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Viet Nam: Quoc Ngu, Colonialism and Language Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Speakers of Vietnamese

According to the International Encyclopedia of Linguistics Vietnamese is the mother tongue of the 60 million people who call themselves *ngu'oi Viet*, or *ngu'oi kinh*, the lingua franca among the other ethnic groups who reside in the political territory of Viet Nam, and a minority language spoken in the neighbouring countries of Cambodia and Laos with 600,000 and 70,000 speakers respectively. It is also used daily by more than one million expatriate Vietnamese, especially in the United States, Australia and France, with small numbers in some African and Pacific island francophone nations or territories of France, and smaller numbers in Japan (Encyclopedia 1992:223). Nguyen Xuan Thu estimates (1995:xii) that speakers of the language exceed 70 million, with nearly two million of these residing outside Viet Nam: more than one million in the United States, 200,000 in Canada, 150,000 in Australia and some 120,000 in France, and significant numbers among those Nguyen Xuan Thu calls "Laotians and Vietnamese Laotians" and "Cambodians and Vietnamese Cambodians". These people have skills ranging from native proficiency in the language to the level of those he calls "second-language speakers", those in Laos numbering around 250,000. Nguyen Xuan Thu estimates the number speaking Vietnamese in north-east Thailand as "high", with a smaller presence of Vietnamese in other south-east Asian countries.

For these populations Vietnamese is variously a familial language and a language of personal or national identity. Among government officials in neighboring Laos, Vietnamese has prominence as a regional language of geographic, political and strategic power. In the former Soviet Union and in the United States, Vietnamese commands a certain strategic and political status. In several nations Vietnamese has a considerable scholarly and academic presence. To these contexts for teaching, learning and speaking Vietnamese we can add the more recently emerged status of Vietnamese as a "heritage or community language" in several countries where Vietnamese immigrants have settled. Under policies of multiculturalism, most notably in Canada and Australia, Vietnamese has a significant presence in public education systems.

1.2 Origins and characteristics of Vietnamese

Although there are scholarly disputes about the origins of Vietnamese, the majority of commentators concur that it has a clear provenance as belonging to the Viet-Muong branch of the Mon-Khmer language family. Some scholars advance a mixed or hybrid origins theory. For DeFrancis (1977:5), there are several possibilities: that Vietnamese is a Tai group language with significant vocabulary borrowings from Mon-Khmer languages, or that it is genetically best classed within the Mon-Khmer group with tone borrowings from Tai languages (cf. also Marr 1981:139). D.H. Nguyen classifies Vietnamese as belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family, within the latter's largest branch, the Mon-Khmer (1992:223-4). There are over 100 Austro-Asiatic languages and some 40 Tai (Crystal 1987:309-10).

Vietnamese is syllabic and tonal and has a rather complex phonological structure, with 11 vowel phonemes, 19 consonant phonemes and six (in the Hanoi dialect, five in the southern variety) tone phonemes. The spoken dialects form a continuum of mutually intelligible varieties from the north to the south of the country in gradations, with concentrations of educated speakers in the major urban centers, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Hue, producing "rather special dialects" (D.H. Nguyen 1987:781).

The Hanoi dialect of Vietnamese has served as the basis for the "... elaboration of the literary language" (D.H. Nguyen 1987:781). The written language has a high proportion of words of Chinese origin but in

the spoken varieties the number is reduced. In some domains of discourse in which the vernacular experience predominates, the proportion of loan words is low, whereas in those domains more concerned with public life, administration and scholarly pursuits the proportion of Chinese-derived loan words increases significantly.

Despite some proposals toward the establishment of a language academy made during the era of rapid popularization of *Quoc Ngu* (romanized writing of Vietnamese) in the early decades of the twentieth century, the terminological evolution of the language has been via creative writing and popularization (adopting mostly utilitarian criteria rather than purificationist ones) rather than through any effort of central language planning (Marr 1981:167).

1.3 Writing Vietnamese

Viet Nam has used three writing systems; Chinese characters and two representations of Vietnamese. These are *Chu Nho*, (or *Chu Han* 'the scholars' script', *Han* characters), *Chu Nom* (an indigenous variation of the Chinese called by D.H. Nguyen "the demotic characters"), and the roman script, *Chu Quoc Ngu* 'the national script', which since 1945 has predominated in most areas of the country and at all educational levels, and whose spirited promotion was a major characteristic of the intellectual and political ferment of the early decades of the twentieth century.

1.4 Influences on Vietnamese

Viet Nam was under Chinese political and cultural sway for ten centuries, from 111 BCE to 939 CE. During this time, and at later periods also, many loanwords entered Vietnamese. There is a popular misconception that the Vietnamese language itself is a descendant of, or somehow genetically connected to, Chinese. This is possibly due to the fact that Chinese ideograms served as the Vietnamese orthography among scholars and public officials for a very long time and also as the means of official literary production, especially among the highly resilient Mandarinate at the various courts of the nation over its long history.

At the present state of our knowledge no claim of a genetic relationship between Vietnamese and Chinese has been supported. Linguistic classifications do not of course affect influences, which have more to do with political and cultural affairs among proximate peoples than with issues of provenance. It would of course be strange if there were not substantial interaction and influence given the close proximity of the nations, the southward expansion of Han peoples at various times and the more ancient civilization of China whose Confucian traditions prevailed in Viet Nam for very long periods, and, among some social strata at certain times, very deeply.

1.5 Other languages of Viet Nam

There are about 54 officially recognized indigenous minority communities within the political territory of Viet Nam, representing 12.9 per cent of the total population of the country. The largest are the Tay people of whom there are more than one million or 13.7 per cent of all minorities; then come the Thai, also numbering more than one million and representing about 12 per cent of all minorities; there are some 900,000 ethnic Chinese representing 11 per cent of the total for all minorities; the Hmong are about 10.5 per cent and the Nung people about 8.4 per cent of all minorities. These groups are located in different areas eg the Khmer on the Mekong Delta, the Chinese in Ho Chi Minh City and the Hmong in the central and northern hill and mountain areas. 87.1 per cent of the population are ethnic Vietnamese (Bernard and Le 1994:6609).

There are also several groups of expatriate or immigrant communities of more recent provenance. As far as the educational attainment levels of the children of these communities are concerned, there is anecdotal evidence reported to the present writer in 1993 and 1994 that many of these children do not master academic Vietnamese sufficiently well to perform to their potential in school and at University.

1.6 Vietnamese overseas

If Australia can be used as a rough guide to the fortunes of Vietnamese in its new host environments, it makes an interesting and mixed picture. According to Kipp et al (1995:72), Vietnamese is the seventh most widely used community language in Australia with 110,187 regular users. This is an increase of 67.3 per cent from 65,856 in 1986 (p. 27).

More than 70 per cent are concentrated in Sydney and Melbourne, with smaller numbers in Adelaide and Brisbane. The population of Vietnamese speakers is mostly young, with 71 per cent under the age

of 35 and a high percentage of the community claiming low confidence in its ability to speak English. More than 80 per cent were born in Viet Nam, according to the 1991 Australian Bureau of Statistics figures.

Vietnamese has had a troubled status in Australian foreign and community language planning. It was designated as a community language in 1987 in Australia's first explicit national language policy, *The National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco 1987), and was included among the 14 priority languages of the 1991 *The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (DEET 1991) but not among the four Key Asian Languages in *Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future* (COAG 1994).

Further, Vietnamese features in some but not all State lists of priority languages (New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland) to qualify for Federal funding supplementation (DEET 1995:97). Vietnamese straddles two public discourses about languages in Australia: it is a community language and benefits from initiatives of multicultural policy (especially from public policy efforts favoring language maintenance); but Vietnamese is also an Asian language and therefore enters the slipstream of the energetic pursuit by Australia of integration into the economic, geo-political and strategic concerns of the Asia-Pacific region through official policy pronouncements along these lines. On the other hand, despite *doi moi*, the new liberal market ideology and approach of the Vietnamese government, and the enthusiasm that exists among developed countries for investing in Viet Nam's economy, Viet Nam is still a poor country whose language does not command the instrumental attachments that Japanese increasingly benefits from in many countries, nor from the growing interest that is evident for Chinese in anticipation of long term growth in its economy.

The creation of a Vietnamese diaspora and especially the large refugee exodus after the Communist victory in 1975 has given birth to a (rather problematical) appellation to Vietnamese writing, a 'literature in exile', discussed by Nguyen Hung Quoc (1994:144) and more certainly the divulgence of Vietnamese values, society, culture and problems onto a broader world consciousness.

1.7 Vietnamese literature

Poetry is, perhaps, the traditional forte of Vietnamese literature. It is in poetry that *Chu Nom* excelled. The distribution of functions that evolved within Vietnamese society allocated poetic verse to exclusive use of *Nom*. Chinese prevailed for all transactional, legal, scholarly and governmental discourse. This patterning reveals an orthographic diglossia, a digraphia, a long-term and stable order in which a tacit pact evolved to distribute literature production to one or other script or language.

Vietnamese society shared a Confucian reverence for literary works and public culture and observed respect for authors whose formal social role was always clear, with a distinct scholar-gentry whose allegiance various colonial administrations sought to win so as to legitimate their political control. In Viet Nam's long political struggles for national autonomy it was often its direct leaders who were expected to express the national yearning for freedom and independence in the approved literary forms. This tradition is exemplified by the communist leader, Ho Chi Minh, whose resolve to rid the country of its colonial masters, the then dominant Japanese, was formulated in his south China prison poetry during World War 2, expressed in classical Chinese characters (DeFrancis 1977:203). So venerated were the educated and so elevated the respect for literary skill that Woodside can state that Viet Nam "... is and always has been one of the most literary civilizations on the face of the planet" (1976:2).

Prior to the tenth and eleventh centuries Viet Nam's literary production was dominated by the writings of Buddhist monks. These are much referred to in later literature but have not themselves survived. It was during this period that the digraphic bifurcation emerged between characters and *Nom*. Han literature, prominent until the 1500s, captured the writing of philosophical and historical material as well as government and administration. As late as the early part of the twentieth century the much depleted position of classical Chinese could still rally support and it was not until 1918-19 that the civil service examinations in Chinese were finally abolished. Counterposed to this was *Nom*. For stories, tales and poems, the expression of local wisdom, the retelling of the culture to its participants, the vernacular medium was used. By the eighteenth century *Nom* had come into prominence.

The 99 steles at the Temple of Literature in Hanoi, which record the performance of students in the Mandarin selection examinations, attest physically to the antiquity of the Vietnamese tradition of literature and the Confucian-Taoist reverence it was accorded. Also recorded are the heroism and struggle of some military writers. Tran Quoc Toan's (1252-1313) famous work, *Phong Cuong Ca* 'Song

of freedom', expresses the fanatical attachment of his warrior father to freedom from Chinese, domination. Among the most acclaimed writing of this time is the *Binh Ngo Dai Cao* 'Proclamations of victory over Ngo' by Nguyen Trai (1380-1442). During the fifteenth century the Le Dynasty (1428-1786) promoted scholarly and literary production, though new themes emerged with new writers. Relations with women featured with male poets writing of their desire for happiness in love, about the national spirit and about society, with a strong theme of devotion to family, filial piety and ancestral loyalty and remembrance (Bennoun et al 1984 passim; Marr 1981:141-146; Yeager 1982).

Two centuries later women themselves became prominent as authors and made a distinctive contribution to the genres of Vietnamese letters. Doan Thi Diem wrote *Chinh Phu Ngam* 'Laments of a warrior's wife' which as the title suggests explores the experience, feelings and attitudes of a woman whose soldier husband leaves to fight (Marr 1981). Ho Xuan Huong's poetry, vivid and explicit and risqué, is more liberationist and less long-suffering and rejects the domesticity imposed on women by social mores and by men's domination. Much of her work is sexually allegorical and some of it even explicit (Bennoun et al 1984). Writing as a "first generation Vietnamese-American woman in a non-Asian world", Wendy N. Duong (1994) sees in the *Hon Vong Phu* 'Statue of the awaiting wife' in North Viet Nam a contrasting vision to Puccini's Butterfly (persistence and eternal struggle as against tragic death) as the poles that the paternal world, literary as well as mundane, defined for women in Vietnamese culture.

The most famous literary work in Vietnamese, however, its canonical apex, is the *Nom* work *Truyen Kieu* 'The Tale of Kieu' by Nguyen Du (1765-1820). Marr (1981:144) calls Nguyen Du, Viet Nam's Chaucer. *Truyen Kieu* tells the story of a beautiful woman, Thuy Kieu, who must abandon her young lover and prostitute herself to the wicked Ma to earn money to save her doomed father and the family honor. Her falsely charged father, though innocent, is unable to be freed otherwise. For 15 years, Thuy Kieu lives in concubinage and slavery, devotedly reflecting on justice, filial piety and the conditions of her life and torment. Her ultimate freedom is gained after a dream foretells a brighter future. Literature came progressively to exhibit a political message of national freedom to the Vietnamese people, rather than extolling loyalty to the king, especially strongly under French colonial rule.

By the early part of the twentieth century a break was visible in literature with the pre-eminence of prose over poetry and the domination of political themes over personal and philosophical ones. There emerged after 1954 a further distinction between the north and the south; later still came the emergence of Communist and Exile literature (Nguyen H. Q. 1994a and 1994b).

Just as the ancient colonization, material and cultural, of Viet Nam by China produced a literary medium and tradition which was progressively indigenized, so too with the recent colonization. Francophone Vietnamese literature's flowering has been briefer, less entrenched and may well have passed into its own history, but it is no less distinctively Vietnamese or unique (Yeager 1982). Some part of the Vietnamese experience was (and may still be) rendered in French.

Lockhart (1994:177) finds in even more recent Vietnamese writing, and especially in the stories of Nguyen Huy Thiep, the emergence of a post-Confucian sensibility and 'the possibility of a fundamental change in Vietnamese literary consciousness', the beginnings even of a post-modernism in which Vietnamese writing is integrated into a contemporary world literary order.

2. Language Policy and Planning

2.1 Introduction

There has always been human activity which more or less deliberately impacts on language, its forms and statuses, but only in the last three and a half decades has an academic discipline been devised to systematically study instances and devise theories of language planning. Language planning presumes the existence of language problems whose resolution requires deliberate attention to language in policy, whether of public institutions or within the private domain.

Probably first invoked by the linguist Uriel Weinreich in the late 1950s, the term 'language planning' became prominent in the work of Einar Haugen, who in 1966 made it the overarching category encompassing all societal intervention in language. Haugen's still popular systematization of the field distinguishes between the following activities: selection of form, codification of the selected form,

implementation of the new norms, and their elaboration into various public domains. Within the latter is included the institutional and cultural cultivation of language forms.

In European countries language academies arose over several centuries whose project was the cultivation of prestige norms of literary standards. The creation of prestigious institutions (e.g. Florence 1582, France 1635, Spain 1713) to cultivate an indigenous and prestigious standard of the designated language later merged with the idea of a national language. During the nineteenth century the emergence of new nations, the revival of ancient ones, and the establishment of national varieties of several languages spawned an expansion of deliberate language engineering, cultivation or propagation.

The great bulk of language planning, however, was not in established or establishing nations but in multilingual polities in which religious missionaries produced orthographic systematization of previously unwritten languages for purposes of proselytizing.

Although in disciplinary terms language planning activity comes under the domain of applied linguistics, closely related to socio-linguistic endeavors, it is rarely entrusted by authorities to professional language planners. More typically, language policy is undertaken by nationalist campaigners and powerful social elites and cultural figures of great prestige whose interests and ideologies are reflected in the choices and strategies for language planning.

In recent years language planning theory has come under sustained attack from several quarters. It has been accused of having an excessive technocratic and descriptive orientation (Luke, McHoul and Mey 1990) and of complicitly serving the interests of a monolingual notion of the nation state and therefore of the project of linguisticism, or linguisticide, in which language planning practices are held to serve the interests of statist and powerful groups. The effects of such practices are to reduce the social space for small, minority or dominated linguistic minorities the result of which is to advance the cause of a small number of languages of wider communication, and pre-eminently among these English, to the exclusion and eventual extermination of the weaker ones (Mühlhäusler 1996; Tollefson 1991; Skutnab-Kangas 1995; Phillipson 1992). A further criticism of language planning is directed toward its overly descriptive character and its poorly developed theoretical content.

2.2 Key terms in language planning

Language planning classically is divided into two major branches of activity: corpus planning and status planning (Kloss 1969). The former addresses norm selection and codification and therefore tends more typically to be undertaken by language experts (though by no means always). The results of corpus planning work are dictionaries and grammars and various formal processes for standardization, literacy manuals, pronunciation and writing and style guides.

Corpus planning aims therefore to respond to ideological imperatives of nationalism, political ideology, anti-racism or counter-sexism by reforming orthographic systems to reflect these and other ideologies; to resolve communicative problems concerning efficiency or style preferences that impede efficiencies; to furnish a language with terminological repertoire adequate for scientific or technical discourse previously allocated to another code.

Status planning addresses the choice of language or variety, the relative social and institutional support allocated to it, and the propagation of the acceptance of the policy. As a result, status planning generally has nation-making or nation-solidifying purposes and aims therefore to spread the language, or its preferred orthography, over the national territory or, in cases of imperial or economic expansion, more widely.

Neustupný (1978) introduced a useful distinction between approaches to language planning: one describes societies which plan language via policy, the other via cultivation. He later further distinguished between the notions of correction and management of language issues as the superordinate frame for describing language planning with the subordinate categories of treatment (organised and deliberate attention to language) and planning for those varieties of language treatment which seek to be theoretically structured and highly systematic.

Cooper (1989) has added the term acquisition planning to corpus and status planning to refer to the deliberate efforts of polities to address foreign, or second, language planning.

2.3 Purposes of language planning

Modernization, however defined, is a common stimulus to language policy, as is authentication of the norms that are devised, invoking nationalism and cultural distinctiveness as key influences. Modernization has often involved the adoption of romanized forms of writing, such as Turkey, Indonesia and Viet Nam.

Typically, however, modernization operates at the lexical level and could be said to be a universal activity if terminology standardization is included along with its extension. Culturally, modernization is a loaded term, since it suggests the adaptation of the marked groups to the norms, values and practices of outsider groups. It is also a very general notion. More commonly, authoritative planning for languages aims for narrower goals which seek to balance tradition and 'modernization'.

Viet Nam is the only instance of a nation with a Chinese linguistic influence in which orthographic reform, aiming at the substitution of characters with a romanized system, was successfully enacted. This may be because the period of its direct domination by China was far longer than for either Korea or Japan (DeFrancis 1977:30) or because its indigenous orthography, the *Chu Nom*, never developed beyond its intermediate position as a phonetic-ideographic system, i.e. it never itself fully evolved toward either a phonetic representation nor toward a native system of ideograms.

It is perhaps also important that the ideology of nationalism and the possibility and idealization of mass education coincided historically with the presence of a class of proponents of romanized writing, the *Quoc Ngu*. The *Nom* was too complex a system to serve mass education campaigns, Chinese was unknown to the vast majority of the population and French promotion of French over Vietnamese made *Quoc Ngu* sufficiently distanced from its own colonizing origins to be invested with nationalist purpose.

3. Vietnamese language planning

3.1 Introduction

The main themes in the history of language planning and language policy in Viet Nam have been the long struggle of the Vietnamese, from ancient to modern times, against colonialism, both from sources proximal and distant, and the reactions of Viet Nam's intellectuals, the scholar-gentry class, bureaucrats, politicians and peasantry to the language forms imposed or favored by these dominating outside forces and their internal supporters.

In these struggles the language policy of Viet Nam's rulers, or the nation's cultural and religious institutions, has involved all aspects of language planning, orthographic reform and propagation, symbolic political struggle around script, terminological extension, literature production, modernization, various forms of codification, standardization and elaboration as well as language-in-education planning and status attribution in specialised domains. Indeed Viet Nam's struggle to secure an indigenous national culture free from the influence of foreigners (or more precisely, one in which it was the Vietnamese openly choosing to admit and regulate the nature and extent of these influences) has bequeathed the country an extraordinarily diverse and rich experience of language policy and implementation.

Viet Nam's history is not unique in its struggle against colonial aggression but it is remarkable in its intensity, duration and also in the diversity of its sources. It is these struggles that frame most of the language policy experiences of the country, which were not mere correlates or reflections of these wider forces but sometimes rose to central national importance in themselves. Indeed language issues were elevated to such prominence at certain times that they came to constitute the social and political moment itself and formulated the manner in which the historical episode is recalled. There has been little research work utilizing a language planning framework on Viet Nam with very few articles in the likely major journals: *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *Language Problems and Language Planning* or the *Language Planning Newsletter* and in edited publications which survey language policy/politics and planning questions in various parts of the world. An annotated bibliography of language planning and education in South East Asia contains no references to Viet Nam (Yin 1990). Extensive examination of the history of language policy is found in John DeFrancis' 1977 *Colonialism and Language Policy in Viet Nam* and David Marr's 1981 *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*. Extensive use is made in this section of these works.

Vietnamese language planning historically can be divided into three macro-phases: Mandarin Education; French colonial education and Vietnamese national education (with nationalist and communist phases).

3.2 Mandarin education 1070-1883

Chinese colonial penetration southwards into the northern parts of what is the acknowledged territory of Viet Nam lasted from 111 BCE to CE 939 and brought to an end the legendary period of Vietnamese history. During the Chinese ascendancy there emerged the typical pattern of language hierarchy with Chinese occupying powerful and official domains and Vietnamese all others. The only writing system was the classical Chinese characters. Chinese administrative policy changed from an initial intention to rule via indirect control utilizing the native aristocracy to "outright cultural and political assimilation" (DeFrancis 1977:10).

In the more than 1,000 years of Chinese domination the numbers of Vietnamese who were admitted to positions at the Chinese court and who were proficient in Chinese "can be counted on the fingers of one's hands" (DeFrancis 1977:11). Those Vietnamese who entered prestige society needed to acquire literary mastery of Chinese, mostly doing so by transferring to the Chinese capital itself and then bringing Chinese official culture to Viet Nam on their return. It was not the policy of the Han rulers of Viet Nam to admit Vietnamese to the educated class.

The Vietnamese wrested political control from their Chinese rulers in 939 and progressively established an indigenous monarchical education and literary system whose characteristics prevailed until their progressive dismantling by the French colonial administrators from the middle of the nineteenth century. Freedom from direct Chinese rule inaugurated, ironically perhaps, a period of cultural dependence and the creation of a distinctively Vietnamese but clearly Chinese-modeled aristocratic scholar class with all its institutions. The early period of Vietnamese monarchical rule saw a struggle between the Buddhist and the Confucian canons for pre-eminence.

The first institution of higher learning, modeled along Confucian principles, was established in Hanoi in 1076, preceded by the introduction of a formal system of education in 1075. This functioned to train civil servants in a parallel system to that promoted by Buddhist priests for those seeking careers as functionaries in the institutions of state. Under the Tran house the Buddhist sway declined in the face of the Confucian order. The term that is sometimes reserved for the writing of this era is 'Sino-Vietnamese', though it differs little from Chinese (DeFrancis 1977:14). Given the linguistic affinity and closeness to classical Chinese writing, Marr (1981:141) questions whether the term 'Sino-Vietnamese' can be justified.

Historiographical interest emerged with the early dynasties whose annals were compiled in 'Sino-Vietnamese' and whose compilation established the use of Chinese characters as the form for such official state documentary purposes, a function they were to retain for many centuries. 'Sino-Vietnamese' literature was generally imitative of its Chinese master genres and styles as well as being written in characters. It was not until the Le period (1428-1786), however, that the by then well-established Chinese system of scholarship, aristocracy and the Confucian order spread beyond the north to encompass most parts of Viet Nam's territory, though slowly and with far less penetration in the southern parts of the country. But although Chinese fulfilled High language functions in the society it was never spoken colloquially by the Vietnamese and so bilingual communication in elite domains of the political life of the country became necessary and persisted for more than 800 years.

3.2.1 Nom

During the thirteenth century the Vietnamese devised a written form for their language based on Chinese characters. It is called *Nom* (or *Chu Nom*) and is sometimes referred to as demotic writing. The earliest extant *Nom* inscription, on a temple stele at Bao An in the north of the country, is from 1209. The first piece of literary writing of Vietnamese is considered to be the 1282 Kingly explanation of his ordinances to his subjects by Tran Nhan Tong (r.1279-1293). *Nom* came to serve exclusively functions of vernacular expression, while Chinese retained dominance court and in scholarly, military and official literature.

The use of *Nom* as an indigenous literary form may have protected vernacular Vietnamese literary creativity from direct Chinese influence. Many compositions were written for reciting, rather than reading, given that the vast bulk of the population was illiterate.

This pattern of separating the written systems by using similar but not mutually intelligible systems lasted for more than 800 years. During this time three main language attitudes evolved toward *Nom*: the irretrievable hostility of the bureaucrats whose disdain never lessened; the positive affirmation of some radicals, such as Ho Quy Ly and Nguyen Hue, who aimed to have it replace Chinese; and its pragmatic acceptance by many for use within the limited domain of indigenous literary production (DeFrancis 1977:44). The paramount literary work in Vietnamese, *Truyen Kieu*, was written in *Nom* by just such a pragmatist, Nguyen Du, between 1802-1820.

Nom used single Chinese ideograms or combinations of up to three ideograms. The characters were used in their phonetic value, i.e. to represent Vietnamese sound symbols. They were therefore largely unintelligible to the Chinese. As the original *Nom* evolved it came to employ composite forms, with parts designated for meaning and others for pronunciation. The system therefore is a unique combination of phonetic representation and the semantic. This system, then, is ideographic or idea-phonetic Vietnamese since it represents the Vietnamese language with the original use of character formations and combinations. Its ancient origins may have lain with the earliest attempts by Buddhist priests to utilize Chinese characters as phonetic symbols, initially possibly to represent Sanskrit or other foreign languages (DeFrancis 1977:21) or for local place names and names of people that did not have Chinese renderings. At any rate Viet Nam's indigenous literature, an oral literature before *Nom*, came now to have a graphonic representation.

Nom was the form for the composition of Vietnamese literature while standard Chinese characters were required in official discourse. This resulted in a linguistic division of labor; an oral and written diglossia. Some parts of the culture were rendered in Vietnamese utilizing *Nom*, whilst all official and governing domains of life required the use of Chinese.

The previously exclusive use of Chinese had erected a barrier greater than the archetypal wall separating illiterate masses from the educated social elite, since this barrier was not only social and officially sanctioned but also radically marked by impenetrable linguistic form. The unifying common element of the spoken language now, with *Nom*, was able to bridge (though only ever partially) the official script barrier. The goal of bridging this barrier, many centuries into the future, was invoked by nationalist and communist leaders in campaigns for making the masses literate. The beneficiary of this national project was not *Nom*, however, but the national language in its romanized form, *Quoc Ngu*, partly because, unlike the *Hankul* script in Korea, *Nom* never underwent codification, standardization and officialization processes.

Under Ho Quy Ly (1400-1407) there was a systematic attempt to make *Nom* substitute for Chinese writing and to popularize the classics of literature by translating them into *Nom*. His reformist and nationalist rule was brief, interrupted by Ming invasion which resulted in the replacement of Vietnamese by Chinese at court, the burning of Vietnamese libraries and the loss of much *Nom* writing. The relegation of demotic writing to subordinate status continued even after the reinstatement of the Vietnamese monarchy under the Le dynasty (1428-1786), back to its previous role of giving literate form to stories of moral injunction or didactic writing and to vernacular poetry.

The fortunes of *Nom* depended on the interest of political and military leaders in seeking popular legitimation or support. During the political struggles for dominance characteristic of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries *Nom* literary production, in its reserved domain, increased significantly, though the division of functions remained unchallenged. However, in their appeal to the people some contestants for political power began to utilize *Nom*, giving it the beginnings of a politicized character. This still incipient critical character led to various interdictions from the royal houses. The Confucian Mandarinate at power came to consider some literature in *Nom* seditious and promoted royal decrees for its suppression, resulting in the destruction of many works written in demotic. Just as the short-lived Ho dynasty's attempt to elevate *Nom* and have it replace Chinese did not last long, so too was the only other systematic effort to reform Viet Nam's political-literary division of labor, that of the Tay Son Dynasty of 1788-1802.

Political instability caused by Manchu invasions from the north and combinations of mercantile, missionary and military adventurism from Western powers stimulated and reinforced internal conflict. Such fertile ground for domestic upheaval forced the Le rulers to cede power to other nobles, culminating in the Tay Son rebellion led by Nguyen Hue and his two brothers in the central region of the country (Marr 1971:16). Favoring the missionary activity of Western religious, Nguyen Hue established a political

base that enabled the institution of a dynasty, the Tay Son. Fiercely defiant against Chinese incursions, and militarily successful against them, the Tay Son rulers strongly encouraged Vietnamese against Chinese. Nguyen Hue's ambitious project was to effect the complete replacement of Chinese by Vietnamese at court and in administration and to substitute characters with *Nom* by translating classical and other works into the latter. His decrees constitute the officialization of Vietnamese and *Nom* in administration (DeFrancis 1977:40) and its active encouragement in the interests of a nationalist and independent Vietnamese spirit.

The Tay Son dynasty was defeated by a rival, Nguyen Anh, who enlisted the support of French religious and military officers, and ascended the throne as Emperor/King Gia Long, ruling from 1802-1820, inaugurating Viet Nam's final dynasty. Little remained of the nationalist language policy agenda of the Tay Son as the early Nguyen rulers progressively re-instituted Chinese works as the prime curriculum for education, favored the use of Chinese characters over *Nom*, and reconstituted the scholar-gentry class whose attachment to the Confucian system was total (DeFrancis 1977:43).

3.2.2 Quoc Ngu

Some two centuries before the defeat of the officialization of *Nom* under the Tay Son rulers, a group of European priests devised a writing system that was to come to prominence and eventually defeat both Chinese characters and the ill fated *Chu Nom*. The priests' main goal was the conversion to Christianity of the Vietnamese and their involvement in language planning (i.e. romanizing Vietnamese) was designed to assist them to acquire knowledge about the Vietnamese people.

Centuries after *Quoc Ngu* was thus devised, the instrument of romanization's ultimate success was the total upheaval brought about by French military conquest and division of the nation into three states, the resultant nationalist struggle, and the subsequent appropriation by communist ideology and popular education of the goal of universal literacy capable of giving the minds and hearts of the masses to the new rulers.

European missionary activity in Indo-China was well established in the seventeenth century and commercial contacts were also becoming widespread. Although several European countries had sent missionaries, it was French Catholics who became dominant by the mid-1700s. Missionary converts were won mainly among those least directly involved in the formal Confucian system, especially the peasantry. Catholicism became therefore an additional point of difference, added to the existing economic and social divides that separated the peasantry and laborers from the elite attached to the Confucian order. Preaching salvation for the poor, the Christian ideology came to be viewed with suspicion by the imperial houses and the entrenched scholar-gentry class who served its interests. According to DeFrancis (1977:50), the missionaries in later centuries sought separatism and under the establishment of French colonial rule became patriotically French almost as much as they were religious, some even becoming involved in direct political activity. Christian villages were often cut off from the surrounding society. Imperial repression, including the massacre of priests and their converts, occurred from time to time in the nineteenth century.

The original missionary goal of communicating with the masses to propagate the Christian faith necessitated a communicative medium. Mastering the spoken language was the priority since so few ordinary people knew either characters or *Nom* and the priests could rely on translators to access literature in these scripts. The present Vietnamese orthography was created in the seventeenth century by a group of these European priests initially as a notational aide for their acquisition of the spoken language. The original sound-symbol correspondences are attributed to a French Jesuit, Alexandre de Rhodes, who is believed to have devised the system between 1627 and 1638, though it is likely that he developed an existing notational system pioneered by Portuguese priests rather than inventing it himself. The new orthography was published by de Rhodes in his 1651 *Dictionarium Annamiticum, Lusitanum et Latinum*, along with a Catechism which was issued at the same time, i.e. a Vietnamese, Portuguese and Latin dictionary with a brief grammatical guide and a prayer book using the system. The system is essentially a phonemic rendering of Vietnamese with extensive use of diacritics to indicate sound quality and as tone markers over vowels. During the early twentieth century the Vietnamese came to call this writing system the *Quoc Ngu* 'the national language', although the previous system, *Nom*, was, in this literal sense, also a *Quoc Ngu*.

Although *Quoc Ngu* was successful in rendering Vietnamese into Latin script, its actual use was circumscribed to a small number of religious documents, personal correspondence and dictionary

compilation within the Catholic community (expatriates and local converts) until well into the nineteenth century. After the establishment of the Nguyen dynasty, some prominent Catholics held powerful advisory positions with the new rulers and other Catholics religiously undertook modifications to de Rhodes' conventions. Reforms by the Apostolic Vicar, the Bishop d'Adran, and a new Latin-Vietnamese dictionary by Father Jean-Louis Taberd made modifications to consonant and tone markers. These changes survive to the present day and despite further reform proposals in the 1920s few other modifications to the script written for European ears 300 years ago have been made (Marr 1981:167).

Quoc Ngu was extended to school use, though in a very limited way, from 1861 (Kelly 1978) when the French conquered three eastern provinces of the south of the country. This was also the year in which a printing press to publish in Vietnamese, using romanized script, as well as in French (Marr 1981:144) was set up for the first time.

3.3 French colonial education

French colonial administration of Viet Nam, the country's division into three parts and its renaming - Cochinchina (the South), Annam (the central parts of the country) and Tonkin (the north) - was progressively established from 1861 and lasted until its dissolution in 1945. During these turbulent years three languages jostled for prominence: a fading Chinese, an asserted French and a resilient Vietnamese. These were orthographically rendered in characters, French, *Nom* and *Quoc Ngu*. *Quoc Ngu* had a slow growth until the first decades of the twentieth century. It was promoted by both colonialist and comprador sections of Vietnamese society, but was fiercely resisted by the Mandarinate and those who opposed the French. It was not until it secured nationalist associations and a modernization dimension that its growth accelerated.

The first period of French political control was direct, just like Chinese colonial power nearly two millennia earlier. The French may have desired to rule via the established aristocracy but rejection of them by the entrenched Vietnamese rulers and public officials necessitated imposition of direct French power, the Rule of the Admirals, from 1861 to 1879. The Nguyen house was hostile to the French presence and refused to concede advantages to them, despite its founder, Emperor/King Gia Long, having acceded to power in 1802 with the active assistance of French missionaries, merchants and military. The Confucian bureaucrats who advised his successors encouraged rejection of French requests for commercial and religious favors, policies which occasionally led to massacres of priests and their converts, as well as a generally anti-Christian ethos at the ruling court.

Frustrated in their attempts to gain religious toleration and commercial advantage, the French commenced a conquest of the entire country. By 1862 they succeeded in prizing three southern provinces from the court at Hue, adding a further three provinces five years later. With this territory they formally established Cochinchina. The French campaign was assisted by the collaboration of Vietnamese Catholics but resisted by the literate officials whose cooperation would have been critical to any effective establishment of French rule, especially the indirect rule they had anticipated setting in place. The non-cooperation of the bureaucrat class required that the French establish an administrative structure afresh, mortally weakening the Mandarinate.

In these endeavors *Quoc Ngu* came to have a function wider than its internal Catholic community base. This is because it was relatively easier to learn and teach than characters or *Nom* (i.e. its phonemic character enabled rapid progress in its use), and because the new administration required interpreters and officials at all levels along with the rapid creation of a documentary system for administering its power. Building initially from the Latin known by many native Catholics and the established missionary schools, the French regime reconstructed a schooling and administrative system along romanized lines.

Despite differences on other issues of colonial policy, successive French officials came to be united and committed to one main goal, that of displacing the Confucian order and its manifestation in Chinese characters along with the formal examination system that sustained it. This was seen as critical to converting the Vietnamese culturally and ideologically away from an attachment to Chinese civilization and political influence and winning them to its French rival. Some French sympathizers (individuals who admired traditional learning) wanted to retain the classical system represented by Chinese. Despite their campaign for its retention, however, they had very little support and did not prevail.

For the whole period of French colonial presence in Viet Nam, education and schooling were domains it struggled to control. The special role of the teacher in Vietnamese culture was a crucial factor in

relations between Vietnamese and French. Teachers organised and participated in the resistance against the establishment of French control. "The teachers held out against the French for over 20 years, despite the capitulation of the Vietnamese monarchy" (Kelly 1978:97).

In 1864 the French moved beyond ad hoc expedient measures aimed at producing a class of linguistically competent Vietnamese collaborators toward the formal establishment of *Quoc Ngu*-medium primary schools, partly to counter the traditional role of the schoolteacher. These government schools (colonial schools) were set up predominantly in areas where the resistance had been strongest. In 1865 the Chinese examinations were formally repealed in Cochinchina, though they continued in the central and northern parts of the country until 1879, just before the extension of French rule there.

New journalism emerged in which Vietnamese supporters of the French were assisted by the ruling administration to set up newspapers using *Quoc Ngu* so as to penetrate more deeply among the population. The first and most famous of these was the government-sponsored *Gia Dinh Bao*, established in April 1865 and published continuously until 1897. A growing narrative, administrative and scholarly literature using *Quoc Ngu* was now emerging, sustained by French rule and local support.

A very complex coexistence of languages and their writing systems and social functions characterized the period, though this can be seen with hindsight to represent the beginnings of the displacement of Chinese and the progressive dislodgment of the *Nom*.

Among the great proponents of romanized writing was the prolific writer, Catholic, one-time editor of *Gia Dinh Bao* and general supporter of French rule in the whole of the country, Truong Vinh Ky (1837-1898), whose support for the French did not diminish his cultural use and knowledge of Chinese characters (mainly for translating classic texts), the occasional use of *Nom* and his commitment to cultural autonomy for his country. His advocacy of romanized script was instrumentally motivated; he saw it as a public utility that would improve access of Vietnamese to Western learning, especially in science and technical knowledge (Yeager 1982:71). He was the "best known collaborator" (Marr 1971:3611) and was prepared to subordinate Vietnamese independence in exchange for its economic and technical elevation. In this respect Truong Vinh Ky is an early westernizer.

Also prominent was Huynh Tinh Cua (1834-1907) whose extensive writing, editorship of *Gia Dinh Bao* and general life-project was the liberation of the Vietnamese spirit from dependence on Chinese thought and Confucian ideology. In addition to these extensions of the literary repertoire in *Quoc Ngu* there was also an upsurge of religious literature in roman script. Despite these efforts, however, roman script did not extend very much further than among Catholics and supporters of French rule while opposition to these categories of identification included the major part of the intelligentsia and was still the province of *Nom* and even Chinese.

During this period in which all language policy initiatives were advanced either by the French or in reaction to them, one significant alternative was canvassed (unsuccessfully as it happened). In 1867 Nguyen Truong To proposed to the Hue court the official adoption of *Nom*. His proposal did not make any reference to *Quoc Ngu*. Essentially the proposal invited the ruling house to adopt *Nom*, in a modified and renamed version, in reaction to the continuation of Chinese at the Hue court, rather than reflecting any perceived threat from *Quoc Ngu* (Marr 1981). Among his arguments were that modernization necessitated such a change and that the introduction of literacy to children would be enhanced by the adoption of *Chu Nom* because children would readily recognize the continuation into literacy of their mother tongue and learn it more effectively, rather than having to acquire literacy in a foreign language, Chinese.

Despite advances for roman writing a resistance literature in *Nom* strengthened, with many writers associating *Quoc Ngu* with the invader and opposing it outright.

From 1879-1905 the Rule of the Admirals gave way to a Civil Administration, but the linguistic situation was essentially unchanged:

- in the more northern parts of the country, Chinese remained in the ascendant, *Nom* retained its restricted uses and *Quoc Ngu* was all but unknown;
- further south, French and *Quoc Ngu* were in the ascendant, *Nom* was resisting but Chinese was in decline.

By 1885 formal French rule had been established over all of the country with the capitulation of the court at Hue and the termination by the French of the Chinese tributary relationship with the north and center of Vietnam. Viet Nam was split into Cochinchina, Annam, and Tonkin; Vietnamese were split between resisters and capitulators. Cochinchina was constituted as a full colony, but Tonkin and Annam were established as protectorates. Despite Civil Administration, France established its control through warfare and bitter fighting against passionate resistance. The Nguyen dynasty was relegated to a puppet role. Insurrection and resistance were not quelled until about 1896; to achieve domination the French enacted a campaign of strong repression.

During this long period French policy wavered between modifications of an essentially unvarying goal: to establish Standard French as the pre-eminent language of Indo-China (DeFrancis 1977:131). French rulers in the North even went so far as to attempt to reinstate Chinese to placate and pacify the Vietnamese bureaucracy, by the founding in 1886 of the Tonkin Academy to pursue scholarly endeavors, using French and Chinese, and by lessening their opposition to the use of characters. Pragmatic considerations also played a role: since the ending of the tributary relationship between China the North and since assuming power, the French had now to conduct diplomatic relations with China. Though the main reason was more likely the unshakeable opposition of the scholar-gentry class. The Tonkin Academy's short duration apparently only succeeded, however, in demonstrating the efficacy of *Quoc Ngu* as a learning medium rather than any placation of the unremittingly hostile traditional bureaucracy in the North Chinese remained strong at the court, even during the humbled status of the royal family, and just as in the decades of the 1860s and 1870s *Nom* was used to give effect to a resistance literature in the south. Chinese served this function in the north and central parts of the country during the 1880s and 1890s. Although the ultimate and unvarying goal was always the adoption of French by the Vietnamese, there were many different views among the French as to tactics and means for achieving this end. Some favored a limited role for *Quoc Ngu*, others for *Nom* and still others advocated some continuation of Chinese. The paramount objective of the promotion of French aimed also at unifying the administrative language across all of Indo-China and detaching the subject peoples from generally Confucian, and particularly Chinese, values, thereby creating a permanently French-loyal part of Asia.

The strategic differences among the French personnel over this period concerning the means to achieve the ultimate goal even involved advocating that a simplified French be the first language taught to Vietnamese children, with classical French reserved for later stages of schooling or for the more able. Some French officials believed that *Quoc Ngu* warranted inclusion in the curriculum. Others had open contempt for Vietnamese, reserving respect only for Chinese which they admired but regarded as a formidable cultural force to be opposed. Other disputes concerned the age levels for the teaching of French and related methodological issues. Proposals were advanced for a transitional use of children's mother tongue for initial literacy in romanized Vietnamese; others considered it politically and culturally dangerous to allow *Quoc Ngu* any space, believing this to be an invitation to the Vietnamese people to fully identify with the Vietnamese language against French. The oscillation between policy goals indicates that debate, even contest, shaped what was done and the pragmatic limits of achieving imperial goals: "... French colonial policy moved between two ideas which could be considered at cross-purposes: cultural assimilation or the Gallicizing of Vietnamese culture and institutions, and association or the maintaining of traditional institutions" (Yeager 1982:37).

These issues were never definitively resolved and it is likely that there was always a variety of practices put in place 'according to practical exigencies determined as much by teacher availability and skill than by deliberate policy. A common pattern was for the direct or indirect support of the mother tongue to precede the introduction of French, followed by the exclusive use of French as the medium in upper primary and secondary levels of schooling, with Vietnamese sometimes continuing to be taught as a subject. Only small numbers of children had any chance of being educated in any case.

The tiny minority of students persisting to higher education or technical education were taught only in French, though some teaching of characters was also employed. The French policy was based on the pinnacle reward being the granting of French citizenship, but very few Vietnamese ever attained that goal. An underlying fear of French policy was that China's political influence was lurking behind its cultural presence. This view underestimated the intensity of Vietnamese opposition to any foreign domination and specifically its tenacious resistance to the Chinese. Another constant in French policy was the almost unrelieved belief in the inferiority of the Vietnamese language as a vehicle for abstract

thought and scientific reasoning.

DeFrancis characterizes the relations among the scripts and languages in the latter part of the nineteenth century as follows: "While Vietnamese written in *Nom* continued to be used as a vehicle of direct or indirect opposition to the French occupation, Vietnamese written in *Quoc Ngu* was more and more becoming the language of collaboration" (1977:148).

Opposition to *Quoc Ngu* was strong among two groups who were themselves implacably hostile to each other: the classically literate class of Vietnamese society who were, in general, contemptuous of romanized writing and also the most ardent collaborators of the colonial administration who preferred French. The divisions seemed, though only roughly, to mirror the religious cleavages of the society, with one proposal made to the French authorities to divide script usage according to religious affiliation: *Quoc Ngu* for Catholics, *Chu Nom* for Buddhists and *Chu Nho* for Confucianists (DeFrancis 1977:149).

Nevertheless there was some expansion of literature in *Quoc Ngu*, although official French censorship of publications remained consistent (the first major unofficial *Quoc Ngu* regular publication, *Nong Co Minh Dam*, did not appear until 1901).

By the turn of the century the downplaying of the Chinese examination and literary system and the redundant status of the old intellectual order had produced a general decline in traditional learning; illiteracy was on the increase. Ironically, Chinese was to be an instrument of a revival of learning in the early part of the twentieth century, though with far from traditional aims.

Marr (1981:147) points out "No fewer than eight language options were theoretically available to Vietnamese of the early twentieth century", these being a matrix of alignments between mass and elite forms of spoken language and the various writing systems:

<i>Spoken Language</i>		<i>Writing System</i>
MASS	ELITE	
1. Vietnamese	Vietnamese/Chinese	Chinese/ <i>Nom</i>
2. Vietnamese	Vietnamese/Chinese	Chinese
3. Vietnamese	Vietnamese	<i>Nom</i>
4. Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Simplified <i>Nom</i>
5. French	French	French
6. Vietnamese	French	French
7. Vietnamese	French/Vietnamese	French/ <i>Quoc Ngu</i>
8. Vietnamese	Vietnamese	<i>Quoc Ngu</i>

Some French officials, perceptively, came to fear that the promotion of romanized writing for the instrumental reasons of establishing communication with the conquered Vietnamese would actually serve to unite their Vietnamese subjects against the widespread adoption of French as Viet Nam's language and that *Quoc Ngu* might even animate nationalist campaigning against French rule itself (DeFrancis 1977:87). *Quoc Ngu's* incipient association with independence claims was lurking in its nationalistic appellation (national language, language of the country). But instrumental convenience was a powerful force, with the administration several times attempting to officialize the exclusive use of French and romanized Vietnamese in public documentation.

If in the latter part of the nineteenth century *Quoc Ngu* grew slowly, it was to enjoy a period of rapid growth in the early decades of the twentieth century. This phase of Vietnamese reaction to French power saw *Quoc Ngu* gain nationalist attachment. It was this change which decisively sundered the association of roman script with foreign invader culture and allowed its greater facility in mass public education to be highlighted.

During 1905 to 1945 a modernization sentiment came to be attached to the propagation of *Quoc Ngu*, resulting in this acceleration of its acceptance and growth. Many factors contributed to this change. Japan's defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 stimulated new modernizing thought among Vietnamese and a view that Asian powers could defeat European ones. Various anti-colonial struggles and precedents abroad encouraged a view that the adoption of some elements of Westernization and modernization would aid in ridding the nation of its foreign rulers.

Phan Boi Chau (1867-1940) was an opponent of French domination who took inspiration from Japan's assertiveness (Marr 1971:113). He wrote (in Chinese) a tract called *Yuenan Lunxian Shi* (*Viet Nam Vong Quoc Su* 'History of the Loss of Vietnam') which contained sentiments critical of the imperial court's failure to lead Vietnamese resistance and called for the expulsion of the French. Phan Boi Chau made contact with Chinese modernizers and revolutionary thinkers and eventually came round to a fully anti-monarchical point of view, influenced by Sun Yat-sen. Over several years in the early decades of the century Phan Boi Chau led study groups to Japan in which an assertive independence-minded modernization came to be seen as the missing element in the previously intense but unsuccessful opposition to colonial subjugation. Although written in Chinese, Phan Boi Chau's radical ideas circulated widely within Vietnam as popular songs. Significantly, unlike other opponents of the French who despised *Quoc Ngu*, Phan Boi Chau came to support its cause. In 1907 he called for its full introduction into the education system in a work entitled *Tan Viet Nam* 'New Viet Nam' (DeFrancis 1977:163).

Despite its perceived foreignness and the disdain of the scholar classes toward its origins *Quoc Ngu* was useful in the new reformist and anti-colonial thinking given voice in the writings of Phan Boi Chau and others. Ironically it was through Chinese that such reformers gained knowledge of world developments and thinking such as Enlightenment philosophy about the Rights of Man, liberation struggles in many parts of the world and Chinese reform thinking. They came to the view, however, that their further propagation would be facilitated by wider literacy and this wider literacy would most effectively be ensured through *Quoc Ngu*.

In March 1907 another decisive development occurred, the founding of the Tonkin Free School. This important, though short-lived, institution was to have a critical effect on the fortunes of Viet Nam's language politics. The School taught Chinese, *Quoc Ngu* and French, nested in a patriotic curriculum within a network of wider activities of propaganda and the recruitment of support for new ideas about Viet Nam's future. One of the key ideals of the Tonkin Free School was a popular incitement to adapt Western ideas and knowledge for the nation's benefit. Marr has called the mood at the school "incipient nationalism" (1971:166) and notes that its translation of foreign works into romanized writing in Vietnamese brought in new concepts and was idealized in poetry as taking to illiterate fellow nationals a "saving spirit" (p. 167). For the School's founders and teachers the support for *Quoc Ngu* was based on an important "modern", incipiently democratic idea, that of bridging the vast social gulf between the spoken and written word caused by the literary domination of Chinese characters and the educated elite who knew them and their separation from the masses of ordinary people. Widespread literacy in *Quoc Ngu* offered the promise of such modernization. This would mean an overturning of the association between opposition to French rule and opposition to *Quoc Ngu* as a product of Western imperial culture.

Although there were competing streams of thought within the Tonkin Free School about more radical versus slower reform, it nevertheless had a great influence on rehabilitating *Quoc Ngu* among scholars and intellectuals whose opposition to it had retarded its entry into many circles of importance in Vietnamese life. The School also produced a large number of translations of major Vietnamese, Chinese and European works, thus giving practical support to roman writing while giving it a literature, making it equal to the other scripts in its social standing. Other schools modeled on the Tonkin Free School were set up in various parts of the country. All this alarmed the French authorities who sought at first to constrain the social access the new ideas it promoted were gaining by energetically promoting French in competition to the School but then, in 1908, closing the School altogether.

Just as in the 1860s colonial schools teaching morals, *Quoc Ngu*, French and hygiene sought to counter the traditional role of schoolteachers in Vietnamese society, colonial policy now reacted to Vietnamese educational autonomy. The Tonkin Free School and other modernizing educational institutions sought non-Western lines of development which directly challenged the authorities' conception of the appropriate knowledge for subjugated peoples. Kelly (1978) shows how the French fortified the social order they desired by their reaction to the new ideas of educational and linguistic change Vietnamese were formulating. Resentful of the competition from bright Vietnamese students in the French schools (and the attendant privileges that resulted), of the role of traditional education in resisting French domination and now of the autonomous access to Western, liberal and reformist ideas that the Tonkin Free School and the related *Dong-Du* 'Eastward Movement' (sponsoring the training of Vietnamese in Japanese military schools) represented, the *colons* (French residents in the colony) pressed for a separate Vietnamese schooling system.

For seven years from 1906 the Conseil pour l'Amélioration de l'Education Indigène 'Council for the Improvement of Native Education' met to implement an educational program for all of Indo-China. Kelly shows how the colonial schools substituted for Vietnamese traditional education and pre-empted the attempt by intellectuals and reformers to independently acquire and interpret potentially dangerous formulations of modern liberalism. These subversive ideas came via Chinese and the recent and current reformism there, but included French liberal thinking. A Code de l'Enseignement Publique 'Code of Public Instruction, was issued in 1917 setting up 'a native education system, which in 1924 was accompanied by a severe regulation of non-government schools, closing 1,835 of them, separating Vietnamese from *colons* in schooling. According to Kelly (1978:102), education policy had become a matter of "colonial survival". The new schooling system, which lasted until 1954 when the French were ejected from Viet Nam, oriented Vietnamese toward subservience in their own country by eulogizing tranquility, subsistence rice growing and rural vocationalism, and traditionalism within a rigidly conformist and unquestioning ethos. Even the French language curriculum seemed to actively constrain any representation of the wider world, even of Europe, and of any liberalism, scientific, technical and free thinking. The curriculum stressed rural and passive vocationalism and moral order under French tutelage, to dampen expectations and dissuade dissent.

France was struggling to regain the allegiance of the Vietnamese, compounded by peasant hostility at the taxation now levied against them by the new French policy of making its' colonies and protectorates pay their way. A period of repression followed as the colonial administration moved against the intellectuals and those rebels still holding out against its rule in the North. Phan Boi Chau succeeded in escaping the country to Thailand as French policy lost conciliatory subtlety. Its governors and residents were preoccupied with the Great War looming in Europe and inaugurated a period of suppression to stifle dissent in the colony.

The decreasing knowledge of Chinese characters led directly or indirectly to the decline of demotic writing, which depended on knowledge of characters, although many intellectuals and reformers were versed in Chinese and composed many of their works in characters. On the other hand, the political contest over the ideas of Phan Boi Chau and other reformers benefited *Quoc Ngu*. French attempts to counter the reform propaganda advanced *Quoc Ngu* because the colonial administration needed to use romanized writing to appeal to wider strata of the population. *Quoc Ngu* also benefited from the reformers' belief that the failure of the previous opposition to the French had been due to its narrow support among unrepresentative intellectuals. The colonial authorities officially sanctioned romanized script journals, and especially promoted the ideas of individuals such as Pham Quynh to weaken the growing nationalist sentiment. His involvement supports a point made by Marr (1981) that to uphold Vietnamese was not inherently patriotic, any more than promoting French was inherently collaborationist, though such connotations were in particular circumstances prominent. Indeed the success of *Quoc Ngu* was largely because both sides, collaborators and independence campaigners, for their own separate reasons, came to view romanized writing of the Vietnamese language as instrumentally important in a campaign waged against each other.

Pham Quynh, like Truong Van Ky before him, was committed to preserving French rule in Viet Nam but at the same time aimed to preserve Vietnamese cultural distinctiveness. He was entrusted with the editorship of *Nam Phong Tap Chi*, a journal in *Quoc Ngu* with close connections with the political offices responsible for internal security. The journal was published from 1917-34 and made an important contribution to diversifying the subjects for which *Quoc Ngu* was used, including asserting the French case over the German in the European conflict. Its main contribution, however, was in the use of *Quoc Ngu* and extensive translations into it, which helped to establish romanized writing as appropriate and modern vehicle to write Vietnamese.

Nam Phong also influenced and helped standardize the language and its Latin orthography on a national basis. Marr (1971:214) has pointed out how the efforts of "educated collaborators" actually benefited the anti-colonial cause by enriching the vocabulary of *Quoc Ngu*, making its syntax more flexible, and introducing beneficial stylistic forms. More importantly, perhaps, these efforts to counter reformism via *Quoc Ngu* gave romanized writing a widely circulated translation literature that inspired a subsequent Vietnamese literature of social criticism and protest. Its immediate political function, however, was to counter the growing independence sentiment by isolating a culturalist agenda from the political one of the reformers. In Saigon as well as in Hanoi, active and energetic writing of journalistic pieces, fiction, poetry and theater scripts and other texts contributed to a "*Quoc Ngu* explosion" (Marr 1981:161) whose young writers were committed to a "single, multifunctional modern standard Vietnamese language" (p.

163).

Socialist moderation in France and the effects of World War 1 meant that political agitation for independence lessened. It was revived with Ho Chi Minh's formation of radical communist organizations following his involvement in the French Communist Party and attendance at the Fifth Communist International in Moscow in 1924, and with the return from exile of reformers like Phan Chu Trinh and Phan Boi Chau (the latter with a commuted death sentence), as well as the return of the thousands of Indo-Chinese who had served in the defense of France during the war in Europe. From Ho Chi Minh's Revolutionary Youth League the Communist Party of Viet Nam emerged in 1930; for the first time urban workers entered the political stage, with strikes and a sharpening of the nationalist agenda of reformers.

Pham Quynh (who later became Minister for Education) was continually active in retaining Viet Nam for the French and eulogized the French language though he did not wish to see it replace Vietnamese. One effect was a 1924 reform that restrained the all-out promotion of French over Vietnamese and called for Vietnamese to be used for the first three years of a child's schooling (Kelly 1978).

Both the Chinese characters and the *Nom* were formally abolished in 1918 in Viet Nam's cultural center and capital of Hue, and in 1916 in Hanoi when the final tertiary examination was abolished. This date signifies the formal end of the classical Mandarin system of education, though not of the Mandarinate itself since the French continued to require a knowledge of Chinese for entry to the civil service until as late as 1940. However, in the schools Chinese had been starved of its lifeblood. Teaching was mainly in French and in Vietnamese with only the most rudimentary and piecemeal Chinese-character teaching remaining. The predominant view of the role of Chinese was akin to the view of the classical languages of the Western tradition, Latin and Greek; it served to ground learners in an intellectual tradition but had no communicative aim. The same was essentially true of *Nom*. In the wider society, Chinese retained limited religious and even political (though largely ceremonial) uses at functions on important occasions until at least the 1940s.

Pham Quynh's language policy (in stark contrast to his political deferral to the realities of colonial relations) made a contribution to intellectualizing *Quoc Ngu* sufficiently for it to function as a realistic alternative to *Nom* and characters. Like some other Vietnamese, Pham Quynh believed that Vietnamese was under-developed compared to Chinese and French, especially French, but he also believed that it was both possible and desirable for the discrepancy in its development to be overcome by lexical expansion, literature production, intellectualization and the use of *Quoc Ngu* to accomplish these language planning objectives.

The 1920s saw an upsurge in writing in new and original genres in Vietnamese, including the novel, and in the wide availability of such material and the diversity of its content in *Quoc Ngu*. The low literacy rates meant that the vitalization of the language still awaited a wide readership.

By the end of 80 years of French domination in Viet Nam *Quoc Ngu* had decisively prevailed over Chinese and *Nom* through two avenues: first, the use of *Quoc Ngu* as a French policy strategy to detach the Vietnamese intelligentsia from dependence on and attachment to Chinese culture and ideology; and second, the French strategy aimed at reducing the effect of political reformers seeking to win the hearts and minds of other Vietnamese away from attachment to the French. Its true and permanent success, however, came when Vietnamese reformers added nationalism and the beginnings of democratic modernization, to their oppositional politics and conceived of *Quoc Ngu* as the means to advance their cause. In response the collaborators determined that *Quoc Ngu* was the medium to contest the reformers' political agenda.

3.4 Vietnamese national education

From 1940 Japan pressured the Vichy-loyal French colonial forces to admit Japan into a power-sharing arrangement in Viet Nam and to resist Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh which he led. In March 1945 the Japanese disarmed the French forces and occupied Viet Nam in their own right with a puppet Vietnamese government. Japan's surrender to the Allied Forces led to the Tan Viet Nam 'Declaration of Independence' by Ho Chi Minh in September 1945. In response the French mounted a strong counter move to retake the country. They regained control of the southern parts of the country and advanced northwards but were decisively defeated at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and forced to permanently relinquish control of Viet Nam.

Delays in implementing the agreements which resulted and the failure to hold the elections that were part of the settlement resulted in the division of the country around the seventeenth parallel, into a southern zone and northern zone, and the involvement of American and other forces on the side of the South in the ensuing Viet Nam War, which ended with the collapse of the South to the forces of Ho Chi Minh in 1975 and the reunification of the country.

The anti-colonial struggle of the Vietnamese passed through succeeding phases, each of which modified later struggles. The first was led by the limited vision and self-preservation ideology of the Mandarinate in the second half of the nineteenth century. The second, led by Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chu Trinh in the early decades of the twentieth century, sought modernization but was unable to mobilize mass support. The third, led by Ho Chi Minh, succeeded in merging the anti-imperialism of Phan Boi Chau with the anti-feudalism of Phan Chu Trinh and involved, for the first time, the peasantry in a complete revolution (Marr 1971; DeFrancis 1977:225).

During the shared-power period the French rulers conceded access to Vietnamese throughout all primary education in an attempt to win collaborators from the Japanese. After the Japanese capitulation the French were forced to concede secondary education entirely to Vietnamese as they fought to restrain nationalist opposition and to reassert French domination, though all post-schooling and technical education was to be in French. With their definitive expulsion from Vietnam, the education system was entirely devoted to *Quoc Ngu*.

By 1946 University examinations in the north were being converted to Vietnamese (though of course the French had returned to Hanoi from 1947 to 1954). French was replaced as the medium of instruction but was often taught as a foreign language. Indeed, other foreign languages soon supplanted it, for strategic reasons: Russian in the North and English in the South.

For DeFrancis (1977), the French attempts to impose their language on the Vietnamese were little more than ideological colonialization, seeking to dominate the Vietnamese intellectually so that permanent assimilation to French civilization and values would be assured, even perhaps permanent deference.

The third main stage in Vietnamese language planning can be divided into two concurrent parts which merge after 1975: the Nationalist system from 1945 to 1975 in the South, and the Communist system from 1945 to 1975 in the North and thereafter in the whole country. The outcome of this third main stage has resulted in Vietnamese in *Quoc Ngu* occupying all official domains at all levels of education (although there has been some attention paid at different times to vernacular education for minorities). Foreign language education choices were dictated initially by the division of the North and South and their political hostility. Since the struggle over script and language has been decisively won, the main single identifiable language planning goal has been for mass literacy in *Quoc Ngu*.

3.4.1 Literacy campaigns

In 1939, at the outbreak of World War 2, only 10 per cent of Vietnamese students continued beyond the elementary years of schooling with about 2-3 per cent continuing to higher levels. Literacy rates were variously estimated to be between 5 per cent and 20 per cent (DeFrancis 1977:218).

During a period of relative liberalization encouraged by Paris in the late 1930s, the Vietnamese communists, who had long propagated basic education and literacy as a means of disseminating revolutionary thought among peasants and the small numbers of urban workers, became active with the Hoi Truyen Ba Chu Quoc Ngu 'Association for Dissemination of the *Quoc Ngu*' (or 'Association for the Dissemination of *Quoc Ngu* Studies', Marr 1981:181). Established between 1938 (Tonkin), 1939 (Annam), and 1943 (Cochinchina), the Association mobilized large numbers of people in successive campaigns for literacy. It formed its own libraries, prepared materials and organised various programs: an ABC Course with 34 spelling lessons and basic numeracy, delivered over four months in the evenings, and a Higher course with more advanced reading, dictation, popularized science and computational tasks.

In its Country Studies report on Viet Nam UNESCO documents the literacy campaigns which came to have such emblematic significance for the country. The optimistic character of the reports published by UNESCO owe something to how such documents are produced; the Country Studies are "...conducted by national organizations and institutes related to the national literacy programmes in the countries under the auspices of Unesco ... " (UNESCO 1984: Preface) and form a part of a comparative series.

According to the 1984 Country Report, Viet Nam inherited a 95 per cent illiteracy rate and from 1938 until the August Revolution in 1945 the Association for Dissemination of the *Quoc Ngu* rendered 70,000 people literate, commencing a series of literacy campaigns that are claimed to have achieved remarkable success.

The ethos of the 1938-45 literacy program was nationalistic, highly independence-minded and evoked dutiful loyalty to the nation, mutual assistance and provided access to critical texts of the Communist Party.

On September 2 1945 the *Declaration of Independence* set out the lines of development for the Provisional Government. When some days later it set out its educational goals compulsory primary education and "total literacy" in *Quoc Ngu* featured prominently (UNESCO 1984:2). The Declaration and the subsequent Orders (numbers 17, 19 and 20) laid the basis for the system of popular or mass education that was to follow, with its revolutionary and universal character. Importantly these statements declared the " ... learning of the national script ... compulsory and free for all Vietnamese" (UNESCO 1984:3).

In October 1945 then President Ho Chi Minh made a *Chong Nan That Hoc* 'Appeal upon the entire people to combat illiteracy'. The language of armed preparation was utilized to argue for national literacy in *Quoc Ngu*, enshrining its association with revolutionary reconstruction of an independent, post-colonial nation. The mobilization invoked a massive upheaval in social relationships: "The literate husbands should teach their illiterate wives, the literate brothers should teach their illiterate sisters, the literate children should teach their illiterate parents, the literate masters should teach their illiterate servants, the rich should form classes at their private homes to teach the illiterates" (cited in UNESCO 1984:3; cf. also Marr 1981:184).

Successive campaigns along the lines of mass mobilization were implemented, from the first Popular Education Course (November 1945 to February 1946) and then repeatedly until the start of the war again in December 1946. Among the slogans that animated the campaign, at a time of drastic danger and upheaval not excluding famine, imminent foreign invasion and a barely-established government, was the supreme association of *Quoc Ngu* with national security, ironically validating the French colonial fear that the national language which it sought to use to dislodge the attachment of the Vietnamese to Confucianism (and the presumed attachment to China) would become a weapon in the Vietnamese campaign against the French as well. The literacy campaign made such connections explicit in its slogans: "To combat illiteracy is to combat foreign invasion."

According to the UNESCO report, by 1947 the number of learners had grown exponentially to more than 2.5 million involving almost 100,000 instructors and some 75,000 classes. During the ensuing war the literacy campaigns continued, becoming smaller and more mobile to evade capture. "Full Literacy Villages" appeared by the end of 1947 and the movement progressed, reaching its peak during the period 1948-50. Villages were designated as such upon reaching targets of 95 per cent of men aged 12-50 and women aged 12-45, and all of the "revolutionary cadres" in the 16-30 age group who could read printed and handwritten material (without spelling out the words) and who could read four-digit numerals and write four-digit numbers as well as a dictated passage of 80 words in 45 minutes with fewer than ten mistakes.

By June 1950 1,424 villages, 80 districts and ten provinces were designated as "full literacy units", increasing the number of literate Vietnamese, and users of *Quoc Ngu*, to some ten million. The Popular Education service continued its literacy work until July 1954, the end of the war, concentrating more on strengthening the basic literacy achievement through targeted higher education July 1954, stage of socialist revolution commenced in the north programs of many sorts.

After the Vietnamese victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu in July 1954, the stage of socialist revolution commenced in the north the of the country. A three-year plan (1956-58) was devised to cement the achievement of literacy in the North, though this time in peace-time conditions. Almost two million learners participated in this massive campaign and in the target age brackets the result was claimed to be a literacy rate of 93.4 per cent. Highland and ethnic minorities were only slowly included in the literacy programs of the country, though romanized writing was produced for many of these languages in the early years of the literacy campaigns (Marr 1981:183).

Over time, emphasis shifted from general and basic education to complementary education, an after-work model of education for elite "cadres" and young people, paving the path to university and college education for thousands of Vietnamese for the first time. In a 1974 report UNESCO was able to conclude that a "majority of working people" had attained "firm and effective literacy" in the North.

During the Viet Nam war, however, literacy efforts in the South did not abate, though the official literature provides less information about these. According to UNESCO, after national reunification in the localities that had been engaged in literacy programs were able to quickly add their programs to those of the North and achieve "basic education and basic literacy nationwide". In many zones the same ethos that animated the campaigns in the North was found, i.e. eliminating the vestiges of neo-colonial culture, removing exploitation due to restricted literacy and bringing about the general liberation of women and improvements in life style, health education and general welfare.

A further two-year literacy plan was embarked upon from 1976-77, claimed to result in some 1,465,870 people, in the target age brackets for men and women achieving literacy, and 12-40 per cent for ethnic minorities of both sexes. The programs are claimed to have been so successful that by February 1978 all of the 21 cities and provinces of the South had "fulfilled 94.15 per cent of their literacy plans and the number of neo-literates totaled 1,323,670" (UNESCO 1984:8).

In four waves of Popular Education in the whole country, literate, more than three million between and 1975 in the North alone and a further 1.5 million in the whole country between 1976 and 1979, a total of more than 15.5 million people. The official position was unambiguous: "Liquidation of illiteracy stands out as a constant revolutionary concept, policy and action in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam" (UNESCO 1979:72).

Marr (1993:339), in a caution against uncritical use of official figures for literacy, school attendance and enrollment, points out that the official statements have recently conceded that a literacy problem remains in the country. According to the 1989 Census, 86 per cent of the population is literate and only 12 per cent of the population over the age of ten years has not attended school (Bernard and Le 1994:6609, 6613). The rate of adult illiteracy is calculated as 12.4 per cent, the sex differential being 16.4 per cent for men and 8 per cent for women (Europa 1994:3310). Whatever the actual or most accurate figures, and whatever the rate of relapse into poor literacy after initial literacy success or the disparities between various age, sex or ethnic groups, Viet Nam has achieved popular literacy levels significantly higher than in comparable countries and in so doing has secured the position of *Quoc Ngu*.

4. Other language planning questions: foreign languages and ethnic minorities

With *Quoc Ngu* firmly established as the official form and Vietnamese as the uncontested language, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is more like the conventional state in which the code-choice part of the national language question has been resolved. Language policy now has merged into language planning which operates within settled policy parameters. Status planning questions now concern the relative weight to assign to ethnic minority languages, corpus planning addresses terminological extension and possible minor orthographic modifications to Vietnamese as well as corpus work on minority languages, and acquisition planning addresses the populations that Viet Nam's planners imagine will be the main foreign interlocutors for the Vietnamese into the future.

A large number of senior and strategically placed officials in modern Viet Nam have languages of the former Soviet Union as their main foreign language and retain an attachment to the continued use of them among Vietnamese. At the same time there is a pragmatic realization that English and other languages will be of crucial importance as Viet Nam pursues its recent policy of *doi moi* (economic liberalization), involving an opening up to the West. Along with *doi moi* goes the relaxation of control on the introduction of foreign information since 1986 and the accompanying liberalization of the circulation of information within Viet Nam (Marr 1993:347), with the nation's leaders believing that such liberalization will not challenge the rule of the Communist Party. Marr's view (p. 356) that authoritarianism will be difficult to maintain in the light of both the means and the demand for foreign information and its more liberal circulation mirrors past Vietnamese experiences in which foreign language competence was the vehicle for the introduction of foreign influences, though this time the influences will be for liberalization as much as for modernization, or rather for a modernization in which liberalism is a central notion.

A small degree of attachment to French remains; it is occasionally the language used in dealings with

foreigners. France provides aid development and French tourism is growing rapidly. French is occasionally used in dealings with other Indo-Chinese countries. Viet Nam is a formal member of the francophone world and government officials have advised the present writer that the country is considering hosting the international congress of *francophonie* (the equivalent of the Commonwealth for the 42 countries that belong to it) in the foreseeable future.

Chinese is perceived to be of strategic and economic importance, not simply because of the proximity of the economically booming, parts of southern China, but also because Taiwan and Hong Kong are among the largest investors in Viet Nam and because there are several hundred thousand ethnic Chinese in the country, concentrated in and around Ho Chi Minh City. Viet Nam's dispute with China (and other countries) over the possession of the Spratly islands is also a constant reminder of the nearness and importance of the People's Republic.

The foreign language in greatest demand is English. The progressive involvement of Viet Nam in the South East Asian grouping of nations which use English as their working language at more than 300 meetings per year, the increased tourism from many English speaking nations and the international lingua-franca character of English have created a massive demand for the learning of the language. Indeed, in 1994 an official decree was issued calling for managers and civil servants to learn a foreign language by 1997, with the emphasis on English.

There is a perception that the increasing opening up of the country will bring a demand for Vietnamese as a Second Language programs for foreigners living and working in Viet Nam and that these will constitute a commercial opportunity for many entrepreneurially-minded Vietnamese. There is also the interesting phenomenon of returning Vietnamese who are anxious that their children re-acquire the language of their parental and familial culture. At present foreign languages are compulsory for all students from Year 6. One official commented to the present writer in 1993 that there was political interest in requiring that two foreign languages be taken at Years 10-12, though the resources for such a program would be scarce. There is a great shortage of language teachers throughout Viet Nam and especially of trained English teachers.

Planning for the language education of ethnic-minority children receives sporadic attention from government officials. Until 1990 there were only government owned and managed schools in Viet Nam; now there are non-government and semi-government schools and indeed 50 per cent of all schools in Ho Chi Minh City are joint government and private. As far as ethnic minorities are concerned, the Vietnamese authorities state their interest in supporting the maintenance of the language and cultural traditions of these communities. They are, however, opposed to ethnic-based schools, at least in the cities, and prefer to integrate the different communities.

5. Conclusion

Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language . . . there is a very divergent, highly codified ... superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature ... which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation" (Ferguson 1959/96:34-35). Function is central to this definition, as is its inclusion only of varieties of the same language, i.e. a High and Low dialect.

According to Ferguson, diglossia tends toward one of three resolutions: the High form prevails (but this tends to occur when it is the standard language of some other community and especially when these communities merge); the Low form prevails as the speech/writing reservoir from which a national standard language is generated (with significant admixture of the High variety); or, more typically, a stable distribution of the pattern continues for very long periods of time.

Fishman's (1967, 1972) modification of the diglossia thesis allowed for there to be "several separate codes" rather than simply a single High and a single Low variety (there are instances with more than one Low variety used by the same community that uses the single High) and admitted to the pattern linguistic differences greater than the ones Ferguson envisioned (i.e. in Ferguson's scheme these differences were greater than stylistic ones but not differences of such magnitude that they would constitute distinct languages) and for any functionally differentiated language varieties.

Fishman's well known formulation of "bilingualism with and without diglossia, diglossia with and without

bilingualism" emerges from this analysis. Fasold (1984:53) has extended the idea even further, describing Ferguson's notion as "classic diglossia" and identifying a category of "broad diglossia", which is "... the reservation of highly valued segments of a community's linguistic repertoire (which are not the first to be learned, but are learned later and more consciously, usually through formal education), for situations perceived as more formal and guarded; and the reservation of less highly valued segments (which are learned first with little or no conscious effort), of any degree of linguistic relatedness to the higher valued segments, from stylistic differences to separate languages, for situations perceived as more informal and intimate."

By analogous logic it is possible to argue that Viet Nam has had a digraphic distribution of functions between its two Chinese derived-writing systems with a nested trigraphia when *Quoc Ngu* is included, in a situation of restricted group bilingualism. The consequence was the remarkable longevity of the diglossic, or digraphic, pattern, and indeed great longevity of the trigraphic pattern once roman writing was allocated a domain of use that was exclusively its own: the Christian literary segment of the population, and later the French cooperation sectors.

The interruption of the long-standing balance of language forces via the active promotion of French, whose exogenous standing, seriously threatened the stability of the cognate systems of Chinese writing, had the effect of destabilizing the established digraphic literary order of many centuries and the more recent trigraphia. The interruption to that pattern erased the elite digraphia as well as the elite bilingualism but not in favor of French. Rather the outcome from the long Vietnamese struggle for an indigenous language and its orthography is the victory of the Low form, for if *Quoc Ngu* could be considered to have been in a distributional power relationship with the other scripts it clearly was the Low form in writing and Vietnamese the Low spoken form. *Quoc Ngu's* prevailing assured that Vietnamese entered the official functions of state and that this entry was via its romanized form.

The appropriation of *Quoc Ngu* to a socially transformative ideology of modernization, a modernization perceived to be an essential ingredient for national liberation, enabled the capture of a discourse not available to *Chu Han*, nor to *Chu Nom*, nor to French. Chinese and French were deprived of these associations because of their own elite status, restricted-domain bilingualism and foreign provenance. *Nom* might have been harnessed to associations of national liberation but not easily to modernization, given its inefficiencies as a system for popularized and mass education and its insecure status as the basis from which to generate a new national variety. That this might have happened under different circumstances is clear from the success of the other ideogram-based literary traditions of Korea and Japan (Marr 1981:142), which successfully used characters as the stimulus for devising original and vernacular-appropriate orthographies. This is also supported by the modernization of China itself, where modernization progresses with the retention of the use of characters despite attempts at romanization.

The discipline of language planning is insufficiently developed to fully explain the success of *Quoc Ngu* over *Nom* and Chinese characters, given the field's predilection for description over theory and its lack of a strong professional communication with historical analysis and political-economic discourse. Sociolinguistics is built around description of the social correlates of language. However, language questions are often constitutive of social realities, these being framed and made in discourse and therefore in language in use. Language planning theory has tended to mirror its parent discipline's approach to focus on how language and society reflect each other.

In the case of Viet Nam, and probably much more widely, language matters often constituted the moments of dispute of which they were also a part. Until *Quoc Ngu* could encapsulate a national project of modernization and national autonomy, its association with its Catholic origins marked its foreignness and distance from most Vietnamese aspirations. But this, by comparison with similar romanization moves in Japan, China and Korea, may not have been enough to secure its political success if there had not also been an entirely exogenous threat from a romanized superposed language.

Intellectuals made *Quoc Ngu* more useful than French and Chinese to their project of defining a modern and autonomous Vietnamese lingual culture, unifying the spoken word (which the nation shared with only relatively slight variations) with its written representation, which had historically entrenched a great social divide between the literate and the non-literate. This, combined with the decision of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam in 1945 to make the campaign against illiteracy one of its principal revolutionary objectives, brought the elites and the masses together in a common national language policy project.

Transformations of Vietnamese society invoking democratic ideals, independence and modernization also transformed *Quoc Ngu* from its seditious associations to instrumental value. Inextricably involved therefore in the broader project of national assertiveness and the traditional Vietnamese priority of autonomy in the face of more powerful nations, *Quoc Ngu* and the social forces whose purposes it came to serve were elevated to central importance in transformative politics.

The trigraphic and diglossic pattern was radically challenged by enforced bilingualism in French and even by the attempted substitution by French of all Vietnamese codes and scripts. This dramatic interruption to the ancient linguistic patterning of Vietnamese society resulted in the adoption of the code whose initial purpose was the private realm of foreign forces bent on conversion, but which was itself converted into a tool of democratic and native liberation, which the unmodified *Nom* and foreigner- and elite-tainted characters were not well suited to address.

Note

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