Percorsi in Civiltà dell'Asia e dell'Africa I

Quaderni di studi dottorali alla Sapienza

a cura di
Federica Casalin, Marina Miranda

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Impaginazione/layout a cura di: Gabriele Tola

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Indice

9. Cyrillic and Chinese: History and Current Trends

Alessandro Leopardi

9.1. One script, many alphabets

For much of its history, the Cyrillic alphabet has been synonymous with Slavic literary culture. From the Bulgarian Empire, where it was created towards the end of the 1st millennium AD on the basis of the Greek alphabet, it spread with Christianity among the Slavs and neighbouring nations; to the west, its advance eventually stopped at the border of Eastern Orthodoxy with Roman Catholicism; to the east, it expanded along with Slavic settlements into the Eurasian steppe up to the far side of Asia and even into North America. Following the fortunes of the Russian Empire and the USSR, the Cyrillic alphabet has spread further beyond its initial horizon. Today, it is used to some degree of officiality in about 20 countries, most of which are successor states to the USSR. Outside of this area, the Cyrillic alphabet is official or co-official in Mongolia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia and in the Serbophone territories of former Yugoslavia: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia.

Despite that it cannot boast the ubiquity of the Latin script, Cyrillic is one of the world's most important writing systems, in which outstanding contributions to global culture have been and keep being made and circulated. However, talking of one Cyrillic alphabet does not help us to get a correct picture of its identity: we would better understand Cyrillic as a "system of alphabets" that share the same core and the same working principles but have diverged in consistent ways. Cyrillic alphabets are in fact sharply tailored to the phonological systems they represent. Due to such a strong commitment to pho-

netic spelling, creation of entirely new letter forms has always been preferred to the orthographical artifices to which adaptations of the Latin alphabet have often resorted under the same circumstances. Specific Cyrillic character sets are never fully interchangeable. For example, Russian and Ukrainian share only nine in ten letters, despite being relatively close to each other: Russian cannot accommodate Ukrainian ґ <g>, i <i>, ï <ji>, є <je>, while Russian ы <y>, э <é>, ъ <"> are not part of the Ukrainian alphabet. Therefore, words cannot be as easily shared among languages using different varieties of Cyrillic as they can among languages using the Latin script. This feature is particularly significant to our investigation because it is the main reason why so many diverging Cyrillisations of Chinese still exist at a time when Hanyu Pinyin (HP)[1] has taken the place of most national Romanisations previously in use: the adoption of a unified Cyrillisation would be unfeasible, since it could not be shared.

9.2. Cyrillic and Chinese: general trends

Cyrillic and Chinese came into contact almost two hundred years ago along the newly established border between Russia and China. At first, the Russians based their transcriptions of Chinese, like their knowledge of China, on Western European sources. A distinctively Russian Cyrillisation of Chinese emerged slowly; it was drafted in several forms during the 19th century to steadily improve until it took its definitive shape by the end of the Imperial period. Since Russian speakers account for more than half of the users of the Cyrillic script, the Russian system has always been the most widespread system. On its basis, two variants have been developed for Ukrainian and Belarusian speakers. In Central Asia, where Russian is still an important vehicle of education and interethnic communication, the Russian system is used without adaptations; as it is in Mongolia, where it is used to transcribe Chinese terms that have not been acclimatised in Khalkha. Outside of the former USSR, local systems independent of the

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[1] The different systems of transcription reviewed in the present paper will be referred to with abbreviations after their first occurrence, and especially in the appendix. For the reader's convenience, such abbreviations are summarised below near the end of this paper.

Russian Cyrillisation are used in Bulgaria and the three Serbophone countries in the Balkans.

Historically, the vicissitudes of the Cyrillic transcription of Chinese have also influenced some developments in the context of the Chinese language reform. Although not as consistent as the imprint of the Latinisation campaign (*Latinizacija*) that was waged in the USSR during the 1920s, a certain degree of public support for the Cyrillic alphabet existed in China, sponsored by the Soviet Union's rising prestige after World War II. During debates preparing the promulgation of HP in 1956 there were several proposals for the adoption of Cyrillic as a phonetic script for Chinese, although never as successful as those in favour of Latinisation (Zhou 1961: 50-51). Finally, it is worth mentioning that at least one variety of Chinese, the Dungan language of Central Asia, has been written exclusively in Cyrillic since the 1950s: a meaningful exception among the other "tetragraphic" Sinitic languages (Mair 1990: 2-3).

However interesting for its many practical and theoretical implications, the history of Cyrillic and Chinese has never been the subject of a comprehensive work like the one Raini (2011) has dedicated to early-modern Romanisations of Mandarin Chinese. Most specialised publications on this subject, like Dacyšen 2018, Šprincin 1964, Veber *et al*. 1908, deal only with the Russian system. In effect, collecting the huge amount of information required for a work of that sort is a challenging task for any scholar. Before getting to the point, a few technical remarks are necessary. Owing to the limited space at our disposal, it would be impossible to dwell long on the phonetic and orthographic peculiarities of each language, and we shall limit ourselves to highlight only a few salient features of individual systems, that will be further summarised in a table towards the end of this paper. Cyrillic is transliterated to the Scholarly System, except for Serbian Cyrillic, for which the equivalent Latin Serbian is given. Unless otherwise indicated, Chinese is Romanised to HP.

9.3. Early attempts at Cyrillisation

By the end of the 17th Century a powerful drive into Siberia had brought Russia in contact with the Chinese empire. Formal relations between the two countries, inaugurated with the signing of the Trea-

ty of Nerčinsk (1678), were further improved a few centuries later with the Treaty of Kjachta (1728), negotiated by Sava Vladislavić (1669-1738)[2]. For the development of Russian sinology, its most important consequence was that a Russian spiritual mission (*Russkaja duchovnaja missija*) was allowed to permanently reside in Beijing: a unique opportunity at a time when most Westerners were not yet allowed to stay in the country. As Russia itself was, at that stage, slowly coming out of her isolation to integrate into European dynamics, it took yet time for Saint Petersburg to exploit such potential. Despite that one of the earliest works on Chinese language, the *Museum Sinicum* (1730) was published in Saint Petersburg by Theophilus (Gottlieb) Siegfried Bayer (1694-1738), the Russian academia chiefly debated in Latin, German and French, and no need for a Russian transcription of Chinese was felt, or there is little evidence of it. In fact, Russia's modern literary language itself was at that time still in the making.

Thus, the earliest transcriptions from Chinese into Russian Cyrillic, such as the toponyms and anthroponyms mentioned in Vladislavić's *Secret report* (1731), appear to be adaptations of Western European Romanisations, rather than original attempts at Cyrillising Chinese. For instance, the name of Emperor Shunzhi 順治 appears in the *Secret report* as Ксунхи <Ksunchi>, which is most likely based on a Western European (Portuguese or Spanish) Romanisation *Xunchi*, but misunderstood to represent /ksunxi/ consistently with a Central European conventional pronunciation of Latin. Such claim is supported by records of Vladislavić having procured books on China of different sources during a visit to Venice ahead of his assignment to the Russian Far East (Vladislavić 1842: 1, 180-181).

Decades after its existence, the Russian spiritual mission in Beijing began to show its full potential as a few people returned from their Chinese sojourn to become appreciated scholars. Among them, Aleksej Leont'evič Leont'ev (1716-1786) and Stepan Vasil'evič Lipovcov (1770-1841) can be recognised to have developed the first working Cyrillisations of Chinese. Due to Leont'ev's and Lipovcov's contemporaries being required to learn Mongol and Manchu before turning

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[2]   For an account of the early diplomatic relations between Russia and China, see Mancall 1971.

to Chinese, it is no surprise that their transcriptions seem to owe much to Manchu orthographic conventions, like spelling HP *ou* as ey <eu>, HP *fen* as фунь <fun'>, HP *qi*, *ji* as ки <ki>, ги <gi> (Veber *et al*. 1908: 3). But such conventions were limited to practice and did not gain any publicity outside of the very restricted circle of specialised users.

9.4. Iakinf Bičurin's transcription

Serious academic work at the Russian spiritual mission began only under the impulse of Iakinf (Bičurin) (1777-1853), who served as head of the mission in 1807-1821. Convinced that focusing on Mongol and Manchu languages was wasteful, he dedicated all his efforts to the local vernacular, that he recorded extensively in a series of unpublished dictionaries and specialised lexicons. Namely to this purpose, Iakinf began working on a transcription system based on Beijing pronunciation of the time; polished during almost three decades of field work, it had reached its maturity when Iakinf published between 1835 and 1838 his *Kitajskaja grammatika* (*Chinese grammar*), the masterpiece of his career as a linguist. However, despite his fame as one of the leading sinologists of the time, Iakinf never got to publish that Chinese-Russian dictionary that would have fully legitimised his Cyrillisation of Chinese. Although a distinctive *Sistema Iakinfa* (SI) could be recognised through Iakinf's published works, manuscripts, and personal papers, no normative description of it was ever published by its author, besides the brief rules of pronunciation listed in Iakinf (Bičurin) 1838. A resume of its evolution, deduced from the *Chinese grammar* and Iakinf's unfinished dictionary, contrasted with later usage, can be found in Leopardi 2020 (127-144).

What appears from this review is that most features of the current Russian Cyrillisation of Chinese were already part of SI. For instance, the representation of syllable-initial voiced affricates /dz/, /d͡ʐ/ with the unusual (in a Russian perspective) digraphs цз <cz>, чж <čž>, instead of the more intuitive дж <dž>, дз <dz>, and rendering the opposition between syllable-final /n/, /ŋ/ as that between Russian нь <n'> /nʲ/, нъ <n"> /n/. While for the latter a few precedents can be observed in Lipovcov's practice (Veber *et al*. 1908: 3), one of Iakinf's letters to his friend Egor Fëdorovič Timkovskij (1790-1875), in which

such usage is justified in terms of traditional Chinese philology, clearly testifies to the former being his personal innovation. Tones were represented with diacritics admittedly borrowed from the practice of Western missionaries (Bičurin 1835: 26): an unfortunate choice in perspective, for they were particularly cumbersome to print with standard Russian types[3].

However, if one must find a significant flaw in SI, it lies in its load of complex and alternative spellings for many syllables. Owing to its adherence to the combinatory rules of contemporary Russian orthography, especially to its contrastive usage of "hard" and "soft" letters, SI has many instances of one same letter used for two phonemes—e.g. и <i>, that represents /i/ before all consonants except ж <ž> ч <č> and ш <š>, where it is pronounced /ɨ/, a sound noted elsewhere with ы <y>, as in Russian—and, conversely, of two letters used for the same phoneme—e.g. /e/, that is noted with э <é> everywhere but following ж <ž> ч <č> and ш <š>[4]. Although they may have helped people literate in Russian to approximate the Chinese pronunciation, and Chinese words to look less "foreign" amid Russian ones, such arrangements did make the system less regular and, of course, less phonemic.

9.5. "Sistema Palladija"

Even though he never got to publish his dictionary, Iakinf left a deep imprint on the subsequent development of Russian sinology.

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[3] Usually, Russian uses no diacritics, unless as components of fixed letter forms, e.g., the breve in й <j>; therefore, special types would be needed to print the accented vowels of SI.

[4] Russian consonants can be pronounced "hard" (i.e., plain) or "soft" (i.e., palatalised) depending on their phonological context. In writing, the "soft sign" ь <'> /ʲ/, е <e> /ʲɛ/, и <i> /i/, ё <ë> /ʲɔ/, я <ja> /ʲa/, and ю <ju> /ʲu/ mark a "soft" pronunciation, while the "hard sign" ъ <"> /Ø/, а <a> /a/, о <o> /ɔ/, у <u> /u/, ы <y> /ɨ/, and э <é> /ɛ/ mark a "hard" pronunciation. However, there are certain consonants that are inherently "soft" (ч <č>, щ <šč>) or "hard" (ж <ž>, ц <c>, ш <š>) regardless of the following vowel letter, whose pronunciation in fact depends on the consonant; in writing, this results in notable exceptions to the principle explained above, e.g., in native Russian words ш <š> /ʂ/ is always followed by и <i> and never by ы <y>, although the former is nonetheless pronounced /ɨ/. Words that do not respect these rules are manifestly transcriptions or loans from foreign languages; see Wade (2011: 7-9).

His many works on China, and especially his Chinese grammar—for long decades the only one available to the Russian-speaking public—made SI into a *de facto* standard, especially in the Cyrillisation of Chinese placenames. One curious instance is the name of Manchuria, whose current spelling Маньчжурия *Man'čžurija* (IPA: [manʲˈʤʊrʲijə]), replacing a previously attested Манджурія *Mandžurija*, is a piece of Iakinf's legacy to be found in the contemporary language, unbeknownst to most Russians. Subsequent amendments were limited to level out some inconsistencies of the system and to simplify a few of its odd or redundant spellings. For example, the complex spelling of syllable-initial aspirated stops /i/ or /jV/ as consonant plus ь <'> plus x <ch>, e.g., тьхянь <t'chjan'> for *tian* 天 "heaven", was progressively abandoned for producing a showy asymmetry, in addition to being redundant under the rules of Russian spelling. While alive, Iakinf defended the rationality of such arrangement, that, however, was decidedly unpractical.

The major lexicographical work published in mid-19th century Russia, Vasil'ev 1867, still employs SI almost unchanged, the only notable exception being in the rendering of syllable-initial aspirate stops, that requires no more the insertion of x <ch>, or ь <'> if followed by и <i> or one of the iotised vowels (Veber *et al*. 1908: 4). A major revision was expected along with the publication of the first Chinese-Russian dictionary, that was still wanting. Both tasks were underway at the hands of an emerging sinologist, archimandrite Palladij (Kafarov) (1817-1878). Palladij began working on a dictionary soon after his arrival in China as the head of the 15th Russian spiritual mission to Beijing (1864-1878), but he was unable to finish it during his lifetime. Compilation was resumed by the lay diplomat Pavel Stepanovič Popov (1842-1913), with the assistance of Palladij's successor at the Russian spiritual mission, archimandrite Flavian (Gorodeckij) (1840-1915), and the *Chinese-Russian dictionary* (*Kitajsko-russkij slovar'*) was finally published in 1888.

On the basis of SI, untangled from its inconsistencies and given simpler spelling rules, Palladij had produced for his dictionary a distinctive Cyrillisation to be called after his name. *Sistema Palladija* (SP) is in fact not radically different from SI, at least in its appearance. Neither does it depart from the latter's spelling of syllable-initial voiced affricates with цз <cz> and чж <čž>, nor its treatment of sylla-

ble-final /n/ vs. / ŋ/ as нь <n'> /nʲ/ vs. нъ <n"> /n/, its most distinctive features, departing from previous practice only in abandoning ы <y> and е <e> in syllable nuclei to the advantage of э <é>. But the "ortho-graphical principle" that was accountable for the many inconsisten-cies of SI has been completely dropped, and spelling is now more phonemic, a significant improvement to the system's regularity.

9.6. The debate on Cyrillisation in late imperial Russia

Despite being only named after Palladij, with the consequence of erasing Iakinf's and, possibly, Popov's and Flavian's contributions to it, the Cyrillisation of the *Chinese-Russian dictionary* established itself as the *de facto* standard of late imperial Russia. In this period, Russia's drive into Asia retook vigour, with the consequence of renovating public and scholarly interest in China. Saint Petersburg and, later, Vladivostok emerged among the leading centres of world sinology. By the turn of the century, a revolution had taken place in the field of linguistics, suggesting a newer, more scientific approach to language and its surroundings. Scholars began to question the adequacy of SP to modern academic needs and put forth their propositions for amending or replacing it altogether with a newer scheme.

An example of such can be found in Veber *et al*. 1908. Resuming the main tenets of a debate started in 1904 by members of the Geo-graphical Society, it proposed radical changes to SP, among which: substituting syllable-final нь <n'>, нъ <n"> with specific letters н <n> and ҥ/ӈ <n͡g/ṇ>, reinstating the pre-SI digraphs дз <dz>, дж <dž> in-stead of цз <cz>, чж <čž>, disposing of the Cyrillic iotised vowels я <ja>, ю <ju>, io <ǐo> and ѣ <ě> for a <a>, y <u>, o <o> and e <e> pre-ceded by j <ǰ> at the beginning of syllables, and by a "palatalisation mark" similar to an apostrophe after consonants, and introducing a whole series of specific characters, such as ў <ŭ>, ÿ <ü> representing /w/ and /y/. Veber *et al*. did in fact propose two distinct variants of their new transcription, one "popular" (*populjarnaja*) and one "more accurate" (*bolee točnaja*)—the former limited to commonly available Cyrillic characters. Under the influence of Wade-Giles Romanisation, it was also proposed to note tones with numerical apices (Veber *et al*. 1908: 6).

Less extensive amendments to SP had been adopted by the time

Petr Petrovič Šmidt (1869-1938) published his *Studies on Mandarin Grammar* (*Opyt mandarinskoj grammatiki*) in 1902, like levelling out the variation between эу <éu>, oy <ou> for syllable-final /ou/, leaving only oy <ou>. More interesting of Šmidt's work is that there are to be found a few interesting instances of Cyrillisation of different varieties of Chinese, such as Sichuanese (Chongqing), Cantonese, Hakka and Fuzhounese. These appear to be variations of SP attentive to vernacular features and possibly influenced by Romanisations in use in Western European publications, such as Hakka initial /ŋ/ noted with нг <ng>, and Cantonese final /m/ noted with мъ <m"> (Šmidt 1902: 17), and are of particular interest because the Russians are known not to have engaged as extensively as other Europeans in research of the southern vernaculars, their interests in China being mainly located in Beijing and Manchuria.

9.7. Soviet reforms and subsequent trends

None of the several propositions reviewed in the previous section was in fact met with enthusiasm outside of the restricted circles who had put them forth. By the turn of the 1910s, SP was too firmly established as "Russia's Wade-Giles" to be challenged by late-comers that lacked any practical advantage over it. Only one step was needed for the Russian Cyrillisation to take its current shape, and it was not to be the result of a thoughtful rethinking of its bases, but the indirect consequence of changes brought to the Russian alphabet by and large. It came with the spelling reform that the newly established Bolshevik government promulgated in 1917-1918 to reshape the Russian Cyrillic alphabet in a consistent way.

The elimination of Church Slavonic characters ъ <">, ѣ <ě>, and i <ĭ>, that by the 19th century had become silent or homophonous with other characters, greatly simplified Russian spelling by making it more adherent to the spoken language. Despite being repelled on ideological grounds by opponents of Bolshevik rule, the reform was indeed quite effective in improving literacy in the USSR. Surely, it affected SP in depth, depriving it of letters that were particularly significant to its spelling. To the abolition of *yer* ъ <"> was lost the long-lasting opposition between нь <n'>, нъ <n"> in syllable codas (вань <van'>, ванъ <van"> becoming вань <van'>, ван <van>), although

pronunciation was unaffected; while syllable finals originally spelt with a *jat'* ѣ <ě>, representing the diphthong /ie/, were all respelt with e <e> (cѣ becoming ce). Reformed *Sistema Palladija* (RP) remained in use for the rest of Soviet history with no significant amendment, and it is still standard in Russia and other successor states to the USSR. But despite its potential, it never went past its primary use as a transcription system.

During the first two decades of Soviet history, Cyrillic came under pressure from the Latin script; in the 1920s Soviet authorities espoused Latinisation of minority languages and Russian itself came very close to switch to the Latin script. By the late 1930s such trend was reversed, and before and after the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) most languages of the USSR shifted back (or forth) to Cyrillic. During Latinisation, the Chinese language, too, was included in the effort, receiving a Latin-based orthography, Latinxua Sin Wenz (LSW), that was to leave a durable imprint in China's own literary reform. But when all other languages were required to abandon theirs for Cyrillic, RP was potentially ready to take the place of LSW, yet nothing happened, and the Chinese language vanished from Soviet censuses as abruptly as the minority that had used it. Its Chinese offspring, HP, adopted by the People's Republic of China in 1956, would eventually challenge RP in such specialised uses as teaching Chinese pronunciation in language courses. While the major Chinese grammar published in pre-war USSR, Ivanov and Polivanov 1930, still introduces Chinese pronunciation with RP only, language courses of the early 1960s already make consistent use of HP.

9.8. The Dungan Cyrillic script

A separate case deserving to be mentioned here is the Dungan language. Dungan (Ru. дунгане *dungane*, Du. Хуэйзўжын *Chuéjzŭžyn*, MSM *Dongganren* 東干人) is the exonym for a group of ca. 200,000 descendants of Chinese Muslims (*Huizu* 回族) who had fled China in the 1870s to settle in Central Asia and are now scattered on both sides of the border between the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan. During Soviet times, Dungans were counted as a separate ethnic group from the Chinese, although from a linguistic point of view they are speakers of Northern Chinese dialects little or no dif-

ferent from some varieties of Gansu and Shandong Mandarin. Since resettlement to Central Asia increased their detachment from mainstream Chinese culture, Dungans had in time developed an independent literary language based on the Perso-Arabic script; such language has been the subject of many studies, such as Dragunov, Dragunova 1937, and Mair 1990.

During the Latinisation campaigns of the 1920-1930s, Dungans, along with the neighbouring ethnic groups, were required to abandon their Perso-Arabic script for the Latin-based New Turkic Alphabet. After the Soviet authorities had turned away from Latinisation and begun implementing Cyrillisation shortly before the war, a Cyrillic-based orthography for Dungan was officially adopted in May 1953. Despite that SP could have been easily adapted to the Dungan language, a new alphabet was developed from scratch under the supervision of Aleksandr Aleksandrovič Dragunov (1900-1955) that very much resembled Kyrgyz and Kazakh Cyrillic (see Reformatskij 1953). Although use of the language is declining and the Dungans are steadily assimilating into the neighbouring national groups, Dungan is currently the only Sinitic language to be exclusively written in a phonographic script completely independent from Chinese characters.

Dungan is thus a proper writing system, not a transcription, and dissimilarities with the Russian Cyrillisation are by and large accountable on dialectal variation. But we can highlight an interesting difference in principle in that the former is completely lacking digraphs. Syllable initials are all represented by single characters, most notably з <z> and җ <ҙ> for syllable-initial /ʣ/ and /ʤ/, while syllable-final /n/ and /ŋ/ are not differentiated in writing, as they are in complementary distribution in Dungan varieties, e.g., ан <an> /an/ vs. он <on> /ɑŋ/, corresponding to HP *an* vs. *ang*—although Dungan also has a syllable-initial /ŋ/ spelt with ӈ <ŋ> as in Kyrgyz. Tone is not indicated in general written texts, while in dictionaries (e.g., KDRS) the three tones of standard Dungan are marked with apical Roman numerals I-II-III. But the most notable feature of written Dungan is that unlike other varieties of Chinese, and for obvious reasons, it is permeable to loanwords from Russian and Turkic languages. Such words as телефон *telefon* "telephone", машынэ *mašyné* "motor car" and музей *muzej* "museum", that came up beside their Sinitic equiva-

lents дянхуа *djanchua* (MSM *dianhua* 電話), чичэ *čičə* (MSM *qiche* 汽車) and бэвугуан *bəvuguan* (MSM *bowuguan* 博物館), are recorded in dictionaries and seem to prevail over the latter in the daily language (cfr. Mair 1990: 9-10). A similar trend has also been noticed by Bausani (1968) in Sino-Arabic, the language that may be considered the predecessor of written Dungan.

9.9. Ukrainian and Belarusian variants of SP

The fact that SP is markedly a Russian Cyrillisation makes its usage *de facto* restricted to languages using the same character set as Russian Cyrillic — a potential problem in a country as linguistically diverse as the USSR. For most of the country's history, this was in fact no issue for two reasons: first, most Soviet citizens were to some extent fluent and literate in Russian; second, most Cyrillic-based national scripts of the USSR, such as Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Turkmen, were indeed developed on the basis of the Russian alphabet and could freely accommodate loanwords from written Russian. But this was not the case of the two other major Slavic languages of the USSR, Ukrainian and Belarusian, that use different subsets of Cyrillic and cannot accommodate Russian text without adaptation. This prompted the development of a Ukrainian and a Belarusian version of RP; despite existing since Soviet times, the independent political and cultural development of the two countries — especially the Ukraine — after the dissolution of the USSR has in time pushed both away from their source.

The differences between the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian alphabets in use today are the result of independent developments based on the spelling of Church Slavonic, the literary language of the East Slavs up to the mid-18th century. They came to diverge in a few but significant aspects; one particularly meaningful to the present enquiry, since it affects the Cyrillisation of many Chinese syllable nuclei, lies in the choice of letters to represent the shared opposition between a "dark" /ɨ~ə/ and a "clear" front vowel /i/: ы <y> vs. и <i> in Russian; и <y> vs. i <i> in Ukrainian; ы <y> vs. i <i> in Belarusian (cfr. the Latin transliteration of these letters, which is based on Czech *y* vs. *i*). Compared to Russian and Belarusian, Ukrainian has two more iotised letters, ï <ji> (cfr. i <i>) and є <je> (cfr. <e>); while the former

has no equivalent in either language or is represented with digraphs Ru. йи <ji>, B. йі <ji>, the latter has its counterpart in the opposition between е <e> (pr. /je/) and э <é> in Russian and Belarusian[5]. Among consonants, the most notable difference concerns the letter г <g>, which in Russian represents a voiced velar stop /g/, while in Ukrainian it has a fricative value close to /h/; for a "hard" /g/, Ukrainian uses the variant letter ґ <g>.

Changes to RP are those consistent with national orthographies, while the bases of the transcription are unaltered: UP has цзінь <czin'> instead of RP цзинь <czyn'> (HP *jin*), ци <cy> instead of цы <cy> (HP *ci*), ген <gen> instead of гэн <gén> (HP *geng*), т'є <t'je> instead of те <te> (HP *tie*); BP has less extensive changes, mostly concerning i <i> instead of RP и <y>, e.g. мі <mi> instead of ми <mi> (HP *mi*). Such slight differences aside, neither system has diverged from their model enough to be considered truly independent of RP. Apparently, this has been an issue in the Ukraine, where strong aspirations to "break away" from the Soviet past—of which Russian is held to be a symbol, despite being the mother tongue of a quarter of Ukrainians—have caught up sinologists as well. An example of this effort to further Ukranianise UP is the so-called "Kirnosova System" (*Systema Kirnosovoji*), described in Kironosova 2009, that has been chosen as the new national standard for the Cyrillisation of Chinese by the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in June 2019 (Hobova 2019: 96).

9.10. Serbian and Bulgarian Cyrillisations

Finally, a few words deserve to be spent on the Cyrillisations based on Serbian and Bulgarian, interesting for having been developed outside of the Russian tradition and for being established on distinctive national variants of the Cyrillic script, especially the Serbian one. This is possibly due to the South Slavic languages being much different from their sister languages phonetically, like having

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5   Ukrainian and Belarusian, too, mark the opposition between "hard" and "soft" consonants using two distinct sets of vowel letters, and have inherently "hard" and "soft" consonants following specific spelling rules, but these are slightly different from those explained above for Russian.

lost the phonemic opposition of plain and palatalised consonants, or to historical and political reasons against the adoption of SP in Balkan countries, like Russian influence being counterweighted by a strong German ascendancy.

Much of the differences between the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet and written Russian is owed to the reform of literary Serbian effected by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787-1864), who put order into the alphabet by recommending a strictly phonemic spelling and introducing a few letters specific to Serbian[6]. A truly Serbian Cyrillisation of Chinese was first discussed in Pešikan 1976; as regards syllable nuclei, it adheres strictly to HP, but consonants were recommended to rather follow WG, for reasons of «cultural continuity» and «in view of the dominance of the unvoiced transcription», with but the minimal adjustments required under Serbian spelling rules (Pešikan 1976: 132). Pešikan's system (PS) recommends such spelling as Фукјен <Fukjen> for HP *Fujian*, WG *Fu-kien*; Тенг Сјао Пинг <Teng Sjao Ping> for HP *Deng Xiaoping*, WG *Teng Hsiao-ping*. But with the decline of WG in the Western world since the 1980s, Pešikan's suggestions have been dropped to the same purpose of «cultural continuity», and the current Serbian Cyrillisation (SĆ) follows HP more closely: voiced syllable initials are consistently represented, as is the HP *j*, *q*, *x* series by means of the Serbian Cyrillic letters ђ <đ>, ћ <ć>, с <s>; Serbians nowadays write Ћингдао <Ćingdao>, Вен Ђабао <Ven Đabao> for HP *Qingdao*, *Wen Jiabao*. Since Serbian speakers are literate in both alphabets and are used to transcribe foreign words in Latin as they would do in Cyrillic, an interesting Cyrillic-influenced Serbian Romanisation of Chinese can be observed in books and, especially, newspapers, where one may encounter such forms as *Fudžou*, *Si Đinping* for HP *Fuzhou*, *Xi Jinping*[7].

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6   Serbian has lost distinctive palatalisation at an early stage, keeping only a few fossilised traces of it. Karadžić took out of the alphabet the iotised vowel letters and the "soft sign", having lost their function as marks of palatalisation, along with the silent "hard sign", and designed new letters for sounds that had become phonemic in Serbian: ђ <đ> /ʤ/, ј <j> /j/, љ <lj> /λ/, њ <nj> /ɲ/, ћ <ć> /ʨ/, and џ <dž> /ʤ/.

7   Such unusual situation arose from official efforts to bring Serbian and Croatian closer to each other during the existence of Yugoslavia as a unified nation. Most Serbophone institutional channels and commercial news outlets today offer the same content in the two scripts; since there is a 1:1 correspondence between

A Bulgarian Cyrillisation (BK) also exists, described in Aleksiev 2018 as well as in Văglenov 1975, though it is mostly limited to the transcription of Chinese geographical and personal names in specialised literature. In general, it follows the rules for the Bulgarisation of words from foreign languages as established in the *Official orthographic dictionary of the Bulgarian language*. Transcription from Chinese is based on HP, but approximating pronunciation rather than spelling. Most salient features of BK *vis-à-vis* other Cyrillisations thus lie in the higher degree of approximation allowed. For instance, the opposition *n* vs. *ng* in syllable codas is unrepresented and both sounds are approximated to Bulgarian н <n>; HP *i* in syllables *zi*, *ci*, *si*, etc. to Bulgarian ъ <ă> /ə/, as is HP *e* in syllable nuclei *e*, *en*, *eng*, transcribed as ъ <ă>, ън <ăn>, ън <ăn>; the HP *j*, *q*, *x* series is not distinguished from corresponding *z*, *c*, *s*, and both are transcribed with ц <c>, дз <dz>, с <s>. BK can thus be considered the least accurate of all Cyrillisations of Chinese.

Cyrillic and Latin Serbian, conversion is done automatically by means of specific software, which explains the oddity of such Cyrillic-influenced romanisations.

Appendix. Comparison of the main Cyrillisations of Chinese

The following tables show correspondences between various Cyrillisations of Chinese reviewed in the present paper, contrasted with HP. Alternative spellings are separated by an oblique stroke (/); samples of context-dependent spelling variation are given between brackets.

1. Initials

HP	Du	BK	Sc	PS	BP	UP	RP	SP	SI	IPA
b	б	б	б	п	б	б	б	б	б	/p/
p	п	п	п	п	п	п	п	п	пх (пьхн)	/pʰ/
m	м	м	м	м	м	м	м	м	м	/m/
f	ф	ф	ф	ф	ф	ф	ф	ф	ф	/f/
d	д	д	д	т	д	д	д	д	д	/t/
t	т	т	т	т	т	т	т	т	тх (тьхн)	/tʰ/
n	н	н	н	н	н	н	н	н	н	/n/
			(нъу)	(нъу)						
l	л	л	л	л	л	л	л	л	л	/l/
			(лъу)	(лъу)						
g	г	г	г	к	г	г	г	г	г	/k/
k	к	к	к	к	к	к	к	к	кх	/kʰ/
h	х	х	х	х	х	х	х	х	х	/x/
j	жи	дзи	ђи	ки	цзи	цзи	цзи	цзи	цзи (цьзн)	/tɕ/
q	чи	ци	ћи	ки	ци	ци	ши	си	ши (цьсн)	/tɕʰ/
xi	щи	си	си	си	си	си	си	си	си	/ɕ/
zh	ж	дж	џ	ч	чж	чж	чж	чж	чж	/tʂ/
ch	ч	ч	ч	ч	ч	ч	ч	ж	ч	/tʂʰ/
sh	ш	ш	ш	ш	ш	ш	ж	ж	ш	/ʂ/
r	з	дз	дз	ж	ж	ж	цз	цз	цз	/ʐ/
z	ц	ц	ц	ц	цз	цз	ц	ц	ц	/ts/
c	с	с	с	с	ц	ц	ц	ц	ц	/tsʰ/
s	с	с	с	с	с	с	с	с	с	/s/
w	в	у	в	в	в	в	в	в	в	/w/
y	й	й	ј	ј	й	й	й	й	й	/j/

Tab. 9.1. Initials.

					2. Finals					
IPA	**SI**	**SP**	**RP**	**UP**	**BP**	**PS**	**Sć**	**BK**	**Du.**	**HP**
/ʅ~z̩/	ы/и	ы	ы	и	ы	и	и	ъ	ы	**i**
/a/	а	а	а	а	а	а	а	а	а	**a**
/ɤ/	э	э	э	е	э	е	е	ъ	ə	**e**
/ai/	ай	ай	ай	ай	ай	aj	aj	ай	э	**ai**
/ei/	эй (шей)	эй	эй	ей	эй	ej	ej	ей	ый	**ei**
/au/	ао	ао	ао	ао	ао	ао	ао	ао	о	**ao**
/ou/	оу	оу	оу	оу	оу	оу	оу	оу	у	**ou**
/an/	ань	ань	ань	ань	ань	ан	ан	ан	ан	**an**
/ən/	ынь/энь (шень)	энь	энь	ень	энь	ен	ен	ън	ын	**en**
/aŋ/	анъ	анъ	ан	ан	ан	анг	анг	ан	он	**ang**
/əŋ/	ынъ/энъ (шень)	энъ	эн	ен	эн	енг	енг	ън	[n/a]	**eng**
/uŋ/	унъ	унъ	ун	ун	ун	унг	унг	ун	ун	**ong**
/aɻ/	эрръ/эллъ	эрръ	эр	ер	эр	ер	ер	ър	әр	**er**
/i/	и (йи/и)	и (йи)	и (йи)	і (і)	і (йі)	и (jи)	и (jи)	и (йи)	и (ий)	**i (yi)**
/ja/	я	я	я	я	я	ja (ља)	ja (ħa)	я	я	**ia (ya)**
/je/	ѣ	ѣ	е	є (м'є)	е	je (ље)	je (ħе)	ие (йе)	е	**ie (ye)**
/jau/	яо (міао)	яо	яо	яо (м'яо)	яо	jao (љао)	jao (ħao)	яо	ё	**iao (yao)**
/jou/	ю	ю	ю	ю (д'ю)	ю	joy (љоу)	joy (дjу) (ħy)	иу (йоу)	ю	**iu (you)**
/jɛn/	янь	янь	янь	янь (м'янь)	янь	jен (љен)	jен (ħен)	ян	ян	**ian (yan)**
/in/	инь	инь (йинь)	инь (йинь)	інь (їнь)	інь (йінь)	ин (jин)	ин (jин)	ин	ин (йин)	**in (yin)**
/jaŋ/	янъ	янъ	ян	ян	ян	jанг (љанг)	jанг (ħанг)	иен (йен)	ён	**yang (yang)**
/iŋ/	инъ	инъ (йинъ)	ин (йин)	ін (їн)	ін (йін)	инг (jинг)	инг (jинг)	ин	[n/a]	**ing (ying)**
/juŋ/	юнъ	юнъ	юн	юн	юн	jунг (ħунг)	jунг (ħунг)	иун (юн)	γ	**iong (yung)**
/u/	у (ву/у)	у (ву)	у (ву)	у (ву)	у (ву)	у (ву)	у (ву)	у	ў (ву)	**u (wu)**
/wa/	уа (ва)	уа (ва)	уа (ва)	уа (ва)	уа (ва)	уа (ва)	уа (ва)	уа	уа (ва)	**ua (wa)**
/wo/	о (во)	о (во)	о (во)	о (во)	о (во)	уо (во)	уо (во)	уо	уә (вә)	**o/uo (wo)**
/wai/	уай (вай)	уай (вай)	уай (вай)	уай (вай)	уай (вай)	уaj (вaj)	уaj (вaj)	уай	уэ (вэ)	**uai (wai)**
/wei/	уй (хуэй)	уй (вэй) (хуэй)	уй (вэй)	хуэй й (вей) (хуей)	уй (вэй) (хуэй)	уej (вej)	уej (вej)	уей	уэй (ви)	**ui (wei)**
/wan/	уань (вань)	уань (вань)	уань (вань)	уань (вань)	уань (вань)	уан (ван)	уан (ван)	уан	уан (ван)	**uan (wan)**
/wən/	унь (вэнь/вынъ)	унь (вэнь)	унь (вэнь)	унь (вень)	унь (вэнь)	ун (вен)	ун (вен)	ун (уън)	ун (вын)	**un (wen)**
/waŋ/	уанъ (ванъ)	уанъ (ванъ)	уан (ван)	уан (ван)	уан (ван)	уанг (ванг)	уанг (ванг)	уан	уон (вон)	**uang (wang)**
/wəŋ/	вэнъ/вынъ	вэнъ	вэн	вен	вэн	венг	венг	уън	[n/a]	**weng**
/y/	юй	юй	юй	юй	юй	jy (њу)	jy (ħy)	ю	γ (йγ)	**ü/u (yu)**
/ɥe/	юэ/юе	юэ	юэ	юе	юэ	jye (њуе)	jye (ħуe)	юе	уә (йуә)	**üe/ue (yue)**
/ɥɛn/	юань	юань	юань	юань	юань	jуан	jуен (ħуен)	юен	уан (йуə)	**üan/uan (yuan)**
/yn/	юнь	юнь	юнь	юнь	юнь	jун	jун (ħун)	юн	үн (йун)	**ün/un (yun)**
/ɛ/	э (ше)	э	э	е	э	е	е	ъ	э	**ê**
/ɔ/	о	о	о	о	о	о	о	о	[n/a]	**o**
/jo/	io	io	йо	йо	йо/ё	jo	jo	[n/a]	[n/a]	**yo**

Tab. 9.2. Finals.

To give an impression of their use in practice, this is how a MSM sentence can be transcribed into the various Cyrillisations hitherto described:

Ch.: 你願意來，你就來。要是你不願意來，那就算了，隨你的便。要是你來了，我們歡迎你，要是你不來，我們這裡也不缺你。 (If you want to come, then come. If you do not want to come, then forget about it, do as you please. If you come, we will welcome you, if you do not come, we will not miss you here.) (Liu Yuehua, Pan Wenyu, Gu Wei, 2004, *Shiyong Hanyu yufa* "Practical Chinese grammar", Beijing, Shangwu yinshuguan, 996.)

SI: Ни³-[юань]-и⁴-лай¹. Ни³-цзю⁴-лай¹. Яо¹-ши⁴-ни³-бу²-[юань]-и⁴-лай¹. На³-цзю⁴-[суань]-ляо³. [суй]-ни³-ди-*бянь*. Яо¹-ши⁴-ни³-лай¹. Во³-мынь⁴-[хуань]-инъ¹-ни³. Яо¹-ши⁴-ни³-бу²-лай¹. Во³-мынь⁴-*чже-ли*-ѣ³-бу²-[цюэ]-низ⁸.

SP: Ни юаньйи лай, ни цзю лай. Яошы ни бу юаньйи лай, на цзю суань ляо, суй ни ди бянь. Яошы ни лай ляо, вомэнь хуаньйинъ ни, яошы ни бу лай, вомэнь чжэли ѣ бу цюэ ни⁹.

RP: Ни юаньйи лай, ни цзю лай. Яошы ни бу юаньйи лай, на цзю суань лэ, суй ни дэ бянь. Яошы ни лай лэ, вомэнь хуаньйин ни, яошы ни бу лай, вомэнь чжэли е бу цюэ ни.

UP: Ні юаньї лай, ні цзю лай. Яоши ні бу юаньї лай, на цзю суань ле, суй ні де б'янь. Яоши ні лай ле, вомень хуаньїн ні, яоши ні бу лай, вомень чжелі є бу цюе ні.

BP: Ні юаньйи лай, ні цзю лай. Яошы ні бу юаньйи лай, на цзю суань лэ, суй ні дэ бянь. Яошы ні лай лэ, вомэнь хуаньйін ні, яошы ні бу лай, вомэнь чжэлі е бу цюэ ні.

PS: Ни јуанји лај, ни кјоу лај. Јаоши ни пу јуанји лај, на кјоу суан ле, суеј ни те пјен. Јаоши ни лај ле, вомен хуанјинг ни, јаоши ни пу лај, вомен чели је пу кјуе ни.

SĆ: Ни јуенји лај, ни ђу лај. Јаоши ни бу јуенји лај, на ђу суан ле, суеј ни де бјен. Јаоши ни лај ле, вомен хуанјинг ни, јаоши ни

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8   According to Iakinf 1835, with tones noted with numerical apices instead of diacritics as in its 1908 reprint. Transcriptions that are not attested there are given in SP between square brackets. Transcriptions attested with tones unmarked are given in italics. For *wo* 我 'I, me', the most frequent of the three variants used by Iakinf, нгэ³ <ngé>, э³ <é>, and во³ <vo>, has been preferred.

9   According to Palladij, Popov 1888.

бу лај, вомен цели је бу ћуе ни.

BK: Ни юен-и лай, ни дзиу лай. Яошъ ни бу юени лай, на дзиу суан лъ, суеј ни дъ бјен. Яошъ ни лай лъ, уомън хуан-ин ни, яошъ ни бу лай, уомън джъли йе бу цюе ни.

Du.: Ни йɣанйи лэ, ни зу лэ. Дансы ни бу йɣанйи лэ, нэ зу суанли, суй ниди бяр. Дансы ни лэли, вәму хуанйин нини, дансы ни бу лэ, вәму зэ җытар е бу чɣә ни[10].

HP: Nǐ yuànyì lái, nǐ jiù lái. Yàoshi nǐ bù yuànyì lái, nà jiù suànle, suí nǐ de biàn. Yàoshi nǐ lái le, wǒmen huānyíng nǐ, yàoshi nǐ bù lái, wǒmen zhèli yě bù quē nǐ.

List of abbreviations

BK (*Bǎlgarska kirilizacija*), Bulgarian Cyrillisation
BP, Belarusian variant of Palladij's Cyrillisation
Du., Dungan language
HP, Hanyu Pinyin
LSW, Latinxua Sin Wenz
MSM, Modern Standard Mandarin
PS (*Pešikanov sistem*), Pešikan's Cyrillisation
Ru., Russian
RP, Reformed Palladij's Cyrillisation
SĆ (*Srpska ćirilizacija*), Serbian Cyrillisation
SI (*Sistema Iakinfa*), Iakinf (Bičurin)'s Cyrillisation
SP (*Sistema Palladija*), Palladij (Kafarov)'s Cyrillisation
UP, Ukrainian variant of Palladij's Cyrillisation
WG, Wade-Giles Romanisation

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[10] Due to the distinctive nature of literary Dungan, the text given here does not correspond morpheme to morpheme to the MSM original above. It has been translated by the author preserving the highest possible correspondence to the original, but several adaptations to Dungan grammar and vocabulary could not be avoided. To appreciate such differences, this sample of written Dungan could be rendered into Chinese characters as 你願意來，你就來。但是你不願意來，那就算哩，隨你的便兒。但是你來哩，我麼歡迎你呢，但是你不來，我麼在這塔兒也不缺你。

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Il presente volume inaugura un'iniziativa editoriale volta a diffondere, analogamente a un progetto precedente cui si ricollega, i risultati delle ricerche di giovani studiosi formatisi nell'ambito del Dottorato in Civiltà dell'Asia e dell'Africa, presso l'Università di Roma Sapienza. I saggi di questa miscellanea, i cui autori appartengono ai cicli 32°-33°-34°, spaziano dalla letteratura araba, hindi e giapponese alla linguistica araba e cinese, fino alla contemporaneità della RPC. Le tematiche trattate sono espressione di alcune delle principali specializzazioni del Dottorato in questione, relativamente alle diverse epoche storiche e alle varie aree linguistiche e culturali del Maghreb, del Medio Oriente, del Subcontinente indiano e dell'Asia Orientale. Basandosi su materiali in lingua originale, per i campi d'indagine prescelti i contributi offrono analisi accurate e nuovi spunti interpretativi.

Federica Casalin insegna letteratura cinese classica presso l'Università di Roma Sapienza; dal 2021 è Coordinatrice del Dottorato di ricerca in Civiltà dell'Asia e dell'Africa. In campo letterario lavora sulla poesia classica, la letteratura femminile, la traduzione della letteratura cinese in Europa nel XIX secolo, la storiografia letteraria in Cina. Ha pubblicato numerosi saggi sui rapporti transculturali sino-occidentali lavorando in prospettiva imagologica sulla diaristica e sulle fonti geografiche di epoca Qing (1644-1911).

Marina Miranda è professore ordinario di Storia della Cina contemporanea presso l'Università di Roma Sapienza e responsabile scientifico della sezione Asia Orientale del Dottorato in Civiltà dell'Asia e dell'Africa, di cui è stata Coordinatrice per due mandati. Dirige due collane editoriali e fa parte dei comitati scientifici di alcune riviste d'area. Formatasi a lungo all'estero, le sue ricerche riguardano sia la storia della Cina moderna, sia la politica interna e internazionale della RPC, cui ha dedicato numerosi saggi e monografie.