* 42, no. 2–3 (2012): 103–44.

⁴⁷ Isawa Shūji and Ōya Tōru eds., *Nissin jion kan* (Tokyo: Namiki Zendō, 1895). The key pursuit of Isawa is phoneticization of Sino-languages, including both *shinago* (or “Chinese Language”), which refers to the Peking Mandarin, and Taiwango. For instance, *Nissin jion kan* has offered a foundation for his subsequent research *Shinkoku kanwa inkyō onji kaisetsu sho: Shiwa Ōyō* (Tokyo: Rakuseisha, 1901) and *Shinago seion hatsubi* (Tokyo: Rakuseisha, 1915). As the initial educational bureaucrats, Isawa also oversaw several earliest Japanese scripts annotated Taiwan language books, including *Taiwan Jūgoon to jibo shōkai*, ed., Taiwan Sōtokufu Minseikyoku Gakumubu (Taihoku: Taiwan Sōtokufu Minseikyoku Gakumubu, 1896).

⁴⁸ For more details about Isawa, see Uzuhashi Tokuyoshi, *Nitchū gengo bunka kōryū no senkusha: Dazai Shundai Sakamoto Tenzan Isawa Shūji no Kaon kenkyū* (Tokyo: Hakuteisha, 1999). Elizabeth Kaske also discussed much of his role in the late Qing and early Republic Chinese language reform movement. See Elizabeth Kaske, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

“Peking Mandarin” to “Taiwanese.”⁴⁹ This contact of linguistic practice facilitated the investment in *dogo* interpreters and focusing on the distinctiveness of Taiwan’s *dogo* in dictionary compilation.

While the authorities and linguists might aim to establish a linguistic interaction with the colony, the popular sentiment could be complex. Even though the significance of speech was recognized, cultivating a linguistic interaction with the first Sinographic sphere in practice was a demanding task. The notion of *dogo* by virtue of finiteness remained to resonate: the value of a language depended on its usage and the potential of the location where it was spoken. This, in turn, influenced the level of dedication to learning the language.

Seeing from this light, the reality was the lack of passion for learning *dogo* to communicate with Taiwanese among Japanese, which seemed to be a regular concern among Japanese language teachers. This lack of passion for learning *dogo* was depicted in “Five Difficulties in Learning *Dogo*,” an article published in the first issue of the *Taiwanese Local Language Magazine* by Watanabe Masashi (1867–unknown).⁵⁰ Although Watanabe was not a professional linguist, he was a trained interpreter via the colonial education system who had

⁴⁹ While “Peking Mandarin” in the late nineteenth century can be linked to the present indication of “Modern Mandarin Chinese,” historically “Mandarin” does not necessarily denote a specific language, as explained here: “Its first and oldest application was to the universal standard language or koiné spoken by officials and educated people in traditional China during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties. In this use it parallels and may in fact be modeled on early southern European missionary expressions, such as *la lengua mandarina*, *falla midarin*, etc., which in turn directly render the native Chinese term *guanhua* (“the language of the officials, or mandarins”), a compound first attested in a mid-Ming times.” W. South Coblin, “A Brief History of Mandarin,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120, no. 4 (2000): 537. We will delve into this aspect and the complexity of the concept later.

⁵⁰ The connection between Watanabe Masashi and his literary penname of “Host of the House of Wind and Mountain” (*Fūzan dō shūjin*) can be evidenced by an entry in the journal of *Notes of Taiwanese Custom*, no. 5, which states that “Watanabe Masashi” as “who often uses the name of ‘Fūzan Dō’ to send reports to this journal,” and introduces him as an interpreter that just moved to Taipei for his new employment in Taipei Hospital (1901, 72). The true identity of Watanabe Masashi is not often shown in scholarship. There is only Pan Wei-Hsin’s dissertation that notes about the full name of Watanabe and his writings on Taiwanese languages. See Pan, Wei-Hsin, *Rizhi shiqi riren taiyu shuxie yu xiangzhengxing quanli gua xi zhi yanjiu* [Examples of Taiwanese Orthographic Writings and their Symbolic Representations from the Japanese Colonial Period] (Ph.D. diss., Taiwan Normal University, 2020).

personal experience with the challenges of learning Taiwanese. In fact, he was the one who learned the Taiwanese language for self-interest, as his main job was a hospital interpreter. Even so, he was aware that the mainstream view considered learning *dogo* as incompatible with a Meiji popular ambition for advancement in the world. As Watanabe observed, “for future employment prospects, people tend to consider it necessary to learn English, Russian, or Mandarin (*guanhua*). However, when it comes to the Taiwanese language, many view it as uneconomical and not cost-effective to make the effort to learn.”⁵¹ Moreover, *dogo* was notorious for its difficulty—another legacy of the Sinographic tradition. Unless phonographic scripts have been developed at some point in history, *dogo* usually lacked a proper notation system to record their sound. This increased the barriers for non-native speakers to learn the language, as they had to learn “from ears to mouths.”⁵² The main task in elevating the practical use of colonial *dogo* has therefore been identified in the establishment of a transcriptive system, whether using Japanese kana orthography or a combination of Sinography and kana ruby.

The linguistic engagement with colonial *dogo* as a language for many linguists attests to their speech-based linguistic view. While the primary audience for such materials remains Japanese, the colonial knowledge documentation facilitates a relatively mature approach to studying colonial *dogo*. An example of this comes from Ogawa Naoyoshi (1869–1947), an early linguist, researcher, and educator of the Taiwanese language, as well as a founding member of the “National Language Study Group.” As I mentioned earlier, in the context of Okinawa, the use of kana scripts has been perceived as dangerous, while in Taiwan, it has been otherwise encouraged. This highlights the significance of considering the essentiality of transcribing the

⁵¹ Watanabe Masashi, “*Dogo gakushū no go nakan*,” *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, no. 1 (December 1899): 9.

⁵² Watanabe, “*Dogo gakushū no go nakan*,” *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, no. 1 (December 1899): 9.

local linguistic landscape in Taiwan. This is evident in Ogawa's speech on "The Research on Kana Orthography" ("Kana tsukai ni tsuite chō," 1900), where he discusses the complete separation between "voice" and "script," stating that written scripts are simply a means of recording language in a tangible form.⁵³ Ogawa argues that kana orthography can serve as a useful transcribing tool for both Japanese and Taiwanese languages, providing a script for speech. Instead, the writing system of literary Sinitic fails to transcribe the voice. In his words, "When it comes to the transcription of Taiwanese language, since for most of the time we hardly find a proper Sinitic character that can fit [the voice], to use Sinitic characters to record the language will be very difficult."⁵⁴

Negotiating Speech and Writing: Taiwanese Responses to Vernacular Movements

The double meanings consciously employed by Japanese writers in relation to *dogo*—manifested, for instance, in annotations to expand and complicate a term's implication—stood in contrast to the interpretation of *dogo* by Taiwanese writers, who tended to adhere to the conventional framework of the literary Sinitic tradition. The concept of *dogo* and its associated otherness, firmly rooted in the Sinographic framework, had been persistently perceived by Taiwanese speakers. This might have been partly due to the parallel education system between colonial institutions and traditional Sinology private schools or tutors, as well as dual-script prints in both Japanese and literary Sinitic in public media.

⁵³ Ogawa Naoyoshi, "Kana tsukai ni tsuite chō," *Kokugo kenkyūkai kaihō*, no. 1 (1900): 8–37. It was reprinted in Taiwan Sōtokufu Minseikyoku Gakumubu ed., *Kokumin yomiho sanshō: kanatsukaihō* (Taihoku: Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpōsha, 1902), 1–59.

⁵⁴ 「殊ニ臺灣土語ニ於テ之ヲ記寫スル際シ、適當ナル漢字ノナキ場合甚タ多キカ故ニ、漢字ヲ用井テ土語ヲ記スルニハ大ナル困難アリ。」 Ogawa, "Kana tsukai ni tsuite chō," 37.

In practice, many literati in colonial-era Taiwan were steeped in traditional literary Sinitic learning while also participating in modern Japanese language education. This dynamic potentially complicated their understanding of language. In other words, instead of being entirely deferential to the elevation of spoken language as promoted by the colonial regime, intellectual communities could have had more ambivalent attitudes toward spoken languages. This tendency manifested itself particularly in their concerns about addressing the significance of *dogo* in Taiwan, despite a clear awareness of it as their spoken language and means for oral communication, even knowing its apparent barriers in communicating with the languages prevalent in the rest of the first Sinographic sphere. In other words, the extent to which the colonized communities embraced the linguistic regime imposed by the colonizers may have depended less on their proficiency in Japanese and more on the value they placed on their own spoken language.

The decline of literary Sinitic in the broader East Asian context, driven by the vernacular literature movements like *genbunichi* in Meiji Japan and the May Fourth Movement in the newly established Republic of China from 1919, revealed a much more complex situation for Taiwanese intellectual communities. As the legitimacy of literary Sinitic diminished, intellectual communities in Taiwan faced a dilemma: should they write as they spoke (*dogo*) or write to maintain the spatial imagination evoked by literary Sinitic? In addition to Japanese proficiency, this confrontation suggested a fundamental tradeoff between the regional context represented by speech and the expansive spatial vision evoked by writing. Ultimately, the goal for some intellectual communities in Taiwan was to develop a form of “vernacular writing” that could inherit the spatial envisioning of literary Sinitic, rather than strictly aligning with their own spoken language. Aware that prioritizing spoken *dogo* conflicted with the spatial scope

represented by literary Sinitic writing, these communities preferred not to fully comply with the strict adoption of vernacular literary norms. In short, rather than completely prioritizing spoken *dogo* at the expense of that spatial imagination, they aimed to develop a vernacular writing style. By weakening the understanding of vernacular literary norms, they sought to inherit literary Sinitic's spatial envisioning

The Taiwan People's News (*Taiwan Minpō*, 1923–1927), the first vernacular Chinese newspaper founded by Taiwanese alumni and students from universities like Meiji and Waseda in Tokyo, exemplified the complex negotiation between spoken *dogo* and vernacular writing movements. Initially using a mix of Japanese and Literary Sinitic scripts like mainstream publications, the editorial board later shifted to publishing exclusively in vernacular Chinese in 1923, renaming it from *The Taiwan Youth*. This move reflected the new era of vernacular writing reforms happening in mainland China at the time. However, for this newspaper, adopting vernacular Chinese writing was more about learning a new literary mode rather than transcribing the local spoken *dogo* language. This demonstrated their approach of negotiating between speech and writing by aiming to develop a new vernacular writing style inspired by the reforms, while still resisting complete capitulation to basing the written norms entirely on spoken *dogo*.

While pursuing vernacular writing, Taiwanese intellectuals like Zhang Wo-jun (1902–1955)⁵⁵ revealed anxieties about spoken *dogo* lacking the spatial scope and literary sophistication of Literary Sinitic norms. In his critique published in *Taiwan People's News*, Zhang notably reiterated *dogo*'s perceived inferiority as a “tongue without written forms,” characterizing it as

⁵⁵ Zhang Wo-jun (張我軍 Tiu goa-kunn) was a prominent Taiwanese writer, educator and intellectual. Beyond being an active and prolific contributor to *Taiwan Minpō*, he was one of the leading figures of the Taiwanese New Literature Movement in the 1920s and 1930s. His writings spanned novels, poetry, and criticism. Zhang advocated for modernizing Taiwanese literature by adopting the vernacular Chinese written form promoted by the May Fourth Movement, while being highly critical of using *dogo* for literary purposes due to its lack of a logographic writing system. His views exemplified the complex attitudes of Taiwanese intellectuals towards vernacular writing during this period.

“an irrational and inferior language that lacks literary value.”⁵⁶ This “unwritability” prevented *dogo* from serving as a source of linguistic identity in Zhang’s eyes. His notion of language was anchored in logographic writing, refusing to consider *dogo* as possessing any literary worth. Despite the vernacular pursuit, Zhang’s conceptualization of vernacular completely separates from local spoken *dogo*. This exemplified the complex sentiment among Taiwanese intellectuals of adopting vernacular Chinese to modernize the written form, while still maintaining elements of the expansive literary imagination valued in Literary Sinitic traditions that *dogo* could not provide.

The pursuit of vernacular literature for these Taiwanese writers, however, paradoxically led to the marginalization of spoken languages, despite language itself being conceptually prioritized. This contributed to a sustained suppression of linguistic identity formation, evident in the greater resistance among Taiwanese intellectuals to fully embrace *dogo* as a legitimate basis for literary expression. Their perspective remained more attuned to the literary currents unfolding in mainland China than the assimilationist agenda of the colonial regime. For these Taiwanese intellectuals in 1925, the concept of *dogo* and its connotations of linguistic “otherness” reflected the deep embeddedness of the Sinographic cosmopolitan framework they remained rooted within. While ostensibly aiming to prioritize language as a core facet of modern national identity construction, this shift toward valorizing vernacular writing paradoxically illuminated the historic existence of a variegated linguistic ecology across the Sinographic communities.

Their partial acceptance of vernacular ideal reflected this very reconceptualization of language simultaneously implied a potential crisis—the perceived betrayal of the diversified

⁵⁶ “Regarding the Taiwanese language that we employ in our daily lives, nine out of ten words are sounds without words; it is a *dogo* and an inferior language that is irrational and lacks literary value.” Zhang Wo-jun, “Xinwenxue yundong de yi yi” [The Significance of New Literature Movement], *Taiwan Minpō* (Tokyo) 67, August 26, 1925: 20.

linguistic realities that had endured for centuries within the extended Sinographic realm. The persisting convention of downplaying *dogo* prevented it from overwriting the traditional spatial-cultural imaginary centered on the Middle Kingdom's cosmopolitan textual norms. This dynamic revealed an underlying tension between the Middle Kingdom framework, predicated on universal logographic literacy, and the realities of the expansive first Sinographic sphere which encompasses diverse spoken vernaculars. Disrupting the idealized homogeneity projected by centuries of Sinographic textual-cosmological integration proved deeply threatening to established civilizational worldviews. Their perspective, in a sense, remained more attuned to the literary currents unfolding in mainland China than the assimilationist agenda of the colonial regime.

It is often neglected that peripheral writers can fantasize about ownership over the cosmopolitan textual traditions, as this enables their symbolic integration into the expansive civilizational vision promised by the Middle Kingdom's "republic of letters." This force urges them to eclipse *dogo* in favor of logographic literacy. The devaluation of *dogo* and speech, in contrast with logographic writing, involves more than just hierarchies of linguistic prestige. As Saitō highlights, it concerns the importance placed on the communal sound created by recitation, the embracing of unintelligibility, and the use of poetry to encode patterns of sonic textures. The idea of linguistic identity and its comprehension is seen as lacking these features, showing limitations in barriers by speech and region. In this way, the "language" connecting everyone to Literary Sinitic must be an imaginative construct, preserved in logographic writing and embodied by an "unintelligible" vocalization.

In this context, the attachment to Sinographic writing for the first Sinographic sphere is probably beyond the issue of privilege, as a deep existential fear of forced deprivation of

language. For Zhang, *dogo* means one's separation from the world of writing; the aspect that it is a language that "we have been using in our daily lives" matters little. As long as "*dogo*" is concerned, it invokes the traditional Middle Kingdom model, and the first Sinographic sphere has only one way to interpret it: even though not yet "barbarous" (for whom literacy of Sinography has no role in their culture), "*do*" inevitably signifies a place where people not versed enough in Sinoscript writing, causing them described as "people who speak" than "people who write." Their relationship with Sinographic writing is not "I borrow the language, but simultaneously I have my voice" but "this is the only language I have."

By tapping into the musicality of language, it enhances transcendence of linguistically defined notions and the practicality of eclipsing *dogo* in everyday life. In order to expound upon the notion at hand, it may be fitting to invoke the age-old aphorism that "history never repeats itself, but it rhymes." This perspective of language posits "historicity" beyond its linguistic aspects: while the detail of speech may differ and vary, the patterns and structures of sonic elements can be recycled. In other words, as logographic symbols adopt a meta-phonetic approach to suggest an abstraction in representing speech, each symbol's need to correspond to a specific sound is downplayed. The emphasis is on creating a repeated, synthetic, and symbolic relationship between writing and voice, rather than a direct correspondence between symbols and sounds. This approach eliminates the need for translation, even when dealing with unintelligible speech. As a result, the role of *dogo* and speech is influenced, not only because they are in opposition to writing, but also because they are too transparent. In the third chapter, we will delve deeper into the matter with a particular emphasis on the complex dynamics of voice and speech, observed from the perspective of opera performance and spectators. To this end, I would like to focus on Saitō's discussion of two nineteenth-century literati—one Japanese Sinologist

and one intellectual from Canton, a periphery of the Middle Kingdom akin to precolonial Taiwan. This will enable us to further explore the mechanism behind *dogo*'s historical and modern oblivion.

For Middle Kingdom intellectuals, the triangular relationship between written Literary Sinitic, regional *dogo*, and the bureaucratic language operating as a vehicular linguistic medium was profoundly significant. In particular, Saitō Mareshi suggests understanding the divide between instrumental usage and symbolic cultural value is essential for grasping “the bureaucratic tongue” versus Literary Sinitic.

In his view, the bureaucratic language served an instrumental role—a vehicular code enabling communication across linguistically diverse territories. Its function was pragmatic: facilitating administration and bridging spoken vernaculars. The “bureaucratic language” (*kanwa* in Japanese, or late-imperial *guanhua* in Chinese) refers to an expedient tongue employed by the administrative class hailing from diverse regions who needed a common mode of communication. Its significance lay in pragmatism rather than status as a standard language or cultural capital.

In contrast, Literary Sinitic occupied the unique role as the “language of origin” (*kigen toshite no gengo*)—conceptually and culturally the source root for diversified *dogo* vernaculars. Its logographically coded textual traditions created a shared symbolic universe, one capable of vehiculating ideas, knowledge, and an overarching civilizational ethos throughout the empire. Though perhaps lacking utility for daily discourse, Literary Sinitic's very form inscribed it with an aura of timeless, hallowed cultural belonging. The ability of Literary Sinitic's logographic writing systems to facilitate historical communication and record-keeping across the vast Middle Kingdom territories legitimized the contemporary prestige and precedence of logographic script traditions, with its purported ambiguity of speech representation, over spoken vernaculars.

As Saitō astutely notes, “Education is what underpins such consciousness. Yet it is not an education that indoctrinates the notion ‘You belong to the Han ethnicity.’ Instead, it is the mastery of timeless classical texts through recitation, coupled with the crafting of literary compositions, that imbues one with the somatic awareness of being an integral part of Chinese civilization.”⁵⁹ He emphasizes literary consciousness and historical communicability over intelligibility—Zhang’s abstract “literary value” notion echoes this dreaming about the historical and spatial reach of textuality.

In other words, commitment to Literary Sinitic correlated not only with *dogo*’s subordination but also reduced the bureaucratic languages to a vehicular linguistic medium without the aura of essential cultural or ethnic belonging. As spoken, malleable tongues, they did not share the legitimacy of immalleable timelessness that could only be associated with literary Sinitic’s historical communicability across epochs and spaces. This historical reach replaced and superseded the importance of facilitating contemporary, localized community communicability. Even with broader synchronic imperial circulation, the bureaucratic tongues remained susceptible to diachronic alteration, unable to replace Literary Sinitic’s enduring trans-historical linkages.

For intellectuals within the Sinographic sphere, Saitō’s perspective posits the literary bond with textuality as holding greater significance for self-image, social status (via examination), and cultural identity compared to (spoken) linguistic identity per se. As he states,

⁵⁹ 「その意識を支えるものこそ、教育である。しかしそれは、お前は漢民族だと教えこむ教育ではない。万古不易の経典を誦んじ、文章を紡むことが、自らが中華文明の一員であるとの意識を醸成し。」 Saitō Mareshi, *Kanbunmyaku no kindai: Shinmatsu=Meiji no bungakukun* (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2005), 109.

Although each region used its own distinct language, the underlying concept within the Chinese world was that there existed a shared linguistic origin. In Liang Qichao's case, he was connected to his native place through Cantonese, while connected to China through Literary Sinitic.⁶¹ Therefore, as long as one could properly read and write the literary writing, being somewhat inadequate in the bureaucratic language would not undermine one's pride as part of the Han ethnicity. The reason one had to speak the bureaucratic language was not because it was correct, but simply because it was in common use...As long as it was a language widely used, whether it was the Min or Cantonese tongue did not matter. For Liang, the bureaucratic language was, so to speak, a vehicular language (*les langues vehicularies*). And his advocacy of the vernacular written language was not about integrating the literary language with Cantonese, but rather about making this vehicular bureaucratic language prevalent not just in speech but also in writing. By doing so, both traditional Literary Sinitic and Cantonese are preserved as they are.⁶²

In the above passage, "Liang" refers to the late Qing reformist intellectual Liang Qichao (1873–1929), a Cantonese *dogo* speaker. According to Saitō, despite being less proficient in the administrative language, Liang's sense of himself as an elite bourgeois and erudite scholar

⁶¹ In the context of the Middle Kingdom, Literary Sinitic is known as *wenyan* (Japanese: *bungen*). For consistency, I translate it as Literary Sinitic. Saitō's original text uses *bungen*.

⁶² 「各地域でそれぞれことな異なった言語を用いてはいるが、起源としての言語は共有しているというのが、中華世界の言語構造であった。梁啓超の場合、郷土とは粵語によって結びつき、中国とは文言によって結びつくのである。従って、文言さえきちんと読み書きができれば、官話が多少下手でも、それが漢民族としての誇りを傷つけることにはならない。官話をしゃべらねばならないのは、通行しているからであって、正しいからというわけではない。.....通行してさえいれば、閩音でも粵音でも構わない。梁啓超にとっての官話は、言ってみれば、乗り物言語(*les langues vehicularies*)である。そして白話文を提唱するのも、文言と粵語との統合を図るなどということではなく、この乗り物言語たる官話を、口頭のみならず書記においても通行させようということなのである。その場合、伝統文言も、粵語も、そのままに保存される。」 Saitō, *Kanbunmyaku no kindai*, 110.

remains strong. His “national” identity as a Chinese is also not affected by his fluency or lack thereof in officials’ language. Regardless of the political and cultural transformation from the Middle Kingdom to the modern nation-state, Liang knows that the textuality of the classics constitutes the essence of his identity. As one of the pioneers in developing modern vernacular Chinese, he always sets his goal as in favor to explore a new form to continue the energy of writing by incorporating official speech.⁶⁵

This statement sheds light on the thinking of language within the first Sinographic sphere, revealing that while the spoken language does not foster a sense of belonging or legitimacy, writing does. As a result, literati from remote hometowns can still have faith in their cultural competence if they are skilled and knowledgeable writers. A Canton-born (near Hong Kong) literati such as Liang can become one main consultant that the Emperor has trusted. While face-to-face communication between officials from other regions may require a common language to be developed, this speech does not necessarily associate with a particular aura other than a tool for communication. Conceiving of it as “the” Chinese language can thus be misleading.

Saitō further underscores the engagement of literati in the second Sinographic sphere with literary Sinitic and emphasizes theirs as a mirror of historical communicability as well. This is exemplified through the analysis of Rai Sanyō (1781–1832), a nineteenth-century Japanese Sinologist, and his work *On Poetry Laws* (Shiritsuron, [1883] 1920), edited by Rai’s disciple Onō Tatsu (1767–1833). In the epilogue, Rai summarizes,

⁶⁵ Historian Elizabeth Kaske provides a detailed investigation on the process of how the official’s language being singled out as what vernacular writing basing itself on. See Kaske, *Politics of Language in Chinese Education*.

Everything that poetry moves the human heart is entirely found in the recitation. Even without interpreting the meaning in detail, tears will well up. It becomes clear that there are no significant differences in the path of vocal expression between Japanese and Chinese.

詩之驚心動魄，總在吟誦之際，不必待細釋其義，而涕已墜之，是知聲音之道，和漢無大異也。⁶⁶（斎藤訳：詩が人の心を動かすのは、すべて吟誦のところにあって、細かく意味を解釈せずとも、涙は流れくる。声音の道には和漢で大きく違うところなどないことがわかる。）⁶⁷

The implication here is that Rai refutes the notion of translation. Rai contends that languages are inherently dynamic, with the ancient language lost or transformed. None of the contemporary speech can revive it entirely. He asserts that this ancient language can only be extracted through conventional Japanese reading of Sinoscript (*kunyomi*), better than any of the spoken languages that evolved and survived in the nineteenth-century Middle Kingdom. This perspective implies that the emotional impact of poetry is found in the recitation itself, which alludes to a similarity in patterns of sounds, tones, and rhymes. These sonic textures render linguistic differentiation in vocal expression nonsensical.

In Rai's work, Japan's logographic written poetry and the current speech are two distinct matters that gesture toward different notions of language. Rai believes that everyday speech only serves as a disconnected substitute for something from the past. Instead, poetry preserves patterns that can be repeated and is more culturally essential. This implies the language that

⁶⁶ Onō Tatsu (Onō Chozan), ed., *Shiritsuron*, in *Nihon shiwa sōsho*, ed. Ikeda Roshū, vol. 10 (Tokyo: Bunkaidō Shoten, [1883] 1920), 453.

⁶⁷ Saitō Mareshi, *Kanji sekai no chihei: Watashitachi ni totte moji to wa nani ka* (Tokyo: Kabushiki Kaisha Shinchōsha, 2014), 157.

poetry engages has the potential to transcend the incomprehensibility posed by linguistic barriers. Even without understanding the meaning of the words, resonance can still be achieved—through a form of “musicality” in the vocal representation of Literary Sinitic. It treats “language” as a notion wherein comprehensibility lies in sonic patterns. Translating through *dogo*, where meaning takes precedence, will risk losing the sonic interaction with history. An imagined sonic communication—replacing linguistic comprehension—may be more effective to prevent *dogo* from emerging with any significance.

Unseen Lingua Franca: *Dogos* as Possible Vehicular Tongues in East Asian Writing Traditions

While crafting this chapter, I often found it intriguing to consider the historical possibility that the lingua franca could have been the first Sinographic sphere’s *dogo*, specifically of Fujian or Canton. This is because these may have been the predominant languages heard in reading sessions when scholars from the second Sinographic sphere interacted with Literary Sinitic during specific eras. This idea is inspired by an instance in 1450 that the Sino-Korean scholar Young Kyun Oh quoted in his *Engraving Virtue: The Printing History of a Premodern Korean Moral Primer*.

Oh transcribed a historical conversation between a Chosŏn Korean scholar-official, Chŏng In-ji, and an envoy from the Ming dynasty of China, then the ruling regime in the central plains. This conversation, recorded in *Veritable Records of King Sejong* (*Sejong jangcheon daewang sillok*, 1454), suggests that the spoken counterpart of Literary Sinitic and the reading of Sinographic characters for the second Sinographic sphere may have entirely differed from the

central voice. However, this did not diminish the Korean scholar-officials' dedication to learning Literary Sinitic and their persistence in practicing it.

This conversation arose because a Chinese academician from the coastal Fujian region served as a literary education mentor in Chosŏn Korea (1392–1897), naturally influencing the scholars with the Fujian speech sound. In 1450, a Ming envoy visited Chosŏn Korea, and a scholar-official asked him to provide instruction on the proper pronunciation of the text. However, the envoy, seen as a symbol of civilizational standards, declined the request. As Oh points out, this decision could carry discriminatory undertones: the envoy believed voicing the text in a prefectural tongue would be more appropriate to display humbleness for the people of Chosŏn Korea. If Chosŏn scholar-officials perfectly mimicked the sound from the Ming court, it created the potential threat of an indistinguishable line between the Middle Kingdom's civilization center and Chosŏn Korea's periphery. The nuanced aspect, however, lies in the rarity and futility of such a request. The assumption of linguistic correspondence was not the primary aim of the script. The historical narrative unfolds as follows:

Chŏng in-ji said, "Because the humble state [Chosŏn] is far [from China] outside the sea, though we wish to investigate correct sounds, there is no teacher from whom we can learn. The sounds [of Chinese characters] in our state were at first taught by academician Shuang Ji, but [Shuang] Ji himself was from Fujian prefecture." "The sounds of Fujian are certainly the same as [those of] this state, and it would be good to use them," said the envoys. [Kim] ha said: "These two wish to learn the correct sounds from Your Excellency; I beseech Your Excellency to instruct them." [Sŏng] Sam-mun and [Sin] Suk-chu discussed [with the envoys] about the sounds of *the Correct Rhymes of the Hongwu Reign* [*Hongwu zhengyun*]

for quite a while. the envoys asked about the civil service examinations, saying, “Do you also have provincial examinations and Metropolitan examinations?” [the officials] replied, “[ours] is entirely modeled after the Ming institution.” The envoys asked, “What do you call the most excellent [candidate]?” [the officials] replied, “[We call him] the first of the Second Grade.” The envoys asked, “Why not call it First Grade but call it Second Grade?” [The officials] replied, “Since the [Ming] court labels theirs the First Grade, [we] would not dare to make him equal.” the envoys said, “indeed.”⁶⁸

Certainly, for the Korean official, it would have been ideal to acquire the script in conjunction with its “correct sounds,” as exemplified in this episode where he endeavored to master a spoken language he believed to have better correspondence with the script. In an effort to reconcile this linguistic and writing disparity—unaware of the inherent inconsistency within Literary Sinitic that lit up its allure—he attempted to bring them into alignment. In a sense, the Korean official approached the chasm between “how the Middle Kingdom writes” and “how the Middle Kingdom speaks,” and his reaction was to attempt to amend it. Inadvertently, he did not notice this request negated the Fujian’s voice.

First of all, this account informs us that a regional language from Fujian prefecture in China became the spoken counterpart of Literary Sinitic for the Chosŏn Korean state, not any historical bureaucratic language or court language of the Ming. Furthermore, a shared

⁶⁸ 鄭麟趾曰：「小邦遠在海外，欲質正音，無師可學。本國之音，初學於雙冀學士，冀亦福建州人也。」使臣曰：「福建之音，正與此國同，良以此也。」何曰：「此二子，欲從大人學正音，願大人教之。」三問、叔舟將《洪武韻》講論良久，使臣問科舉之制曰：「亦有鄉試會試乎？」答曰：「悉倣朝廷之制。」使臣曰：「爲魁者，何以爲號？」答曰：「乙科第一人。」使臣曰：「何不稱甲科，而稱乙科乎？」答曰：「朝廷稱甲科，故不敢比擬也。」使臣曰：「然。」 The original source: *Veritable Records of Sejong (Sejong sillok)* 127:22b Sejong sillok 127:22b (Sejong 32/1[intercalary]/24). Cited in Young Kyun Oh, *Engraving Virtue: The Printing History of a Premodern Korean Moral Primer* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 143.

recognition emerged between the two sides that no single prescribed method of vocalization existed for the written words. The envoy's ambiguous attitude toward language becomes evident in his acceptance of the similarity between the Fujian pronunciation and the version in this state, while acknowledging its divergence from the "central" version. The envoy held an open and indifferent disposition toward alternative pronunciations, fully grasping that Literary Sinitic, as a written form, inherently maintained a flexible relationship with sound and speech. In a sense, the envoy did not insist on rigidly linking the use of Sinoscript to a singular corresponding spoken form. In particular, it touches upon the Middle Kingdom's internal multivocality and lets us know the circulation of writing could, in fact, be accompanied by sounds from the margins.

It is crucial to note that this fifteenth-century story reflects how rarely issues of "spoken language," "vocalization," or "alignment with speech" were a concern; they were labeled secondary, less important than mastering the writing itself. This rarity of linguistic discrepancy in discourse could be a sign that the Sinographic Cosmopolis privileged writing over speech.⁷⁰ The composition of Literary Sinitic could be way more important for the establishment of cultural capital in the Sinographic world than imitating the language.

This certainly does not mean verbal mastery of the capital voice held little value. Nevertheless, since voices and pronunciations were perceived as place-contingent rather than enabling circulation or expansion, they remained localized and momentary. Even the capital voice could differ across dynasties. The prevalent common language among officials over time could naturally alter. There was a deep-rooted distrust of the perpetuity and consistency of sounds, which conversely increased the weight placed on logographic Literary Sinitic writing. Its

⁷⁰ That being said, there are other examples, including the early 18th century Edo Japanese Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai's notable critique. Ogyū opposed the tendency to read literary Sinitic with local syntax (*kundoku*) and instead advocated learning the language of the Middle Kingdom to properly engage with the written tradition. However, the insights of Saitō's analysis can shed light on how Ogyū's proposal might deviate from the intentional ambiguity inherent in the linguistic relationship within the Sinographic tradition. See Saitō, *Kanji sekai no chihei*, 57–128.

ambiguity of explicitly aligning with any distinct speech strengthened the allure of transcending a Babelic condition of language confusion.

This isolation of Sinographic writing from the influence of speech is the state that creates the space of Sinographic Cosmopolis, even within the first Sinographic sphere, the Middle Kingdom itself. Where my emphasis lies in the effect of this mechanism, which was not merely the prevalence of the writing and its spatial impact, but, simultaneously, an ideological suppression and disregard of the linguistic and cultural values of spoken languages.

The story also highlights the role of labor, intermediaries, and aural memories in the circulation of Sinoscripts and their texts. For the Ming envoy, the result of Chosŏn Korea being a Sinitic-administered state seemed to already satisfy the fantasy that Literary Sinitic as a script presented itself virtually beyond the confines of spoken language. This could have been a reaffirmation of his belief that Sinitic writing could be applied universally. The influential power to unify writing was an important symbol of the imperial vision, as the civil service examination, which the Ming Chinese envoy asked the Chosŏn scholar to verify their civilization level, shows.

However, from the Chosŏn scholar's perspective, the route of learning, the mediation of a "peripheral" Fujian voice, was inscribed in their cultural memory of Sinitic writing. It is also interesting to consider: while Sinitic writing might have been the targeted subject that this Fujian academician aimed to spread, perhaps it was his Fujian speech that became the true spoken lingua franca. Overall, the Ming envoy's focus remained primarily on the literacy and legibility of Sinitic writing itself. In contrast, the Chosŏn scholar's awareness extended beyond the written text, attentive to the gap symbolized by their divergent spoken understandings—a discrepancy that the envoy's singular emphasis on the written script seemed to overlook or render peripheral. The Ming envoy's reaction shows us that the manipulation of such a fantasy was in conjunction

with a continuous relegation of attention to sound and language as unproductive or dangerous, therefore cutting it off from the system.

Recognizing the Middle Kingdom's multivocality and its indispensable role in Literary Sinitic's speech immunity can help us consider the power of Literary Sinitic as a dynamic balance rather than a single vector from the center's ascendancy. This allows us to discern what the narrative of Literary Sinitic conceals: precisely its origin—the logographic writing's coming from or fixation with speech. When the transcendence of speech became the main mark of Literary Sinitic, it also became the most crucial quality anchoring the Middle Kingdom's legitimacy as a ruling regime against the practice of multivocality.

Many instances of this sort of awareness concerning writing and speech emerged from the encounter between the second Sinographic sphere and the expansive first Sinographic sphere—more than a homogenous-imaged Middle Kingdom. For instance, in the case of the Chosŏn-Korean scholar-official Chŏng In-ji, had there not been an outsider who began to consider the linguistic difference between the Fujian scholar's voice and the capital's tongue, there might not have been an opportunity to contemplate whether the Middle Kingdom was a textual or speech regime. To put it differently, the mediation of the inter-continental interaction being replaced from the Fujian voice to the writing was, by itself, a kind of concealment and memory rewriting.

In this example, we also do not know by what language the Ming envoy communicated with Chŏng. Was there a translator-interpreter present? Did Chŏng self-learn the capital voice? Did the Ming envoy speak the capital voice? Did they communicate entirely by brush and writing? In short, the process of how they communicated was replaced by the content of their conversation. By this, language (barriers) was underplayed, and communicability on the page was highlighted. When we proceed to the late nineteenth century, one more intriguing

connection between this example and our focus on Japan and Taiwan ties back to the Fujian or marginal voice.

Conclusion

Vernacular writing is difficult to express through dialects and local languages.

—*Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō*, July 17, 1925⁷³

This chapter argues that Sinography-based textual practices played a crucial role in the historical East Asian colonial context. While the current discourse on colonial studies tends to focus on the emergence of East Asia into speech defined countries as a criterion imposed by global standards, this chapter delves into the transition from *dogo* to language, arguing its process involving more oft-overlooked nuances. This nuanced transition is crucial in understanding the possibility of nationhood and linguistic identity, which can be linked to the imaginative spectrum and literary value of the relationship between *dogo* and writing. The chapter highlights that linguistic intervention has its limitations and that, except for a writing system, *dogo* must find a cultural identity that can compete with what logographic writing has evoked. Overall, this chapter offers an analysis of the role of language in colonial contexts and its implications for nationhood and identity formation.

Specifically, this chapter explores how the Japanese Empire navigates the dynamic between ancient Sinitic and modern Western empires. It is crucial to consider the dialectic between the Sinographic worldview and *dogo* conceptualization. In the Sinographic Cosmopolis, despite the diversification of “dialects” and local languages is prominent, *dogo* serves as a vital

⁷³ Chen Fu-Quan, “Bai hua wen zhi shi yong yu Taiwan fou” [Is Vernacular Chinese Applicable to Taiwan?], *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 17, 1925: Chinese edition, 4.

means to veil their reference to language. The interplay between dissociating *dogo* from language and equating logographic writing with language forms the inverse relationship between distinct places and the “universe.” The disengagement of *dogo* is what makes logographic writing more akin to the sense of “pure” writing and, as a result, satisfies a more Sino-epistemologically “linguistic” desire. In essence, the Japanese intellectuals and linguists aimed to rewrite the epistemology of language by conferring authority to the Japanese language, challenging the *dogo* conceptualization, and disrupting the Sinographic Cosmopolis. They hoped to establish a new alignment of *dogo* and Sinography to transform the way language is associated with. Beyond the mere expansion of *kokugo*, the true urgency of the Japanese Empire may lie in investing in the intricate relationship between language and identity. This also means the quest must navigate the regional context’s complexities.

The question of how *dogo* transitions into language in East Asia’s historical continuum is complex and rooted in epistemology. In the context of Sinographic writing, the logographic writing assumes the status of language and holds *dogo*, the native languages, in captive. The late nineteenth-century Japanese intellectuals recognize this as a universal problem in the Sinographic Cosmopolis and seek to fuse nationhood and language to counter it. The alignment of nation and language, and *dogo* with writing, is seen as a destructive variation to the Sinographic paradigm. By imprinting the principles that hegemony informs its subjects and reiterates the normalization repeatedly, a self-subjugation process can replace ideology. Nevertheless, the reiteration process is also the ground for emerging discrepancies that can transform into a form of “resistance.” With the intersection of different discursive regimes, the chance for “the teleological aims of normalization” to bifurcate or alter may increase.⁷⁴ Perhaps

⁷⁴ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 92–93. I am particularly inspired by the analysis of how subjugation and resistance are intertwined with the

the disparity in the notion of language between the Sinographic worldview and European linguistics allows Meiji Japan's intellectuals and linguists to overwrite the normalization that led generations of Sinographic intellectuals to relegate their *dogo*. The encounter with the speech-based idea of language provides a different view of *dogo*, challenging the a-legibility of writing as the sole means of world-making. The relationship with *dogo* is crucial and indispensable to Meiji Japan at a time when it aimed to assert its national identity and imperial project. In the history of Japan, there have been more possible sources to envision *dogo*'s interplay with writing. It has a more solid "past" to allow for a pursuit of the correspondence style, given its literary employment of the phonographic kana writing system for centuries.

It is crucial to note that the process of subjugation, beyond taking away, also designates one's place in the world. Submission to Sinographic writing enables inclusion into a larger vision than an immediate community, endowed with a history and a future—something *dogo* without a proper writing system to write down is unable to promise. While some communities within the Sinographic Cosmopolis have been able to explore the coordination of *dogo* and Sinography in their literature, many have self-disciplined to exclude *dogo* from their cultural and artistic representations. This dilemma persists across the Sinographic Cosmopolis, continuously deferring the alignment of *dogo* and writing historically and extending to the modern times, as an alternative route of seeking for the fusion of nationhood and language emerges. The question of whether to embrace local *dogo* as a desirable subject and whether it should be framed as a language presents a complex problem that only a few places—or maybe none—can confront without any issues. This is a prevalent and enduring issue throughout the Sinographic Cosmopolis. It is a problem that has been acknowledged by Imperial Japan and its colonies, and is one that could be considered cosmopolitan in nature: Despite the act of *dogo*'s underplaying

repetition and proliferation of an internalization process. This passage is my rewriting and digestion of their idea.

seeming like a domestic concern, I contend the self-destruction—or the self-relegation—of *dogo* and its representational forms in colonial Taiwan mirrors a more symptomatic and revealing of a universal dilemma across the Sinographic Cosmopolis.

The anchor of the first Sinographic sphere hinges on an epistemological view that relegates *dogo*. This implies objection to the Japanese colonial regime could intensify the depreciation of *dogo*, trapping the place in a dual dilemma of denial. I believe this sheds a significant light on the complexities in the displacement of East Asian coloniality. Colonial Taiwan arguably presents an unusual case for postcolonial studies—the embedment in a subdued desire to elevate local cultural identity for the act of anti-colonialism. Meanwhile, turning to frame *dogo* as language, however, comes with the difficulty of losing the memory that has been associated with the “language.” The crucial factor is the risk of a place endorsing *dogo* (body) over “logographically-coded writing” (soul) without fear of losing its “history.” This metaphor is inspired by Judith Butler’s concept: “The subject [which subsumed to the structure] not only effectively takes the place of the body but acts as the soul that frames and forms the body in captivity.”⁷⁵ Retrieving one’s “body” at the cost of losing all the memories inscribed on the “soul,” however, is a steep price to pay. The difficulty lies in more than the loss of Sinographic writing; it is in the absence of alternatives.

One possible interpretation of the colonial communities’ hesitation in assessing the potential of the *dogo* is that it could be viewed as a form of resistance. Perhaps, they were hesitant to embrace a concept introduced by the outsiders, or they were cautious about the potential consequences of adopting a new practice. Out of nostalgia or a devotion to the Middle Kingdom and its modern substitute were also possible reasons. Regardless of the sentiments, it is worth considering this perspective as it sheds light on the complex dynamics between the first

⁷⁵ Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 92.

and second Sinographic spheres, along with the colonial powers and the colonized population. This perspective may suggest that by not participating in language policy or valuing the alignment of nation and language, there is a defiance of the “master narrative” imposed by Japanese colonizers. Nevertheless, the high stakes could lead to a prolonged displacement of regional identity and nationhood. It encourages people to pretend to be deaf to avoid facing miscommunication. The most severe stake is the oblivion of “the first Sinographic sphere” and envisioning the Middle Kingdom as always having a unified language.

Numerous instances existed wherein colonial Taiwanese people learned Japanese, endorsed even the concept of “vernacular writing,” yet downplayed the significance of *dogo*. This continuous undervaluation of *dogo* could be, to a degree, likened to the way dialectic variations were often overlooked in the establishment of national writing processes. Dialectic variations might not conform to the standard language upon which national writing was based, but they competed on the same linguistic dimension, remaining within the realm of language. However, *dogo* arguably experienced an additional layer of suppression, stemming from an epistemological divide. *Dogo* was, by definition, considered irreconcilable with the medium of writing as it inherently contradicted logographic writing. There was a consistent skepticism regarding the need to develop written forms for *dogo*. In the 1920s, the introduction of the concept of vernacular logographic writing sparked debates among colonial Taiwanese literati. The crux of these debates centered around the inherent contradiction in achieving “vernacularity” within the logographic context.

Many argued that if *dogo*, or the language in Taiwan, was not the basis of establishing vernacular writing for Taiwanese writers, then the very concept of vernacular writing became hypocritical. Taiwanese writer Chen Fu-Quan, in an article dated July 17, 1925, for *Taiwan*

Nichinichi Shinpō, remarked, “As for Taiwan, with a population of over three million, it would be difficult to find even one in ten thousand who understands the bureaucratic language. If vernacular writing is to be applied to Taiwan, there is no way to do so without first unifying the language.”⁷⁶

Chen then satirically suggested it would be better for a complete shift to Japanese writing—referring to it as “a correspondent writing style” (*genbunichi-tei*) in the original text. He argued, “As a result, those who wish to promote vernacular writing must unify the language, otherwise they cannot express its spirit or clarify its meaning. According to this, we Taiwanese should use a style that unifies spoken and written language, such as newspapers, which are concise, simple, and clear. Isn’t this better than the complexity of vernacular writing, which is confusing and troublesome for people to understand?”⁷⁸ Using “a correspondent writing style” instead of “Japanese” sheds light on how Taiwanese literati deeply associated the Japanese language with linguistic and writing correspondence. The emphasis on “Japanese” is characterized by its alignment of language in writing instead of evoking linguistic identity. To Chen, either the correspondent style—Japanese—or the non-correspondent style—literary Sinitic—makes sense. What Chen believed contradicted its original purpose was the imposition of vernacular logographic writing, prevalent in mainland China at the time, on Taiwan.

Actively pursuing the development of vernacular logographic writing for local *dogo* was never seen as an option. In his words, “If a person from Fujian writes an article, and a person from Guangdong reads it, it would be like entering a dense fog, leaving them clueless.”⁷⁹ Instead

⁷⁶ Chen, “Bai hua wen,” 4.

⁷⁸ Chen, “Bai hua wen,” 4.

⁷⁹ Chen, “Bai hua wen,” 4.

of attempting to combine *dogo* and logographic writing, he would rather oppose the concept of vernacular writing altogether.

Paradoxically, deeper involvement with the colonial language framework, which emphasizes alignment, could inadvertently fuel some others in the colonized community's desire to transform *dogo* into a recognized and distinct language. Engaging more extensively with the idea of aligning nation and language can support or even intensify the colonial communities' aspiration to establish a unique connection between *dogo* and language. Derived from the second Sinographic sphere's context, colonial language ideology acts as an undercurrent for the localized linguistic nationalism in Taiwan. Therefore, instead of antithesis, colonial language ideology, originating from the second Sinographic sphere's context, and localized linguistic nationalism in Taiwan are intertwined, seen as connected in the orientation they have been taking. They both, in other words, represent a centrifugal force in terms of language and writing. Japanese linguists throughout the colonial period have shown efforts toward a more mature development of *dogo* and logographic writing in Taiwan. The late and relatively minor group of Taiwanese folklore enthusiasts, who eventually raised their interest in the same direction until the 1930s, primarily faced challenges from their peers for seeing it an implicit resonance with the colonial language ideology. the colonial communities' desire to claim a distinct relationship of *dogo* as a language. The potential conflict will remain inexplicable without scrutinizing Imperial Japan's role in the broader Sinographic Cosmopolis context.

While there is a vast body of scholarship on empire studies and the colonial condition in the Japanese Empire, existing scholarship often assumes a neat equation between nation and language. However, in recent years, researchers whose work focuses on writing in premodern and early modern East Asia have begun exploring the ways in which Sinography-based textual

practices do not accord with the current linguistic paradigm, offering nuanced perspectives that go beyond the traditional equation of nation and language. This chapter aims to contribute to research both on the Japanese Empire and on East Asian writing and linguistic practices by drawing on the latter to complicate our understanding of the association between nation and language in East Asian colonial contexts. It also highlights a direct or transformed legacy of Sinographic tradition. In particular, I propose to adopt the conceptual framework of “the first Sinographic sphere” and “the second Sinographic sphere” to bring nuance to our conceptualization of the relationship between Japan as a colonizer and Taiwan as a colony. The aim to situating the colonial context in the Sinographic tradition is also to challenge the conventional “mapping” we employ in analyzing East Asian colonialism.

Rather than solely examining how Meiji Japan’s imperial endeavors imitated Western-style colonization, my interest lies in understanding the generative negotiations they developed within the continuum spanning ancient Sinitic civilizational models and modern Western imperial formations. Since modern imperialism seems more proximate while Sinitic empires appear temporally distant to our present vantage, we may tend to assess late Meiji intellectuals through the lens of their anticipated futures, assuming their worldviews oriented decisively towards modernity while departing from preceding eras.

However, what these historical actors potentially engaged with was the accumulated knowledge inherited from past generations. I focus more on “the past-as-remembered” within the colonial context than “the future-as-anticipated”⁸¹—the common approach taken when studying colonial pursuits, typically framed as ambitious, purposeful, and future-oriented projects of exploration and exploitation. Yet for the Meiji intelligentsia, the paradigms and scenarios

⁸¹ I borrow these two terms from Mathieu Hilgers and Éric Mangez, *Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications* (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 4.

preceding them likely resonated with greater familiarity than the impending modern unknown, just as we find ourselves more attuned to contemporary currents and estranged from histories one hundred years removed. Perhaps we can learn from how they analyze pasts as mirrors to excavate potential tensions that nonetheless invite change.

The colonization of Taiwan, in this light, had to be positioned within the transitional era marking the shift from Literary Sinitic regimes to speech-centric language paradigms. The seeming anachronisms embodied by colonial-era Taiwan, I posit, encapsulated a more essential dimension of the Japanese imperial project—one negotiating the ideologies between Sinographic textual cosmologies and ascendant linguistic-national imaginaries. It crystallized the intricate cultural-linguistic reconfigurations catalyzed by intersections between relic and emerging world orders.

Chapter III

The Voice Politic of Sinographic Illiteracy: *Dogo* (In)Comprehensibility and Its Cultural Forms

While modern perspectives generally view Japanese and Chinese as separate languages, the insights of Rai Sanyō (1781–1832), a prominent early modern Japanese Sinologist, prompted us to reconsider the significance of their linguistic and syntactical differences. Rai distinguished between speech, subject to regional and temporal variations, and “voice,” which remains culturally consistent over time. In this way, he highlighted that conceptualizing voice with Sinitic literature was just as pivotal as visually reading texts. Rai posited that voice, as patterns extracted from speech, was more enduring and reliable than spoken languages. He legitimized the priority of poetry and verse by emphasizing a symbolic interpretation of “voice” beyond linguistic comprehension. For him, “poetic patterns” (*shiritsu*) served as a matrix to retrieve the voice that speaks to one through culture, memory, and history, rather than immediate comprehension.¹

Rai’s perspective presents a unique challenge for envisioning East Asia before the modern era, when linguistic senses and perceptions were less clearly delineated. As scholar David Lurie notes, “Through the beginning of the twentieth century, the cultural role of Chinese studies remained immense—again, most of the Meiji period, from 1868 until the period following the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895, was intensely Sinicizing.”² Significantly, Rai’s assertions, compiled by his disciple Onō Tatsu in the 1883 publication *On Poetry Laws* (*Shiritsuron*, [1883]1920), reached a broader readership, even garnering an endorsement from a Qing Chinese

¹ Onō Tatsu (Onō Chozan), ed., *Shiritsuron*, In *Nihon shiwa sōsho*, ed. Ikeda Roshū. Vol. 10 (Tokyo: Bunkaidō Shoten, [1883] 1920), 415–455.

² David Lurie, *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 333.

academic. This underscores the relevance of his ideas during a period when modern views and the literary Sinitic tradition coexisted and complicated notions of linguistic and cultural identities. In short, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century East Asia may not witness a replacement but tensions and coexistence of modern views and the literary Sinitic tradition. This theorization of the emphasis on cultural voice in the literary Sinitic tradition seeks to complicate the study of East Asian colonialism from a modern perspective.

I contend Rai's conceptualization sheds light on a "fictional vocality" and concerns how not explicitly catering to linguistic understanding was a defining characteristic of the literary Sinitic tradition's engagement with voice. This invites us to reconsider how the lingering gravity of literary Sinitic sensibilities staked out an embodied, extra-linguistic, and a-comprehensive positionality not fully assimilable to emerging modern regimes of language, nation, and colonial territoriality. By reconsidering how literary articulations of "voice" may have lingered as disruptions within colonial language, identity, and power constructs, we are prompted to consider how divorcing from semantic apprehension could have connected communities to an imaginative realm beyond the local scope.

This chapter argues that Rai's perspective on literary voice holds particular significance in colonial-era Taiwan. Due to the literary Sinitic tradition, widespread written literature in local spoken languages was limited. Notions of linguistic identities tied to Taiwanese languages were regarded with suspicion, seen as potentially aligned with Japanese colonial policies. Rather than elevating spoken languages' cultural value as identity construction, such activities were often viewed as threats to social well-being or intellectual development.

To understand this "conservative" attitude regarding linguistic identities, we must delve into the dynamic interaction between the written Sinitic script, the region's diverse linguistic landscape, and the impact of Japanese colonialism at that time. In popular society, there was a

clear demarcation—local spoken languages for everyday life, and literary Sinitic writing as the primary literacy form. The split between written and regional spoken forms was taken for granted, internalized in thinking, and externalized through aesthetic and cultural standards.

The literary Sinitic tradition persistently prioritized vocalized patterns over verbal transparency across various genres, including verse and theater. This prioritization cultivated aesthetic sensibilities not necessarily tethered to semantic comprehension, maintaining a separation between linguistic and cultural identity within the paradigm of logographic writing. To fully grasp this dynamic, we need an approach considering the interplay among literary genre, participants, ideas, epistemology, and aesthetics. Examining the extent to which “*dogo*” (local “language”) identity was culturally crucial within this tradition is a central aim of this chapter.

This separation of cultural identity from *dogo* associated linguistic identity became ingrained in colonial Taiwan, where literary Sinitic writing occupied a revered status detached from diverse regional speech. As we will explore, artistic practices like opera exemplified how the literariness of “voice” could shape an embodied experience of the tradition even for non-literate audiences unable to fully parse textual meanings.

To shed light on this dynamic with a fresh perspective, this chapter explores the role of opera theater in colonial Taiwan in shaping aesthetic sensibilities that suspend linguistic concerns, particularly among nonliterate individuals. While the textual aspects of the literary Sinitic tradition have received much scholarly attention, the significance of voice and sound in its development has often been overlooked. By focusing on the priority of the literariness of voice in opera theater, especially in cases where linguistic comprehension is secondary or even irrelevant, this chapter aims to shed light on how the nonliterate population of colonial Taiwan has been embedded in and intertwined with the literary Sinitic tradition through aural means,

which makes them at the center of tension between cosmopolitan spatial envisioning and modern nationalist linguistic construct.

In other words, I contend opera theater may provide a unique avenue for individuals who may have never had the opportunity to engage in the act of writing to acquire and participate in sensibilities that cohere around something other than linguistic borders. How voice is perceived and understood in these practices lays the groundwork for the suspension of linguistic identities, enabling even those who are not literate to accept a disengagement from speech and align themselves with the medium of writing. Immersion in this aesthetic and habituation to this “voice” may foster a mindset that prioritizes a transcendent ideal over the constraints of linguistic norms while overriding the inclination to recognize verbal communication. This approach not only broadens our understanding of the cultural dynamics of colonial Taiwan but also invites us to reconsider the multisensory nature of the literary Sinitic tradition.

I use the term “opera theater” to suggest the diversity and regional variations inherent in this performative tradition and to avoid the connotations of a unified, homogeneous art form. Although now collectively known as “*xiqu*” or “traditional Chinese opera,” “*xiqu*” may inadvertently prioritize literary and performative aspects while overlooking linguistic diversity and regional contexts. To better understand the implications of the term *xiqu* and its reinterpretations, it is important to examine its roots—intriguingly, in Japanese literary studies.

In the late nineteenth century, some Meiji Japanese Sinologists turned to folk literature in their studies, challenging the traditional literary Sinitic hierarchy. They began more formal and academic research on opera theater, focusing primarily on works from the Yuan and Ming dynasties (fourteenth to seventeenth centuries) to study the “play scripts” as literary works. The character compounds for *xiqu* 戲曲 were taken from the Japanese term 戲曲 (*gikyoku*), which

these researchers used to refer to play texts in a general sense.³ In the Japanese context, the term had a broader implication, denoting play scripts of various forms of dramatic arts, including traditional Japanese theater forms such as Noh, Kabuki, and Bunraku, as well as modern plays.

For Wang Guowei (1877–1927) and many early-twentieth-century Chinese scholars, however, the semiotic understanding of the characters denoted something different from the Japanese interpretation—“(dramatic) songs” was underscored as part of the literary genres in the literary Sinitic tradition, rather than the notion of “play scripts.” As Huang Shichung has demonstrated, following the influence of Meiji Japanese Sinologists, Wang, operating in his own cultural and intellectual milieu, reshaped the Japanese conceptualization of *gikyoku* to *xiqu* to better suit his own understanding of “opera theater” and its place within the cultural tradition’s emphasis on verse.⁴ This reinterpretation of the term 戲曲 or 戲曲 by Chinese scholars, notably Wang, marked a significant shift in the understanding of opera theater and its relationship to traditional Chinese literature. It highlighted the importance of considering the literary and musical aspects of the genre, rather than solely focusing on the play scripts as the Japanese Sinologists had done. Wang’s reinterpretation of the term, in a sense, ensured that the genre fit within the framework of “literature” in the literary Sinitic tradition.

In short, unlike the Japanese scholars who used the term to refer generally to play scripts, the interpretation of *xiqu* turned to refer to the “genre” of opera theater itself. Qi Ru-Shan’s

³ Regarding the phenomenon of Sinographic characters’ reimportation, see Lydia Liu’s discussion of “return graphic loans” in *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 27–42.

⁴ The above account of the process by which Meiji Japanese Sinologists influenced the establishment of opera theater studies, from scholars like Mori Kainan, Kōda Rohan, and Sasakawa Rinpū to Wang Guowei, draws heavily on the research of Huang Shichung. Huang Shichung, “Mori Kainan, Kōda Rohan, Sasakawa Rinpū kara Ō Kokui e (1)–(3) Nihon Meiji jiki (1868–1911) no Chūgoku gikyoku kenkyū kōsatsu” *Engeki eizōgaku*, no. 2 (2009): 207–228, no. 2 (2010): 155–166, no. 2 (2011): 163–174. Mandarin Chinese version see “Cong Mori Kainan, Kōda Rohan, Sasakawa Rinpū dao Wang Guowei—riben mingzhi shiqi (1869–1912) de Zhongguo xiju yanjiu kaocha,” *Xiju yanjiu*, no. 4 (July 2009): 155–194.

(1877–1962) scholarly emphasis on the performance aspects of *xiqu*, particularly the “songs and dance” elements, was built upon Wang’s reinterpretation of the genre as “dramatic songs.”⁵ While seemingly contradictory to the literary aspect, Qi’s perspective reinforces the notion of *xiqu* as a literary art form that is an integral part of the literary Sinitic tradition by focusing on its aesthetic qualities’ potential to transcend linguistic boundaries. By focusing on the distinctive features of *xiqu* as a stage art and highlighting the artistic skills of singing and dancing, Qi emphasized the aesthetic and performative aspects of the genre compared with Western dramatic tradition, suggesting that the morphology of theater was fundamentally homologous across different regional contexts. This perspective allowed him to symbolize the art with the renowned Peking Opera star Mei Lanfang (1894–1961) as an emblem, focusing on Mei’s acting style as a “nationally” representative figure while obscuring the fact that his singing might not be linguistically intelligible to regional audiences.

In doing so, Qi’s perspective moved away from the practical considerations of linguistic accessibility and audience comprehension, instead focusing on appreciating *xiqu* as an art form that transcended language. This change in the ontology of theater allowed for a greater emphasis on the aesthetic experience of the performance, rather than the direct engagement with the linguistic content of the plays. Consequently, the prioritization of the aesthetic and performative aspects of *xiqu* implicitly replaced the direct connection between the “plays” and the spectators with a more abstract relationship between the art form as a combination of the “songs” (particularly “literary songs”) and choreography, and the connoisseur. This enabled Qi to advocate *xiqu* as a “national” art form without confronting the linguistic practices where the form circulated.

⁵ Hsiao-Chun Wu, “Qi Rushan, *Gewu* (Song-and-Dance), and the History of Contemporary Peking Opera in Early Twentieth-Century China,” *CHINOPERL* 36, no.1 (2017): 22–45.

The complex process of cultural and scholarly negotiation in the early twentieth century, which led to the recognition of “*xiqu*” as a specific performance style, tended to underplay linguistic diversity and audience comprehension in favor of promoting a unified national art form and strengthening its connection to the literary Sinitic tradition. It is a mixture of the emphasis on the verse nature of literature and the homogeneity of performance style. When juxtaposed with Western conventions, the actors’ bodies and the stage-act aspect of the performance become especially salient, inadvertently overshadowing the analysis from the perspective of “plays.” However, by primarily focusing on the aesthetic and performative aspects of *xiqu*, current *xiqu* studies may miss the opportunity to explore the intricate ways language, performance, and audience reception interact with the spatiality of cosmopolitan writing and regionally diversified speech. Late twentieth-century *xiqu* scholars, such as Elizabeth Wichmann and Nancy Guy, have generally emphasized the aural performance aspects of *xiqu*, downplaying the importance of linguistic diversity and regional variations in the genre. Wichmann, for instance, has characterized theater-going as “listening to theater” rather than “seeing a theater,” borrowing the phrasing among theater-goers in opera theater.⁶ Similarly, Guy has rhetorically asked, “But why should the incomprehensibility of the language make the enjoyment of Peking Opera impossible?”⁷ These perspectives persistently regard linguistic concerns with suspicion, focusing instead on the aesthetic and performative integrity of the genre. However, by prioritizing the aesthetic and performative aspects of *xiqu*, these perspectives risk overlooking the complexity of how the logographic-based literary Sinitic system incorporates oral culture into its realms. They

⁶ Elizabeth Wichmann, *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991).

⁷ Nancy A Guy, “The Appreciation of Chinese Opera: A Reply to Ching-Hsi Perng,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 7, no. 2 (1990): 254.

may also oversimplify audiences' perception and epistemology involved in perceiving voice performance in opera theater.

It is crucial to reclaim the space to investigate the grappling with linguistic and cultural identities through the lens of theater in early twentieth-century East Asia, not only for opera theater but also for broader cultural and historical understanding. The curious case of colonial Taiwan serves as a poignant example of how the appreciation of theater encapsulates the loss and negotiation of linguistic and cultural identities in a peripheral site of the first Sinographic sphere. During the colonial period, the appreciation of opera theater, despite the incomprehensibility of the language, was seen as an encapsulation of a particular spectatorship, emblematic of the people in Taiwan. Despite the growing popularity of local language opera in the 1920s, there was a persistent aura surrounding distanced and literary performance styles that were linguistically incomprehensible. For instance, the Taiwanese planners of the exposition insisted upon the exclusion of local language opera from major symbolic events, such as the commemorative exposition for the fortieth anniversary of Taiwan's colonial administration in 1935. They favored inviting Peking Opera star Mei or a traveling troupe from Shanghai over showcasing local talent or raising the profile of opera theater in local languages. This demonstrates that the sensibilities cultivated by the literary Sinitic tradition around vocal articulation as an aesthetic experience detached from linguistic intelligibility have lingering ramifications in voice performance in the theater. The emphasis on the morphological similarity of opera performances across various regions is also deeply rooted in the focus on logographic writing in the literary Sinitic tradition.

In other words, the disposition that the literary Sinitic tradition fosters may include the choice of writing style or linguistic comprehension and how linguistic comprehension and incomprehension are experienced, understood, and aestheticized in cultural activities. The accumulated cultural sensibilities to appreciate a detachment from linguistic intelligibility can

become a lingering suppression of voice from the locals. In a sense, opera theater is a crucial, indispensable component of the literary Sinitic tradition since it dictates the degree to which the suspension of linguistic comprehension can be turned into an aesthetic experience. By examining theater as a genre where voice defies linguistic comprehension, particularly in the colonial Taiwanese context, we can gain valuable insights into the aural engagement of the literary Sinitic tradition alongside its textuality. This approach enables us to unravel the complexities of identity formation and cultural negotiation in a world where the boundaries between language, literature, and performance are never easily aligned.

The primary aim of this analysis is to provide a new lens for understanding how cultural traditions unsettle and complicate the colonial linguistic dynamics of the period. By understanding how these traditions intersect with and shape the colonial experience, we can gain a more nuanced perspective on the conventional understanding of linguistic-based analysis of the East Asian colonial conditions.

The first half of this chapter explores the paradigm of “voice” to elucidate how the literary Sinitic tradition can foster an environment that downplays the equation between linguistic and cultural identity. It suggests that “voice” emerges as an essential device to translate the linguistic distance inherent in the technology of logographic writing into the verbal and literary realm. Culturally, spoken languages, in general, are susceptible to soft-pedaling within the literary Sinitic tradition rather than targeting distinct regional languages.

By cultivating a contrived voice evocative of the text, the literary Sinitic tradition ensures that social and cultural interaction is envisioned under the attachment to the contrived voice of the text instead of direct speech that can be separate from writing. In other words, the “literariness” of oral communication acts as an operative device of the Sinographic regimes through two fundamental techniques: developing a “community” voice and an aesthetic

hierarchy centered on literalized voices that transcend linguistic boundaries. By fostering a shared, idealized mode of vocalization that transcends regional and linguistic boundaries, the Sinographic tradition creates a sense of community that delimits the role of spoken language. Moreover, by establishing an aesthetic hierarchy that privileges literalized voices over everyday speech, this tradition further reinforces the marginalization of linguistic identities and the primacy of the written word. While prioritizing the aesthetic and material aural regime instead of linguistic comprehension, this early modern vocal framing unsettles and complicates the dichotomy of hegemonic colonizer language and oppressed colonized languages.

The second half of this chapter focuses on the complex dynamics of language, power, and identity in the East Asian colonial context against the backdrop of the traditions's aural literariness. It suggests that the devaluation of speech and the persistence of suspicion about linguistic identities are not solely the result of colonial oppression but are also deeply rooted in the region's cultural and literary traditions. The debate over whether theater should embody a mode of vocalization that prizes incomprehensibility or engage in speech-defined interaction reveals a prolonged insistence on the literary Sinitic tradition and a persistent rejection of localization. This adherence to tradition, in cooperation with colonial modernity, reinforces a mechanism that marginalizes local-voiced performances, encapsulated by the very space of the theater building and intellectuals' habitus.

This recontextualization invites us to consider the localization of Taiwanese-spoken opera as a significant turning point, marking the end of the traditional opera paradigm that prioritizes incomprehensible vocalization and alignment with the literary Sinitic tradition. By allowing spectators to align with the stage linguistically, the emergence of Taiwanese-spoken opera can challenge the established hierarchies and open up new possibilities for aural economics to internalize linguistic comprehension within its aesthetic experience. To better contextualize this

development, it demands a consideration of the inseparability between the symbolic representation of language in theater as an anchor that ties with how the logographic-based literary Sinitic system incorporates oral culture into its realm.

The Precedence of Writing in the Sinitic Tradition

Imagine choosing one from them: would you prefer to be fluent in all spoken languages or master all written languages? The first option allows for communication effectively through speech, promising seamless interaction with individuals from diverse backgrounds. This skill has the potential to foster connections, facilitate understanding, and promote collaboration across cultures and contexts. Conversely, the second option highlights proficiency in written communication, which means one can read any written form at will. It promises a reading ability that extends beyond historical and linguistic frameworks, guaranteeing almost infinite access to written knowledge. Once again, let me remind you that while this option grants the ability to read even classical works from various cultural contexts, it may entail flawed learning ability of spoken languages. In exchange for literacy across myriad texts, your immediate communication with foreign others would be blocked, and gaps would not be crossed. Which option would you prefer?

The dichotomy between spoken and written linguistic mastery is not merely theoretical—it has real implications in the historical development of traditions like the literary Sinitic classics prevalent across premodern and early-modern East Asia.

The rise of the literary Sinitic tradition across East Asia can be intertwined, in part, with a pivotal shift in modes of expression and communication. As written forms of the Sinitic script gain prominence for cross-cultural and cross-regional exchange—traversing the multilingual

landscape within the Chinese “Middle Kingdom” itself and radiating outward to societies like Japan, Korea, and Vietnam—new conventions surrounding vocalization and speech may emerge. Mastery of this shared logographic writing system enabled communication despite diverse linguistic backgrounds, fostering an environment where individuals speaking different tongues could readily exchange ideas through the medium of the written word, on the one hand. This also catalyzes a gradual reorientation in which written modes assume greater prestige and influence, overshadowing the significance accorded to direct verbal communication and speech acts.

Most importantly, one of the central developments was the cultivation of vocalization paradigms that deliberately prized qualities of “incomprehensibility” in vocal practices, which were engineered to defy immediate vernacular intelligibility. Rather than adhering to speech’s conventional purpose of facilitating comprehension, this mode of articulation represents a departure into realms of unfamiliar, almost performative vocal expression detached from everyday linguistic norms. It is this notion of “incomprehensibility” as an idealized trait, I argue, that becomes emblematic of the literary Sinitic tradition’s sensibilities surrounding vocalization and aurality. In addition to the textual landscape, incomprehensibility offers a lens to observe the complex matrix involving cultural sensibilities, voice performance, regimes of aurality, and the roles that verse literature plays in literary imaginations and acoustic phenomenologies. Since the meaning exchange in listening practice is literarily downplayed, the “Indigenous” is somewhat eclipsed by an ethos that disengages vocality from territorial-bonded linguistic identities. The interaction with how voice and speech articulated identity becomes one of the most profound influences exerted by literary Sinitic imaginary, even beyond the shift and vernacularization of the written form itself.

Exploring the Aural Engagement in the Literary Sinitic Tradition

To suggest the relationship between literature and this regime of aurality, the primary focus of this chapter is placed on verse in its broader sense. In the view of Saitō Mareshi's literary Sinitic tradition's research, cultivated with a particular kind of sensibility and habitualized into "voice," may encourage a notion of thinking in favor of an ideal transcending linguistic norms over natural languages. As he puts it, "To consider the relationship between writing and language [in the literary Sinitic contexts], one should first prioritize examining what kind of 'voice' [likely meaning spoken sounds/vocalization] existed in the context where writing was used." (「文字と言語の関係を考えるのなら、まず文字が用いられた場における音声がいかなるものであったかを第一とすべきだろう。」)⁸ The vocal realm and vocalization evoked by verse help one to experience the linguistic transcendent articulation in the phenomenological world, beyond conceptual precedence put on writing. It implies the role of the perception of voice in serving as a powerful tool that reinforces the ideology of Literary Sinitic writing and fuels the separation of writing and speech.

Saitō argues that vocalization modes enshrine a studied incomprehensibility distinct from prosaic expression, aestheticizing the vocal embodiment of Sinitic verse. This aestheticization offers insights into "literary listening," contributing to a more nuanced understanding of Literary Sinitic's cultural impact. Saitō contends that Sinographic script's paradigmatic logographic writing style profoundly influenced literature's connection to a distinct voice, departing from the patterns of ordinary speech associated with a region. Notably, he suggests a ritualistic and performative tradition set the tone for how Literary Sinitic writing was verbalized. The perception of Literary Sinitic centered around its vocal expression in ancient rituals, where

⁸ Saitō Mareshi, *Kanji sekai no chihei: Watashitachi ni totte moji to wa nani ka* (Tōkyō: Kabushiki Kaisha Shinchōsha, 2014), 111.

comprehending the text's recitation was usually secondary to its performative aspect. Rather than a comprehensible voice aligning with everyday language, a performative transcendence beyond normal comprehension, separate from everyday speech, was considered more charismatic and culturally alluring:

In any case, it is inferred that the method of recitation had a tradition different from everyday language and was probably passed down in ritual settings. Or it may have actually followed the standard of the Zhou⁹ pronunciation, but of course, it was not perceived as a regional difference but rather as the correct transmitted sound. It could even be artificially constructed. Such a way of reciting may have been called “elegant speech.”

In summary, it can be said that the verbalization of writing was likely not done through everyday spoken language but rather corresponded to a vocalized language of ritual or performative nature. This seems to be the appropriate view.¹⁰

Saitō's observations highlight how the literary Sinitic tradition deliberately cultivated a mode of vocalization that departed from the conventions of ordinary speech. This “elegant speech,” as he terms it, prioritized a ritualistic, perhaps constructed quality over the straightforward comprehensibility of quotidian language use. In the views of the listeners, the

⁹ One of the earliest historical dynasties in the Middle Kingdom that is credited with utilizing the concept of the "Mandate of Heaven" as the legitimizing force for imperial rule, dominating “the Central Plain” and be regarded as the foundation for the Middle Kingdom at the center of civilization.

¹⁰ 「いずれにしても、朗誦の方法には日常の言語とは異なる伝承があり、儀礼の場において継承されてきたのではないかと推察される。あるいはそれは実際に周の音を規範としたものであったかもしれないが、もちろんそれは地域的な差異としてではなく、伝承された正しい音として意識されていたからであった。仮構されたものであった可能性すらある。そうした読誦を「雅言」と呼んだのではないだろうか。総括とて言えば、文字の言語化は、日常言語によってなされたものではなく、儀式的ないし演技的性質をもつ音声言語との対応によってなされたと思える。」 Saitō, *Kanji sekai no chihei*, 110–111.

primary function of this created “voice” was to prepare them to move away from the purely linguistic aspects. This vocalized yet unfamiliar expression would foreground the importance of literary Sinitic writing; it was a form of verbal communication that was embedded in and would not dissociate itself from the writing.

The notion of “voice,” most importantly, marks literacy. Literary scholar Maeda Ai has analyzed that the practice of reading aloud may have functioned as a device to exhibit and consolidate the authority of literary Sinitic writing, particularly in emphasizing the difference in literacy between different social classes. As Maeda writes it, “The sound-reading of the Chinese classics—wherein repletion of rhythms and the vibrations of the voiced words creates a kind of ‘spiritual language’ [*seishin no kotoba*] that is radically different from everyday Japanese—represents a form of instruction that imprints the very form of Chinese language [*kango no keishiki*] on the souls of these youth.”¹¹ An aura of incomprehensibility paradoxically enhanced the prestige of this recitation style by intentionally alienating the vocalized reading from patterns of reciters’ everyday speech. The audience-inaccessible vocalization conversely formed a special kind of “language,” a language that might connect its audiences mainly by fragments of vibrations rather than serving for linguistic comprehension. These vocalizations functioned as symbolic tokens of educational attainment and literary erudition, yet they purposefully deviated from representing authentic speech vernacular. In short, both Saitō and Maeda highlight that the embodiment of literary Sinitic in local contexts manifested not as a readily understandable speech style, but rather as a vocal fantasy—a recitation manner inherently “anti-speech” or detached from spoken vernaculars. While vocalized, this recitation did not supersede or challenge the importance of the written literary Sinitic form as the predominant medium for

¹¹ Ai Maeda, *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*, ed. James A. Fujii (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2004), 231.

cross-regional communication. Instead, the vocalized “voice” reinforced and elevated the prestige of the written texts through its ritualized, fantastical qualities distinct from everyday speech and playing down the audience accessibility and linguistic environments where they were uttered.

This downplay of accessibility may resonate with the notion of “a-legibility,” proposed by Lurie, which I have introduced in the first chapter. It highlights the distance from speech embedded in the conventional perception and use of logographic-written literature, a basis for forming the first and second Sinographic spheres. This means the intra-continental use of Literary Sinitic for communication between different regions within ancient China and the inter-continental use. Through this, Lurie introduces a new layer of complexity to our understanding of logographic-written literature, suggesting that its appeal and impact encompass a realm of symbolic allure. Beyond linguistic signification, a property that imparts aura to writing or representational forms can exist; extending beyond an immediate communicative function can be seen as more symbolically captivating. In this way, the notion of “a-legible” can serve as a point of departure to challenge conventional interpretations by positing an anachronistic linguistic entity and prompting us to explore the multifaceted nature of writing in its circulation. More importantly, Lurie’s concept prompts us to reevaluate the significance of writing as both a technology and a medium, emphasizing that its appearance as linguistically obscure may not influence how it earns its relevance.

Saitō and Maeda here, on the other hand, underscore the crucial role of sound in mediating the relationship between text and individuals within the literary Sinitic tradition. They argue that the sound of linguistic unfamiliarity is a pivotal factor shaping how people perceive and interpret these written works. They posit that the act of listening carries equal importance to reading and writing. This perspective adds a layer of complexity to the textual experience—beyond the

sensibilities evoked by the visual components, the literary Sinitic tradition also encompasses aural and bodily dimensions.

In short, by drawing a contrast between “writing” representing the trans-regional Sinitic literary tradition, while “speaking” is associated with regional vernacular languages or dialects, my main point is that there exists an intermediary “voice” that mediates between these two spheres—the pan-Sinitic written realm and the localized spoken realms. This intermediary “voice” is a way of vocalizing or reciting the Sinitic literary texts that depart from natural vernacular speech patterns. It was a contrived, prescribed mode of vocalization that intentionally distanced itself from spoken vernaculars. Yet, simultaneously, it bridged the written, visual realm and an auditory embodied dimension. This “voice” occupied a space between the relatively “mute” Sinitic writing and the multitude of oral regional languages. It enabled the trans-regional literary texts to be aurally experienced while maintaining a sense of removal from any single localized speech form. The emergence of this intermediary “voice” could shed light on the broader dynamics between the literate Sinitic tradition and spoken languages in the regional contexts. Furthermore, examining prescribed qualities and their perception as evoking literary prestige rather than vernacular comprehension will illuminate a lingering influence of literary Sinitic tradition.

“Principles over Places”: Proper Voice as a Trans-regional Device

Most current discussions about “proper voice” (Chinese: *zheng yin*, Japanese: *seion*, also known as “correct voice”), however, ignore the fact that the norm is more about literary practice than influencing spoken language. Li Huei-Mian, an expert in classical Chinese literature, phonology, and opera theater, has touched upon this aspect, emphasizing the importance of understanding “proper voice” as a tool for creating a shared literary and cultural space rather than a prescriptive

guide for spoken language. In the introduction for *Exegesis of Rhymes of the Central Plain*,¹² she opposes focusing too narrowly on the technical aspects of precise phonetic representation, as it may fail to appreciate the broader cultural and literary significance of the “proper voice” concept.¹³ Instead of equating “proper voice” with “standard phonetic sounds” through a simplistic linguistic lens, she emphasizes “proper voice” as a literary device—defined as synthesized sound categories systematized from various spoken languages around different places, used to refine verse composition beyond any single dialect.

Li highlights the spatially expansive imagination that underpins the trans-regional Sinitic literary culture, exemplified by the phrase “principles over places” (以理不以地, *yili bu yidi*, literally: abiding by laws rather than by a particular place), coined by the late Ming literati Mao Xianshu in the seventeenth century.¹⁴ By focusing on the literary and cultural significance of “proper voice,” we can better appreciate its role in fostering a sense of unity and shared identity within the diverse landscape of the Literary Sinitic tradition. In Li’s words,

The terms “proper voice” and “standard sounds” are two different concepts. The term “standard sounds” is a modern linguistic term that stresses the phonological basis of the common language and its sound sources, as well as the phonological norms of the varieties of spoken languages. “Proper voice” emphasizes the proper pronunciation of words and aims to correct mispronunciations. It is not necessarily based on a particular living dialect [...]

¹² For the spatial envisioning of “Central Plain,” see Yuri Pines, “‘The One That Pervades the All’ in Ancient Chinese Political Thought: The Origins of ‘The Great Unity’ Paradigm,” *T’oung Pao* 86, no. 4/5 (2000): 280–324. See also footnote 8.

¹³ Li Huei-Mian, *Zhong yuan yin yun jian shi* [Exegesis of *Rhymes of the Central Plain*] (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2016), 1–29.

¹⁴ See Mao Xianshu, *Yun xue tong zhi* [General Guide to Rhymeology] (Jinan: Qi Lu shu she, 1997).

Each person assigns actual phonetic values to these sounds in accordance with the standard pronunciation he or she recognizes. This becomes what one calls “proper voice.”¹⁵

The concept refers to a conceptualized ideal vocalization and recitation style that aims to transcend any single regional dialect or vernacular speech pattern. In contrast, the modern notion of “standard sounds” refers to the phonological norms within a distinctive spoken language or dialect. It is confined to one place, context, and form of speech.

In other words, this “proper voice” vocalization aims to evoke a trans-regional dimension as much as possible. The very naming conventions for these vocalizations, often invoking ancient dynasties during which the Middle Kingdom incorporated neighboring minorities, the idealized “Central Plain,” or “proper voice” itself, strengthened a synthesized nature. Their invocation attempted to defy geographic frameworks through their expansive, supra-regional connotations. Fundamentally, Li contends that the consideration of Literary Sinitic must extend beyond a purely linguistic exploration. Rather than anchoring it to any specific spoken standard or variation, Literary Sinitic privileged the role of “voice” in shaping literature across diverse cultural contexts, underscoring its significance beyond merely facilitating linguistic communication. Within this tradition, “voice” was conceptualized as a deliberate detachment from, and defiance of, constraining spatial frameworks.

While Li’s perspective emphasizes the literary and cultural aspects of “proper voice,” the broader context of structural phonology within the Literary Sinitic tradition remains essential. To fully understand the complex dynamics of regional vocal interactions within the use and spread of this tradition, it is essential to examine the tendency of structural phonology instead of precise

¹⁵ Li, *Zhong yuan yin yun jian shi*, 16–17.

phonetic transcription in the matrix of its writing system. Failing to do so may risk overlooking the vital function of “voice” within this tradition.

Many scholars of Chinese phonological and literary research have engaged in discussions concerning the detachment of vocalization from specific geographic locations. They have explored the notion of “proper voice” as a device to represent a kind of vocal standard within the Literary Sinitic tradition. However, the exact nature and function of “proper voice” remain a topic of ongoing debate. Some scholars argue that “proper voice” is not primarily about achieving phonetic preciseness in transcription but rather about creating a transcendent, pan-regional norm for the circulation and composition of verse within the continent. However, the issue is still sometimes sensitive.

Among phonologists, an enduring discussion has centered around the “descriptive” versus “prescriptive” models. Philologist David Prager Branner has offered a perspective that seems to align more with the prescriptive approach, suggesting that logographic writing systems might facilitate the development of structural phonology standards rather than norms tied to individual pronunciation variations. In contrast, some phonologists might favor the “descriptive” model, where phonological research corresponds to the practical language use of a specific group in a particular place and time, aligning with documenting the language as actively used by a community without prescribing overarching standards. While Branner left his statement open to interpretation, he suggested a more complicated approach to consider phonological research in using logographic writing might be needed. In other words, this tendency towards detachment from specific locations could be explained by the system’s complication of one-to-one

correspondences between characters and speech sounds, leading to the historical solution of establishing overarching “sound categories.”¹⁶

The historical production of “rhyme books” should emerge against the backdrop that Branner has described—they were indispensable reference works that meticulously cataloged rhyme groups, tonal patterns, and pronunciation guides, allowing poets to adhere to the intricate rhyming conventions of Sinitic poetry. One of the earliest and most influential rhyme books was Lu Fayan’s *Spelling Rhymes* (*Qieyun*, 601), compiled in the early 7th century during the Tang Dynasty. *The Central Plain Rhymes* (*Zhongyuan Yinyun*, 1324) and *Correct Rhymes of the Hongwu Reign* (*Hongwu zhengyun*, 1375), two critical references for early modern Sinitic verse and lyrics, demonstrate a persistent effort to create a unified, cross-regional standard for proper vocalization and rhyming conventions. As Sino-Korean scholar Young Kyun Oh astutely analyzes, these works often aim to transcend the limitations of regional speech and establish an imaginative consistency of voice rules that bridges geographical and temporal divides. Moreover, the compilation of rhyme books often served political and cultural purposes, such as reinforcing authority and legitimacy. The *Correct Rhymes of the Hongwu Reign*, for instance, commissioned during the early Ming Dynasty, primarily aimed to reaffirm the new regime’s orthodoxy and bolster Emperor Taizu’s political standing by emphasizing the revival of Sinitic culture and reclaiming its authority through the production of cross-regional symbolic work on proper vocalization.

But what precisely do these cataloged rhyme books exhibit? Was it a privileged spoken language used to voice poetry? Oh has argued that these “phonological” norms were not established to unify or promote a standard language. Instead, they aimed to synthesize shared

¹⁶ David Prager Branner ed., *The Chinese Rime Tables: Linguistic Philosophy and Historical-Comparative Phonology* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Pub, 2006), 2.

rules from regional differences. Oh underscores the disconnection between the Literary Sinitic “voice” and real-life communication, characterizing it as an “unnatural” mode of vocalization that aims to evoke the recitation of texts considered sages’ expressions. In his words, the “voice” represented in the rhyme books “was not grounded in actual, human communication; or it may not have reflected any actual set of speech sounds of a living language, except that it found its matrix in the sage’s—which one might say was ‘unnatural’—vocalization of texts.”¹⁷ He has briefly summarized with a list of descriptions,

(1) they are invariably associated with written language, transcending the dialectal differences in spoken languages; (2) they find their archetype in the (often archaic) past, by derogating contemporaneous linguistic reality; (3) they tend to act as a prescriptive norm with synthetic or “imagined” sounds.¹⁸

The penchant is also clearly stated in, as early as *Spelling Rhymes*’s preface, where Lu emphasizes his endeavor to synthesize “sounds” from various places and temporal contexts to compile a work that is inherently resistant to regional differences and time change: “The purpose of the *Qieyun* was to provide a phonetic analysis; collating the past and the present and bridging the distinctions between the South and the North, the *Qieyun* aimed at providing a correct norm of pronunciation conforming to the reality.”¹⁹ These notions are in line with Li’s phrasing “principles over places.” They suggest the aim for the “imagined” sounds intertwined with and

¹⁷ Young Kyun Oh, *Engraving Virtue: The Printing History of a Premodern Korean Moral Primer* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 145.

¹⁸ Oh, *Engraving Virtue*, 145.

¹⁹ Lu Fayan (601), *Qieyun*, revised from the translation by Coblin, W. South, “Marginalia on Two Translations of the ‘Qieyun’ Preface” *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 24, no. 1 (1996): 93.

rooted in writing, maintaining an imaginative distance from speech rather than being tied to a specific linguistic tongue. The aim of this creation might not be to replace or constitute a speech for verbal communication. Instead, a certain degree of verbal dysfunctional communication has been anticipated as their inherent nature. Apart from speech, “voice” represents a form of vocalization that transcends real-world spoken language. There is an intention to develop a form—or multiple forms, with “proper voice” connoting a refined aura—ungrounded in any specific language to bolster the fantasy of expansiveness of logographic writing.

These observations reinforce the idea that prescriptive norms, as exemplified by rhyme books and the concept of “proper voice,” are more closely tied to literary practices and the creation of a shared cultural identity than to the actual spoken language of any particular community. If these norms are not designed for speech, they may indeed be more relevant to literature than to spoken language, serving to establish a transcendent vocal ideal that is inherently connected to the literary Sinitic tradition’s self-conceptualization of its expansion across time and space. While the resistance of being tied to any particular speech community may initially appear to be primarily concerned with factors external to the literary content itself, such as the actual production of sounds (“vocalization”) or the relationship between written characters and their pronounced forms (“reference”), Rai’s work, which will be explored in the following section, offers a different perspective. Rai’s insights will illuminate how this notion of voice is, in fact, intrinsic to the very status and nature of verse within the literary Sinitic tradition.

I contend that Rai’s approach differs from the focus of “proper voice” on its synthesis or prescription derived from natural speech. Instead of solely concentrating on its technical or prescriptive aspects and relationship with spoken languages, he emphasizes how literature is firmly grounded in the realm of this pan-regional voice to maintain a level of abstraction and

detachment from the concrete realities of everyday speech. In this way, Rai suggests that Sinitic poetry operates independently of any distinctive speech environment. He is clear about how this detachment from specific places is essential to literary Sinitic practice and, in a sense, utilizes it.

Regardless of one's stance on Rai's position, his analysis of the organic connection between conceptualizing a "voice" considered "immune" to the influence of specific spoken languages and its relationship with verse literature within the Literary Sinitic tradition merits further attention. By exploring how essential speech detachment and neutrality to linguistic change emerge as a crucial element for the orality envisioning and the dispositions it fosters, Rai sheds light on the complex interplay between the literate Sinitic tradition and oral vernacular spheres.

Poetry As Transregional Notation

Rai's work, *On Poetry Law*, argues that the essential mission of the aural experience of transregional literary texts is to maintain a sense of removal from any single localized speech form.²⁰ This helps to contextualize the broader phenomenon of prioritizing the aesthetic experience of the voice over linguistic intelligibility in various artistic and literary traditions against the backdrop of literary Sinitic writing. Based on this viewpoint, his work invites us to consider the broader cultural and literary implications of the "proper voice" concept. This approach opens new avenues for understanding the dynamic relationship between written and spoken language in developing and spreading the Literary Sinitic tradition. He suggests that

²⁰ My reading of Rai's work is significantly indebted to Saitō Mareshi's analysis, which drew my attention to Rai's pondering over the literary Sinitic tradition and his insightful analysis of poetic patterns. For Saitō's analysis of Rai, see Saitō, *Kanji sekai no chihei*, 131–158; *Kanbunmyaku: The Literary Sinitic Context and the Birth of Modern Japanese Language and Literature*, ed. Ross King and Christina Laffin (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 31–68. While Saitō's analysis focuses primarily on Rai's engagement with the literary Sinitic tradition and his exploration of poetic patterns, this study extends these insights to the realm of opera theater and the aesthetics of spectatorship.

between the written Sinitic and the multitude of oral regional languages, an intermediary form of “voice” occupies an essential space.

Rai’s focus extends beyond the content of poetry to encompass a philosophical question: why does the literary Sinitic tradition culturally endorse poetry and verse? This endorsement is somewhat counterintuitive, considering the inherent uncertainty in exchanging sound values within a non-phonologically represented writing system. However, no writer would argue that Sinitic poetry is appreciated solely for its semiotic meaning. In *Chinese Literary Forms in Heian Japan*, for instance, Brian Steininger has highlighted “a powerful emphasis on the audible”²¹ in the dominance of literary Sinitic. Despite a common association of the periods’ heavy reliance on written communication and document-based governance, there remained a strong emphasis on “oral recitation as the default mode of reading.”²² The ability to recite a text in a refined manner could lead to material rewards or social advancement, with ceremonial occasions often revolving around the oral performance of opaque literary texts.

The crux of the matter lies in the fact that poetry must fit into a melodic, harmonious framework, and the learning, perceiving, and reproducing of this “prosody” mitigates the improbability of truly capturing the essence of a place and its speech. The value of each speech or voice reading is seen as lying in the degree to which it can evoke sonorous sensibilities and patterns. Essentially, poetry is not about language but a kind of musicality; it retreats into a pure pattern for sensory experience. In essence, Rai argues that the literary Sinitic tradition’s endorsement of poetry and verse is rooted in the understanding that these forms serve as a means of encoding and preserving a unique form of fictional vocality that transcends the boundaries of

²¹ Brian Steininger, *Chinese Literary Forms in Heian Japan: Poetics and Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017), 174.

²² Steininger, *Chinese Literary Forms*, 175.

individual languages and speech patterns. This perspective highlights the philosophical underpinnings of the Sinitic poetic tradition and its emphasis on the musicality and sensory experience of language, rather than its semantic content alone.

Rai's perspective also encompasses that Sinitic verse creates conduits for audiences to experientially inhabit voice as a mode of multi-sensory experience that transcends the delimitations imposed by any single linguistic framework. By internalizing this speech-detached voice in literature, the system of "poetry" can contribute to the cultivation of a sensibility that prioritizes the aesthetic and symbolic dimensions of language over its purely communicative functions. Yet, Rai's unique contribution lies in his emphasis on the liberatory potential of the aesthetic experience of the voice, particularly in his recognition of the independence of audiences' perception. He emphasizes the rupture and discontinuity inherent in the idea of "linguistic transcendence," questioning whether there would be a homogenous and unified result made from this transregionality. He argues that the process of transregional extraction is ultimately irreversible, and phonologically speaking, it would always be experienced differently.

The title of Rai's book, *shiritsu*, can simply mean the phonological pattern matrix employed to compose a Sinitic poem. Rai argues that creating these phonological patterns promotes linguistically transcendent vocalization. They can be seen as part of a broader cultural tradition that sought to elevate literary and vocal expression beyond the confines of everyday speech. Written in literary Sinitic, Rai states,

Today's prosody is different from that of ancient times. What we now refer to as prosody is often attributed to the poetic rules of the Tang Dynasty. Therefore, calling them poetic rules suffices. Labeling them as prosody, metrical, or stylistic rules is too broad [...]

Therefore, it is incorrect to regard prosody as solely the creation of the Tang Dynasty.

These patterns are created by nature itself. How could it be that the Tang Dynasty alone established these rules, and all subsequent generations simply followed them without daring to change or innovate? Things gradually develop and evolve until they reach a fixed state that cannot be easily altered.

今之所謂聲律者，多謂唐之詩律也，謂之詩律則可，謂之聲律格律格調者，皆泛也。[...] 故以聲律為唐之制作，則不可也，天之制也，豈有唐一代之制，而後世畫一奉之，莫敢變革者哉。物有漸而至，定而不可易者。²³

Rai's argument revolves around whether the phonological patterns used in Sinitic poetry reflect the speech patterns prevalent in the Tang Dynasty or if they transcend the connection to spoken language. He contends that poetry is not bound to the specific voice or pronunciation of a particular language at a given time, as these are “made by nature” and subject to change over time. The phonetic qualities of a natural language are inherently ephemeral, and even the immense power and influence of the Tang Dynasty could not ensure the perpetuation of its specific speech patterns beyond its temporal boundaries.

Instead, Rai argues that the phonological patterns in poetry engage with the lyrical flow and rhythms of language itself, rather than the specific sound values of a particular language or time period. Poetry, as a human creation, “patternizes” the irreducible materiality of language—that is,

²³ 「今の謂いわゆる聲律は古の謂いわゆる聲律なる者と同じからず、今の謂いわゆる聲律は唐の聲律を謂ふなり、之を詩律と謂ふは則ち可なり、之を聲律、格律、格調と謂ふものは皆泛なり、[...] 故に聲律を以て唐の制作と為さば則ち不可なり、天之制なり、豈唐一代之制にして、後世畫一して之を奉じ、敢て變革する莫き者あらんや、物には漸にして至り、定りて易ふ可からざるものあり。」 Both the original text and Japanese translation are cited from Onō ed., *Shiritsuro*, 440–41.

it creates patterns and structures from the basic building blocks of sound and meaning that underlie natural languages. By doing so, poetry connects not to the linguistic framing of a specific time or place, but to a transcendent vocal phenomenology unconstrained by temporal or regional barriers. He considers the production of the poetic text itself and how it internalizes these vocal patterns beyond linguistic framing.

In other words, poetry documents and preserves aural perception in a delocalized manner, capturing the essential qualities of sound and rhythm excerpted from languages. This idea goes beyond simply acknowledging that the vocalization of poetry can transcend the boundaries of specific languages or speech patterns. It implies that the relationship between poetry and the listener is not merely one of communication or transmission, but rather a shared participation in a more basic, extra-linguistic mode of perception and understanding. This allows poetry to transcend the limitations of any language or historical period and speak to readers across time and space. Rai's argument suggests that the power of poetry lies not in its connection to the specific speech patterns of a given era, but in its ability to evoke a universal sense of musicality and meaning through the patterning of language itself.

However, Rai does not aim to suggest the notion of a seamless, unifying voice that can emerge through transregional extraction. Instead, he emphasizes the inevitable differences and variations in the process. This perspective is evident in his focus on the independent perception of these patterns. Rai argues that despite the consistency of the patterns or their origins, the listening experience cannot simply replicate the linguistic experience that informs them when they are revoiced. This discrepancy between the original linguistic experience and the listener's perception is likely inherently connected to the non-phonological nature of literary Sinitic writing, which obscures the exact sound values it represents. This leads to a paradoxical nature of rhyme—it has a fixed pattern. Still, it does not have a single origin nor a single “restoration,”

as the extracted elements would merge with different linguistic environments and always be experienced differently regarding their phonological and aesthetic qualities. He emphasizes that audiences will inevitably develop heterogeneous perceptions when engaging with these poetic patterns:

Rhyme has a fixed pattern, yet it does not originate from a fixed pattern. Although rhyme has a fixed pattern, the listener may not grasp this fixed pattern, which is why listening is difficult to comprehend.

夫律者，有一定之法，而未始於一定之法也。律者有一定之法，而聆之者未得一定之法也，聆之難也。²⁴

For logographic Sinitic poetry, the consistent rhymetic patterns encoded within the verses are traditionally considered integral to the art form. However, Rai consciously shifts the emphasis away from these underlying rhythmic and rhyme structures that have long been prioritized. Instead, he foregrounds the inherent variability in how the actual sounds of these logographically coded verses are realized and vocalized.

By accentuating the diverse aural renditions that can emanate from the meta-phonetic abstraction of Sinographic writing, Rai challenges the conventional notion that such poetry straightforwardly reflects the spoken languages across the Middle Kingdom. The logographic system, he posits, has essentially transformed the relationship between the written poetic symbols and their auditory manifestations.

²⁴ 「夫れ律は一定の法あり、而して未だ始めより一定の法あらざるなり、律は一定の法あり、而して聆く者は未だ一定の法を得ざるなり、之を聆くは難し。」 Onō ed., *Shiritsuron*, 443.

Rather than directly encoding linguistic messages, these verses extract and constitute more abstract sonic elements through a process akin to musical notation—transcribing sound with a sign. The mapping between logographs and vocalization is indirect, enabling a cosmopolitan encompassing of “voices” across regional communities with their distinct linguistic backgrounds, exposures to poetic traditions, and subjective interpretive lenses.

Rai’s insistence on foregrounding this pluralistic sound realization, over the presumed consistency of rhymetic patterns, encapsulates the paradoxical duality at the heart of the auditory experience of logographic poetic works. He subverts the idea that logographic Sinitic poetry purely mirrors or arises from the spoken dialects of China and complicates logographic Sinography’s influence on literature through the relationship between poetry and language. Instead, he posits it as an art form that logographically transforms and notates an abstract rendition of sound, one open to myriad valid interpretations shaped by the cosmopolitan diversity of its audiences.

By positioning poetry as a realm centered around the emergence and production of aesthetic experience, which arises from the engagement with sound and vocal qualities rather than linguistic meaning, he challenges the primacy of language in determining the value and meaning of poetic works. As Rai ultimately notes, “The soul-stirring power of poetry is always felt in the moment of recitation. One need not wait to carefully parse its meaning, for tears will have already fallen. This shows that the way of sound and voice is not greatly different between the Chinese and the Japanese.”²⁵

²⁵ 「詩之驚心動魄，總在吟誦之際，不必待細釋其義，而涕已墜之，是知聲音之道，和漢無大異也。」 Onō ed., *Shiritsuron*, 443. 「詩が人の心を動かすのは、すべて吟誦のところにあるのであって、細かく意味を解釈せずとも、涙は流れくる。声音の道には和漢で大きく違うところなどないことがわかる。」 Japanese translation from Saitō, *Kanji sekai no chihei*, 157.

The emphasis on an independent operation of the linguistic realm reflects how Rai is firmly grounded in the literary Sinitic tradition, particularly its ideal of neutrality of any linguistic change. Both Rai and the theory of “proper voice” prioritize cultivating an imaginative engagement with sound that transcends the boundaries of speech. Nevertheless, by focusing solely on the symbolic connection, the notion of “proper voice” often oversimplifies the complexity of reception in terms of establishing a transregional abstraction model and the potential for disconnection and miscommunication. This downplaying of reception may risk local and peripheral societies becoming susceptible to profound oblivion and silence.

In contrast, Rai seems to destabilize the Middle Kingdom’s ownership of Sinitic poetry and dissociates it from the aura of the central plain or dynastically cultural standard by disconnecting its linguistic ties and underscoring the reception as somewhat independent. This approach opens up new possibilities for understanding and appreciating Sinitic poetry beyond its traditional cultural and linguistic contexts. Ultimately, Rai’s approach not only reshapes our understanding of Sinitic poetry with its aural engagement but also invites us to reconsider the complex interplay between language, culture, and aesthetic experience in studying East Asia’s literary Sinitic tradition more broadly.

Rai suggests that by acknowledging listeners’ subjectivity, rather than homogenizing them into the language poets have in mind, literature can be seen as an autonomous aesthetic domain decoupled from the constraints and structures of natural language, liberated from specific linguistic claims. This idea emphasizes the disconnection and independence between listeners and the original text, which serves as a key to understanding how the linguistically transcendent framing functions to either consolidate or undermine the dichotomy between the center and the periphery. Rai’s discussion of poetry utilizes this linguistically transcendent approach to

downplay the particularity of authority, such as the specific linguistic or cultural context in which a poem is created. Ultimately, this fulfills two of his goals: First, he dissociates literature from the source language, emphasizing the autonomy of the aesthetic experience. Second, he highlights the inherent ability of the sensibilities of reception to disregard any claim of space, thereby establishing literature as an autonomous realm that transcends linguistic boundaries.

In short, my reading of Rai's work suggests that the crucial role of poetry in the literary Sinitic tradition stems from its ability to encode unique forms of fictional vocality. While these forms may originate from natural language patterns, they are not tied to a specific place or time. Poetry serves as a vessel to preserve the memory of this fictional vocality, although it does not guarantee that the patterns can be readily understood through the act of listening alone. The patterns contained within poetry may not be immediately perceived as meaningful semantic content, as this form of vocality has moved beyond the realm of "language" as traditionally conceived.

Rai encourages us to recognize the diversity and multiplicity of experiences that arise when linguistic elements are extracted from their regional contexts and recombined in new ways. The idea of a single, unified voice emerging from this transregionality is problematic, as the extracted elements would always be experienced differently in terms of their phonological and aesthetic qualities. By recognizing that each listener brings their own unique set of experiences, expectations, and interpretive frameworks to the aesthetic encounter, Rai opens up space for a more diverse and dynamic understanding of the voice in the literary Sinitic tradition. This approach moves beyond the idea of a single, authoritative voice and instead celebrates the multiplicity of voices that can emerge through the creative engagement of audiences with the text.

Considering how Rai reacts to the theory of “proper voice” with an emphasis on the listening experience, the intransparency between audiences and the speech-detached voice, and the role of the genre of verse, the lack of consideration for the complexity of reception in the “proper voice” theory raises important questions about the implications of foregrounding a mode of appreciation that values vocal qualities detached from specific locations. How might this emphasis on the aesthetic experience of the voice shape cultural sensibilities and influence the way we perceive and engage with language? Moreover, what are the unintended consequences of cultivating an aesthetic hierarchy that decouples vocality from linguistic meaning?

These questions become particularly relevant when examining instances where the prioritization of a consistent aesthetic realm of sonic spectatorship overshadows the linguistic complexities inherent in cultural practices. One of the most striking examples of how this approach can oversimplify linguistic diversities and obscure the realities of communication among audiences can be found in opera theater, a genre that “can be” deeply anchored in audience engagement. The complex linguistic landscape of opera performances, where “characters speak to each other in mutually incomprehensible languages, and their oral communication with the audience of any particular regions by no means guaranteed,”²⁶ is often glossed over in favor of emphasizing a unified aesthetic experience. This tendency to prioritize symbolic unity over the acknowledgment of linguistic and cultural diversity reveals the limitations of the “proper voice” approach and highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and aesthetic experience in the literary Sinitic tradition.

²⁶ Wei Shang, “Writing and Speech: Rethinking the Issue of Vernaculars in Early Modern China,” *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000–1919*, ed. Benjamin Elman (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 277.

Wei Shang's analysis of opera theater provides a concrete example of how prioritizing a consistent aesthetic realm can risk obscuring the complex linguistic diversity and the potential for miscommunication within cultural practices. As he depicts, "When Peking opera moves from stage to page, the distinction between regional phonologies is hardly noticeable except for a few regional syntactic and phonological markers; the stylized Hubei Mandarin is generally rendered in a formal style laced with classical and semiclassical expressions and formalities, while Beijing dialect is registered in a plain style gesturing toward colloquialism."²⁷ Shang points out that the perceptual aspect of opera theater as an aesthetic realm, and its textualization, help maintain a consistent realm of sonic spectatorship in the imagination of the audience. However, this consistency comes at the cost of overshadowing the complex linguistic nature of the stage and the potential for incomprehension between the audience and the performers. This "mechanism" or approach is efficient because it implicitly frames or presents the experience of language/vocalization not as an inherent difficulty or cultural obstacle, but rather through the more flexible and pluralistic notions of "textures and styles."

This flattening of linguistic diversity in the understanding and textualization of opera mirrors the risk posed by the notion of "proper voice" to local and peripheral societies: it implies that the diversity of regional phonologies and dialects can be erased or trivialized in the pursuit of a unified aesthetic experience. This underestimation of linguistic comprehension also implies that audiences must invest considerable time to decipher the performance, bridging the language gap through literary tradition and experience. In part, this also explains why opera theater is "a genre with prerequisites for the audience, as it takes years of exposure to performances for one to

²⁷ Shang, "Writing and Speech," 277.

finally feel at home with its dialogues and arias.”²⁸ By engaging a sense of aurality disconnected from linguistic understanding, opera theater positions itself as an arena for non-linguistic sonic patterning—prioritizing qualities like rhythm, tonality, and mellifluous flow over communicative pragmatics. The understanding of the influence of the literary Sinitic tradition on voice performance in theater illuminates why the appreciation for non-linguistically aligned performance was represented as a sign of parochiality of the site of Taiwan by so many external observers in the early twentieth century.

The “Phonology” of Theater: Rising Linguistic Concerns

The sensibilities cultivated by the literary Sinitic tradition around orality as an aesthetic experience detached from linguistic intelligibility have lingering ramifications, especially for how theatrical voice performance has been conceptualized and received. In Taiwan, this manifests in the common experience of audiences with a pronounced aesthetic orientation privileging vocal expressions that defied linguistic alignment and vernacular comprehensibility. The long tradition has shaped the expectations and preferences of Taiwanese audiences, who have grown accustomed to appreciating aurality and performances inconsistent with their linguistic experience. As a result, theatrical vocalization intentionally disconnected from naturalistic speech patterns or denotative meaning came to be highly valued, appreciated, and taken for granted.

However, this elevated cultural prestige accorded to non-aligned, “illegible” modes of vocal performance was not without ideological implications. Such privileging of vocalization paradigms unmoored from parochial vernacular spheres can implicitly create a hierarchy that

²⁸ Shang, “Writing and Speech,” 277.

casts more linguistically anchored theatrical traditions as relatively unsophisticated or emblematic of parochialism. The very framing of theatrical vocality as ideally transcendent of localized linguistic constraints perspectively centers certain aesthetic sensibilities while potentially marginalizing or rendering illegible alternate performative modalities more indelibly tethered to distinct vernacular contexts. By framing theatrical orality as ideally transcendent of localized linguistic constraints, certain aesthetic sensibilities are perspectively centered, potentially marginalizing or rendering unrefined or insular alternate performative modalities that are more indelibly tied to distinct vernacular contexts.

This ambivalent and complex politicality is best embodied by a recurring theme of audience reception and comprehension challenges regarding theatrical performances in Taiwan. To illustrate this theme of aesthetic experience being detached from linguistic intelligibility in theater, I present a series of quotations, primarily from civil writers representing foreign emigrants' perspectives in the early twentieth century. These excerpts can collectively exemplify how the literary Sinitic tradition cultivates a theater culture detached from linguistic comprehensibility. They can evidence that, among Taiwanese audiences, the normative way of appreciation almost always involves a discrepancy between the aesthetic and linguistic aspects of the theater. These excerpts shed light on how the legacies of the literary Sinitic tradition and its idealized vocal paradigms have played out in complex ways within Taiwan's cultural activities. The appreciation of theater that does not fully align with local vernacular languages is usually interpreted as a manifestation of a parochial structure that marginalizes local societies.

Several of the excerpts highlight Taiwanese audiences' struggles in fully understanding the dialogue and lyrics of operas performed in more formal or literary Chinese varieties, such as "book language" or "Peking languages." The main argument is that this linguistic disconnect

creates a barrier to comprehending the plot and content, resulting in an aesthetic experience that contradicts the linguistic experience.

From George Leslie Mackay's (1844–1901) *From Far Formosa: The Island, Its People, and Missions*, 1895:

the text of the play, being in the book language, is very imperfectly understood by the audience; and were it not for the colloquial “asides” and the explanations given by knowing ones to those about them, the performance would indeed be a “dumb show” to most of the auditors.²⁹

From Matsushima Kō (松島剛, 1854–1940) and Satō Hiroshi's (佐藤宏, 1870–1899) *Conditions in Taiwan (Taiwan jijō 台湾事情, 1897)*:

In terms of language, because various decorations and rhythms were added, it sounded very different from the language commonly used; even foreigners who were familiar with the Amoy language were almost deaf to these performances without a knowing one explaining the story to them.³⁰

²⁹ George Leslie Mackay, *From Far Formosa: The Island, Its People, and Missions*, edited by the Rev. J.A. (James Alexander) Macdonald (New York: F.H. Revell, 1895), 118–119. Mackay was one of the most respected Western missionaries in Taiwan during the late 19th century. Affiliated with the Canadian Presbyterian Church, he arrived in Taiwan in 1871 and resided in Tamsui, a northern port city, until his death in 1901. His book, *From Far Formosa*, chronicled his experiences and observations of Taiwan's geography, culture, and people. Upon its publication, the book soon became a foundational text for introducing Taiwan to a global readership, including the Japanese, who had recently acquired Taiwan as a colony following the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895.

³⁰ Matsushima Kō, Satō Hiroshi, and George Leslie Mackay, *Taiwan jijō* (Tokyo: Shunyōdō, 1897), 179. This book is a translation of Mackay's work with several alterations and adjustments. Also, both Matsushima and Satō, the translators, with their specialties in geography and education (Matsushima) and law (Satō), respectively, are the only ones who never visited Taiwan among these quotations.

From Watanabe Masashi's (渡辺雅 or 風山堂, 1867–unknown)³¹ “Actors and Theater” (*Haiyū to engeki* 俳優と演劇), published in *Notes of Taiwanese Custom* (*Taiwan kanshū kiji* 台湾慣習記事) in 1901:

The Phonology of Theater: What was transmitted from [China's] Fukushu³² mainly uses “the bureaucratic voice.”³³ On the contrary, islanders’ preexistent theater employs a language as a mixture of the literary version of the local language, and some words that should be considered theatrical in nature are mixed in, for which the locals distinguish them by naming them “theatrical accents.” Only the comic plays use the local language as their main language, and the puppet plays also use the local language.³⁴

³¹ I traced the pen name “Fūzan Dō” back to the individual “Watanabe Masashi” using two primary sources. The link between the penname and the owner can be evidenced by an entry in the journal of *Notes of Taiwanese Custom*, No. 5, which states that Watanabe Masashi as “who often uses the name of ‘Fūzan Dō’ to send reports to this journal,” and introduces him as an interpreter that just moved to Taipei under a new employment in Taipei Hospital (1901, 72). Nevertheless, Watanabe Masashi as the true identity is mostly unknown to current researchers. To date, only Pan Wei-Hsin’s dissertation noted the full name of Watanabe and his writings on Taiwanese languages. See Pan, Wei-Hsin, *Rizhi shiqi riren taiyu shuxie yu xiangzhengxing quanli gua xi zhi yanjiu* [Examples of Taiwanese Orthographic Writings and their Symbolic Representations from the Japanese Colonial Period] (Ph.D. diss., Taiwan Normal University, 2020).

³² In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Qing capital experienced what historian Andrea Goldman called “a golden age for opera performance.” During this time, the Qing court patronized the pihuang opera genre, which originated in Shannxi, a region in northwestern China on the Silk Road. Pihuang used a northern, more tongued dialect, which helped the Qing court establish its cultural authority away from the Han literati in the south. The popularity of pihuang in the capital led to it, and its variations, being referred to as the “capital” (jin) style. This style later developed into today’s Peking Opera in the early twentieth century. The success of pihuang in the capital also encouraged its spread to other regions outside the capital. As a result, even in the nineteenth century, Fujian, a coastal province far from the capital, saw the emergence of “jin” troupes that performed in the pihuang genre. This is “the transmitted style from Fukushu mainly uses the official sound” specifically indicates. See Andrea Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770–1900* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 3.

³³ The linguistic register employed in these Fuzhou plays, while rooted in the “capital-style” or “proper” speech pattern, could diverge from the strict bureaucratic / vehicular tongue for dramatization and literariness.

³⁴ 「劇の語音、福州より渡来せるものは主に官音を用ゆれども、本島人演劇の語音は、讀書音に土語の雜りたるものにして、別に演劇特趣の語と見るべきものの混入せるを見る故に土人は戲訛（芝居訛）を命名して區別せり、只滑稽劇にありては大都土語を用ゐ、又傀儡には土語を用うるもの多し。」 Watanabe Masashi, “Haiyū to engeki,” *Taiwan kanshū kiji*, no. 1 (1901): 30.

From Takamatsu Toyojirō's (高松豊次郎, 1872–1952) “My Ambitions Regarding Entertainment Supply” (*Goraku kyōkyū ni kansuru yo no hōfu* 娯楽供給に関する予の抱負), published in *Taiwan Daily News* (*Taiwan nichinichi shinpō* 台湾日日新報) on May 16, 1909:

As a first step, I aim to establish a Taiwanese theater. The people of Taiwan have a deep-rooted appreciation for dramas. While they enjoy opera theater, the language barrier often hinders their full understanding, leaving them to imagine the plays through the acting, which is not enough to satisfy their tastes. That is why I believe it would be a valuable educational experience for the general public if we could arrange a play that tailors to the preferences of the locals, filling in the shortcomings of traditional Chinese opera theater. [It would be fantastic] if we could have Taiwanese individuals involved on stage, creating the backgrounds, crafting props, and presenting the facts and events that unfolded in Taiwan in the Taiwanese language.”³⁵

From Kataoka Iwao's (片岡巖, 1876–1930) *Records of Taiwan Customs* (*Taiwan fūzoku shi* 台湾風俗誌, 1921):

Unlike the mainland Japanese, who see [theatre] to appreciate plots and the talents of actors, a Taiwanese audience is merely attracted by the spectacularity of the costumes that actors wear without even knowing what the story is about. [...]

³⁵ 「故に若し本島人の嗜好に適する様な演劇を組織して、在来の支那劇の缺點を補ひ、舞台に背景を見せ総て道具を作り台湾人が舞台に現われ、台湾語で台湾に在った事実や 出来事を脚色して観せたならば、何程平民文學的で亦通俗教育になるか知れぬと思ふ。」 Takamatsu Tokyojirō, “Goraku kyōkyū nikansuru yo no hōfu,” *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), May 16, 1909: Japanese edition 5.

Those who genuinely expect to see a play are rare; most of them just enjoy the clamor atmosphere. In fact, since the majority of Taiwanese theater uses the bureaucratic language, audiences essentially do not have the ability to understand the play and even do not attempt to watch and listen to it.³⁶

From Higashikata Takayoshi's (東方孝義, 1888–1957) "Taiwanese Customs—Taiwanese Theatre" (*Taiwan shūzoku—taiwan engeki* 台灣習俗—台灣演劇), published in *Taiwan Times* (*Taiwan jipō* 台灣時報), published in eight monthly installments from July 1936 to April 1937:

Even though not understand the lyrics and songs for they are put in Peking languages, audiences are mysteriously, intensely connected to the stage. They will burst into laughter, and indulge in silence, sympathy, or indignation, to the extent that they have some talents to not detach from the show. It is possible for them to completely dissolve into the performance and the music.³⁷

The above materials generally concern the lack of linguistic accessibility in opera theater and its impact on audience reception. Mackay, for instance, notes that the story is basically incomprehensible without explanations from informants, while Matsushima and Sato, probably taking Mackay as an example, depict that even fluent speakers find the stylized, ornate theatrical language nearly unintelligible. Watanabe, on the other hand, contrasts the use of mainland tongues in the most prevalent forms introduced from mainland China in recent times with the mixture of local languages and literary registers in preexisting local theater. The latter, as of

³⁶ Kataoka Iwao, *Taiwan fūzoku shi* (Taihoku: Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpōsha, 1921), 214–15.

³⁷ Higashikata Takayoshi, "Taiwan shūzoku—taiwan engeki," *Taiwan jihō*, no. 7 (July 1936): 24. This serialization was reprinted into his *Taiwan shūzoku* (Taihoku: Dōjin Kenkyūkai, 1942).

1901, refers to a more esoteric oral tradition that, while linguistically similar to the local language, is voiced in a more highbrow register. This form of theater was on the verge of popularity and practiced primarily among bookish circles. The use of elevated language and literary registers in these performances creates a barrier to understanding for the general audience, who may struggle to fully comprehend the content without the aid of explanations or prior knowledge. In sum, Watanabe suggests the tension between the stylistic choices in opera theater, either preexistent or prevalent, and the accessibility of the performances to the wider public. Although his concern about audience reception is more implicit, the fundamental idea is that the performances generally downplay vernacular intelligibility and lack colloquialism.

In the years following the first decade of the twentieth century, some writers seem to interpret the linguistic disconnect in opera theater in different ways. Takamatsu, for example, views it as a shortcoming that needs to be addressed by developing more vernacular Taiwanese theater—an endeavor he actively pursued for around ten years. His perspective suggests that the linguistic accessibility of the performances is crucial for audience engagement and understanding. In contrast, Kataoka implies that Taiwanese audiences did not necessarily prioritize comprehending the plot, as they were more attracted merely to the spectacle itself. This view criticizes the emphasis on visual and sensory aspects of the performance as a means to compensate for the audience's lack of linguistic understanding.

Higashikata, writing from 1936 to 1937, presents a particularly intriguing case, as he holds a positive view of the ways Taiwanese audiences appreciate opera theater despite linguistic inaccessibility. Unlike most of his predecessors, who focused on the problems that the lack of linguistic intelligibility might facilitate, Higashikata suggests that linguistic comprehension is not as essential as previously thought. Instead, he normalizes the idea that Taiwanese audiences deeply connect with and immerse themselves in opera theater primarily through the aesthetic

experience of the performance, relying on sensory and emotive dimensions rather than literal understanding. Ironically, Higashikata's view, which emphasizes sonic spectatorship without the need for literal comprehension of the spoken words, echoes the early-modern cosmopolitan valorization of incommunicative orality that transcends linguistic frameworks. This perspective highlights the importance of the auditory and emotional aspects of the performance in engaging the audience, even when the linguistic content may not be fully understood.

These writers all highlight the “non-aligned” vocal performances and their linguistic unintelligibility to local audiences, using this phenomenon to validate their understanding of the basic condition of Taiwanese people, societies, cultural preferences, and problems during the colonial period, only differing in their interpretations. The orality in opera theater seems to evoke a sense of unease and incongruity among the writers, stemming from their attempt to comprehend and assess the cultural “essence” of the colonized Taiwanese community. This discomfort is rooted in the apparent misalignment between the spoken language and the audience's appreciation of the opera, which challenges their preconceived notions of how language and cultural understanding should interact. The repetition of this theme demonstrates that extra-linguistic operatic appreciation has remained an everyday practice for a long time among Taiwanese audiences, and it concerns emigrants. It could be argued that, for these writers, this distinctive way of theatrical appreciation—characterized by a craze for theater but a high tolerance for incomprehensibility—intriguingly and bizarrely ties to Taiwan's culture or “ethnicity” (*minzoku-sei*), a term that gained popularity in East Asia around the 1920s. The discussion about theater and ethnicity is explicitly stated in Tsubakimoto Giichi's *The Overview*

of *Taiwan* (*Taiwan Taikan*, 1923), which criticizes the theater for losing its particular “Taiwanese ethnic spirits” by merely following Chinese modes.³⁸

This phenomenon of extra-linguistic appreciation in Taiwanese opera theater can be seen as a manifestation of the broader literary Sinitic tradition, which has long placed a high value on the aesthetic and emotive qualities of language over literal comprehension. In order to accord with its cosmopolitan spatial envisioning, this tradition tends to consider the sound, rhythm, and tone of the language more important than the literal meaning of the spoken words, and strengthens the belief that the aural appreciation of literary works is not necessarily dependent on a full understanding of the linguistic content. The orality in Taiwanese opera theater, with its emphasis on the extra-linguistic aspects of performance, can be seen as an extension of this literary tradition, highlighting the deep-rooted influence of Sinitic culture on Taiwanese cultural practices. In this light, the writers’ unease and incongruity in the face of Taiwanese audiences’ appreciation of opera despite linguistic barriers can be understood as a confrontation with the Sinitic literary tradition. The orality in opera theater thus serves to expose and highlight the persistent influence of the literary Sinitic tradition on Taiwanese culture, even in the context of colonial modernity.

Higashikata’s perspective is a telling example, particularly notable because he had already witnessed the emergence and popularity of colloquial operas in the late 1920s—which will be discussed in a subsequent section—by the time he wrote this entry. Despite this development, which presumably aimed to bridge the linguistic gap between the opera and the audience, Higashikata’s premise remains unchanged: he characterizes Taiwanese audiences’ enjoyment as a “mystery” connection rather than linguistic comprehension. His persistence in highlighting the

³⁸ Tsubakimoto Giichi, *Taiwan Taikan* (Osaka: Ōsaka yagō shoten, 1923), 281. Yamane Yūzo also highlights the “music and theater-loving” of Taiwanese, even taking it as the first feature in his discussion of “Taiwanese ethnicity.” See Yamane Yūzō. *Taiwan minzokusei hyakudan* (Taihoku: Sugita Shoten, 1930), 2–24.

audience's unusual appreciation of opera, even in the face of more accessible colloquial operas, underscores the central role that this inconsistent way of engaging with orality and language plays in his understanding of Taiwanese cultural identity, tying it to a symbolic aesthetic rather than a valorization of language activities. Higashikata's stance may reveal his personal perspective or implicit political message. He may be trying to underscore his own cultural literacy and insider's grasp, or possibly defending folkloric values against the intensification of cultural homogenization that occurred alongside the launch of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). This interpretation can be surmised from his more explicit opposition to the limitations enforced on the staging of opera theater in the 1940s. In sum, these accounts tell us how immersed Taiwanese audiences were in incommunicative orality within the space of theater and imply a complicated negotiation between the cultural values associated with traditional aesthetic and linguistic sensibilities.

Institutionalizing the Aestheticized Incomprehensibility in Theater

The development of permanent theater spaces in colonial Taiwan has proved to present a curious dynamic—while representing modern infrastructure, the underlying ideology perpetuated the marking of cultural sophistication for extra-linguistic vocal phenomenology and the preclusion of more linguistically-specific theatrical activities for gaining recognition. In other words, while embodying the new idea of infrastructure, institutional systems, and economics of entertainment brought about by the colonial condition, the establishment of theater venues in Taiwanese communities paradoxically gave physical manifestation to the aesthetic sensibility rooted in the early-modern imaginativity of vocality. The understanding of theater spaces and theatrical experience within this form of space emerged as detached from local society—envisioned as realms separated from the surrounding linguistic contexts and downplaying the linguistic

concerns, reinforcing reluctance to prioritize spoken languages. This allows us to observe the porosity of Taiwan's colonial condition resulting from the early-modern tradition. The dominance of visiting troupes from mainland China in the theater scene of colonial Taiwan, performing in "corrected rhymes" or "proper voice," can be seen as a form of literary "voicing" that prioritizes the aesthetic experience of vocal articulation over linguistic intelligibility. This emphasis on the sensory and affective dimensions of theater challenges the colonial construction of language-based identities, which seeks to align language with political and cultural allegiance.

The diary of Taiwanese writer Ng Ong-seng from around 1926 and 1927, for instance, evidences his regular attendance at performances sung in unfamiliar dialects or languages in the local theater. A broader context can be found in Takeuchi Sadayoshi's encyclopedia *Taiwan* (1914–1915, 1927, 1929), who recorded that in urban theaters, instead of local troupes, visiting troupes from Shanghai and other regions brought relatively "advanced" performances to these new spaces:

"In recent years, some relatively advanced Chinese troupes would come from Shanghai or other places to perform. They offered not only traditional theater but new drama styles, with better skills and well-equipped productions. However, these touring troupes were limited to performing in the permanent urban theaters, while the countryside could only host local Taiwanese touring actors."³⁹

This stark contrast reveals how linguistically non-aligned touring troupes from other regions dominated modern urban theaters, while local companies, regardless of their genres of performance, were typically restricted to performing in open fields or outdoor spaces. Their

³⁹ Takeuchi Sadayoshi, *Taiwan* (Taihoku: Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpōsha, 1914), 626.

culturally unsophisticated performance seemed to be taken as the reason to rationalize this divide. The potential marginalization of locally-formed troupes is evident here. It can be assumed that this preference for international troupes led to a divide in resources. This disparity, in turn, influenced aesthetic development, and sustainability, and was detrimental to the drive to develop performances more closely aligned with the local language and culture.

The establishment of permanent theater venues and the role of wealthy “teahouses” in institutionalizing the separation of linguistic understanding in cultural activities highlight how the appreciation of vocalicity as an aesthetic experience undermines colonial matrices of power. By prioritizing sophistication with linguistically non-aligned performances over local linguistic contexts, the theater scene in colonial Taiwan creates a space for the recuperation of literary “voicings” that weaken nationalist and colonialist constructions of linguistic identity. This is best represented by the symbolic opening of a nine-month program by a Shanghai troupe in the establishment of the “Tamsui Theater” in 1909 (operating from 1909 to 1916, renamed as New Theater from 1916 to 1945) as the inaugural, leading theater for Taiwanese patrons.⁴⁰ (Figure 3.1)

⁴⁰ For more details about the theater environment before the Tamsui Theater, see Chiu Kun-Liang, *Jiuju yu xinju: Rizhi shiqi Taiwan xiju zhi yanjiu, 1895–1945* [Research on Taiwanese Theater during the Japanese Governance (1895–1945): Old Drama and New Drama], Taipei: Zi li wanbao shewen huachu ban bu, 1992.



Figure 3.1. The interior of the Tamsui Theater and its audience, 1909.⁴¹

Despite its groundbreaking role in catering to Taiwanese audiences, the Tamsui Theater, financed by Japanese bankers and situated in the heart of Taihoku's (now Taipei) vibrant entertainment district, remained conspicuously detached from the local theater production scene. The theater's management chose to maintain a distinct separation from indigenous theatrical practices, opting instead to showcase performances by visiting troupes from mainland China. Remarkably, even when the performances of visiting troupes failed to meet expectations and were abruptly terminated, the Tamsui Theater's management often left the program slots vacant rather than extending invitations to local troupes to fill the gaps. This striking pattern prevailed throughout at least the first half of the 1910s, and likely beyond, as evidenced by the theater's scheduling practices.⁴² For instance, following the inaugural nine-month engagement of a

⁴¹ "Tamsui gikuwan no engeki to kankyaku," *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), September 26, 1909, Japanese edition, 7.

⁴² While the available materials that I am able to collect during the time scope of my writing and have at hand are sufficient to demonstrate this trend for the first half of the 1910s, it is reasonable to assume that this tendency

Shanghai-based troupe from September 1909 to June 1910, another Shanghai troupe was swiftly brought in for a two-month stint. Save for the occasional film screenings organized by resident Japanese associations, there is scant evidence to suggest that the theater actively sought out or featured performances by pre-existing local troupes most of the time.⁴³

Some scholars attributed the divide between local and visiting troupes to the immaturity of local troupes and their performances unqualified for theaters, as they were accustomed to centering their performances around religious worship events and targeting gods as potential audiences.⁴⁴ However, the key issue is audiences' participation is overlooked. This explanation fails to consider that "visiting troupes" serves as a device to legitimate an aesthetic distance that reinforces traditional literary concepts and envisioning, concretized by the theater management's deliberate exclusion of local troupes. The preference for visiting troupes over local productions as a refined choice conceals the hierarchical structure of aesthetic sensibilities that separates the Cosmopolitan "center" and marginalizes local practice.

The preference for linguistically non-aligned performances from visiting troupes suggests a suspicion of the audience's engagement in the theatrical-worship mingled style of interaction. In this style, the performance responded to local people's interest through spectacle and by acknowledging the audience's presence, even though it was not yet linguistically aligned in the

extended to a broader timeframe. Further research and a complete survey of theater programs across Taiwan may be necessary to conclusively establish the full extent of this pattern.

⁴³ For instance, according to an April 21, 1912 newspaper report, the Tamsui Theater remained vacant from theatrical productions for over a year, from around 1911 to April 1912, except for a brief visit in January 1912. The report stated, "there has not been any theatrical production in the Tamsui Theater for more than a year."¹ This extended closure was likely influenced by the outbreak of the Republic Revolution in mainland China in November 1911.² Although a few sporadic events occurred, no local troupes were invited to perform at the theater during this period. See Ying Ti Yan Yu [The Warbling of Orioles and Swallows], *Taiwan Nichichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), April 21, 1912: Chinese edition, 5.

⁴⁴ Shih Wan-Shun, "Shokuminchi niokeru engeki to kanshū: taiwango tsūzoku engeki no kōki o chūshin ni," trans. by Kondō Mitsuo, *Gengo Shakai*, no.7 (2013): 63–83.

1910s as the preexistent local troupes also lent their performance to the “capital” style and “the language of officials” as Watanabe in *Notes of Taiwanese Custom* has described. My emphasis is that the presence of local, orally-based audiences is conceptually rejected and replaced in order to prioritize the sensibilities of writing-based communities. When the emergence of the new theater economy centers on downplaying linguistic concerns, it takes for granted the exclusion of local productions even more. By precluding the consideration of prioritizing the intelligible hearing of local audiences, “linguistic alignment” cannot even exist as a stylistic choice that foregrounds orality and the local audience's presence, perception, and bodies. The most essential aspect here is the aesthetic de-hierarchization that deems the spoken language-reflected tendency as illegitimate and inferior. The deferral of the linguistically aligned performance or the modest quality of the local production is merely a reactive result of this de-hierarchization.

The show business at the Tamsui Theater primarily relied on an international approach, featuring theater troupes from mainland China, with wealthy “teahouses” acting as brokers. Composed of affluent businessmen and entrepreneurs who functioned as stockholder groups, these “teahouses” would rent theater schedules and prefer contracting renowned troupes from coastal cities in China rather than the local society to fill the slots. When a teahouse successfully invited a skilled troupe to Taiwan, other city-based teahouses might approach the troupe leader to arrange a railway tour, with the relationship between teahouses and hired troupes being based on temporary contracts rather than exclusive monopolies.⁴⁵ Some visiting troupes and actors might extend their short visits into long stays or even residences, but only if a teahouse was willing to continue sponsoring them. A successful example is the Shanghai troupe, Qingxian-ban,

⁴⁵ More discussion of teahouses can be gained from Xu Yaxian, *Sounds from the Other Side: the Operatic Interaction between Colonial Taiwan and China during the Early Twentieth Century*, trans. Jo-Hsuan Wang (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 2013).

which performed for the opening of the Tamsui Theater and some chose to stay longer, but members of less prominent later troupes often found themselves struggling to collect enough travel money to afford the ferry passage back to their hometowns.⁴⁶ While the teahouses fostered a cross-regional theater scene mediated by their stockholder interests, they might also damage the theater environment in the long run. The revenue generated through this outsourcing economy did not encourage sufficient investment for the future, as it relied heavily on the foreign supply of troupes, with transportation costs consuming a significant portion of the circulated money, rather than investing in training actors, developing programs, or refining performances.

The association of these visiting troupes with the prestige of the central plain, now coated with a new layer of globalized cosmopolitan color such as the origin from the international city of Shanghai, implicitly conceals how the legacy of the literary Sinitic tradition lends their performances an air of cultural sophistication, which is reinforced by the grandeur and exclusivity of the theater spaces they occupied. Theater historian Xu Ya-xian has surveyed the impact of visiting troupes from mainland China during the colonial era, estimating that more than fifty troupes from Shanghai, Guangdong, and Fujian provinces traveled to Taiwan, totaling over 2,500 individuals. Despite their regional origins, most of these troupes claimed themselves as “the capital ensemble,” indicating that they performed in “proper voice,” while initially meaning the pronunciations followed the styles near the central plain and bore higher proximity to rhyme books, but later came to suggest their indebtedness to the contemporary trend set in Beijing. Xu divided the visiting troupes’ activities into three stages: the initial stage (1908–1919), the thriving stage (1920–1926), and the recession stage (1927–1936), with a significant decline

⁴⁶ Visiting Chinese opera troupes sometimes faced financial strain when language barriers prevented supporting actors from finding temporary employment to earn enough money for their return voyage home. This occasionally led to disputes arising from the actors’ strained circumstances. See “*Shina shibai no katto*,” Taiwan Nichichi Shinpō (Taihoku), November 25, 1910: Japanese edition, 7.

following the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937.⁴⁷ The appreciation of vocal phenomena beyond linguistic meaning, as evidenced by the dominance of visiting troupes and the institutionalization of theater venues, challenged the premise of hypothesizing the colonized Taiwanese communities of solid language-based identities.

The economic realities of the theater industry, characterized by temporary contracts and a profit-driven mindset, reveal the complex interplay between the phenomenological and aesthetic dimensions of vocality and the material conditions that shaped the production and reception of theater. The precarious financial situation often led to abrupt contract terminations for troupes that failed to generate sufficient revenue or incurred higher costs than anticipated. Essentially, the outsourcing economy, with its emphasis on transportation costs, may have hindered the development of a more locally grounded theater scene that could have further challenged colonial matrices of power.

The Habitus of Disorienting Linguistic Identities in Theater

In short, the prevalence of theater spaces institutionalized and commercialized opera theater, featuring non-linguistic sonic patterning that enabled the aesthetic sensibility to maintain its independence from language politics. However, this came at the expense of further developing localized theaters. To gain a deeper insight into how the regime of aurality coexists with the regime of linguisticity and the complexities of East Asian colonial sceneries, it is essential to consider colonial intellectuals' ambivalent attitudes towards the insistence on aestheticizing unintelligibility in an opera theater. This insistence often resulted in the marginalization of local theater developments, which were seen as inferior and parochial in comparison to the more “refined” and “sophisticated” opera theater.

⁴⁷ Xu, *Sounds from the Other Side*, 2013.

Within the criticism of local educated elites, I contend that it reveals French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "habitus," which language theorist John Joseph describes as "the actions agents undertake that are not deliberate, and the cases where they undertake a deliberate course of action but find themselves unable to achieve it because of their own strong "dispositions."⁴⁸ Their dispositions towards aesthetic sensibilities that trivialize intelligibility, in other words, may inadvertently perpetuate the marginalization of local theaters and reinforce a sense of cultural hegemony.

This section will present two case studies to illustrate the complex negotiations of cultural identity and appreciative sensibilities that characterized the colonial intellectuals in Taiwan. By insisting on the aestheticization of unintelligibility, their views on opera theater may have unintentionally reinforced colonial hierarchies and hindered the growth of local theater that could have catered to the linguistic and cultural specificities of colonial audiences. The first case examines Kua Ting-Thiu's⁴⁹ (1889–1979) essay, "Regarding the Theater in Taiwan" (*Taiwan no geki ni tsuite*, 1913), written before the emergence of a more colloquially understandable opera theater.⁵⁰ In this essay, Kua theorizes why he views opera theater as less linguistically driven, making a direct connection between theater and writing and implying that theater is a mere replication of knowledge from written text. His rationale shows a cultural worldview that places less importance on language as a whole and rejects considering the notion of incomprehensibility

⁴⁸ John Joseph, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 75–76.

⁴⁹ Kua Ting-Thiu / Ke Zheng-He (柯丁丑/柯政和, 1889–1979) was an influential Taiwanese intellectual and educator who studied at Tokyo Music School (now Tokyo University of the Arts). Kua was a prominent figure in the Taiwanese cultural scene during the Japanese colonial period. He later changed his name to Ke Zheng-He around the time he moved to Beijing, where he served as a founding member (1923–1949) of the Department of Musicology at Beijing Normal University.

⁵⁰ Kua Ting-Thiu, "Taiwan no geki ni tsuite," *Taiwan kyōiku*, no.133 (1913): 57–62.

of immediacy by language as a problem. The second case study analyzes Zhang Wei-Xian's⁵¹ (1905–1977) post-reflection on the emergence of localized opera styles. Zhang's account intriguingly suggests a distorted interpretation, attributing the localization of opera performances to the colonial schema.

As noted earlier, many foreign emigrants' perspectives regarded the downplaying of the importance of language in opera theater with suspicion, rendering it as alienating the audience and distancing them from the evolving local environment. The owner of Asahi-za, Takamatsu, had attempted to promote practical reforms beyond mere criticism, advocating for “true performance” to center around audiences' vernacular comprehension, an idea inspired by one of the earliest modern Japanese theater reformers, Kawakami Otojirō (1864–1911).⁵² Takamatsu can be said to be a crucial figure in the discursive influence of this issue, problematizing the non-linguistically aligned opera theater seen in public discourse. Recruiting Taiwanese amateur actors and developing repertoires himself, Takamatsu's “*seigeki* company” was active from its debut in August 1910 to 1919, with the titles of repertoires sporadically appearing in newspapers, carrying on the concern of the topic. His plays advocated localizing the plays by language, characters, themes, and settings. In other words, Takamatsu, despite being a colonial emigrant,

⁵¹ Zhang Wei-Xian (張維賢, Tiunn Ui-heng, 1905–1977) was a prolific dramatist who advocated for modern theater reform. Zhang was a key figure in the development of Taiwanese theater during the Japanese colonial period and the early postwar era. Although for the sake of consistency, I should have referred to him by his Taiwanese pronunciation, I chose to use the Mandarin pronunciation since scholarship about him usually uses this convention.

⁵² While less known, Kawakami has visited Taiwan twice, in 1902 and 1911 respectively. The 1902 field trip paved the ground for him to realize his “realistic” approach by collecting local materials to stage a Taiwan-set version of Shakespeare's *Othello* (1903). The 1911 visit was invited by Takamatsu, inseparable from Takamatsu's intention to advocate *seigeki*, promoted by Kawakami to denote a “true play,” a form that distinguishes from traditional performance, as a correct style of performance in a Western manner. More details about Kawakami can be found in Robert Tierney, “Othello in Tokyo: Performing Race and Empire in 1903 Japan.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.4 (2011): 514–540; Yoshihara Yukari, “Emi suin honan Kawakami Otojirō ichiza jōen “osero”-jūsō ka suru “shūen,” *Shakai Bungaku*, no. 21 (2005): 19–30; Inoue Yoshie, “Nihon tōchi de umareta kawakami no engeki—“Taiwanonitaiji,” “Osero,” “Seibantōbatsu,” *Journal of Kibi International University, Department of Sociology*, no.9 (2009): 63–72; and Shih Wan-Shun, “Chuanshang yinerlang de aoseluo yu Taiwan zhengju—“zhengju” zhuzhang shidi diaocha yu wutai zaixian” [Kawakami Otojirō's “Othello” and Taiwan Seigeki, the Field Survey for “Othello” and its Representation on Stage], *Taipei Theatre Journal* 8 (2008): 7–30.

paradoxically strived to connect Taiwanese audience members to Taiwanese language-based performances, while the management through local teahouses downplayed this force and prioritized visiting troupes.



Figure 3.2. Advertisement for the theatrical production “A Poor Youth” by the Taiwan Seigeki Company, Takamatsu’s first Seigeki troupe in Taiwan, from *Go en: Taiwan gogaku zasshi* magazine, 1910.⁵³

Taiwanese theater historian Shih Wan-Shun has challenged the notion that the evolution of opera theater in Taiwan is solely an internal innovation within the genre, contending a connection with Takamatsu’s project. Most scholars credit the stimulation brought by Chinese visiting troupes or grassroots spontaneous development for the emergence of “local language opera” from singing arts into full plays around the late 1920s. However, Shih has argued that

⁵³ Taiwan Seigeki Company, advertisement, *Go en: Taiwan gogaku zasshi* 3, no. 9 (1910).

Takamatsu, despite the downplaying of his direct influence in her subsequent publications, might have played a significant role in this development. She evaluates Takamatsu's pursuit of vernacularization, noting, "From a macro perspective, Takamatsu Toyojirō can be said to have accurately grasped the pulse of Taiwanese audiences and the shortcomings of the theatrical environment at that time."⁵⁴ Through a careful examination of the similarities in repertoire developments, Shih has astutely unraveled a connection between the *seigeki* company and the evolution of opera theater, highlighting an unexpected legacy of Takamatsu's theory and project in the development of local language opera's maturity, alongside scholarly debates.⁵⁵ By emphasizing the shared concern of vernacularization between Takamatsu and local language opera, Shih has challenged the interpretation that the call for attention to audience engagement linguistically discontinued with Takamatsu's departure around 1919.

Regardless of whether the direct influence between the two forms can be attested, it is discernable that both Takamatsu's *seigeki* company and local language opera, whether by design or as an unintended consequence, have a disruptive effect on the aesthetic hierarchization that prioritizes distanced interaction with audiences. They react to the traditional aesthetic paradigm and its precedence of distanced spectatorship by proposing a variation. In this way, they are parallels that disturb the normative ways of appreciation. However, by prioritizing linguistic comprehension, both forms also encounter a similar dilemma: when the language used in theater becomes too close to the audience's own language, without the mediation of literary distance or the "educational" guidance of intellectuals, it is perceived as dangerous. This proximity threatens

⁵⁴ Shih Wan-Shun, "Zhimi ndi ban xinpaiju de chuang cheng—Taiwan zhengju" [Creating the Colonial-versioned Shinpa Drama—The Aesthetics and Politics of Taiwan *Seigeki*], *Taipei Theatre Journal* 12 (2010): 38.

⁵⁵ Shih Wan-Shun, "Banyan 'Taiwan': rizhi shiqi Taiwan de juchang, xiandaihua yu zhuti xinggou (1895–1945)" [Staging "Taiwan": Theatre, Modernization, and Subjectivity Formation of Taiwan during the Japanese Colonial period (1895–1945)] (Ph.D. diss., Taipei National University of the Arts, 2010), chap. 5. In a later Japanese journal article, she downplays this connection, only noting Takamatsu's plays were the only Taiwanese-language ones in 1910s theaters. See Shih, "Shokuminchi niokeru engeki," 2013.

to blur the line between the artistic realm and everyday life, potentially leading to a breakdown of social norms and moral boundaries. Oftentimes, the style that prioritizes linguistic comprehension is susceptible to denigration as a means to suppress these variations and maintain the established aesthetic hierarchization. By positing that it evokes an overly direct physiological response from the audience, this style is denounced as vulgar, obscene, and provocative, arousing carnal desires. The use of such derogatory terms suggests that prioritizing linguistic experience is considered illegitimate and serves as a consequence for challenging the dominant aesthetic paradigm.

By positioning Taiwan *seigeki* and local language opera together, it becomes clear that both underscore the alignment of theatrical dialogues with the audience's linguistic consistency and colloquial conversation. In this sense, they highlight audiences as linguistic subjects and orally-based communities rather than hypothesizing the suspension of language understanding. These forms anticipate that theater serves the audience's orality, rather than regarding orality in theater as a means to transmit literary work without the use of writing. Beyond the generic distinction between opera theater and modern plays, their relationship highlights a common effort to prioritize the audience's linguistic engagement and create a more intimate, participatory theatrical experience.

In an English-written dissertation about the history of "local language opera" in Taiwan, also known as *gezaixi* (a Mandarin pronunciation), *ko-a-hi*⁵⁶ (a Taiwanese pronunciation), or Taiwanese opera, Hsiao-Mei Hsieh has highlighted the genre's prioritization of its connection to audiences. The language used in local language opera is immediately understandable to the

⁵⁶ "Ko-a-hi" is the Taiwanese pronunciation, often used by Japanese writers during the colonial period to evoke the soundscapes in Taiwan. The Mandarin pronunciation "gezaixi" is more common today but is anachronistic when referring to the early twentieth century. For historical accuracy, "ko-a-hi" or "local language opera" is preferred when I discussed the early-twentieth century context.

majority of the Taiwanese population, as it employs a southern Fujian dialect with accents from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou, the regions from which many immigrants originated. While not all diversified ethnic and sociological groups can be engaged, Hsieh notes, “Its dialogue and lyrics were generally more colloquial, tinged with a sense of humor that spoke to ordinary people. Such accessibility thus enabled *gezaixi* to become the most popular entertainment in the early half of the twentieth century on the island.”⁵⁷ Remarkably, by the late 1920s, this “indigenous” opera form not only emerged from grassroots society in Taiwan but also captivated audiences across the Taiwan Strait in Xiamen, Mainland China for the similarity in spoken languages as Hsieh has focused on. The emphasis on the audience’s perception and communicability in local language opera implies that the orality of theater prioritizes immediate, spontaneous interaction over the evocation of literary aesthetics. This shift challenges the accumulated literary conceptualization and undermines the essentialization of community connection through unintelligibility, potentially dismissing the validity of the fantasy of writing’s transregional communication. By prioritizing the audience’s linguistic comprehension, local language opera poses a significant threat to the established literary paradigm, and is more enduring as it employs a familiar singing-based performance mode that does not urge spectators to abandon the enjoyment of music.

However, this challenge to the dominant aesthetic hierarchy is met with resistance from colonized intellectuals, who, while translingual experience and modern colonial education have partly shaped their perceptions of language, are not completely immune to the influence of the literary Sinitic’s notion of cultural sophistication. In fact, the discrepancy between colonial intellectuals’ translingual experience and their resistance to addressing vernacularization and linguistic concerns in opera theater for orally-based counterparts is particularly intriguing. This

⁵⁷ Hsiao-Mei Hsieh, *Across the Strait: History, Performance and Gezaixi in China and Taiwan* (Ph.D. Diss., Northwestern University, 2008), 32–33.

discrepancy may stem from an old ideology that regards “education” as a means to imbue learners with transregional skills and potential, allowing them to transcend their native languages rather than being tied to any specific speech. Conversely, illiteracy is associated with unintelligibility, reinforcing the transcendental status carried by the new communication means gained through education. Colonized intellectuals often view activities focusing on the literal meaning of spoken words and transparent communication as transient, expedient, and instrumental for “enlightening the mass,” while the ultimate civilized and cultural goal is to move beyond one’s language to engage in transregionality.

This ideological framework, which privileges transregional and extra-linguistic modes of expression as markers of cultural refinement, has a profound impact on how Taiwanese audiences perceive theatrical performances and how their appreciation is interpreted. Among Taiwanese audiences steeped in this legacy of valorizing extra-linguistic vocal phenomenology, the reception, and interpretive lenses employed to experience theatrical performance inherited potent ideological undertones. An appreciation for non-aligned, uncomprehending modes of vocalization risked being coded as a marker of cultural sophistication, while more prosaic developments prioritizing intelligibility within specific linguistic matrices became susceptible to being perceived as unrefined or insular—representations of an inferior parochial condition. The hierarchical structure of such aesthetic sensibilities, while rooted in premodern cosmopolitan imaginations of vocality, perpetuated discursive regimes that could delimit how diverse theatrical articulations were apprehended and validated in the modern colonial and postcolonial context.

Kua’s essay prominently suggests that audiences have internalized the notion that not understanding the language is merely a stylistic choice in opera theater, just as understanding the language is another stylistic option. He argues that there is no fundamental difference between

the two. Kua rejects the inevitability of making the language too accessible and asserts that the ability of textual comprehension and its oral circulation should be the first priority in maintaining a safe distance between the performer and the spectator. This distance is deemed necessary for the art form to function as a vehicle for cultural refinement and moral edification.

Despite receiving a Japanese language education and having studied in Tokyo himself, Kua's thinking about opera theater gave little room for linguistic comprehension. In 1913, as a model minority—a college Taiwanese student at Tokyo's Ueno Music University⁵⁸—Kua was invited by the journal *Taiwan Education* (*Taiwan kyōiku*) to introduce theater culture to Japanese readers in an article titled “Regarding the Theater in Taiwan” (*Taiwan no geki ni tsuite*).⁵⁹ In the middle of the essay, he addressed the topic of language, stating, “It is true that with dozens of languages in China, different regions have difficulty communicating with each other.”⁶⁰ This statement likely stems from a reaction to the criticisms by colonial celebrities like Takamatsu, indicating that Kua felt an urgency to justify why linguistic barriers do not contradict the cultural relationship between local spectators and performance. He stated,

However, since Beijing is the imperial capital and the center of art and literature, it is the place where plays are mainly performed. People in the provinces have no choice but to

⁵⁸ According to Satō and Watanabe's survey, there were around only one hundred Taiwanese students of postsecondary education during the late Meiji to early Taisho (1910–1915). Kua was the only one studying art and music, alongside the majority of social science, law, or economic majors. See Satō Yumi, Watanabe Sōsuke, “Senzen no taiwan chōsen ryūgakusei nikansuru tōkei shiryō nitsuite,” *Shokuminchi kyōiku taiken no kioku*, edited by Nihon Shokuminchi Kyōikushi Kenkyūkai Un'ei Iinkai (Tōkyō: Kōseisha, 2005), 82–99.

⁵⁹ The article's authorship is not entirely clear, as an introductory sentence states: “This article is based on Tokyo Music University student Kua Ting-Thiu's draft.” This raises ambiguity over whether Kua himself penned the essay or if it was an interpreter who helped record his ideas.

⁶⁰ Kua, “Taiwan no geki ni tsuite,” 1913: 61.

enjoy the plays in the official language.⁶¹ Although there are very few people who have a good understanding of the language, if I have to tell you how we understand the play, first of all, ancient stories and famous fictional stories are the favorites of the general public. Those who are literate can rely on books, while those who are illiterate can rely on oral tales to learn about the themes of the story. In addition, due to some people who make a living as storytellers, even if one does not understand the dialogues, it is still enjoyable because the picture emerges in the mind when they watch a play [見ながら観念を浮かべて楽しみ]. Furthermore, as for the songs, most of them have been studied and listened to in the past, so it would also be clear.⁶²

Kua's interpretation of opera underscores that the idea that opera theater does not require linguistic understanding is not because the art form is inherently easy to comprehend. Rather, it stems from a cultural worldview that places less importance on language as a whole. This worldview, which downplays the importance of language not only in the aural experience of literary works but also in opera theaters, reflects a broader cultural attitude that privileges the abstract and the symbolic over the concrete and the literal. It is an attitude that sees language as a

⁶¹ There are some exaggerations in this depiction. Neither the capital was the place of production of opera performances—which simplifying the process that many regional troupes congregated in the capital and incorporated their regional languages and voices—nor “the officials’ language” is the only language in opera performance. At least Kua should know there were several kinds of opera performances that used classical, literary version of Taiwanese language. Kua’s depiction exaggerated the authority of cultural capital, seeing it as the “origin” that produced cultural activities, which betrays clearly how he takes into the binary of a singular center and peripheries.

⁶² 「支那の言語は数十種もあるから、土地が 変わると言語が 通し ないけれと」、北京は帝都で 學術文藝の中心で あるから、劇は主に此処で 作られ、地方で も仕方なし官話で やる。通す る者は非常に少ないか、然らば如何にして理解するかと云へば、古の歴史及び 小説等に著名なものは、一般の人に好まれ、文字を読める者は書籍に依り、読めない者は話に依って其の事柄を知って居る。又それを話して聞かせるを業とする者もある故、臺詞が 分からなくとも、見なか ら観念を浮かべ て楽しみ、又歌に就いては、曾って學んだ り聞いたりしたこともあるから、尚一層明亮に分かる。」Kua, “Taiwan no geki ni tsuite,” 1913: 61.

potential source of disruption and disorder, one that must be kept at arm's length to maintain social and moral stability.

Kua had not yet witnessed the phenomenal change in local language opera when he wrote his essay. He conceptualizes the theatrical spectatorship as merely a surrogate for the reading experience. Instead of engaging in immediate verbal communication, both actors and audiences trace the source of their interaction in the books even though this medium does not directly open to them. Actors serve as modern stand-ins for historical figures, while audiences understand the characters they portray through knowledge disseminated from books and rely on the interpretation of literate individuals. Kua suggests that their exchange exists in "the picture" that "would emerge in the mind when they watch a play," with the assistance of voice as a vehicle to recall those memories. In this context, the medium of voice on stage provides audiences with cues of atmosphere and emotion rather than messages and content for comprehension. They listen to the lyricality of the lyrics rather than the text itself. In his view, spectators interact with the characters and images, while the performers are merely a means to evoke them.

This unique ontology of theater, as interpreted through the lens of the first Sinographic sphere in Taiwan, allows non-literate individuals to engage with the realm of reading despite their lack of formal literacy skills. By attending opera theater, these individuals can participate in a cultural practice that is deeply rooted in the written tradition, even if they cannot read the texts themselves. In this way, theater seems to serve as a bridge between the oral and written worlds, enabling those who are not literate to access the cultural knowledge and values embedded in the Sinographic writing system. However, the "bridge" between the written and oral worlds provided by theater is not a form of "translation" in the sense of making the content of the written world more comprehensible to the oral world. Instead, the translation is made for the sake of

impenetrability that serves to experience the essential gap marked by the divide. It is only through this mechanism that the cultural consciousness of this region is dominated by a strong sense of “one language,” despite the coexistence of various dialects and spoken languages. The unified written form transcends linguistic diversity, and theater reinforces the idea of a single, shared language that binds the culture together. By providing a space where the non-literate can engage with the written tradition, theater plays a crucial role in maintaining this sense of “linguistic” unity.

Consequently, the cultural preference for opera theater that maintains a linguistic barrier serves as a defense mechanism against the perceived dangers of linguistic accessibility, which may have an effect on dissociating the general public from the cosmopolitan writing regime. By valorizing the style that eschews linguistic comprehension, the cultural establishment seeks to preserve the art form’s role as a symbol of high culture, one that transcends the mundane realities of everyday language and speech. However, this perspective also raises important questions about the relationship between colonized intellectuals and local practices. The non-acceptance of specific aesthetic and cultural practices may further weaken the cultural identities that colonized intellectuals purport to establish.

This preference is evident in the attitudes of colonized intellectuals towards the emerging popularity of local language opera. The inability of Zhang Wei-Xian and many modern colonized intellectuals to assess the politicality of the emerging popularity of local language opera reveals their struggle to extend their idea of cultural identities to connect with the local community. They fail to consider the significance of audience perception and the local language opera’s emphasis on engaging with the local population. Instead, these intellectuals tend to underplay how the local audiences actively shift their enthusiasm toward the alignment of opera

theater with the tastes and preferences of the local community. By belittling the agency of these audiences and attempting to reiterate the impenetrable nature between the art form and the community, the intellectuals demonstrate their complex relationship between writing, language, and culture. This ambivalence stems from their adherence to the cultural preference for linguistic unity in the sense of the writing tradition, which they perceive as a necessary defense against the dangers of linguistic parochialism, despite this may sacrifice their connection and claim for a collective colonized identity.

Zhang, for instance, while having attempted to develop modern dialogue-based dramas in Taiwanese languages in the 1920s, did not consider absorbing or adapting stories from local language operas. In his short memoir, "My Memory About Theater," he clearly expressed suspicion about the significance of local language operas, relegating their popularity from a subjective choice by spectators to a manipulated result in the hands of the Japanese authority. Colonized intellectuals never raise an ideological charge against the reliance on visiting troupes, but when confronted with the favor of colloquial operas, they quickly raise ideological concerns and doubts about plotting, finding reasons to maintain distance. This precisely betrays a defense mechanism insisting on a linguistic barrier between the performer and the spectator, and emphasizes the role of language in opera theater is not simply a matter of stylistic preference or artistic choice. It is deeply embedded in a cultural worldview that shapes the very nature of the art form and its relationship to society as a whole. To maintain this distance between the artistic realm and everyday life, the orality of opera theater is an indispensable sign of the stability of the cultural worldview.

Zhang alluded to a rumor suggesting that the colonial authority might have supported local language operas as a means of intervening in the theatrical landscape of the colony. In his

memoir, written in 1954, he noted the following, using the Republic of China calendar to refer to the years 1927 to 1928 (corresponding to the Japanese calendar years of Showa 2 to 3):

I remember it was around the 15th and 16th years of the Republic of China. With the fear that “cultural plays”⁶³ would win the hearts of the people and its influence too difficult to control, the Japanese colonial government conversely sponsored the *gezaixi* secretly in place of them [cultural plays], which linked to the popularity of *gezaixi* nowadays.⁶⁴

The role of the “Japanese colonial government” in relation to colloquial Taiwanese-spoken language opera, as described in this account, is extremely intriguing. It suggests that while there was a burgeoning interest in traditional opera theatre as a vehicle for presenting local voices and colloquial sounds, and general audiences were excited about the performances becoming more accessible to them, not everyone celebrated this phenomenon. Some saw the excitement as dangerous, and the strong resonance between audiences and actors was considered worrisome and irritating. The juxtaposition of local language operas and Japanese colonizers reflects the shadow of doubt cast on the legitimacy of the growing popularity of local language operas. Indeed, in the context of colonial Taiwan, cultural plays may have been subject to more careful examination by the authorities due to their potential for promoting social and political change. However, the rumored support of the Japanese colonial government for local language operas can be seen as a reflection of the unease about the linguistic identification’s conflict with the

⁶³ Cultural plays refers to a form of modern spoken drama that emerged in the 1920s, aspiring to localize Western-style theatre. In the context of colonial Taiwan, this often refers to the work that is influenced by Japan’s Tsukiji Little Theater and China’s May Fourth movement, focusing on addressing issues such as women’s rights, education, and the clash between tradition and modernity.

⁶⁴ Zhang Wei-Xian, “Wode yanju huiyi” [My Memory about Theater], *Taipei wenwu* [Taipei Cultural Artefact] 3, no.2 (1954): 112.

stability of linguistic unity in the historical cultural worldview. By suggesting that the popularity of these operas was not a spontaneous phenomenon, but rather the result of external intervention, the rumor cast doubt on the legitimacy of the art form and the agency of its audiences.

It remains uncertain whether the Japanese colonial government or any other agency truly offered exclusive support that facilitated the rapid growth of local language opera in the 1920s. This uncertainty arises from a significant lack of historical records about the production and evolution of local language opera, which evolved from singing arts in grassroots society, and scholars often have diverse opinions concerning its roots and development. To the best of my knowledge, no scholarship has conclusively suggested that the government actively supported opera. From an administrative perspective, the authorities likely viewed opera theater as a whole, without differentiating between non-linguistically aligned and linguistically aligned operas. This makes it difficult to assume that they would have shown specific partiality towards colloquial opera over others. Instead, a more plausible assumption is that there was a lack of legislative prohibition on colloquial opera as the colonized intellectuals might wish, plus the perceived stricter examination of the content of modern spoken plays, may encourage the interpretation of governmental support.

Literary critic Michael Bourdaghs, in his analysis of Japanese singer Misora Hibari's (1937–1989) rumored Korean descent, observes that “Rumors often summon up suppressed moments from the past. Feeling estranged from present-day reality, people turn to their past to find alternative possible versions of that reality.”⁶⁵ Colonized intellectuals in Taiwan might have experienced a similar sense of alienation from their present reality, leading them to seek an alternative explanation for the growing popularity of local language opera as a means to vent

⁶⁵ Michael K. Bourdaghs, *Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-pop* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). 82.

their frustration with the premature cultural plays. They may have turned to the notion that Japanese influence could have played a decisive role in this shift in spectatorship, as the alternative; otherwise, they would not have been able to accept that audiences were forsaking the established aesthetic tradition. As audiences embraced local language opera, the colonial intellectuals may have felt that their own artistic and cultural values were becoming increasingly disconnected from the evolving tastes of the Taiwanese public. This shift might have challenged the writing-based oral culture and sensibilities, raising questions about the long-standing cosmopolitan spatial envisioning. Rather than emphasizing the unity of spoken language as the basis of the present community, it seems to have been more important for colonial intellectuals to resist the disintegration and loss of validation of the past.

This realization triggers a sense of anxiety and alienation, as the rise of local language opera implies the evolving nature of the audience itself. The unusual resonance that spectators experience with local language opera unsettles the colonized intellectuals, who worry about how audiences are responding to what they perceive as a misguided mechanism. In their view, this mechanism manipulates audiences by employing a voice that evokes listeners in an immoral way. They believe that allowing one's body to resonate with this sort of voice jeopardizes the authenticity of one's subjectivity. Audiences who prefer a legible performance to their ears and their spoken languages are regarded as a sign of uneducatedness. They must be maneuvered or misguided, to the degree that become unable to appreciate the beauty and elegance of the performance embedded in the writing tradition rather than spoken words. The framing of the audiences' acceptance of unintelligible content as a conscious, aesthetic preference rather than a source of difficulty serves as a fundamental habitus that the literary Sinitic tradition imprints on its subjects. By obscuring incomprehensibility as a practical problem, the system instills a deeply

ingrained set of dispositions and attitudes that shape the perception and behavior that persistently underplays linguistic diversities.

The most intriguing aspect of the emergence of local language opera theater is that despite being voiced in a local language, it is the perceived ingenuity of the performance rather than its increasing genuineness that comes to dominate the narrative about this local variation. The suspicion of Japanese influence behind the scenes suggests a sense of dishonesty and shifts the attention to the displaced reception in the eyes of the intellectuals. They can attribute the root of the theatrical craze to various factors, such as vulgarity, external manipulation, and low appreciation—anything but its relation to language and genuine local expression. In other words, the focus on this genre of opera in a local colloquial voice turns to its indecorous performances and the contaminative effect on the minds of mass audiences. By associating the rise of local language opera with colonial influence, the intellectuals could dismiss the idea of genuine “localization” and avoid confronting the unsettling implications of the audience’s enthusiastic bodily reactions to the performances.

The dishonesty perceived by the intellectuals may stem from their discomfort with the visceral, embodied response of the audience to the local language operas. The strong resonance between performers and the audience, manifested through physical and emotional reactions, challenged the intellectuals’ conception of proper cultural appreciation and threatened their sense of control over the cultural narrative. This disparagement is most clearly evident in *The Taiwan People’s News* (*Taiwan minpō*, 1923–1930, successor of *Taiwan seinen*, 1920–1922), one of the most important public forums during the 1920s. As a Taiwanese-targeted “vernacular” newspaper, it plays an instrumental role in shaping public disparagement of local language operas during their emergence.

The founding members of the journal were primarily Taiwanese alumni and college students who studied at universities such as Meiji and Waseda in Tokyo.⁶⁶ Many of them were heavily inspired by the self-aspiration movement after World War I and the literature reform movement of the May Fourth Movement in China in 1919. Initially, the journal used hetero-lingual scripts in both Japanese and Literary Sinitic, following the conventional approach of mainstream publications like *Taiwan Daily News*. However, in reaction to the writing reform in mainland China, the editorial board eventually decided to publish their magazine exclusively in vernacular Chinese, replacing both scripts and changing the title from *The Taiwan Youth* to *The Taiwan People's News* in 1923. In part this reflects a new boom: vernacular Chinese connotes a writing reform that marks a departure from the antiquated era. However, essentially, its advocacy for vernacular writing separates it from the local spoken language. For Taiwanese writers, adopting vernacular Chinese is more about learning a new writing mode and less about transcribing their own speech.

Hirada Shoji's analysis of modern Chinese writing reform aligns with the separation of "vernacularization" and "language" in the Taiwanese context. Hirada points out that modern Chinese literary reform tended to prioritize the unification of "characters" and ways of writing over the consideration of "sound."⁶⁷ This tendency is particularly evident in the context of Taiwan, where intellectuals consciously suppressed linguistic concerns to justify their adoption of vernacular Chinese writing. Some writers compared the old form of vernacular, exemplified

⁶⁶ For instance, Lim Teng-lok (林呈祿, Lin Cheng-Lu, 1886–1968), who served as the chief editor of the paper, majored in law at Meiji University. He was a founding member of the Taiwan Parliament Petition League Movement (臺灣議會請願運動, 1921–1934) and drafted the petitions. After WWII, Lim went on to operate the Eastern Publishing Company (東方出版社), a publisher that focused on translation and children's literature. The executive editor Ng Teng-chhong (黃呈聰, Huang Chengcong, 1886–1963), Ong Bin-chhoan (王敏泉, Wang Ming-Quan, 1889–1942), and Ng Tiau-khim (黃朝琴, Huang Chao-Chin, 1897–1972) studied at Waseda University.

⁶⁷ See Hirada Shoji, "Me no bungaku kakumei, mimi no bungaku kakumei: ichikyūniju nendai chūgoku ni okeru chōkaku media to "kokugo" no jikken," *Chūgoku bungakuhō*, no. 58 (1999): 75–114.

by popular literature written in literary Sinitic novels like *The Dream of Red Chamber* and *Water Margin*, to the new style, which they described as living, organic, and enlightening, rather than dead, static, and pleasure-seeking.⁶⁸ Another article advocated that if Taiwanese people wanted to become “a Taiwanese for East Asia” instead of “a Taiwanese for Taiwan,” learning vernacular Chinese would be a more efficient way to become East Asian (“*toyo*” in Japanese and “*doyan*” in Chinese) citizens, rather than wasting time learning “thousands of words of Sinographic graphs.” The article stated, “One must have a slight foundation in literary Sinitic and understand Mandarin—the national language of China—to be able to write it.”⁶⁹

The eschewing of genuine “localization” in the disparagement of local language operas intersects with the debates among Taiwanese writers in the 1920s regarding their relationships with vernacular Chinese. Both demonstrate how the intersection of the post-Sinitic world and colonial relationships complicate the linear narrative of vernacular modernity and nationalism. The aesthetic criticism against local language opera highlights that the paradigm of writing as the central identity definer never fades away.

The attitudes of colonized intellectuals in the 1920s towards truly speech-aligned, vernacularized local language opera explains their tendency towards vernacular writing. This is evident in a report titled “Pernicious Impacts of Local Language Operas,” published on July 10, 1927, by an anonymous Taiwanese journalist.⁷⁰ The journalist vividly depicts the process of how local spoken language operas “invaded” the theaters in his neighborhood. He attributes the

⁶⁸ Qian Fei, “Taiwan minbao zenme buyong wenyanwen ne” [Why Does not Taiwan Minpō Use Literary Sinitic?], *Taiwan Minpō* (Tokyo) 36, November 1, 1924: 14.

⁶⁹ Lin Gengyu, “Dui zai taiwan yanjiu baihuawen de wo jian” [My Opinions Regarding Studying Vernacular Chinese in Taiwan], *Taiwan Minpō* (Tokyo) 18, March 11, 1924: 9.

⁷⁰ It could be Ng Ong-seng who might have penned the two criticisms of *ko-a-hi*. Ng lived in Shinchiku (now Hsinchu) and worked as a journalist for the newspaper around the time. His diary evidenced he attended the “proper voice” performances at Shinchiku-za quite frequently.

problem to Japanese theater managers rather than the colonial government, hypothesizing that the Japanese owners' involvement stems from their inability to distinguish between culturally refined opera performances and those performed in the local colloquial voice due to their lack of understanding of the local language. Unlike Zhang's retrospective accounts that rationalize the suppression of local language operas as an attempt to curb the circulation of progressive ideas, this report portrays the Japanese owners' pursuit of blockbusters as a vicious drive that allows local language operas to enter the theater. The journalist's criticism suggests that the Japanese owners' lack of understanding of the local language and culture leads them to prioritize financial gain over maintaining the cultural refinement of the theater:

[The success of utilizing *ko-a-hi* in enhancing the profit for a shop has inspired] a Japanese man called Aritomoto, a manager of Shinchiku-za, to be interested in gezaixi. As a mainlander Japanese, he was somewhat of an amateur to this form. However, as a mercenary businessman, he immediately recognized the value of gezaixi. He soon made a contract with a troupe in Taihoku named "Reformed Troupe," consisting of both male and female actors, and has staged their programs in Shinchiku-za from the beginning of June to June 15th. There seemed to be full seats for daytime and evening programs around a dozen days. Assumably, the profit would be impressive.⁷¹

Throughout the report, the use of "local language" is never openly identified as a key factor. The narrative first introduces the music of local language opera as evoking obscenity, characterizing the style with "vulgar lyrics and indecent mannerisms." It then emphasizes the

⁷¹ "Gezaiju de liu bi" [Pernicious Impacts of Local Language Operas], *Taiwan Minpō* (Taihoku) 165, July 10, 1927: 14.

consequences of consumer capitalism by noting the materialistic Taiwanese shopowners and Japanese theater managers, criticizing them for luring audiences with easy, obscene tricks or being driven by speculative motives. The report suggests that the audience, consisting mainly of women, is particularly vulnerable to these tactics.

The report concludes with a comparison: “There is a pressing need for reform in local language opera due to its perceived negative impacts. In contrast, the traditional Chinese-style ‘proper sound’ opera, delivered in the unintelligible Beijing dialect and enjoyed by a specific class, holds artistic merit with its advanced tone and lyrics. However, the general Taiwanese audience may not turn to it.”⁷² The significance of enhanced comprehensibility through the use of local language is overshadowed by the emphasis on deception, vulnerability, and intensity. In the reporter’s understanding, the spectators’ reactions to the performances must be disingenuous. The audience is not seen as endorsing the performance with a transparent understanding but rather as being riveted by the deceitful nature of the theater. The reporter suggests that the audience’s reaction cannot be genuine because the performance itself is not genuinely produced.

The association between Japanese colonizers’ presence and local language opera, beyond mere external attribution, may also reflect an implicit discernment of the linguistic paradigm entailed by the colonial regime and its disruptive rupture of linguistic unity in the writing tradition. Colonized Taiwanese subjects, aware of or smelling the subtle transformation brought about not only by the use of the Japanese language but also by its epistemological and aesthetic reframing, struggled to negotiate between their linguistic, aesthetic, and writing identities. The pursuit of vernacular Chinese writing can be seen as an attempt to resume the writing unity, while the local language opera represents the traditional oral culture’s change in quality, which exposes the cosmopolitan spatiality’s internal mystery—the pretense of aestheticized

⁷² “Gezaiju de liu bi,” 14.

unintelligibility and underplaying audiences' presence—and symbolizes its merging with a new aural sensibility that builds on the basis of aligning with linguistic comprehension. There are two extremes of “vernacularization” in the particular context of East Asia, but for the 1920s colonized Taiwanese subjects, it is nothing unnatural to accept their coexistence. The attitudes of colonized intellectuals in 1920s Taiwan towards vernacularized, locally originated operas provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between language, identity, aesthetics, and colonial subjectivity. It calls into question the tension between understanding the colonized people of Taiwan as Sinitic writers or Taiwanese speakers. It urges us to recontextualize the imposition of Japanese-speaking drama during the wartime period beyond the simple deprivation of local speech and invites us to reconsider theater's role in the entire language politic.

Zhang's recollections, which shed light on the perception of local language opera and its implications for the relationship between language, culture, and identity during the Japanese colonial era, find a home in a valuable archive—the *Taipei Cultural Artefact* (*Taipei wenwu*, 1952–1961). As one of the earliest postcolonial, Chinese-written journals reflecting on the Japanese colonial era, *Taipei Cultural Artefact* serves as a crucial repository of narratives that illuminate the complexities of cultural transitions and memory politics during the shift from Japanese colonialism to the postcolonial period. The ways in which he recalls his memories, his perception of local language opera, and the unsettled ambivalence behind the issue continue to resonate in contemporary debates and discussions surrounding Taiwan's cultural landscape.

Conclusion

This chapter proposes a fresh perspective on the cultural dynamics of colonial-era Taiwan by examining the role of opera theater in shaping the sensibilities of nonliterate individuals and their relationship with the literary Sinitic tradition. In colonial-era Taiwan, opera theater by large

retained as a cultural form that consistently privileged vocal phenomenology over regional and linguistic differences. This prioritization of the literary voice can be seen as a manifestation of the broader tendencies within the Sinographic Cosmopolis, which often emphasized the written word and its associated sensibilities over the particularities of spoken languages. Through this complex and deeply ingrained process, regional audiences become habituated to the separation of linguistic and cultural identities, a phenomenon that is rooted in the literary Sinitic tradition. This habituation occurs even among those who lack literacy, as the appreciation of opera theater is not contingent on the ability to comprehend the literal meaning of the words being spoken on stage. By examining the ways in which opera theater in colonial Taiwan perpetuated this hierarchy of the literary voice over linguistic comprehension, we can gain valuable insights into the cultural mechanisms that shaped the experiences and sensibilities of the nonliterate population. More importantly, examining these techniques of aural literariness helps to shed light on the complex dynamics of language, power, and identity in the East Asian colonial context.

This chapter also sheds light on the role of literary genres in diminishing the cultural significance of spoken languages. By treating verbal opacity as a stylistic characteristic, opera theater and the verse culture in the Literary Sinitic tradition tend to dissociate cultural values from speech. In the name of culture, convention, and aesthetics, the words spoken by characters in an opera or the voice associated with poetry are thought to be interpreted and appreciated beyond their literal meanings. This supposed interpretive process is believed to lead to a deeper understanding of and emotional connection with the cultural themes and values presented in the genres. The use of verbal opacity is thus an effective tool for captivating audiences, as it creates a unique allure that sets the art form apart from everyday life. This may help illuminate the significance of verse in the literary Sinitic tradition since the verse serves as a kind of notation to

denote a translinguistic “orality” in order to mediate between the logographic writing system and diversified speech environments.

Finally, this reliance on verbal opacity can contribute to the continuous detachment of regional audiences from the symbolic voice. Their engagement with Sinitic verse is premised on the neglect of dysfunctional verbal communication, as the art form prioritizes aesthetic and cultural values over linguistic comprehension. However, if regional audiences can acknowledge and understand this unintelligibility not as the sole linguistic standard, but as an alternative mode of perception, it may allow them to “liberate” themselves from the cultural hegemony that enforces homogenous control over voice and expression. In contrast, in the colonial Taiwanese context specifically, the intelligibility of linguistically aligned representation is associated with instrumental rather than aesthetic value. This has been a primary struggle for colonized Taiwanese intellectuals grappling with their complex identities. They found themselves unable to aestheticize “parochial” local speech, culture, and audience’s reaction to linguistic representation. They found themselves caught between their native language, the Japanese language which carried its own epistemological reframing of the literary Sinitic tradition, and the traditional Chinese writing system that had historically served as a unifying aesthetic force underplaying speech across cultures. Navigating how these competing linguistic and artistic modes of expression compromised their ability to fully embrace any one representation of their cultural identity may prove essential to provide a more nuanced understanding for positioning the Japanese colonization of Taiwan in its historical context.

Conclusion

Scholars of modern Japanese studies have carefully examined the concepts of national language consciousness, logocentrism, and literary modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, scholars interested in the study of constructivism in the context of the Japanese national language have primarily focused on the domestic framework within Japan. The nation-building of Japan's cultural identity is understood as the theology of the production of the modern Japanese language and writing, usually inclining to take on the binary of Sinographic writing and national language.

On the other hand, although scholars in Japanese colonial studies have illuminated the forceful homogenization of internal and external diversities carried out during the construction of the Japanese language, these readings often conflate epistemological reframing with power imbalance and fail to address broader perspectives or engage in cross-cultural analysis. Consequently, assumptions emerge that Japanese colonialism is mere replication of Western colonialism and modernity with compromised processes and results, that ancient China's hegemonic vision colors its development, and that a tidy equation between nation and language serves only egocentric imperialistic and expansionist interests. The domestic-oriented tendency in both modern Japanese studies and colonial scholarship inadvertently reinforces self-obsessed identification formation. It tends to flatten the intricacies of regional and temporal tensions from which alternative narratives emerge and react as necessary, and fails to consider that how "civilization" is understood is contested rather than singularly defined in modern East Asia due to a lingering struggle and tension accumulated from the centuries-long center-peripheral balance made from a subtle comprehension of writing and language.

To gain a deeper insight into the nationalist and colonialist constructions of linguistic identities in East Asia, my work argues for both a temporal and spatial expansion by considering how the significance of language precedence speaks to East Asian literary history and the intra-East Asia comparison where the same legacy of Sinography and the literary Sinitic tradition is shared. The epistemological and cultural challenge through nationalizing language is my focus, which is aimed to providing a nuanced view in understanding Japanese and Taiwanese colonial interaction. I contend arguing the association between nation and language in East Asian colonial contexts needs to tackle the intricacies of regional tensions intertwined with a subtle comprehension of language.

This dissertation aims to address the blind spot in colonial studies by arguing that it is necessary to draw from researchers whose work focuses on premodern and early modern Japanese writing practices. In recent years, researchers focusing on writing in premodern and early modern East Asia have begun exploring the ways in which Sinography-based textual practices do not accord with the current linguistic paradigm. They offer nuanced perspectives that go beyond the traditional equation of nation and language, highlighting that language and culture nonalignment has existed as a principle. This sheds new light on the association between nation and language in East Asian colonial contexts.

These researchers illuminate the underlying causes of the blind spot in colonial studies, which can be attributed to the failure to account for the intricacies of regional tensions intertwined with a subtle comprehension of language. Their work suggests that colonialism may subtly and regretfully serve as a means for both the colonizer and the colonized to assume autonomy, while avoiding foregrounding the geopolitics. I concretize the complexities of regional tensions embedded in a nuanced understanding of language with the framework of “the

first Sinographic sphere” and “the second Sinographic sphere.”

Half of my dissertation explores the complex relationship between writing and language within the Sinographic tradition. The second half aims to situate our understanding of colonial conditions in East Asia within the scope of influence of the literary Sinitic tradition. I focus on three main aspects: the local reluctance to prioritize spoken languages, the emphasis on sensory and affective dimensions over communicative intelligibility, and the delocalized cultural emphasis. By examining these aspects, I investigate how the lingering influence of the literary Sinitic tradition might have destabilized the colonial construction of language-based identities while simultaneously precluding further possibilities for localized development that could have happened. Furthermore, this exploration serves as a mirror to better understand how Japan’s modern and colonial paths were built upon a deep introspection of the internal mechanisms that the literary Sinitic tradition relied on within regional dynamics. It contributes to future investigations of the potential impact of the Japanese language’s internalization of Sinitic characters in the broader East Asian context.

The interpretation of East Asian colonialism, particularly Japanese colonialism, as various encounters of peripheries around the framework of “the first Sinographic sphere” and “the second Sinographic sphere” developed in this work has the potential to contribute to a more dynamic understanding of regional cultural history. Although this work specifically focuses on colonial Taiwan, most of Imperial Japan’s long-term overseas and domestic colonies, including Manchuria, Korea, and Okinawa, held different visions of and interactions with the Literary Sinitic tradition. Notably, the particularity of the Taiwanese colonial condition within imperial Japanese history lies primarily in two aspects: its commencement in the 1890s and its status as the most “Han” culturally dominated space. Despite being located on the Kingdom’s frontier,

most people in colonial-era Taiwan had the least consciousness as “frontier tribes,” even less than the Han-Manchu complex for Manchuria. By unpacking the tension inherent in this distinct colonial context, we can gain a deeper understanding of how the Japanese Empire grappled with deconstructing the literary Sinitic tradition. This analysis allows us to explore the variations in each colony’s relationship with locality, writing, and language, which were subject to the literary Sinitic conventions to varying degrees. Each colony brought unique interactions as a region with this early modern cultural view into its relationship with the Japanese colonizers.

This perspective may also shed new light on the emphasis on literacy in incorporating subjects such as “Indigenous people” and “children,” two symbolic groups who have been traditionally excluded from the writing regime of literary Sinitic. Tying children’s writing with literary expression or allowing “barbarian others” to engage in writing, potentially unthinkable in traditional literary Sinitic, challenges the Sinographic dominance of literacy. In this way, situating these colonial contexts in the era of transition from Literary Sinitic as the paradigm to speech as the mode may contribute to developing a more dynamic understanding of regional cultural history. Examining these dynamics can provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between regional identities, cultural traditions, and colonial influences in East Asia during this period.

Bibliography

I. Primary Materials and Editions

I.I. Historical Newspaper

Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō (Taihoku), 1909–1935

Takamatsu Tokyojirō, “Goraku kyōkyū nikansuru yo no hōfu,” *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), May 16, 1909: Japanese edition, 5.

“Tamsui gikuwan no engeki to kankyaku,” *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), September 26, 1909, Japanese edition, 7.

“*Shina shibai no katto.*” *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), November 25, 1910: Japanese edition, 7.

“Ying Ti Yan Yu” [The Warbling of Orioles and Swallows]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku). April 21, 1912: Chinese edition, 5.

Chen Fu-Quan, “Bai hua wen zhi shi yong yu Taiwan fou” [Is Vernacular Chinese Applicable to Taiwan?]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 17, 1925: Chinese edition, 4.

“*Kinjōhana o soyubeku nanpōkan no shin shukō*” [錦上花を添ゆべく南方館の新趣向]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), April 19, 1935: Japanese edition, 7.

“*Bairenhō o taiwan e amoi no hōjinkan ni hanashi okiru*” [梅蘭芳を台湾へ 厦門の邦人間に話起さる]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), May 24, 1935: Japanese edition, 7.

“Ju jie tai dou Mei Lanfang bo shi ruo de yu Taiwan bo chu yan, yu Ri Hua qin shan ying xiang shi da” [劇界泰斗梅蘭芳博士 若得於臺灣博出演 於日華親善影響實大 If Dr. Mei Lanfang, the Leading Figure in the Theater World, Could Perform in Taiwan, It Would Have a Significant Impact on the Friendship Between Japan and China]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), May 31, 1935: Chinese edition, 4.

“*Bairenhō no amoi iki kimareba taihaku no koro*” [梅蘭芳の厦門行き決まれば台博の頃]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), June 6, 1935: Japanese edition, 2.

“Jōen ga ayabumareru gei-cya no rebyūgeki (kanjin no yokyōhi yosan no taihan ga kyōgeki shōhei ni michiterare)” [上演が危ぶまれる 藝姐のレビュー劇 (肝腎の餘興費予算の大半が 京劇招聘にみち充ちてられ)]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 5, 1935: Japanese edition, 7.

“Shinsaichi yori” [震災地より]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 18, 1935: Japanese edition, 7.

“Saïdo no shinsai ni ryō heika goshinnen” [再度の震災に両陛下御軫念]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 18, 1935: Japanese edition, 7.

“Nanpōkan shutsuen no kyōgeki ukeoisha kimeru” [南方館出演の京劇請負者決める]. *Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpō* (Taihoku), July 18, 1935: Japanese edition, 7.

Taiwan Minpō, 1924–1927

Lin Gengyu, “Dui zai taiwan yanjiu baihuawen de wo jian” [My Opinions Regarding Studying Vernacular Chinese in Taiwan]. *Taiwan Minpō* (Tokyo) 18, March 11, 1924: 9.

Qian Fei, “Taiwan minbao zenme buyong wenyanwen ne” [Why Does Not Taiwan Minpō Use Literary Sinitic?], *Taiwan Minpō* (Tokyo) 36, November 1, 1924: 14.

Zhang Wo-jun, “Xinwenxue yundong de yi yi” [The Significance of New Literature Movement]. *Taiwan Minpō* (Tokyo) 67, August 26, 1925: 20.

“Gezaiju de liu bi” [Pernicious Impacts of Local Language Operas]. *Taiwan Minpō* (Taihoku) 165, July 10, 1927: 14.

“Gezaixi zenyang yaojin” [Why Should Gezaixi be Banned]. *Taiwan Minpō* (Taihoku) 139, January 9, 1927: 4–5.

I.II. Historical Magazines and Bulletins

Taiwan dogo sōshi, 1899–1901.

Taiwan go, 1901.

Taiwan gogaku zasshi, 1902–1903.

Engeki tsūshin: *Taiwan engekikyōhō* (Taihoku), October 1942–March 1944.

Higashikata Takayoshi. “Taiwan shūzoku–taiwan engeki.” *Taiwan jipō*, no. 7 (July 1936): 24–28.

Inō Kanori. “*Taiwan no Kanjin ni okonawaruru engeki*.” *Tōkyō Jinruigakkai Zasshi* 24, no. 274 (1909): 143–148.

Isakawa Genichirō. “Shukushi,” *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, no. 1 (December 1899): 5.

Kimura Tadashi. “Shukushi.” *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, no. 1 (December 1899): 1.

Kua Ting-Thiu, “Taiwan no geki ni tsuite,” *Taiwan kyōiku*, no.133 (1913): 57–62.

Sasagi Yasugorō. “Taiwan dogo sōshi hakkō shukushi.” *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, no.1 (December 1899): 3.

Taiwan Seigeki Company. Advertisement. *Go en*: Taiwan gogaku zasshi 3, no. 9 (1910).

Uchigawa Daigo. “Taiwan zasshi oboe sho.” *Aishō*, no. 2 (August 1934): 21–37.

Watanabe Masashi. “Dogo gakushū no go nakan.” *Taiwan dogo sōshi*, no. 1 (December 1897): 9.

———. “Haiyū to engeki.” *Taiwan kanshū kiji*, no. 1 (1901): 23–30.

Zhang Wei-Xian, “Wode yanju huiyi” [My memory about theater], *Taipei wenwu* [Taipei Cultural Artefact] 3, no.2 (1954): 105–113.

I.III. Historical Published Works

Andō Motokazu ed. *Taiwan taikan*. Tokyo: Nihon Gōdō Tsūshinsha, 1932.

Chamberlain, Basil Hall. *Essay in Aid of a Grammar and Dictionary of the Luchuan Language*. Yokohama: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd., 1895.

Feng Menglong. “Yangbalao Yueguo Qifeng” [The Strange Encounter of Old Eight Yang in the Country of Yue]. In *Yushi Mingyan* [Illustrious Words to Instruct the World]. Vol. 18. 1624. Chinese Text Project. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=696452>. Accessed June 9, 2024.

———. *Stories Old and New: A Ming Dynasty Collection*. Trans. by Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.

Hamada Hidesaburō, ed. *Taiwan engeki no genjō*. Tōkyō: Tansei Shobō, 1943.

Higashikata Takayoshi. *Taiwan shūzoku*. Taihoku: Dōjin Kenkyūkai, 1942.

Inō Kanori. *Sekai ni okeru Taiwan no ichi*. Tokyo: Hayashi Shōbō, 1899.

———. *Taiwan shi*. Tokyo: Bungaku sha, 1902.

———. *Taiwan bunkashi*. Tōkyō: Tōkō Shoin, 1928.

Isawa Shūji and Ōya Tōru eds., *Nisshin jion kan*. Tokyo: Namiki Zendō, 1895.

———. *Shinkoku kanwa inkyō onji kaisetsu sho: Shiwa Ōyō*. Tokyo: Rakuseisha, 1901.

———. *Shinago seion hatsubi*. Tokyo: Rakuseisha, 1915.

Kataoka Iwao. *Taiwan fūzoku shi*. Taihoku: Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpōsha, 1921.

- Mackay, George Leslie. *From Far Formosa. The Island, Its People, and Missions / by George Leslie Mackay*. Edited by J. A. (James Alexander) Macdonald. New York: F.H. Revell, 1895.
- Mao, Xianshu, *Yun xue tong zhi* [*General Guide to Rhymeology*]. Jinan: Qi Lu shu she, 1997.
- Matsushima Gō, Hiroshi Satō, and George Leslie Mackay. *Taiwan jijō*. Tokyo: Shunyōdō, 1897.
- Miyara Tōsō. *Miyara Tōsō zenshū 8: Yaeyama goi*. Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1980 [1930].
- Nakajima Toshirō, ed. *Yi jiu san ling nian dai Taiwan xiang tu wen xue lun zhan zi liao hui bian* [A Compiled Collection of Materials from the 1930s Taiwan Nativist Literature Debate]. Kaohsiung: Chun hui, 2003.
- . *Nihon tōchiki Taiwan bungaku kenkyū josetsu*. Tōkyō: Ryokuin Shobō, 2004.
- , Kawahara Isao, and Shimomura Sakujirō, eds. *Nihon tōchiki Taiwan bungaku bungei hyōronshū*. Volume 1–5. Tōkyō: Ryokuin Shobō, 2001.
- . *Taiwan gikyoku kyakuhonshū*. Tōkyō: Ryokuin Shobō, 2003.
- Ng Ong-seng [Huang Wangcheng]. *Huang Wangcheng xian sheng ri ji* [*The diary of Ng Ong-seng*]. Edited by Xueji Xu. Taipei: Zhong yang yan jiu yuan Taiwan shi yan jiu suo, 2008.
- Ogawa Naoyoshi, “Kana tsukai ni tsuite chō.” *Kokugo kenkyukai kaihō*, no. 1 (1900): 8–37.
- . *Ogawa Naoyoshi ronbunshū: Nihon tōchi jidai ni okeru Taiwan shogengo kenkyū*. Edited by Lin Chumei. Tōkyō: Sangensha, 2012.
- Onō Tatsu (Onō Chozan), ed. *Shiritsuron*. In *Nihon shiwa sōsho*, edited by Ikeda Roshū. Vol. 10. Tokyo: Bunkaidō Shoten, [1883] 1920. 415–455.
- Shisei Shijisshūnen Kinen Taiwan Hakurankai Kyōsankai ed. *Shisei Shijisshūnen Kinen Taiwan Hakurankai Kyōsankai shi*. Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 2012.
- . *Shisei Shijisshūnen Kinen Taiwan Hakurankai shashinchō*. Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 2012.
- Sugi Fusanosuke. *Nittai kaiwa taizen*. Kōetsu by Ogawa Naoyoshi. Taihoku: Shinkōdō, 1920.
- Taiwan Sōtokufu Minseikyoku Gakumubu, ed. *Taiwan Jūgoon to jibo shōka*. Taihoku: Taiwan Sōtokufu Minseikyoku Gakumubu, 1896.
- . *Nittai shōjiten*. Taihoku: Taiwan Sōtokufu Minseibu Gakumubu, 1898.
- . *Kokumin yomiho sanshō: Kanatsukaihō*. Taihoku: Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpōsha, 1902.
- Takeuchi Sadayoshi. *Taiwan*. Taihoku: Taiwan Nichinichi Shinpōsha, 1914.

Tokieda Motoki. *Kokugogakushi*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1932.

———. *Kokugogaku genron: Gengo kateisetsu no seiritsu to sono tenkai*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1941.

Tsubakimoto Giichi, *Taiwan Taikan*. Osaka: Ōsaka yagō shoten, 1923.

Ueda Kazutoshi, and Toshiaki Yasuda. *Kokugo no tame*. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2011.

Wu Wenxing, Xu Peixian, Cai Jindang, Nakata Toshio, and Tomita Tetsu. *Rizhi shiqi Taiwan gongxuexiao yu guominxuexiao guoyu duben* [National Language Textbooks for Public Schools and Citizen Schools in Taiwan during the Japanese Rule]. Taipei: SMC Publishing, 2003.

Xu Yaxiang, ed. *Taiwan Ri ri xin bao yu Tainan xin bao xi qu zi liao xuan bian* [Selected Theatrical Materials from the *Taiwan Daily News* and *Tainan Daily News*]. Taipei: Yu zhou chu ban she, 2001.

———, ed. *Shi shi yu quan shi: Ri zhi shi qi Taiwan bao kan xi qu zi liao xuan du* [Historical Facts and Interpretations: Selected Readings of Theatrical Materials from Taiwanese Newspapers and Periodicals during the Japanese Colonial Period]. Yilan: Guo li chuan tong yi shu zhong xin, 2006.

Xue Jun (Setsu Shun). *Riben guo kao liu* [A Brief History of Japan] (Nihonkoku kōryaku). 1523. Waseda University Library Digital Collection. Accessed June 12, 2024. https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ru03/ru03_03352/index.html.

———. *Riben guo kao liu* [A Brief History of Japan] (Nihonkoku kōryaku). 1523. Chinese Text Project. Accessed June 12, 2024. <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=143765>.

Yamane Yūzō. *Taiwan minzokusei hyakudan*. Taihoku: Sugita Shoten, 1930.

Yano Ryūkei. *Nihon buntai mōji shinron*. Tokyo: Hōchisha, 1886.

II. Secondary Scholarship

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006.

Ariga, Chieko. “The Playful Gloss. *Rubi* in Japanese Literature.” *Monumenta Nipponica* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 309–35.

Bachner, Andrea. *Beyond Sinology: Chinese Writing and the Scripts of Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

Ban Toshinori. *Nihon ni okeru chūgoku gikyoku jiyūō no kisoteki kenkyū: Edo-ki kara Meiji-ki wo chūshin ni*. PhD diss., Waseda University, 2015.

- Barclay, Paul D. "An Historian among the Anthropologists: The Inō Kanori Revival and the Legacy of Japanese Colonial Ethnography in Taiwan." *Japanese Studies* 21, no. 2 (2001): 117–136.
- . "Peddling Postcards and Selling Empire: Image-Making in Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule." In *Statecraft and Spectacle in East Asia*. Edited by Adam Clulow. London: Routledge, 2013. 78–107.
- . Barclay, Paul D. "Playing the Race Card in Japanese-Governed Taiwan: Or, Anthropometric Photographs as 'Shape-Shifting Jokers.'" In *The Affect of Difference: Representations of Race in East Asian Empire*. Edited by Christopher P Hanscom and Dennis C. Washburn. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016. 38–80.
- . *Outcasts of Empire: Japan's Rule on Taiwan's "Savage Border," 1874–1945*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017.
- Beecroft, Alexander. *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day*. London: Verso, 2015.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bourdagh, Michael. *Sayonara Amerika, Sayonara Nippon: A Geopolitical Prehistory of J-Pop*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- ed. *The Linguistic Turn in Contemporary Japanese Literary Studies: Politics, Language, Textuality*. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2010.
- Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Branner, David Prager, ed. *The Chinese Rime Tables: Linguistic Philosophy and Historical-Comparative Phonology*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Pub., 2006.
- Chan, Tak-hung Leo, ed. *One into Many: Translation and the Dissemination of Classical Chinese Literature*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003.
- Chang, Sung-sheng Yvonne, Michelle Mi-Hsi Yeh, and Mingru Fan, eds. *The Columbia Sourcebook of Literary Taiwan*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Chen Pei-feng. "Dōka" no dōshō imu: *Nihon tōchika Taiwan no kokugo kyōikushi saikō*. Tokyo: Sangensha, 2001.
- . *Nihon tōchi to shokuminchi kanbun: Taiwan ni okeru kanbun no kyōkai to sōzō*. Tokyo: Sangensha, 2012.

- . “Leisi, chayi he hunza: Chongxin sikao Taiwan de Hanwen he Jindai Wenxue” [Similarity, Difference and Hybridity: Rethinking Kambun and Modern Literature in Taiwan]. *Chung-Wai Literary Quarterly* 44, no.1 (March 2015): 145–51.
- Chiu, Kun-Liang. *Jiuju yu xinju: Rizhi shiqi Taiwan xiju zhi yanjiu, 1895–1945* [Research on Taiwanese Theater during the Japanese Governance, 1895–1945: Old Drama and New Drama], Taipei: Zi li wanbao shewen huachu ban bu, 1992.
- . “Cong xingguang dao zhongsheng: Zhang Weixian xinju shengya ji qi kunjing” [From Starlight to Bell Chimes: Zhang Weixian’s New Drama Career and Its Predicaments]. *Xiju Yanjiu* [Journal of Theater Studies], no. 20 (2017): 39–64.
- . “Movement of the Western Modern Drama in Taiwan and Its Modernity.” In *Modernization of Asian Theatres: Process and Tradition*. Edited by Yasushi Yagata and Ravi Chaturvedi. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019. 41–62.
- Chow, Kai-wing. “Narrating Nation, Race, and National Culture: Imagining the Hanzu Identity in Modern China.” In *Constructing Nationhood in Modern East Asia*. Edited by Kai-wing Chow, Kevin Doak, and Poshek Fu. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001.
- Chow, Rey. *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- . *Entanglements, or Transmedial Thinking about Capture*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Clark, Paul H. *The Kokugo Revolution: Education, Identity, and Language Policy in Imperial Japan*. Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2009.
- Clements, Rebekah. *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Crossley, Pamela Kyle. “Thinking about Ethnicity in Early Modern China.” *Late Imperial China* 11, no. 2 (June 1990): 1–35.
- . *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Crossley, Pamela Kyle, Helen F. Siu, Donald S. Sutton, eds. *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
- Dawley, Evan. *Becoming Taiwanese: Ethnogenesis in a Colonial City, 1880s to 1950s*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2019.
- DeFrancis, John. *The Chinese Language: Fact and Fantasy*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984.

- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context." In *Limited Inc.* Trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman and Samuel Weber. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1988. 1–22.
- Doak, Kevin. "What Is a Nation and Who Belongs? National Narratives and the Ethnic Imagination in Twentieth-Century Japan." *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 2 (1997): 283–309.
- . *A History of Nationalism in Modern Japan: Placing the People*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Duus, Peter, Myers, Ramon H. and Peattie, Mark R., eds. *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Duthie, Torquil. *Man'yōshū and the Imperial Imagination in Early Japan*. Boston: Brill, 2014.
- Emmerich, Michael. *The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Elman, Benjamin, ed. *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000–1919*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014.
- Errington, James Joseph. *Linguistics in a Colonial World: A Story of Language, Meaning, and Power*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
- Eskildsen, Robert. *Transforming Empire in Japan and East Asia: The Taiwan Expedition and the Birth of Japanese Imperialism*. New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2019.
- Finnegan, Ruth. "How Oral Is Oral Literature?" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 37, no.1 (1974): 52–64.
- Fraleigh, Matthew. "At the Borders of Chinese Literature." In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Chinese Literatures*. Edited by Carlos Rojas and Andrea Bachner. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 457–476.
- Fogel, Joshua A., ed. *Sagacious Monks and Bloodthirsty Warriors: Chinese Views of Japan in the Ming-Qing Period*. Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2002.
- . *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- , and Matthew Fraleigh, eds. *Sino-Japanese Reflections: Literary and Cultural Interactions between China and Japan in Early Modernity*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022.
- Fujii Shōzō. *Taiwan bungaku kono hyakunen*. Tokyo: Tōhō Shoten, 1998.

- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Crow's Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1998.
- Geary, Patrick J. *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- . *Language & Power in the Early Middle Ages*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2013.
- . *Zhong shi ji zao qi de yu yan yu quan li* [Language and Power in the Early Middle Ages]. Trans. by Linhai Liu. Shanghai: Zhong xi shu ju, 2019.
- Gerow, Aaron A. *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship, 1895–1925*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
- Giorgio, Francesco, and Bianca Basciano. *Chinese Linguistics: An Introduction*. Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2021.
- Goldman, Andrea. *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770–1900*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Guy, Nancy. “The Appreciation of Chinese Opera: A Reply to Ching-Hsi Perng.” *Asian Theatre Journal* 7, no. 2 (1990): 254–59.
- . *Peking Opera and Politics in Taiwan*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.
- Goldstein, Joshua. *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-Creation of Peking Opera, 1870–1937*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Handel, Zev. *Sinography: The Borrowing and Adaptation of the Chinese Script*. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Hanscom, Christopher P., and Dennis C. Washburn, eds. *The Affect of Difference: Representations of Race in East Asian Empire*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016.
- Heylen, Ann. *Japanese Models, Chinese Culture and the Dilemma of Taiwanese Language Reform*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012.
- Higuchi Yasushi, “Ryōtai shoki no Taiwango kyōgaku Part 1.” *Bungakubu Kiyō = Bulletin of the Faculty of Language and Literature* 25, no. 2 (2012): 23–40.
- . “Rizhi shidai chuqi dutai riren yanzhong de taiwanhua” [The Taiwan Language Observed by Japanese Voyagers to Taiwan in the Early Stages of the Japanese Colonial Period]. *Taiwan Wenxue Yanjiu* [Taiwanese Literature Studies], no. 8 (June 2015): 43–96. (In Japanese)

- Hilgers, Mathieu, and Éric Mangez. *Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.
- Hirada Shoji. "Me no bungaku kakumei, mimi no bungaku kakumei: Ichikyūnijyu nendai chūgoku ni okeru chōkaku media to 'kokugo' no jikken." *Chūgoku Bungakuhō*, no. 58 (1999): 75–114.
- Hotta-Lister, Ayako. *The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910: Gateway to the Island Empire of the East*. Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library, 1999.
- , and Ian Nish, eds. *Commerce and Culture at the 1910 Japan-British Exhibition: Centenary Perspectives*. Leiden: Global Oriental, 2012.
- Hsieh, Hsiao-Mei. *Across the Strait: History, Performance and Gezaixi in China and Taiwan*. Ph. D. Diss., Northwestern University, 2008.
- Huang Shichung. "Cong Mori Kainan, Kōda Rohan, Sasakawa Rinpū dao Wang Guowei—Ribei Mingzhi shiqi (1869–1912) de Zhongguo xiju yanjiu kaocha" [From Mori Kainan, Kōda Rohan, Sasakawa Rinpū to Wang Guowei: A Study of Chinese Drama Research in Japan's Meiji Period (1868–1912)]. *Xiju Yanjiu* [Journal of Theater Studies] 4 (July 2009): 155–194.
- . "Mori Kainan, Kōda Rohan, Sasakawa Rinpū kara Ōu Kokui e (1) Nihon Meiji jiki (1868–1911) no Chūgoku gikyoku kenkyū kōsatsu." *Engeki Eizōgaku*, no. 2 (2009): 207–228.
- . "Mori Kainan, Kōda Rohan, Sasakawa Rinpū kara Ōu Kokui e (2) Nihon Meiji jiki (1868–1911) no Chūgoku gikyoku kenkyū kōsatsu." *Engeki Eizōgaku*, no. 2 (2010): 155–166.
- . "Mori Kainan, Kōda Rohan, Sasakawa Rinpū kara Ōu Kokui e (3) Nihon Meiji jiki (1868–1911) no Chūgoku gikyoku kenkyū kōsatsu." *Engeki Eizōgaku*, no. 2 (2011): 163–174.
- Hyōdō Hiromi. *"Koe" no kokumin kokka Nihon*. Tokyo: Nippon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 2000.
- . *Monogatari, ōrariti, kyōdōtai: Shin katarimono josetsu*. Tokyo: Hitsuji Shobō, 2002.
- . *Enjirareta kindai: "Kokumin" no shintai to pafōmansu*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005.
- Ienaga, Saburō. *The Pacific War, 1931–1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan's Role in World War II*. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010.
- Inoue Yoshie. "Nihon tōchi de umareta kawakami no engeki—"taiwanonitaiji," "osero," "seibantōbatsu." *Journal of Kibi International University, Department of Sociology*, no.9 (2009): 63–72.

- Izumi Tsukasa. “Nihon tōchiki Taiwan no chōheisei dōnyuji ni shōjita ‘kokugo nōryoku mondai: Kokugo fukaisha’ no chōhei ni kansuru ‘Taiwan jihō’ ‘Shinkensetsu’ no kiji o chūshin ni.” *Nihongo to Nihongo Kyōiku*, no. 39 (March 2011): 123–144.
- . “Nihon tōchiki Taiwan no kōminka undō ni okeru kokugo = Nihongo no ichizuke.” *Nihongo to Nihongo Kyōiku*, no. 41 (March 2013): 109–123.
- . “Kokugo” to guntai: nihon tōchiki taiwan ni okeru ‘kōmin bungaku’ o chūshin ni.” *Minshūshi Kenkyū*, no. 91 (July 2016): 5–19.
- . “‘Bungaku’ to ‘jyūken’: Nihon tōchiki Taiwan no Nihongo = kokugo jyūgyō kara hamidasumono.” *Showa Bungaku Kenkyū*, no. 85 (2023): 132–146.
- Joseph, John E. *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Jones, Alisa. “Triangulating Identity: Japan’s Place in Taiwan’s Textbooks.” In *Imagining Japan in Postwar East Asia*. Edited by Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu, and Edward Vickers. London, New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Kang, Yin-Chen. *The Formation of Taiwanese Classical Theatre, 1895–1937*. Ph.D. diss., SOAS University of London, 2013.
- Kaske, Elizabeth. *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Karatani, Kōjin. *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Kin Bunkyō. *Kanbun to higashi ajia: kundoku no bunkaken*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010.
- , ed. *Kanji o tsukatta bunka wa dō hirogatte ita no ka: Higashi Ajia no kanji kanbun bunkaken*. Tokyo: Bungaku Tsūshin, 2021.
- . *Literary Sinitic and East Asia: A Cultural Sphere of Vernacular Reading*. Edited by Ross King. Trans. by Ross King, Marjorie Burge, Si Nae Park, Alexey Lushchenko, and Mina Hattori. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- King, Ross. “Editor’s Preface: Vernacular Reading in the Sinographic Cosmopolis.” In *Literary Sinitic and East Asia: A Cultural Sphere of Vernacular Reading*. Edited by Ross King. Leiden: Brill, 2021. ix–xl.
- and Christina Laffin. “Editors’ Preface: Saitō Mareshi, the ‘Literary Sinitic Context,’ and Literary Modernity in the Former Sinographic Cosmopolis.” In *Kanbunmyaku: The Literary Sinitic Context and the Birth of Modern Japanese Language and Literature*. Edited and trans. by Ross King and Christina Laffin. Leiden: Brill, 2020. xxi–xxii.

- , ed. *Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in the World of Wen: Reading Sheldon Pollock from the Sinographic Cosmopolis*. Leiden: Brill, 2023.
- Kleeman, Faye Yuan. *Under an Imperial Sun: Japanese Colonial Literature of Taiwan and the South*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003.
- . *In Transit: The Formation of the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014.
- Koerner, E.F.K. *Toward a Historiography of Linguistics: Selected Essays*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1978.
- Koketsu, Satoko. “Japanese Diplomacy and the Sino-Korean Suzerain-Vassal Relationship before and after the First Sino-Japanese War.” In *A World History of Suzerainty: A Modern History of East and West Asia and Translated Concepts*. Edited by Takashi Okamoto. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 2019. 151–73.
- Komori Yōichi. *Nihongo no kindai*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000.
- , Kensuke Kōno, and Osamu Takahashi. *Media, hyōshō, ideorogī: Meiji sanjūnendai no bunka kenkyū*. Tōkyō: Ozawa Shoten, 1997.
- Konno Shinji. *Furigana no rekishi*. Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2009.
- . *Hyakunenmae no Nihongo: kakikotoba ga yureta jida*. Tokyo: Kabushiki Kaisha Iwanami Shoten, 2012.
- . *Bōru hyōshibon to Meiji no Nihongo*. Kamakura: Minato no Hito, 2012.
- . *Kanji kara mita Nihongo no rekishi*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2013.
- . *Nihongo no kindai: Hazusareta kango*. Tokyo: Kabushiki Kaisha Chikuma Shobō, 2014.
- . *Kanazukai no rekishi: Nihongo o kaku to iu koto*. Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2014.
- . *Kanji to katakana to hiragana: Nihongo hyōki no rekishi*. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2017.
- . *Tekisuto no henyō: Dōtai to shite no tekisuto*. Tokyo: Musashino Shoin, 2021.
- Kornicki, Peter. *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Koyasu Nobukuni. *Kanjiron: Fukahi no tasha*. Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2003.
- Kunstler, Mieczyslaw Jerzy. *The Sinitic Languages: A Contribution to Sinological Linguistics*. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019.

- Kyōto Daigaku Bungakubu Kokugogaku Kokubungaku Kenkyūshitsu, ed. *Nihon kigo no kenkyū*. Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Kokubun Gakkai, 1965.
- Lee, Yeounsuk. *The Ideology of Kokugo: Nationalizing Language in Modern Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017.
- Levenson, Joseph. "The Humanistic Disciplines: Will Sinology Do?" *Journal of Asian Studies* 23, no. 4 (1964): 507–512.
- Levy, Indra A. *Sirens of the Western Shore: Westernesque Women and Translation on Modern Japanese Literature*. New York: Columbia University, 2006.
- Li, David C. S., Reijiro Aoyama, and Tak-sum Wong. "Preface." In *Brush Conversation in the Sinographic Cosmopolis: Interactional Cross-border Communication Using Literary Sinitic in Early Modern East Asia*. Edited by David C. S. Li, Reijiro Aoyama, and Tak-sum Wong. London: Routledge, 2022. xxiii–xxvii.
- Li Huei-Mian, *Zhong yuan yin yun jian shi* [Exegesis of *Rhymes of the Central Plain*]. Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2016.
- Li Shang-Lin. "Kanji, Taiwango, soshite Taiwan wabun—Shokuminchi Taiwan ni okeru Taiwan wabun undō ni taisuru saikōsatsu." *Kotoba to Shakai*, no. 9 (2005): 176–200.
- Liao, Ping-Hui, and David Der-Wei Wang. *Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1895–1945: History, Culture, Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Liu, Lydia He. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- Lurie, David. "Language, Writing, and Disciplinarity in the Critique of the 'Ideographic Myth': Some Proleptical Remarks." *Language & Communication* 26, no. 3–4 (July 2006): 250–69.
- . *Realms of Literacy: Early Japan and the History of Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011.
- Maeda Ai, *Kindai dokusha no seiritsu*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1989.
- . *Tekusuto no yūtopia*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1990.
- . *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*. Edited by James A. Fujii. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Mason, Michelle M. and Helen J. S. Lee, ed. *Reading Colonial Japan: Text, Context, and Critique*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Matisoff, James. "On Megalocomparison." *Language* 66, no. 1, (1990): 106–20.
- Matsuda Kyōko. *Teikoku no shisen: Hakurankai to ibunka hyōshō*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003.

- . “Inō Kanori’s ‘History’ of Taiwan: Colonial Ethnology, the Civilizing Mission and Struggles for Survival in East Asia. *History and Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (2003): 179–196.
- . *Teikoku no shikō: Nihon “Teikoku” to Taiwan genjūmin*. Tokyo: Yūshisha, 2014.
- Matsumoto Sannosuke. *Kindai Nihon no Chūgoku ninshiki: Tokugawaki jugaku kara Tōa kyōdōtairon made*. Tokyo: Ibunsha, 2011.
- Matsunaga Masayoshi. “Taiwango undokaku kaki.” *The Hitotsubashi Review* 124, no. 3 (September 2000): 353–372.
- . “Taiwango no hyōju mondai.” *The Hitotsubashi Review* 130, no. 3 (September 2003): 291–302.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Mine Takashi. *Teikoku Gekijō kaimaku: Kyō wa Teigeki asu wa Mitsukoshi*. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1996.
- Mitchell, Timothy. “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order.” In *Grasping the World: The Idea of Musuem*. Edited by Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago. London: Routledge, 2004. 442–460.
- Miura Kanō. *Meiji no Kangaku*. Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1998.
- Mutsu, Hirokichi. *The British Press and the Japan-British Exhibition of 1910*. Victoria, Australia: Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies, the University of Melbourne, 2001.
- Nakamura Shunsaku. *Edo Jukyō to kindai no “chi.”* Tokyo: Perikansha, 2002.
- . *Shisōshi no naka no Nihongo: Kundoku, hon’yaku, kokugo*. Tokyo: Bensei shuppan, 2017.
- . *Soraigaku no shisōken*. Tokyo: Perikansha, 2019.
- , Ichiki Tsuyuhiko, Tajiri Yūichirō, and Maeda Tsutomu, eds. *“Kundoku” ron: Higashi Ajia kanbun sekai to Nihongo*. Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2008.
- . *Zoku “Kundoku” ron: Higashi Ajia kanbun sekai no keisei*. Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2010.
- Ogino Kaoru. *Inō Kanori: Nenpu, shiryō, shoshi*. Tōno: Tōno Monogatari Kenkyūjo, 1998.
- Oguma, Eiji. *Tan’itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: “Nihonjin” no jigazō no keifu*. Tokyo: Shin’yōsha, 1995.
- . *“Nihonjin” no kyōkai: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, Chōsen, shokuminchi shihai kara fukki undō made*. Tokyo: Shin’yōsha, 1998.

- Oh, Young Kyun. *Engraving Virtue: The Printing History of a Premodern Korean Moral Primer*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Okamoto Makiko. “Nippon tōchi zenhanki taiwan no kanryō soshiki niokeru tsūyaku ikusei to zasshi ‘go en’: 1910–1920 nendai o chūshin ni.” *Shakai Kagaku* 42, no. 2–3 (2012): 103–44.
- . “Shokumichi tōchi shoki taiwan niokeru hoōin tsūyaku nojinji—seido sekkei ninyō jōjyō ryūdōsei.” *Shakai Kagaku* 48, no. 4 (2019): 79–106.
- Ōki Yasushi. *Fū Bōryū “Sanka” no kenkyū: Chūgoku Mindai no tsūzoku kayō*. Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 2003.
- . *Fū Bōryō to Minmatsu zokubungaku*. Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, 2018.
- Oesterreicher, Wulf. “Types of Orality in Text.” In *Written Voices, Spoken Signs: Tradition, Performance, and the Epic Text*. Edited by Egbert J Bakker, and Ahuvia Kahane. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1997. 190–214.
- Osa Shizue. “Nisshin sensō ni okeru ‘kanji’ mondai no tenkai: Teikoku kyōiku gembun-itchi undō to Kangakusha konsinkai wo megutte.” *Historia: Journal of Osaka Historical Association*, no. 136 (1992): 1–22.
- . *Kindai Nihon to kokugo nashonarizumu*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1998.
- . “Rinkaiten toshite no kanji, kangaku: Teikoku no uchinaru ‘tasha’ no yukue.” *Nihon Shi Kenkyū*, no. 462 (2001): 78–117.
- Owen, Stephen. *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*. Boston: Harvard University Asia Center, 1992.
- Pan Wei-Hsin. “Rizhi shiqi riren taiyu shuxie yu xiangzhengxing quanli gua xi zhi yanjiu” [Examples of Taiwanese orthographic writings and their symbolic representations from the Japanese colonial period]. Ph.D. diss., Taiwan Normal University, 2020.
- Pak Mi-jōng, and Rei Hasegawa, eds. *Nihon Teikoku no hyōshō: Seisei, kioku, keishō*. Tokyo: Enishi Shobō, 2016.
- Parezo, Nancy J, and Don D Fowler. *Anthropology Goes to the Fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.
- Phillipson, Robert. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- . “Realities and Myths of Linguistic Imperialism.” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 18, no. 3 (1997): 238–48.
- Pines, Yuri. “‘The One That Pervades the All’ in Ancient Chinese Political Thought: The Origins

- of ‘The Great Unity’ Paradigm.” *T’oung Pao* 86, no. 4/5 (2000): 280–324.
- Price, Gareth. *Language, Society, and the State: From Colonization to Globalization in Taiwan*. Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2019.
- Reischauer, Edwin. “The Sinic World in Perspective.” *Foreign Affairs* 52, no. 2 (1974): 341–48.
- Rogers, Henry. *Writing Systems: A Linguistic Approach*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Saitō Mareshi. *Kanbunmyaku no kindai: Shinmatsu=Meiji no bungakuken*. Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2005.
- . *Kanbunmyaku to kindai Nihon: Mō hitotsu no kotoba no sekai*. Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 2007.
- . “‘Dōbun’ no poritikkusu.” *Bungaku* 10, no. 6 (2009): 38–48.
- . *Kanji sekai no chihei: Watashitachi ni totte moji to wa nani ka*. Tokyo: Kabushiki Kaisha Shinchōsha, 2014.
- . *Kanbun sutairu*. Tokyo: Hatori Shoten, 2010.
- . *Kanbunmyaku: The Literary Sinitic Context and the Birth of Modern Japanese Language and Literature*. Edited and trans. by Ross King and Christina Laffin. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- Sakai, Naoki. *Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- . *Translation and Subjectivity: On “Japan” and Cultural Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Sand, Jordan. “Subaltern Imperialists: the New Historiography of the Japanese Empire.” *Past & Present* 225 no. 1 (2014): 273–288.
- Satō Yumi, Watanabe Sōsuke, “Senzen no taiwan chōsen ryūgakusei nikansuru tōkei shiryō nitsuite.” In *Shokuminchi kyōiku taiken no kioku*. Edited by Nihon Shokuminchi Kyōikushi Kenkyūkai Un’ei Iinkai. Tokyo: Kōseisha, 2005. 82–99.
- Schirokauer, Conrad, David Lurie, and Suzanne Gay, eds. *A Brief History of Japanese Civilization*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2012.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove, and Robert Phillipson. “Linguicide and linguisticism.” In *Kontaktlinguistik. Contact Linguistics. Linguistique de contact. Ein Internationales Handbuch zeitgenössiger Forschung* [An International Handbook of Contemporary Research. Manuel international des recherches contemporaines], no. 1 (1996): 667–675.

- Samuels, Ellen Jean. *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.
- Shang, Wei. "Writing and Speech: Rethinking the Issue of Vernaculars in Early Modern China." In *Rethinking East Asian Languages, Vernaculars, and Literacies, 1000–1919*. Edited by Benjamin Elman. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014. 254–301.
- Shih Wan-Shun, "Chuanshang yinerlang de aoseluo yu Taiwan zhengju—"zhengju" zhuzhang shidi diaocha yu wutai zaixian" [Kawakami Otojiro's "Othello" and Taiwan Seigeki, the Field Survey for "Othello" and its Representation on Stage], *Taipei Theatre Journal* 8 (2008): 7–30.
- . Shih Wan-Shun, "Zhimindi ban xinpaiju de chuang cheng—Taiwan zhengju" [Creating the Colonial-versioned Shinpa Drama—The Aesthetics and Politics of Taiwan *Seigeki*], *Taipei Theatre Journal* 12 (2010): 35–71.
- . "Banyan 'Taiwan': Rizhi shiqi Taiwan de juchang, xiandaihua yu zhuti xinggou (1895–1945)" [*Staging "Taiwan": Theatre, Modernization, and Subjectivity Formation of Taiwan during the Japanese Colonial Period (1895–1945)*], Ph.D. Diss., Taipei National University of the Arts, 2010.
- . "Shokuminchi niokeru engeki to kanshū: Taiwango tsūzoku engeki no kōki o chūshin ni." Trans. by Kondō Mitsuo, *Gengo Shakai*, no.7 (2013): 63–83.
- Shimazaki, Satoko. "Fantastic Histories: *The Battles of Coxinga* and the Preservation of Ming in Japan." *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 9, no. 1 (2015): 17–53.
- . *Edo Kabuki in Transition: From the Worlds of the Samurai to the Vengeful Female Ghost*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.
- Shimizu, Akitoshi. "Colonialism and the Development of Modern Anthropology in Modern Japan." In *Anthropology and Colonialism in Asia and Oceania*. Edited by Jan van Bremen and Akitoshi Shimizu. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999. 115–171.
- Shimoda, Hikaru. "Tongues-Tied: The Making of a 'National Language' and the Discovery of Dialects in Meiji Japan." *American Historical Review* 115, no. 3 (June 2010): 714–731.
- South, Coblin, W. "Marginalia on Two Translations of the 'Qieyun' Preface." *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 24, no. 1 (1996): 85–97.
- . "A Brief History of Mandarin." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120, no. 4 (2000): 537–52.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Starr, Frederick. *The Ainu Group at the Saint Louis Exposition*. Chicago: The Open Court Pub. Co., 1904.

- Steininger, Brian. *Chinese Literary Forms in Heian Japan: Poetics and Practice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017.
- Stock, Brian. *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Suzuki Toshiyuki. *Kinsei dokusha to sono yukue: Dokusho to shoseki ryūtsū no kinsei, kindai*. Shohan. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2017.
- Suzuki Yoshisato. *Tsukurareta Nihongo, gengo to iu kyokō: “Kokugo” kyōiku no shitekita koto*. Tokyo: Yūbun Shoin, 2003.
- Tai, Eika. “Kokugo and Colonial Education in Taiwan.” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 7, no. 2 (1999): 503–540.
- Tanaka, Stefan. *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.
- Taylor, Insup, and M. Martin Taylor. *Writing and Literacy in Chinese, Korean and Japanese: Revised Edition*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014.
- Teng, Emma. *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures, 1683–1895*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Thornber, Karen Laura. *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009.
- Tierney, Robert Thomas. *Tropics of Savagery: The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
- . “Othello in Tokyo: Performing Race and Empire in 1903 Japan.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2011): 514–540.
- Tomita Akira. “Nihon tōchijidai shoki Taiwan ni okeru nihongo kenkyū—Kokugo kyōju kenkyūkai oyobi Ogawa Naoyoshi no kenkyū ni tsuite.” *Nihongo Kyōiku* 99 (December 1998): 96–107. (Nihongo Kyōiku Gakkai Gakkaishi Iinkai).
- . “Nihon tōchijidai shoki no Taiwan sōtokufu ni yoru ‘Taiwan go’ no sōshutsu.” *Kokusai Kaihatsu Kenkyū Fōramu*, no. 11 (March 1999): 155–166. (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Daigakuin Kokusai Kaihatsu Kenkyūka).
- . “Tōchisha ga hiseitochisha no gengo o manabun to iu koto—Nihon tōchi shoki Taiwan de no Taiwan go gakushū.” *Shokuminchi Kyōikushi Kenkyū Nenpō*, no. 3 (2000): 6–21.
- . “Taiwan sōtokufu kokusei chōsa ni yoru gengo chōsa—Kindaiteki senshisu to shite no kokusei chōsa no seikaku kara mita naiyō to sono henko.” *Ōsaka Shakai Gengo Gaku*, no. 2 (2002): 87–98.

- . “1905nen rinji Taiwan tokō chōsa ga kataru Taiwan shakai—shuzoku, gengo, kyōiku o chūshin ni.” *Nihon Taiwan Gakkai Hō*, no.5 (May 2003), 87–106. (Chiba: Nihon Taiwan Gakkai).
- . “Moto taiwango tsūyakusha Ichinari Otoshige to ajia taiheiyō sensō ki no “fukkengo,” *Kōkyō: Nihongo bungaku kenkyū*, no. 3 (2016): 19–34. (Seoul: Kōria Daigakko Nihon Kenkyū Sentā).
- Toyoda Kunio. *Gengo seisaku no kenkyū*. Tokyo: Kinseisha, 1968.
- Tsuboi Hideto. *Kankaku no kindai: Koe,shintai, hyōshō*. Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2006.
- Tsukishima Hiroshi. *Rekishiteki kanazukai: Sono seiritsu to tokuchō*. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1986.
- Ueda, Atsuko. “Sound, Scripts, and Styles: *Kanbun kundokutai* and the National Language Reforms of 1880s Japan.” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 20 (2008): 134–56.
- . *Language, Nation, Race: Linguistic Reform in Meiji Japan (1868–1912)*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021.
- Uzuhashi Tokuyoshi. *Nitchū gengo bunka kōryū no senkusha: Dazai Shundai Sakamoto Tenzan Isawa Shūji no Kaon kenkyū*. Tokyo: Hakuteisha, 1999.
- Wakabayashi, Judy. “Script as a Factor in Translation.” *Journal of World Literature* 1 no. 2 (2016): 173–194.
- Wang, William Shiyuan, “Foreword to *Brush Conversation in the Sinographic Cosmopolis: the Second Miracle*.” In *Brush Conversation in the Sinographic Cosmopolis: Interactional Cross-border Communication Using Literary Sinitic in Early Modern East Asia*. Edited by David C. S. Li, Reijiro Aoyama, and Tak-sum Wong. London: Routledge, 2022. xvii–xxii.
- Wang, Yuanfei. *Writing Pirates: Vernacular Fiction and Oceans in Late Ming China*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021.
- Washburn, Dennis. “文学 Bungaku/Literature.” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 25, no. 1 (2013): 116–26.
- Whitman, John. “The ubiquity of the gloss.” *Scripta* 3 (2011): 95–121.
- Wichmann, Elizabeth. *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991.
- Wixted, John Timothy. “‘Literary Sinitic’ and ‘Latin’ as Transregional Languages: With Implications for Terminology Regarding ‘Kanbun’.” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 276 (2018): 1–14.

- Wu, Hsiao-Chun, “Qi Rushan, *Gewu* (Song-and-Dance), and the History of Contemporary Peking Opera in Early Twentieth-Century China.” *CHINOPERL* 36, no.1 (2017): 22–45.
- Xu Shijia. *Meiji Nihon no bunmei gensetsu to sono henyō*. Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 2014.
- Xu Yaxiang. *Ri zhi shi qi Zhongguo xi ban zai Taiwan* [Chinese Opera Troupes in Taiwan during the Japanese Colonial Period]. Taipei: Nan tian shu ju chu ban, 2000.
- . *Sounds from the Other Side: The Operatic Interaction between Colonial Taiwan and China during the Early Twentieth Century*. Trans. by Jo-Hsuan Wang. Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc, 2013.
- Yamada Kanto. *Shokuminchi Chōsen ni okeru Chōsen go shōrei seisaku: Chōsen go o mananda Nihonjin*. Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2004.
- Yang Chengshu, ed. *Nihon tōchiki Taiwan ni okeru yakusha oyobi “honyaku” katsudō: Shokuminchi tōchi to gengo bunka sakusō kanke*. Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2015.
- . *Taiwan Ri zhi shi qi yi zhe yu yi shi huo dong* [Translators and Translation Activities in Taiwan under Japanese Rule]. Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2023.
- Yano Tōru. *Nihon no Nan’yō shikan*. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1979.
- Yasar, Kerim. *Electrified Voices: How the Telephone, Phonograph, and Radio Shaped Modern Japan, 1868–1945*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
- Yasuda Toshiaki. *Teikoku Nihon no gengo hensei*. Tokyo: Seiri Shobō, 1997.
- . *Shokuminchi no naka no “kokugogaku”: Tokieda Motoki to Keijō Teikoku Daigaku o megutte*. Tokyo: Sangensha, 1997.
- . “‘Teikoku no tagengoshusei’ kara ‘tagengoshusei no teikoku’ e.” *Kotoba to Shakai* Bessatsu, no. 2 (2005): 121–127.
- . “‘Kokugo’ no kindaishi: Teikoku Nihon to kokugo gakushatachi.” Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2006.
- Yi, Christina. *Colonizing Language: Cultural Production and Language Politics in Modern Japan and Korea*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.
- Yoshihara Yukari. “Emi suin honan Kawakami Otojirō ichiza jōen “osero”—jūsō ka suru “shūen,” *Shakai Bungaku*, no. 21 (2005): 19–30.
- Yoshida Shingo. *Taiwango to moji no shakai gengogaku: Kijutsu teki daigraphia kenkyū no kokoromi*. Tokyo: Sangensha Publishers, 2023.