

## REFORMING THE CHINESE SCRIPT

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No. 6 of the *People's China*, published on 16th March, 1956, contained an article by Wu Yu-chang, the Chairman of the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, together with a supplement entitled "Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet and Simplifying Chinese Characters".

(a) *Simplification of Chinese Characters*

As Wu Yu-chang reminds us, a scheme to simplify Chinese characters was approved by the State Council on 28th January, 1956. "The full scheme falls into three parts. The first is a list showing 230 simplified characters (together with their original forms) arranged in alphabetical order based on the *chu yin tzu mu*, a system of phonetic symbols adopted in 1913. These symbols had been given a trial earlier by most papers and periodicals, and were universally adopted in printing and writing from 1st February, 1956, on. The second list contains another batch of 285 characters which it is proposed to simplify (side by side with the proposed simpler forms). The third list gives 54 simplified 'radicals' (arranged according to the number of strokes in the old forms). The latter two lists were published so that they can be given a trial before final revision and promulgation in March 1956."

So far this is an excellent scheme. But the Committee intends to go further than that and by the summer of 1957 it hopes to cover the simplification of more than 1700 characters, and the plan is to simplify at least half of the 6000 or 7000 commonly used characters within the next three years. It will have to be seen whether this is still a simplification and not a complication. In any case printing or typewriting will be done and is already done horizontally from left to right.

(b) *Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet*

The Committee has further undertaken preparatory work for drawing up a phonetic alphabet. The first step in this direction was to popularize the common language which takes the Peking pronunciation as its standard. The Committee publishes the new alphabetical letters with the approximate equivalents in the Wade system, the International Phonetic Symbols and English sounds.

The printed form of the alphabet to be:

A B C Ç D E F G Ç H I J K L M N D O P Q R S Ş T U W X Y Z Z  
a b c ç d e f g ç h i j k l m n ñ o p q r s ş t u w x y z z

In printing, typewriting or in telegraphy, the letters ç, z, ç, ş, ñ and i may be replaced by g, zh, ch, sh, ng and i respectively, if the proper types are not available.

The tone marks are indicated by adding a dash (-), an acute (´), a semi-circle (˘) and a grave (˘). It is apparently not intended to indicate tone marks in continuous texts.

Although the new Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is only in a draft scheme stage and a revised plan—as far as we know—not yet ready to be placed before the government for adoption and publication, it may be of interest to Western students to examine how this phonetic alphabet for the Chinese written language would work when compared with the National Language Romanisation known as *Gwoyue Romatzyh* (G.R.) for which Dr. Chao Yüan-jên was primarily responsible and which was brought to the notice of Western students in 1942 by Professor W. Simon in *Chinese Sentence Series* and which in 1947 he had made available to the Western students in his *1200 Chinese Basic Characters. An elementary textbook adapted from the "Thousand Character Lessons"* (平民千字課). In the forthcoming revised third edition of this book, Professor Simon has added an Appendix (V) setting out a comparison of the G.R. system and the Draft Scheme system (D.S.).

I wish to thank Professor Simon for allowing me to use this Appendix to contrast both systems.

In Tables I and II the Initials and Finals of both systems have been set out and the first five lessons are given in the D.S. system (fully marked with tones) and Lesson 4 of Book III has been chosen to illustrate it without tone marks.

TABLE I INITIALS

	G.R.	G.R. = D.S.	D.S.		G.R.	G.R. = D.S.	D.S.
1		b		12		m	
2 <sup>1</sup>	ch <sup>1</sup>		q	13		n	
3 <sup>2</sup>	ch <sup>2</sup>		ç	14		p	
4		d		15		r	
5		f		16		s	
6		g		17 <sup>1</sup>	sh <sup>1</sup>		x
7		h		18 <sup>2</sup>	sh <sup>2</sup>		ç
8 <sup>1</sup>	j <sup>1</sup>		ç	19		t	
9 <sup>2</sup>	j <sup>2</sup>		z	20	ts		c
10	k			21	tz		z
11	l						

<sup>1</sup> Before i.

<sup>2</sup> Before vowels other than i.

TABLE II FINALS

	G.R.	G.R. = D.S.	D.S.		G.R.	G.R. = D.S.	D.S.
1		a		20 <sup>1</sup>	iou		iu
2		ai		21	iu		y
3		an		22	iuan		yan
4	ang		aŋ	23	iue		ye
5		au		24	iun		yn
6		e		25		o	
7		ei		26	ong		uŋ
8	ei		er	27		ou	
9		en		28 <sup>2</sup>		u	
10	eng		eŋ	29 <sup>3</sup>		ua	
11 <sup>4</sup>		i		30 <sup>2</sup>		uai	
12 <sup>1</sup>		ia		31 <sup>2</sup>		uan	
13 <sup>1</sup>		ian		32 <sup>2</sup>	uang		uaŋ
14 <sup>1</sup>	iang		iaŋ	33 <sup>2</sup>	uei		ui
15 <sup>1</sup>		iau		34 <sup>1</sup>	uen <sup>1</sup>		(wen)
16 <sup>1</sup>		ie		35 <sup>4</sup>	uen <sup>2</sup>		un
17 <sup>1</sup>		in		36 <sup>3</sup>	ueng		(weŋ)
18 <sup>1</sup>	ing		iŋ	37 <sup>2</sup>		uo	
19	iong		ioŋ	38	y		i

<sup>1</sup> In isolation (with zero-initial): ji, ja, jan, jaŋ, jau, je, jin, jio, ju.

<sup>2</sup> In isolation (with zero-initial): wu, wa, wai, wan, waŋ, wei, wen, weŋ, wo.

<sup>3</sup> Occurs only in isolation (with zero-initial).

<sup>4</sup> Does not occur in isolation (with zero-initial).

## G.R.

## FIRST BOOK

## DIHI KEH

## BAW MING

## LESSON I

- 1 Woo lai baw ming,
- 2 shing —,
- 3 ming — —,
- 4 nian suey,
- 5 juh —.

## DIHELL KEH

## SHIATZ

## LESSON II

- 1 Buh neng kann-de ren sh shiatz,
- 2 bwu shyh tzyh-de yee suann shiatz.
- 3 Shiatz kuu,
- 4 bwu shyh tzyh-de yee kuu.

## DIHSAN KEH

## RUH PYNGMIN SHYUESHIAW

## LESSON III

- 1 Woo ruh pyngmin shyueshiaw,
- 2 shyue (shyau) dwu shu,
- 3 shyue (shyau) shiee tzyh.
- 4 Bwu tzay tzuoh shiatz,
- 5 lai shyue tzuoh shinmin.

## DIHSYH KEH

## CHIANTZYH KEH

## LESSON IV

- 1 Chiantzyh keh,
- 2 kehx hao,
- 3 syhgeh yueh jiow dwuwanle.
- 4 Shyh tzyh yihchian-duo,
- 5 shinn yee huey shiee,
- 6 janq yee huey jih,
- 7 baw yee huey kannle(au).

## DIHWUU KEH

## GONG DWU

## LESSON V

- 1 Yow dwu shu, yow tzuoh gong.
- 2 Dwu shu shyh juan dwu shu,
- 3 tzuoh gong shyh juan tzuoh gong.
- 4 Yuann tormgbau
- 5 du dwu shu, du tzuoh gong.
- 6 Gong yeu dwu, leh wuchyong.

## THIRD BOOK

## DIHSYH KEH

## NONGYEH

LESSON IV<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nongyeh yeu woomende shenghwo guanshih heen jonqyaw. Woomen <sup>2</sup>chy-de mii, may, dow, liang, yong-de sy, ger, mian, ma du sh nongyeh-<sup>3</sup>de shengchaan. Suooyii woomen chyoh shenghwo-de fengfuh, buh kee <sup>4</sup>buh chyoh nongyeh-de fajaan.

<sup>5</sup>Jonggwo shuh-chian nian lai yii nong lih gwo, nongyeh shianq wei <sup>6</sup>shyhjih suo tuijonq. Dann dawle keshyue-faming-de shiannday, ruguo <sup>7</sup>reng yonq tsongchyan-de tuufaa, jiow buh neng baochyh shianqlai-de <sup>8</sup>dihwey le. Suooyii ingdang yonq keshyue-de fangfaa lai gaeliang, <sup>9</sup>nongyeh tsair yeou fajaan-de shiwanq.

## D.S.

## FIRST BOOK

## DI'JI KE

## BAU MID

## LESSON I

- 1 Wò lai bau mí,
- 2 xīn—,
- 3 míng — —,
- 4 nián suì,
- 5 zù —.

## DI'ER KE

## XIAZ

## LESSON II

- 1 Bù nēn kàn de rén sì xiāz,
- 2 bú sì zì de jě suàn xiāz.
- 3 Xiāz kǔ,
- 4 bú sì zì de jě kǔ.

## DI'SAN KE

## RU PIDMIN XYEXIAU

## LESSON III

- 1 Wò rù pīnmín xyéxiāu,
- 2 xyé (xiāu) dú gǔ,
- 3 xyé (xiāu) xiě zì.
- 4 Bú zài zuò xiāz,
- 5 lái xyé zuò xīnmín.

## DI'SI KE

## QIANZI KE

## LESSON IV

- 1 Qiānzi kè,
- 2 kè-kè hǎu,
- 3 sīgè yè yīu dúwánle.
- 4 Sì zì jìqiān-duò,
- 5 xīn jě huì xiě,
- 6 zàn jě huì yì,
- 7 bàu jě huì kǎnliaū.

## DI'WU KE

## GUDDU

## LESSON V

- 1 Jù dú sū, jù zuò gūn.
- 2 Dù sū sì zuān dú sū,
- 3 zuò gūn sì zuān zuò gūn.
- 4 Yān túnbaū
- 5 dū dú sū, dū zuò gūn.
- 6 Gūn yí dú, lè wú qín.

## THIRD BOOK

## DI'SI KE

## NUdje

LESSON IV<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nunje y womende senhuo guanxi hen zunjau. Women <sup>2</sup>ci de mí, mai, dou, lian, yn de si, ge, mian, ma du si nunje <sup>3</sup>de senchan. Suoji women y qiu senhuo de fenfu, bu ke <sup>4</sup>bu qiu nunje de fazan.

<sup>5</sup>Zunguo su-qian nian lai yi nun li guo, nunje xian wei <sup>6</sup>shie suo tuizun. Dan daule kexye famin de xiandai, ruguo <sup>7</sup>ren yn cuqian de tufa, yiu bu nen bauçi xianlai de <sup>8</sup>diwei le. Suoji jin dan yn kexye de fanfa lai gailian, <sup>9</sup>nunje cai ju fazan de xiwan.

<sup>1</sup>This lesson has been chosen to illustrate a continuous text where tone marks are being omitted.

It would be premature to pass a final judgment on the Draft of the New Chinese Script, but it is already quite clear to all who are concerned with the pedagogical side of the transcription question that the system when used *with* tone marks is confronting the student with a bewildering accumulation of marks, and when used *unmarked* is bound to cause confusion, whereas G.R. "presents the student with a real script, easy to write, easy to type, easy to print, and easy to read and memorise".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See W. Simon, *Chinese Sentence Series*, Introduction p. xv.