

Taiwan Literature and the Negotiation of Language from Below: Huang Shihui and His Ideological Convictions

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Introduction

One criterion determining the status of a language is the recognition of its suitability as a language of literary composition. Vice versa, if a language is widely used for literary composition, it is very likely to enjoy a high status among its users. The status of a language and, by implication, its recognition as a medium of literary composition, results from complex negotiations involving many parties. In brief, language planning and attempts to establish a linguistically defined literary model are closely connected. In Taiwan, the late 1920s and early 1930s witnessed the first systematic attempts to link language planning and literary innovation ‘from below’. By attempts ‘from below’ I refer to language ideologies and reform proposals made by groups or individuals not associated with governmental language planning institutions. They are typically targeted at language varieties that are not part of (official) language planning. One key protagonist of the early ‘language from below’ movement in Taiwan was Huang Shihui (Taiwanese: Ng Chioh-hui) 黃石輝 (1900–1945),¹ who is generally considered to be the initiator of the first nativist literature debate (*xiangtu wenxue lunzheng* 鄉土文學論爭). Countering the claim that Taiwanese writers should follow the track beaten by the protagonists of the May Fourth Movement and write in northern Chinese *baihua* 白話, Huang Shihui was among the first to contend that the language of literary composition by Taiwanese authors should

1 For bibliographical transparency, the names of Taiwanese persons and the titles of articles written in Taiwanese are rendered in Mandarin using the *Hanyu pinyin* system.

be Taiwanese Southern Min (referred to as *Tai-oan-oe* 臺灣話 in the debate, hereafter: Taiwanese). In the widely-quoted newspaper article *Why Not Advocate Nativist Literature?* of 1930,² he fiercely rejected the notion that Taiwanese was vulgar and not appropriate for literary composition. Most previous studies have analyzed Huang Shihui and other proponents of nativist literature as figures of Taiwan literature history. This perspective, I argue in this paper, ignores many important aspects of Huang Shihui's work and overemphasizes his position in the literary context. As a matter of fact, Huang Shihui did not write a single literary work of any lasting significance. I suggest that a close reading of Huang Shihui's essays from the perspective of language planning will lead to a more satisfying analysis, capturing various dimensions of his language policy and providing us with a more nuanced understanding of his ideological convictions. I conclude that Huang Shihui's role as an ideological trailblazer of a distinct Taiwanese cultural identity has been overstated in previous studies. Indeed, dichotomies like 'pro-Taiwanese' *vs.* 'pro-Chinese' do not apply to his sociolinguistic agenda.

- 2 Huang Shihui, »Zenyang bu tichang xiangtu wenxue« 怎樣不提倡鄉土文學, *Wurenbao* 伍人報 nos 9-11 (Aug 6-Sep 1st, 1930); repr. in *1930 niandai Taiwan xiangtu wenxue lunzhan ziliao huibian* 1930 年代台灣鄉土文學論戰資料彙編 [A Collection of Materials on the Taiwanese *xiangtu* Literature Debate in the 1930s], ed. by Toshio Nakajima 中島利郎 (Gaoxiong: Chunhui chubanshe, 2003), 1-6. The opening lines of the newspaper article have been quoted in many studies on Taiwan literature and intellectual history, *inter alia* in Chen Fangming 陳芳明, *Taiwan xin wenxueshi* 臺灣新文學史 [A History of Modern Taiwanese Literature] (Taipei: Linking, 2011), 99-100; Chen Shurong 陳淑容, *1930 niandai xiangtu wenxue: Taiwan huawen lunzheng ji qi yubo* 一九三〇年代鄉土文學/臺灣話文論爭及其餘波 [Nativist Literature of the 1930s: The Debate on Written Taiwanese and Its Aftermath] (Tainan: Tainan shili tushuguan, 2004), 88; Douglas L. Fix, »Taiwanese Nationalism and Its Late Colonial Context« (PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1993), 138; Ann Heylen, *Japanese Models, Chinese Culture and the Dilemma of Taiwanese Language Reform* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 156; Hsiau A-chin, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 40; Wu Rwei-ren, »The Formosan Ideology: Oriental Colonialism and the Rise of Taiwanese Nationalism« (PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 2003), 328.

1 *Biographical Notes*³

Huang Shihui was born in Tainan on 20 April 1900. His birth name was Zhimu 知母, but he later used Shihui and also the pen names Shounong 瘦儂 and Shoutong 瘦童 in his publications. During his childhood, his family moved to Gaoxiong County. After graduating from state school, he became a professional seal carver. He later moved from Gaoxiong to Pingdong 屏東 where, at the age of 24, he married Wu Yong 吳雍. The couple had two sons (Chengxi 承系 and Tiehun 鐵魂) and two daughters (Bingyun 冰芸 and Pinhui 品惠). During the 1920s, he became an active participant in the cultural and political resistance against the Japanese colonial government. When the Taiwan Culture Association (*Taiwan wenhua xiehui* 臺灣文化協會) split into a nationalist right wing and a socialist left wing in 1927,⁴ Huang joined the standing committee of the latter, where he was responsible for women's affairs. At the age of 34, he and his family moved to Qishan 旗山 in Gaoxiong County. Health problems and economic pressure prevented Huang Shihui from participating more actively in political resistance and in the language debate. In 1945, following a false medical diagnosis, he died from a lung disease four days after his 45th birthday. Many important details of his biography await further research. For example, in a newspaper article of 1933⁵ he mentions his recent release from prison and the fact that since that time he had not been willing to write anything. It seems obvious that his

- 3 The biographical notes are based on Lü Xingchang 呂興昌, »Thau ti Tai-oan thin, kha ta Tai-oan te: lun Ng Chioh-hui Tai-oan bun-hak e kuan-tiam kap sek-ken« 頭戴台灣天·腳踏台灣地：論黃石輝台語文學兮觀念俗實踐» [Over Your Head is the Taiwanese Sky, Your Feet Walk on Taiwanese Soil: On the Ideas and the Practice of Huang Shihui's Taiwanese Literature], 1996 <ws.twl.ncku.edu.tw/hak-chia/li-heng-chhiong/thau-ti.htm> (last retrieval Jan 5, 2010); Lü Meiqin 呂美親, »Huang Shihui« 黃石輝, in *Taiwan da baikequanshu* 臺灣大百科全書 [Encyclopedia of Taiwan] <taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=7591> (last retrieval Jan 5, 2010); Shi Yilin 施懿琳, »Huang Shihui«, in *Taiwan wenhua shidian* 臺灣文化事典 [Taiwan Culture Encyclopedia], ed. by Lin Rengqian 林仍乾 & al. (Taipei: Shida Renwen Zhongxin, 2004), 829–831.
- 4 For a discussion of the historical background, I refer to Wu Rwei-ren, *The Formosan Ideology*, 232.
- 5 »Suowei “yundong kuang” de nasheng—gei Chunrong Kefu er xiansheng« 所謂「運動狂」的喊聲——給春榮克夫二先生 [Shouts and Screams of a So-Called ‘Movement Maniac’, for Chunrong and Kefu], *Taiwan Shinminpō* nos 967–969 (Oct 29–31st, 1933); repr. in *1930 niandai Taiwan xiangtu wenxue lunzhan ziliao buibian*, 403–412 (release from prison is mentioned on p403).

imprisonment was related to his political activism, but this assumption still needs to be verified.

2 *Historical Context*

Huang Shihui occupies a peculiar position in the history of Taiwan literature. On the one hand, as he is widely recognized as *the* initiator of the first nativist literature debate, no serious overview of Taiwan's literature history would be complete without the name of Huang Shihui. On the other hand, however, neither a literary work nor a theoretical treatise in the field of literature theory or history is associated with the name of Huang Shihui. As a matter of fact, it seems that his position in Taiwan's literature is for the most part associated with the opening lines of the aforementioned newspaper article *Why Not Advocate Nativist Literature?* of 1930. The first passages of the article read as follows:

You are Taiwanese. Over your head is the Taiwanese sky. Your feet walk on Taiwanese soil. All you see are the conditions of Taiwan. Everything your ears hear is Taiwanese news. What you undergo is Taiwanese experience. That which you speak is also a Taiwanese language. Therefore, that powerful, gifted pen of yours, that productive brilliant pen should also write Taiwanese literature.

How should Taiwan literature be written? We have to write texts in Taiwanese, poems in Taiwanese, novels in Taiwanese, songs in Taiwanese, we have to describe things Taiwanese. There is nothing strange about it. Why don't we write texts in Taiwanese? Why don't we write poems in Taiwanese? Why don't we write novels in Taiwanese? Why don't we write songs in Taiwanese? Inelegant! Rough! This is what the old aristocrats think!⁶

It is commonly accepted that Huang Shihui's call for a literature written in the local Southern Min variety of Taiwan must be seen in the context of the language debate in the aftermath of the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Huang Shihui's position was formulated in opposition to Zhang Wojun 張我軍 (1902–1955), a Taiwanese student at Peking University who had written essays in which he advocated the extension of northern Chinese *baibua* style literature to Taiwan. In his newspaper articles, Huang Shihui strongly rejected the cultivation of Mandarin *baibua* or classical *wenyanwen*, as he considered the »noble style« reflected in these varieties to be »alien to the unlearned laboring masses«.⁷

6 The first part of the translation is quoted from Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 40; the second part is my translation.

7 Huang Shihui, »Zenyang bu tichang xiangtu wenxue«.

Instead, he argued that »we should write on affairs and use the language that is closest to us«.⁸

The opening lines of *Why Not Advocate Nativist Literature?* seem to be the rhetorical leitmotif of the first nativist literature debate that was finally triggered by Huang Shihui's publication of a follow-up essay in 1931.⁹ With his almost hypnotizing repetition of the words »Taiwan« and »Taiwanese« he succeeded in enforcing a local Taiwanese dimension to the 'language of literature' debate that had reached Taiwan from Beijing. In most analyses, it is generally agreed that Huang Shihui's concerns went beyond language choice. Whereas Hsiao A-chin cautiously writes that »Huang demanded more radical 'localization' of literature«,¹⁰ Fix argues that Huang's »analysis went further than a mere recognition that his implied reader spoke Taiwanese and resided in the colony. Huang advocated the creation of an independent Taiwanese culture. His rules for language reform, if taken to the extreme, called for the complete localization of language and literature«.¹¹ Yvonne Chang even goes a step further by arguing that the claim for literature in the local language on things Taiwanese, voiced by Huang and other nativists, »clearly envisioned a 'Taiwanese consciousness' as something to be distinguished from the more inclusive 'Chinese consciousness' or ethnic Han consciousness«.¹² In other analyses, Huang Shihui receives less attention as an early advocate of Taiwanese consciousness. Instead, his leftist ideals are emphasized. Lin Pei-Yin, for instance, argues that the relationship between nationalism and nativist literature »can be traced back to the left-leaning intellectual Huang Shui-hui's call for promoting Taiwan's native soil literature in the early 1930s with an attempt to popularize literature among the masses«.¹³ Similarly, Wu Rwei-ren argues that Huang's »view was consistent with the *class* stance of the proletariat«. Moreover, the opening passage »clearly reveals the leftist position of Huang and his attempts to call out to the rightists:

8 Huang Shihui, »Zai tan xiangtu wenxue« 再談鄉土文學 [Another Discussion of Nativist Literature], *Taiwan Shimbun* 台灣新聞 July 24, 1931, in Nakajima, *1930 niandai Taiwan xiangtu wenxue*, 53–64, translated in Fix, »Taiwanese Nationalism«, 138.

9 Ibid.

10 Hsiao A-chin, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism*, 40.

11 Fix, »Taiwanese Nationalism«, 138.

12 Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, »Taiwanese New Literature and the Colonial Context«, in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. by Murray A. Rubinstein (New York: Sharpe, 1999), 267.

13 Lin Pei-Yin, »Nativist Rhetoric in Contemporary Taiwan«, in *Cultural Discourse in Taiwan*, ed. by Chin-chuan Cheng, I-chun Wang and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (Kaohsiung: National Sun Yat-sen University, 2009), 56.

inasmuch as the dominant majority of the Taiwanese population consisted of illiterate 'toiling masses', there was no choice but to follow the line of native literature which was in accordance with Taiwan's reality if one hoped to move and to 'awaken' the masses.¹⁴ Like Wu Rwei-ren, Chen Shurong also foregrounds the fact that Huang Shihui's prime interest was the promotion of literature for the masses.¹⁵

3 *Huang Shihui's Oeuvre*

It is hard to avoid the impression that assessments of Huang's position in Taiwan's literary and intellectual history are rather restricted if not biased with regard to the textual evidence. In the following passages, I will first place the article »Why not advocate nativist literature?«, which preceded the nativist literature debate, in the broader context of his oeuvre. Following this, I will quote and translate some passages from his contributions to the nativist literature debate. By juxtaposing these passages with the frequently quoted 'first lines' of Why Not Advocate Nativist Literature?, I intend to provide textual evidence which hints at a broader spectrum in Huang's thinking.

At the age of 17 or 18, Huang Shihui became involved in the activities of local poet societies, one of which was the famous Pingdong-based Whetstone Society (Li she 礪社). According to Lü Meiqin (1996), Huang Shihui later published more than 120 poems in classical Chinese style in the Chinese section of the *Tainan Shimbun* 臺南新報. So far, some 200 of Huang's early poems have been found.¹⁶ This dedication to traditional Chinese poem writing is clearly incompatible with the conception of Huang Shihui as an advocate of an independent Taiwanese culture. In the 1920s, he started to publish political essays in different newspapers, including the communist weekly *Taiwan dazhong shibao* 臺灣大眾時報. The range of topics in his earlier essays evidence to his social engagement that was by no means restricted to sociolinguistic issues. In February 1927, he published an essay on The Liberation of Women and the Future of Society,¹⁷ followed by an article on The Future of the Chinese

14 Wu Rwei-ren, »The Formosan Ideology«, 229–230.

15 Chen Shurong, 1930 *niandai xiangtu wenxue*, 89–90.

16 Lü Meiqin, »Huang Shihui«.

17 »Funü jiefang yu shehui qiantu« 婦女解放與社會前途, *Taiwan Mimpō* 臺灣民報 no 144 (1927).

Revolution, written in May 1928,¹⁸ and a contribution entitled Let's Welcome our Labor Day one week later.¹⁹

Huang Shihui's better-known articles were published between 1930 and 1934 and are all associated with the debate on nativist literature. The label 'nativist literature', although frequently applied by the participants of the debate themselves, is arguably misleading. Most importantly, it hides the fact that the main focus of the debate was actually on language and not on literature in the narrow sense. The language debate centred on issues such as the status of the orthographic standardization of Taiwanese, and the spread of literacy in written Taiwanese (*Tai-oan oe-bun* 臺灣話文). Contributions appeared in different newspapers and magazines. Founded in 1931 by young intellectuals from central Taiwan, the magazine *Nanyin* 南音 (Sounds of the South) evolved as the main forum of debate on orthographic standardization. The orthographic debate in *Nanyin* did not last very long. In a note in volume 5, the editor announced that the number of pages for columns in written Taiwanese would henceforth be reduced to avoid the impression that the magazine was exclusively a forum for discussions on written Taiwanese. Given the historical context, it seems likely that the debate was discontinued due to Japanese censorship. In this connection it must be emphasized that from the outset, the debate was hampered by various limitations. Most importantly, Japanese censorship obviously prevented the group from publishing a position that questioned the fundamentals of linguistic hierarchy in the colony. The top position in this hierarchy was occupied by Japanese as the national language (*kokugo* 國語), and the breathing space for Taiwan's Sinitic languages was quickly diminishing when Huang Shihui first called for writing Taiwanese texts.

In the first issue of *Nanyin*, Huang Shihui's comrade-in-arms Guo Qiusheng 郭秋生 (1904–1980) published a detailed set of principles for the selection of characters to be used in written Taiwanese texts. In the following issues, these proposals were practically applied and discussed in an enthusiastic, sometimes capricious language debate. As I have analyzed before,²⁰ it was by no means uncommon for the participants of the debate to propose the use of one particular character in one issue of *Nanyin* and to put forward a counterproposal in the next issue. The contributions on written Taiwanese appeared in the columns Column for Discussions on Written Taiwanese (»Taiwan huawen taolunlan« 臺灣話文討論欄), Column for Attempts in Written Taiwanese

18 »Zhongguo geming de qiantu« 中國革命的前途«, *Taiwan dazhong shibao* 1/1928.

19 »Huanying women de laodongjie« 歡迎我們的勞動節«, *Taiwan dazhong shibao* 2/1928.

20 Henning Klötter, *Written Taiwanese* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), ch. 4.

«Taiwan huawen changshilan» 臺灣話文嘗試欄), and Issues Concerning New Characters («Xin zi wenti» 新字問題). Apart from Huang Shihui and Guo Qiusheng, contributors to the debate included Huang Chunqing 黃純青 (1875–1965), Lai He 賴和 (1894–1943), Li Xianzhang 李獻璋 (1904–1999), and Zhuang Chuisheng 莊垂勝 (also known as Furen 負人, 1897–1963).

Huang Shihui contributed the following fourteen essays to the nativist literature debate. As pointed out above, it can be assumed that his temporary imprisonment and his health problems prevented him from playing an even more active role.

1930

- (1) 怎樣不提倡鄉土文學 [Why Not Advocate Nativist Literature?]. *Wurenbao* 伍人報 nos 9–11 (Aug 6–Sep 1st)—Nakajima 1–6.

1931

- (2) 再談鄉土文學 [Another Discussion of Nativist Literature]. *Taiwan Shimbun* 臺灣新聞 July 24—Nakajima 53–64.
- (3) 我的幾句答辯 [My Response in a Few Sentences]. *Showa Shimbun* 昭和新報 nos 142–144 (Aug 15–29)—Nakajima 69–73.
- (4) 鄉土文學的檢討——再答〔廖〕毓文先生 [A Review and Discussion of Nativist Literature: Another Answer to {Liao} Yuwen], original place of publication unknown—Nakajima 105–111.
- (5) 和點人先生談枝葉 [Talking About This and That with Dianren]. *Taiwan Shimbun* Sep 3rd—Nakajima 113–117.
- (6) 給點人先生——為鄉土文學問題 [For Dianren, on Issues Concerning Nativist Literature] *Shōwa Shimbun* 昭和新報, exact date unknown—Nakajima 119–120.
- (7) 對「臺灣話改造論」的一商榷 [A discussion of ‘A theory of the reform of the Taiwanese language’], original place of publication unknown (Nakajima 147–152)
- (8) 鄉土文學的再討論給克夫先生的商量 [Another Discussion of Nativist Literature, Exchanging Opinions with Kefu], original place of publication unknown—Nakajima 153–157.

1932

- (9) 新字問題 (臺灣話文討論欄) [Column for discussions on written Taiwanese: Issues concerning new characters]. *Nanyin* 南音 1,4 (Feb 22nd)—Nakajima 269–271.
- (10) 言文一致的零星問題 [Some Problems concerning the unification of speech and written language]. *Nanyin* 南音 1,6 (April 2nd)—Nakajima 279–295.

- (11) 答負人（臺灣話文討論欄） [An Answer to Furen {Zhuang Chuisheng}]. *Nanyin* 1,8 (June 13)—Nakajima 299–301.

1933

- (12) 所謂「運動狂」的喊聲——給〔邱〕春榮克夫二先生 [Shouts and Screams of a So-Called 'Movement Maniac', for {Qiu} Chunrong and {Lin 林} Kefu]. *Taiwan Shinminpō* 臺灣新民報 nos 967–969 (Oct 29–31st)—Nakajima 403–412.
- (13) 解剖〔賴〕明弘君的愚論 [Dissecting {Lai} Minghong's Stupid Position]. *Taiwan Shinminpō* nos 974–978 (Nov 5–9)—Nakajima 421–433.

1934

- (14) 沒有批評的必要，先給大眾識字 [There is No Need to Criticize, First Teach the Masses How to Read]. *Xianfa budui* 先發部隊 [no date indication on cover page, preface dated March 1934], 1–2—not reprinted in Nakajima.

4 Selected Passages from Huang Shihui's Essays

As suggested above, a close look at some selected passages from Huang's essays shows that it is impossible to claim that Huang advocated Taiwan's radical cultural separation from China. For example, in his very first article (#1) on nativist literature we find the following lines:

Although Taiwanese can only be used in Taiwan, it still has a deep link with the whole of China. To be sure, the words we speak with our mouths cannot be understood by people from other provinces, the words we write down with characters will certainly be understood by people from other provinces.²¹

These lines support my previous claim²² that the promotion of written Taiwanese by Huang Shihui and other young language activists of the Japanese period was by no means tantamount to a linguistic breakaway from the Northern Chinese *baihua* movement. Rather, the linguistic reforms triggered by the May Fourth movement remained appealing for the young intellectuals, albeit to different degrees. One of Huang's associates, Zhuang Chuisheng, formulated the orthographic tenet of the group with the words, »to use Chinese characters for their meaning to write Taiwanese texts—this is what we call written Taiwan-

21 Nakajima, *1930 niandai Taiwan xiangtu wenxue*, 2.

22 Klötter, *Written Taiwanese*, ch. 4; Klötter, »Re-Writing Language in Taiwan«, in *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, ed. by Fang-long Shih, Stuart Thompson and Paul-François Tremlett (London: Routledge, 2009), 102–122.

ese«. ²³ For example, following the Mandarin model, it was proposed to use the characters 怎樣 for Taiwanese *an-tsud* 'how' (Mandarin *zenyang* 'how'), 信 for *phoe* 'letter' (Mandarin *xin* 'letter'), 給 for *boo* 'give' (Mandarin *gei* 'give'), 說 for *kong* 'speak' (Mandarin *shuo* 'speak'), and so forth. ²⁴ The suggestion to model written Taiwanese on written Mandarin was not uncontroversial. Guo Qiusheng, for instance, deliberately deviated from the Mandarin model, arguing that »for us as Taiwanese, Mandarin as a vehicle of expression is a scary iron chain«. ²⁵ His proposal to replace Mandarin characters with new Taiwanese characters was, however, not welcome by his fellow activists.

In any case, Huang Shihui's rejection of cultural separation between China and Taiwan is not merely a comment made in passing. When Liao Yuwen 廖毓文 (1912–1980) accuses him of trying to lock Taiwan's doors, Huang Shihui in 1931 writes the following (#4):

[Liao Yuwen writes:] »We should not lock the door and protect ourselves and stubbornly stick to a Taiwanese literature in the Taiwanese language for the purpose of popularizing literature.«—I have always made clear that I am against locking our doors! In my article Another Discussion of Nativist Literature in *Taiwan Shimbun*, I stated very clearly: We advocate nativist literature with the aim that those who can read the Taiwanese vernacular can also understand the (northern) Chinese vernacular, and essays written in the Taiwan vernacular should be understandable for Chinese, this has nothing to do with locking one's door. [...] I am sure that he [Liao Yuwen] has read these lines. If he really wants to discuss seriously, why does he still claim that I advocate closed doors?

The contributions to the debate on nativist literature can basically be divided into two groups. The first group includes those which deal with the basic question *whether* there ought to be literature in the local vernacular; the second group comprises articles which discuss *how* spoken Taiwanese should be converted into written texts. Huang Shihui contributed to both groups. As the following passage shows, this part of the debate went beyond the selection of particular characters. Those involved in the discussion also touched on the question whether and how texts written in Taiwanese should make use of transcriptions in order to facilitate reading. In 1932, Huang writes (#10):

23 Zhuang Chuisheng, »Taiwan huawen zabo« 臺灣話文雜駁 [Miscellaneous Notes on Written Taiwanese; Part 3], *Nanyin* 1,3 (1932), 7.

24 For details see Klöter, *Written Taiwanese*, 155–176.

25 Guo Qiusheng, »Taiwan huawen taolun lan« 臺灣話文討論欄 [Column for Attempts in Written Taiwanese], *Nanyin* 1,9/10 (1932), 36.

If we either use loan characters or create new characters, we have to indicate the reading. Thus, everyone recognizes the importance of transcription. Even Lai Minghong of the opposing faction recognizes it. But how should we transcribe? [...] As nobody has a good method, we can consider all systems. We can use Japanese *kana*, this would be the easiest and the most common method. If you can't use *kana*, you can also use the Roman alphabet or Chinese phonetic symbols. In my opinion, *kana*, the Roman alphabet, or Chinese phonetic symbols—none of these solutions is as good as using the *fanqie* 反切 system that was common in the old days. I believe that *fanqie* is alive, and all the other systems are dead.²⁶

Huang Shihui's call for literature in the local Taiwanese vernacular was certainly not part of a cultural navel gazing, as the frequently-quoted first lines of his first nativist essay may suggest. It must therefore be emphasized that the Taiwanese home soil is by no means the focal point of Huang Shihui's ideological agenda. Rather, all of his sociolinguistic proposals are inextricably linked to his socialist convictions. In other words, Huang was first and foremost a socialist, and his advocacy of literacy in Taiwanese was a response to the needs of the illiterate masses. From Huang Shihui's point of view, the masses were in the first instance illiterate and underprivileged, and only in the second instance Taiwanese. At the end of the first section of essay #1 he writes:

Furthermore, when we write texts or compose poems, we write for Taiwanese readers, especially for the hard-working masses. These broad hard-working masses have not received higher education, so our art and literature must be easy to understand. The hard-working masses have to understand easily, nothing else needs to be considered! To be sure, we should not restrict ourselves narrow-mindedly to the lower classes, but the easily understandable essays we compose for the lower classes are certainly also easy to understand for intellectuals—for the class of scholars they add a degree of understandability. Therefore, no one can doubt that our readers are the broad masses, especially the broad masses closest to us.²⁷

Interestingly, in his last contribution (#14) to the nativist literature debate he returns to the issue of mass illiteracy. After four years of discussion on character selection and Taiwanese orthography, this essay clearly has a weary and cynical undertone. He writes:

All the present literary works, the new ones and the old ones, the good ones and the bad ones, they all have nothing to do with the masses. This is a fact, and however pigheaded and stubborn you are, you just can't deny it! Why, then, are art and literature insulated from the masses? The answer is simple: the masses can't read.

26 Nakajima, *1930 niandai Taiwan xiangtu wenxue*, 282.

27 *Ibid.*, 2.

However good a work is, the masses can't read it. The only way they can go is keeping distance and they do not have the slightest chance to enjoy even a fraction of the grace of literature. You want to consciously create 'proletarian works' for the masses. Still, you don't get as excited with them as when you jerk off, and you reach parts of the intellectual class only, especially the leisure class with its tea snacks and drinks. And what about the masses? They have nothing to do with that.²⁸

The rhetoric of Huang Shihui's last contribution to the nativist literature debate is in obvious contrast to his first paragraphs published in 1930. The words 'Taiwan' and 'Taiwanese' are almost completely absent from his vocabulary, instead his writing is interspersed with Marxist terms like 'masses' (*dazhong* 大眾), 'class' (*jiejì* 階級), and 'proletarian' (*puluo* 普羅). This is certainly not a new development in his thinking, as his Marxist convictions are evident even before the beginning of the nativist literature debate. His focus on mass literacy also shows that his affinity with the ideals of the May Fourth Movement was much stronger than his opposition to Zhang Wojun may suggest. In any case, his argument is strikingly reminiscent of the famous writer Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) who, according to Schwarcz, argued that »Intellectuals had before them a task far more modest than the one envisioned by idealistic prophets of this new literature. First, they had to teach the masses how to read.«²⁹

5 Concluding Remarks

The few passages quoted above clearly indicate that Huang does not qualify as an advocate of complete localization and Taiwanese nationalism, and that his thinking focused on language planning, policies of literacy and the status of the Taiwanese language, and not on literature in the narrow sense. Ideologically, Huang Shihui was a socialist, and his plea for language reform was closely linked to a program of (language) education for the masses. To be sure, socialist convictions are by no means at odds with notions of cultural particularity. In the case of Huang Shihui, it can be concluded that some studies overemphasize Huang's preoccupation with the latter. The notion of Huang Shihui as a harbinger of Taiwan cultural independence obviously relies on the first lines of his

28 Huang Shihui, »Meiyou piping de biyao, xian gei dazhong shizi« 沒有批評的必要，先給大眾識字 [There is no Need to Criticize, First Teach the Masses How to Read], in *Xianfa budui* 先發部隊 1/1934, 1–2.

29 Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 209.

essay *Why Not Advocate Nativist Literature?* and cannot be substantiated in the broader context of his other articles.

The political and ideological agenda of Huang Shihui and the other intellectuals who promoted literature in the Taiwanese vernacular clearly falls into the domain of language planning. In this respect it must be emphasized that language planning is by no means restricted to official institutions. Cooper points out that it »may be initiated at any level of the social hierarchy, but it is unlikely to succeed unless it is embraced and promoted by elites or counterelites.«³⁰ Similarly, Spolsky argues that »Language activists are significant participants in language management [...]. Working at the grassroots level, they attempt to influence existing, former, or potential speakers of the language to continue its use and to persuade government to support their plans. Lacking authority, they depend on acceptance of their ideology by those they try to influence [...].«³¹ The constraints with regard to the role of government agencies formulated in both quotations clearly apply to the language ideas of Huang and the other advocates of nativist literature. As the aims of the language activists were in diametric opposition to the language policy of the Japanese colonial government, it is pointless to analyze the reasons for the failure of the movement.

The issues discussed in this paper are by no means restricted to Huang Shihui and they deserve attention with regard to other figures of the first nativist literature debate as well. Thanks to the publication of a comprehensive source book of the original essays,³² most relevant texts are now easily accessible. A systematic re-reading of the nativist literature debate remains a desideratum for research on Taiwan's cultural history.

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30 Robert L. Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 183.

31 Bernard Spolsky, *Language Management* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 204.

32 Nakajima, *1930 niandai Taiwan xiangtu wenxue*.