

individual's experience of cosmopolitanism and sense of *tianxia*. But this criticism aside, the book is a welcome and distinctive contribution to knowledge on Chinese popular music.

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## Sound, Meaning, Shape: The Phonologist Wei Jianguo (1901–1980) between Language Study and Language Planning

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Mariana Münning's *Sound, Meaning, Shape* is the first comprehensive and in-depth introduction of the Chinese linguist Wei Jianguo (1901–1980) in the English language. Taking Wei as a prime but heretofore understudied representative of the language and script reformers of 20th-century China, Münning expertly demonstrates the deep intertwining of linguistic and philological scholarship, practical reforms and the politics of self-determination.

It is a fine choice to focus on Wei Jianguo as a prism into the knowledge production and practical reform of modern Chinese language and writing. An accomplished linguist – specifically, phonologist – and an active language and script reformer with official capacity in both the Republic of China (ROC) and the People's Republic of China (PRC), Wei occupies a “unique position between conceptualization and implementation” (p. 22) of the linguistic and scriptal future of modern China. Compared to his May Fourth teachers who started the script revolution, Wei was of a younger generation that played a more substantial role in implementing and negotiating reform ideas. Wei's position is unique due to his official positions in promoting language and script reforms in both the ROC and the PRC, showcasing the surprising continuity of reform efforts across the Strait despite acute political and ideological differences.

Münning tells the life story of Wei in nine chronologically arranged chapters divided into three parts – “sound,” “meaning” and “shape” – reflecting the three aspects of the Chinese script. Part one on “sound” introduces the readers to Wei as an emerging scholar of linguistics who was trained by well-known script revolutionaries such as Qian Xuantong and Li Jinxi at Peking University and who became a loyal champion of the national language (*guoyu*) movement from an early stage (chapter two). Wei defined and defended *guoyu*, specifically, the new national pronunciation based on the Beijing dialect. On the one hand, he and his coterie worked on the historical heritage and hence legitimacy of the new *guoyu* (chapter four). On the other, he combated such conservative “tigers” as Zhang Shizhao, who sought to reverse the historic tide of the unification of speech and writing (chapter three). In addition to his work on the mainland, Wei experimented with teaching the new national language in Korea (chapter three, section three) and sought meaningful ways to negotiate the relationship between Minnanese and *guoyu* while promoting the national language in Taiwan (chapter five). Part two (chapter six) moves onto “meaning” and focuses on Wei's contribution to making of the world's most popular dictionary, the *New China Dictionary* (*Xinhua zidian*), which adopted a pro-language approach that reconceptualized the Chinese word and reorganized the actual compilation of the dictionary. Part three (chapters seven and eight) examines Wei's script

reform activities in both the ROC and the PRC, respectively, which in principle embraced character abolition but in practice supported simplified characters. Chapter nine reiterates the three central claims of the book: first, linguistic and scriptal planning legitimized the status quo as well as its changes; second, changes had roots in “traditional Chinese scholarship”; third, Wei’s concept (*Begriff*) (p. 22) of language and writing “stayed the same” (pp. 235; 30–31).

One key concept that serves as the hinge that unites the whole book is MÜnning’s definition of Wei’s concept of language, which takes “language as a tool for communication” (p. 20). Grounded in Wei’s vocation of linguistics, the primacy of language, its unquestioned utilitarianism and its power over writing constitute the supreme organizing principles under which sound, meaning and shape cohere. From Wei’s investment in the phonological tradition of the Beijing dialect to his redefinition of dictionary entries not as characters but as words that describe “the morphology of language” (p. 176), from his linguistic principles (dubbed as “ten characteristics”) guiding the compilation of the *New China Dictionary* (p. 179) to his championship of both ROC’s and PRC’s character simplification based on their phonetic capacity demonstrated by ideo-phonographs (p. 222), the dominance of linguistic principles (as Wei describes it) is unmistakable. In addition, pivoting the book on the central concept of language makes a particularly convincing case for the consistency of Wei’s life’s work (MÜnning’s third claim) as well as the continuity between Chinese philological tradition and modern Chinese language and script reforms.

The book is at its finest when it substantiates two instances of continuity: first, the phonological construction of the Beijing dialect as an old, prestigious language ready to shoulder the responsibility of a new national language; second, the apt point that simplified characters had historical origins and were a shared enterprise by both the ROC and the PRC. MÜnning’s reading of Wei’s 1929 article “*Gu yin yang ru san sheng kao*” (Study of the three tones *yin*, *yang* and *ru* in Old Chinese”) in conjunction with Bai Dizhou’s work illustrates “how the two discourses on tones – the highly technical philological discourse and the practical, implementation-oriented language planning discourse – merged” and “nurtured the image that modern *guoyu* is based on tradition” (p. 110). Following a similar train of thought, MÜnning gives concrete examples of traditionally simplified characters such as 历, 迁, 运, 战 and 证 (p. 225), and ingeniously argues for the case of simplified characters as “new traditional characters” (p. 226). MÜnning is particularly judicious in her resistance against the constructed but problematic binary between traditional and simplified characters, opting instead for a more scholarly informed comparison between complex and simplified characters.

Overall, through the case study of Wei Jianguo, the book succeeds in establishing the consistency and generative entanglements between academic research, language planning and script reform, anchored in a linguist’s conviction in, and loyalty to, language. The book provides further food for thought with interesting moments of tension pointing to the unsettling question of what writing has been and could be to language. As Wei’s work (like this book) is organized around the three aspects of Chinese writing (sound, meaning and shape), an important oversight that MÜnning spots in Wei’s work is his presumed silence in relevant discussions about Tang Lan’s groundbreaking theory of *san shu shuo* (three principles of character formation), which covered these very three aspects (p. 208). What the book does not confront but could not help but suggest was a series of provocations: does Tang Lan’s well-known critique of the primacy of language (phonocentrism) and affirmation of writing require a self-reflection that Wei the phonologist was unprepared for? How did Wei understand the all-too-often contradictory tendencies of character abolition that was utterly pro-language and his major achievements with the *New China Dictionary* and character simplification that negotiated with, if not outright critiqued, phonocentrism? If, as MÜnning suggests, the endgame of the script reform in the PRC was indeed the rediscovery of “the phonetic characteristics of the characters,” which leads to “the self-assertion” that “the Chinese script cannot do less than the Latin alphabet, but more” (pp. 236–237), then would the phonologist not be compelled to re-examine and rethink his basic concept of language? These critical questions and more

prompt future research on 20th-century Chinese linguistic and scriptal modernity, to which Munning's *Sound, Meaning, Shape* makes a valuable contribution and serves as an important reference.

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## Hong Kong Foodways

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This book is the fruit of decades of extensive research on the changing foodways of Hong Kong, a city known for its international palate and vibrant culture of dining out. As one of the few specialists, Sidney Cheung has been central to the general landscape of Hong Kong food studies, his deeply enriching scholarship bringing it to new heights in the past three decades. Based on years of long-term ethnography, Cheung succinctly and ably defines and provides an overview of the local food scene up until the start of the 21st century, as well as offering possible future research directions. As the first book on the Hong Kong food scene, *Hong Kong Foodways* will be useful for food scholars hoping to familiarize themselves with Cheung's major works, scholars in need of an introduction to the subject matter, and the wider general public wishing for a taste of this "gourmet's paradise."

The major contribution of this book is showing how socio-political developments gave rise to a multiplicity of local food products, habits and cuisines, as well as their changing meanings in the 20th century. In my view, what is profoundly significant, though perhaps implicitly, is Cheung's account of the culinary consequences of Hong Kong's geographical, demographic and political relationship to mainland China. Its impact, especially following the return of Hong Kong to Chinese governance in 1997, becomes increasingly apparent as the book unfolds.

While thematic, the book is broadly chronological. At the estuary of the Pearl River Delta, fresh-water fish and oyster farming were made available and further developed as a result of British colonial rule of Hong Kong and increasing border controls since the 1950s (chapter one). Taking on a Mintzian (after Sidney Mintz) approach, Cheung hints at how Hong Kong foodways can and should be understood by grounding them in local food production. China also served as a major source of migrants to Hong Kong over the past century, who brought not only Chinese Hakka and Shanghai cuisines, but also "Western" cuisines that had developed in the wealthier coastal regions, possibly inspiring variants in Hong Kong like "soy sauce Western food" and tea cafés (chapters two and three). This may be one of the most detailed historical accounts of movements of cuisines vis-à-vis the Chinese migration to Hong Kong, and how they are localized according to local palates and social change.

In response to the changing political relationship with the mainland, private-kitchen restaurants connected the Hong Kong population to the tastes of greater China, while *puhn choi* "common pot" dining came to affirm local identity (chapter four), addressing a rising concern over local food heritage (chapter five). Instead of following the general trend of focusing on food and Hong Kong