

The Development of Hanwen Regular Script and Its Influence on Italic Typography

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Abstract—China experienced great changes in the early 20th century. When the foreign invaders brought the war, they also brought the advanced scientific and cultural thoughts and opened the prelude of the New Culture Movement. However, westernization is not the right way to save the country. At that time, the Nanjing National Government and people of insight realized the importance of the spirit of the Chinese nation. In 1934, the government published *The Essentials of the New Life Movement* in Nanchang, which started the New Life Movement to carry forward the spirit of the Chinese nation. As the representative of nationalism and the inherent culture, the Hanwen regular script has been shouldering a very important national mission in mainland China until 1949. This paper analyzes the font characteristics of Hanwen regular script and its influence on the modern regular script, and reflects on the deficiency of the Chinese character font design system in the Republic of China era and its influence on the current modern font design of Chinese characters.

Keywords—Hanwen regular script; printing regular script; Chinese character font design; New Life Movement

I. INTRODUCTION

The Arts and Crafts Movement swept across Europe at the end of the 19th century. As for the application of organic form and curve of natural elements, the design of Chinese character fonts at that time also reflected the streamline form. The modernism design trend from 1920 proposed that fonts should be designed in accordance with their functions. The most fundamental purpose of font design is to serve as a communication medium and output information in a direct and clear form. During this period, China was experiencing New Culture Movement. The reform of literary style and the simplified geometric processing of characters were all influenced by Western design. At the same time, Japan created boldface based on Chinese character font and combined with Western modern printing technology, which was later introduced into China in the late 19th century. Under the dual influence of the design trend of the West and Japan and the westernization of the New Culture Movement, and with the assistance of western instruments and drawing tools, Chinese character fonts become graphically mechanized. And unduly neat and decorative Chinese characters began to lose the randomness of writing, and the use of regular font is relatively weakened. As a result, the

whole printing industry began the coexistence of multiple writing styles.

II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRINTING PRESS OF HANWEN REGULAR SCRIPT

Zheng Wuchang (See "Fig. 1"), a famous painter of the Republic of China, was born in Shengxian, Zhejiang. He graduated from Hangzhou Fu School in his early years and was employed as an editor in Chung Wha Book Company (Shanghai) in 1922. Later, he succeeded Gao Yehou as the director of the fine arts department of Chung Wha Book Company, during which he was also the professor of the department of Traditional Chinese Painting of Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts, Hangzhou National College of Art, Shanghai Xinhua Art School and Suzhou Art School. In 1927, Zheng Wuchang, Huang Binhong, Li QiuJun, He Tianjian and others established the Bee Painting Society in Pingleli, Jiujiang Road, Xizang Road, Shanghai. In the same year, Zheng Wuchang gathered a group of painters of Shanghai Painting School, as well as the Shanghai Chinese Painting Association, and published the *Bee Picture* together with the Bee Painting Society. In order to get the best binding effect, they used regular script for typesetting. At that time, only the matrix of No.5 regular script of foreign-funded enterprise: Millington Printing Plant can meet the requirement. According to the *Recalling Chung Wha Book Company*, the matrix of No.5 regular script is not complete, and that of No.2 is less. [1] Zheng Wuchang often went to Millington Printing Plant for exchange and negotiation, and the Millington Printing Plant was uncooperative, and they often argued with each other.



Fig. 1. Zheng Wuchang (1894-1952).

"Movable type was first created in China, with a wide range: clay type, wooden type, and copper type before, to the current lead type. Printed book has mud, wood, copper, and magnetic version. The fonts on ancient books include Simsun, regular script, clerical script, cursive handwriting, etc. Now Chung Wha Book Company has taken the lead in making a whole set of movable type of imitated Sung characters, can't we be the first to create a set of movable regular script? The typeface of Simsun is different from that used in modern society, and reforms should be made to suit the needs of the public." [2] For this reason, Zheng Wuchang is determined to create a typeface of Hanwen regular script to solve the problem. In 1932, he set up Printing press of Hanwen regular script. The headquarters is located in Dongshan Road, Shanghai, while the printing plant is located in Yangshupu Huasheng Road, Shanghai. The main business of Hanwen regular script Printing Company is to sell lead type and copper mould of Hanwen regular script. The birth of the national industry of Manufacture of Hanwen regular script promoted the Domestics' movement and the defense and adherence to the nationalism of traditional culture, which further changed and shook the monopoly position of foreign capital enterprises on Chinese printing industry.

According to the introduction of Qian Zhixiu, chief editor of *The Eastern Miscellany*, and Song Yinshao, accountant of The Commercial Press, the typeface of Hanwen regular script was handed over to the typeface factory of Zhang Hanyun. The movable type copper mould of Hanwen regular script began in 1929 and was completed in September 1933, covering No.1 to No.5 font size, and the new No.5 font size. Hanwen regular script is highly praised by the printing industry and people of insight. Mr. Cai Yuanpei's inscriptions for Hanwen regular script: "The great contribution of Chinese culture". Hanwen regular script is also known as "New Invention of Chinese Printing Tools" and "The Great Revolution of Modern Culture".

III. THE PROMOTION OF NEW LIFE MOVEMENT AND ZHENG WUCHANG'S SELF-RECOMMENDATION

On February 19, 1934, not long after the issue of Hanwen regular script, Chiang Kai-shek published *Essentials of the New Life Movement* at a meeting of the enlarged premier memorial week in Nanchang. Chiang Kai-shek put forward

the following requirements in the field of art and fine arts: "All kinds of book cover, newspaper inscription slogan, are not allowed to use three-dimensional color font. As for the questions about China in the article, western calendar are not allowed, so as to attach importance to national consciousness." [3]

Three-dimensional color font is decorative typography. During this period, Chinese typography was deeply influenced by western and Japanese design trends. Due to the enlightenment of thought and the integration of foreign culture, the cover of magazine and anthology covers in China then, especially in Shanghai, an international city with developed commerce, adopted a large number of design elements, graphic fonts and a large number of foreign fonts to highlight westernization and internationalization. Nationalism has always diluted and weakened traditional culture. From the cultural perspective, this is the exploitation and destruction of traditional Chinese culture and inherent virtue. For example, as Chiang Kai-shek put forward, "The road of salvation and revival begins with the revival of the inherent virtues of the nation to enhance our national spirit and develop our historical culture".

The great significance of Hanwen regular script actually began with Zheng Wuchang's submission to Chiang Kai-shek: On the reward of the movable type board of Hanwen regular script, and order each subordinate and each organ to use it accordingly, so as to promote the inherent culture and revitalize the nation. In his submission, Zheng Wuchang put forward four points to explain the reason to Chiang Kai-shek: the regular script is the authenticity of the ancient printed fonts; the use of Simsun was inconsistent, and writing and printing were separated; the monopoly of Japanese movable type on the Chinese printing industry; and more than 270 printing firms in China have adopted Hanwen regular script type printing, and the applicability of Hanwen regular script is strong.

IV. THE GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT AND PROMOTION OF HANWEN REGULAR SCRIPT

As for the forbidden instruction of three-dimensional color font, the use of fine arts has not been restricted and improved in the later implementation due to the unclear specification of pattern and text. During the crucial period of the dissemination of political ideas, the recognition of a large number of artistic characters is very low, which is not conducive to the dissemination of ideas. And the style and form of art characters are very personal, and did not form a specific design ideas and logic, all by the preferences of design workers. The political authorities are aware of the importance of Normalization of font form. In view of this, the Executive Yuan issued a new decree on 31 December 1939 to improve the situation. According to the article, *All Subsequent Slogans Should be Printed in Regular Script for Publicity*, "All slogans should be printed in regular script for publicity." (See "Fig. 2") Since the instruction issued, the block letters in Chinese have been favored by major publishing houses and printing houses.

At the same time, almost every issue of the voice of City of *Shen Daily* (Shanghai edition) appeared advertisements in Hanwen regular script. Due to the success and wide influence of Hanwen regular script, printing type faces of regular script are becoming more and more. Subsequently, there appeared different styles of printing type faces of regular script such as Chinese regular script, Hanwen regular script and Hanyun regular script.

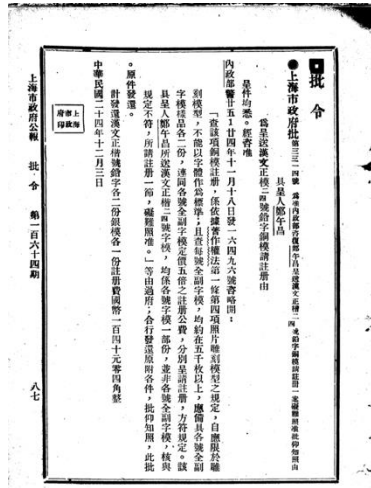


Fig. 2. A copy of Decree No. 334 of Shanghai Municipal Government.

V. THE ORIGIN OF HANWEN REGULAR SCRIPT

They cast *The Thirteen Classics of Tang Dynasty* in Bai Ren Tang into a type, hoping to develop a set of regular script. Later, when the individual fonts were taken apart and typesetting again, it was found that the fonts were of different sizes and shapes. Therefore, Zheng Wuchang decided to hire a professional to be responsible for writing: veteran scholar or calligrapher of Guangeti calligraphy in the Ming and Qing dynasties, and character written in this way is square and neat. So Zheng Wuchang hired Gao Yuncheng, who worked with him at Zhonghua Book Company, to write. Gao Yuncheng was a famous calligrapher at that time. He is the author of *Gao Shu Xiao Kai* and *Model of Chinese Calligraphy*, which sold over 100,000 copies.

The archetype of regular script is Tang handwritten calligraphy. Regular script of the Tang dynasty has a long history and beautiful font. Ouyang Xiu recorded in *A New Book of Tang's History* that there are four ways to select officials then: Shen, Yan, Shu, and Pan. It is recorded in Hong Mai's *Rong Zhai Essays* that "Ji Yi Shu Wei Yi, Gu Tang Ren Wu Bu Gong Kai Shu (Against the background of the imperial examination system, calligraphy was not only to examine scholars' artistic ability, but also to test their basic skills and cultural qualities as officials)" The neat regular script developed into "Guangeti calligraphy" in Ming and Qing dynasties. Therefore, in the early years of the Republic of China, shortly after the fall of Qing government, it was easier for the book and text in regular script to be recognized by the Chinese people than Simsun.

VI. THE FONT CHARACTERISTICS OF HANWEN REGULAR SCRIPT

Hanwen regular script (See "Fig. 3") has a very important influence on modern printing regular script. At the political level, the state organ issued the approval order to support and encourage the development of Hanwen regular script. The breakthrough and inheritance of Hanwen regular script in traditional handwritten regular script has an important influence on the later development of regular script in mainland China, Taiwan or SanSeiDo in Japan.

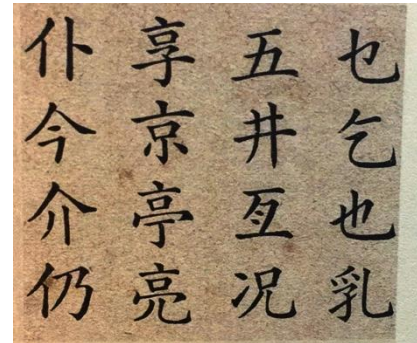


Fig. 3. Hanwen regular script in *Samples of Chinese Type*, printed by Printing Press of Hanwen Regular Script in 1933.

A. Standardization of Font Strokes

On the basis of the early printing regular script, the Hanwen regular script was perfected in the form structure and systematized in order between the fonts. The characters of Hanwen regular script are retained to the greatest extent, the vertical and horizontal relationship of the stroke is more inclined to the systematic font of the font base, forming a standardized stroke structure. It can be found from *Samples of Chinese Type* produced by Printing Press of Hanwen Regular Script in 1933 that the strokes of "今" and "介", "亨", "享" and "亮" almost overlap, which shows that Hanwen regular script have begun to pay attention to the concept of modular character base. (See "Fig. 4")

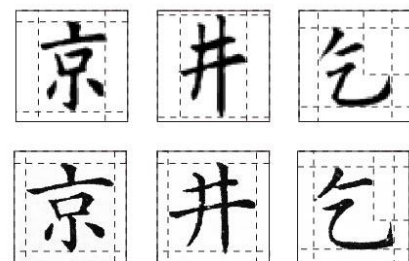


Fig. 4. Structural distribution of regular script and Hanwen regular script in *Jiu Cheng Gong Li Quan Ming* by Ouyang Xun.

B. Balance of Space Structure and Font Center of Gravity

The structural strokes of Chinese characters vary greatly from character to character. No matter how many strokes, the simplicity and complexity of the glyph structure must be

balanced and symmetrical in the same space. It can be found from the comparison of the structure between handwritten regular script and Hanwen regular script represented by Ouyang Xun's *Jiu Cheng Gong Li Quan Ming* that there are many changes in the space between body and stroke in traditional handwritten regular script, and the spatial structure is also very different. However, the stroke spacing of Hanwen regular script is quite symmetrical, and the literal size is more consistent. Thus a relatively uniform space effect is formed and a new order of space structure is established.

Hanwen regular script has adjusted the left-sided focus of traditional handwriting. The center of gravity of printing Hanwen regular script is relatively stable, which creates a relatively uniform space structure, which also plays a certain role in promoting the structure of later typesetting and printing regular script.

It can be found from the comparison between Hanwen regular script and printing type face of regular script in the same period that No.2 regular script and Huafeng block letters of The Commercial Press earlier than Hanwen regular script have many disadvantages. The early style of regular script is more miscellaneous, and the two types of typefaces were written by calligraphers of different styles and printed by engravers. Due to the different styles, varying levels of calligraphy, and the skills of the engraver, the final printed version of the font structure is not very sophisticated, not systematic and complete. Hanwen regular script perfects these disadvantages and makes the skeleton structure of printing type face of regular script more modular.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Hanwen regular script is helpful to uphold and develop the traditional culture. As a commodity, the lead type mould of Hanwen regular script plays an important role in Domestic Movement. In cultural sense, it is much more than a simple commodity of lead type mould. Herbert Marshall McLuhan holds that typography is the engineer of nationalism in *Understanding Media — The Extension of the Man*. [4] It is not long since Hanwen regular script prevailed, but its cultural and national beliefs defended the cultural self-esteem and self-confidence from the perspective of art in the national crisis of resisting foreign enemies.

However, from another perspective, Zheng Wuchang overemphasizes the 5,000-year inherent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, hoping to restore Chinese culture through political power. However, this action ignores and belittles the diversity of design and even the scientific use of fonts. The font design of Chinese characters should confirm to the policy that "let a hundred schools of thought contend, and let a hundred flowers blossom", instead of being exclusive. For example, Shi Dao Zhou Yi's *Graphic and Text* is still being published today. Today, although the Chinese design industry is booming, the attention Chinese designers pay to the Morisawa Type Design Competition and TDC also reflects the profound influence of historical legacy on the font design of Chinese characters.

The font design of Chinese character in the Republic of China was highly creative. The infiltration of foreign design culture makes the culture and art of this special era present a scene of brief prosperity. When a large number of graphic characters and printed fonts appeared, there were almost no studies and works on the design methods of Chinese characters. Designers are more likely to imitate Chinese character font according to their own preferences or the typeface of some foreign fonts. For example, in the 1920s and 1930s, the pattern characters in *Liangyou* of the Republic of China imitated the Japanese graphic characters in Taiichi Fujiwara's *Graphically-useful Fonts* of the same period. Therefore, the design of Chinese character fonts is limited to the variability of the font, the unity of the font base, and the restoration and improvement of the traditional edition. There is almost no content about the relationship between Chinese character fonts and different types of printing, as well as the specification of different fonts. Compared with Japan in the same period, the research and summary of this methodology are still far behind, as Japan has a large number of Chinese character font design methods, and even reading psychology research.

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