Tonal Prosody in Chinese Parallel Prose

DAVID PRAGER BRANNER
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

“From Rusticus... I learned... to abstain from rhetoric, and poetry, and fine writing; and not to walk about in the house in my outdoor dress, nor to do other things of the kind...”
—Marcus Aurelius, Meditations I (George Long, tr.)

Parallelism in Chinese has a long history, and is found in some of the earliest written texts as well as official speeches. By late Six Dynasties times, there were three separate styles of parallelistic composition: plain, rhyming, and tonally alternating. The plain style seems to have been the most ancient, and in the Six Dynasties remained common in formal settings, including letters and memorials. Rhyming was common in fine literature such as fuh 赋 and admonitory genres including tzann 贅, ming 銘, and beiwen 碑文. The tonally alternating style of composition was associated with lesser forms, such as prefaces and the short formal letter known as chii 數.

In the Targ, this last “preface style” grew to be the dominant style of composition in “parallel prose” (pyanwen 輔文) proper, and it continued to be used in official memorials and elsewhere through modern times. In conception it is absolutely distinct from the rhyming style, because the second and fourth lines of a stanza, which rhyme in rhyming style, must be of opposite tones in preface style and therefore cannot possibly rhyme.

The preface style is later than the others, and must have postdated the movement for tonal prosody in poetry. However, it is in the preface style of parallel prose that the prosodic opposition of pyng and tzeh tones is first attested, predating its appearance in poetry. We shall also find that the very idea of a unified pyng tone category has been a literary fiction since perhaps the eighth or ninth century.

1. TONAL PARALLELISM IN MODERN TIMES

Rigorous tonal contrasts are familiar to us in Chinese society today from the antithetical couplets seen posted on door-jambs and temple columns, and used in congratulatory or condolatory messages. It is not uncommon to see couplets in which every syllable exhibits a tonal contrast with respect to the corresponding syllable of the other line of the couplet. These through-composed couplets resemble the epigrams of the ancient West, and their likeness to the carefully crafted couplets of the juejiuh 絕句, perhaps China’s best known poetic form, makes the style seem very widespread.

By way of example, here is a grave inscription from a modern tomb in Taiwan (Hwang 黃 family reburial; cemetery at Wuujye 五結, in Ilan 宜蘭 county).

黃金莫比先人德 ○○●○○●
府第應求後代賢 ●●○○●○

Yellow gold—it cannot compare to the virtue of those who have gone before; the family residence—it should strive for sageliness in future generations.

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Western Branch of the American Oriental Society, 18 November 2000, Tempe, Arizona, as “The Infection of Parallel Prose with the Yeongming Prosodic Virus.” I am grateful to the many members of the audience there for their comments.

In order to indicate the tonal value of each syllable, I have borrowed the symbols ○ (for pyng 平), ● (tzeh, that is to say any of the three non-pyng tones shaang 上, chiuh 去, or ruh 入), and ○ (ambiguously either pyng or tzeh) used in traditional Chinese tsyrpuu 詞譜. The symbol ※ (used below) is my own contrivance, to indicate prosodically irrelevant syllables.

Notice that in the grave inscription, every syllable has a pyng or tzeh value opposite to the corresponding syllable in the other line. The first syllable of the first line is pyng; the first syllable of the second line is therefore tzeh, and so on. The whole couplet is ordered in this way. The two lines begin respectively with Hwang 黃 “yellow” and fuu 府 “residence,” forming a simple acronym for “the Hwang residence.” Grave inscriptions of this kind are rarely original; they are supplied in great quantity in the handbooks used by traditional kan-yushy 堪興師 (geomancers) and gravediggers.

As another example, consider the woanlian 挽聯 (mourning couplets) composed by Yuen Ren Chao (1892–1982), for his librettist, Liou Bannmee 劉半農 (1891–1934; cited in Chang 1986: 682):

十載淵雙箋 無詞今後難為曲  ※●○●※  ※○●●○○
數人弱一人 教我如何不想他  ※○●●※  ※●○●●○

Ten years—joined as double reed;¹ without words, henceforth it will be hard to make music.

Our “Few Men”² are lessened by one; “O tell me how not to think of him!”³

In Chao’s composition, not every syllable is subject to tonal parallelism. The final syllables of the longer lines are parallel, and before them only every other syllable is parallel. The prosody in Chao’s quatrain is not arranged as precisely as in the grave inscription. Although both types are widespread, in general, parallelistic composition in belles-lettres over the centuries has favored Chao’s style. Only in simple couplets is perfect parallelism considered de rigueur, as longer compositions tend to skip some of the syllables (in specific, alternating positions within the line), except when a show of skill is intended.

In this essay I discuss the practice of tonal prosody in one specific form, parallel prose composition (pyanwen 駑文). I then turn to consider the larger meaning of the pyng-tzeh distinction and its use in poetry.

2. RULES OF TONAL PARALLELISM

In earlier times, however, tonal parallelism in prose was not necessarily applied with such rigor as we might imagine. The subject itself has been poorly studied. The main native discussions of tonal prosody in the past were of poetry. The seminal Bunkyō- hifuron 文鏡秘府論, for instance, from the early ninth century, cites all of its examples from poetry. Anthologies and other studies of parallel prose, which flourished from Song times onward, have stressed the mechanics of parallelism in syntax and diction, and that is understandable because syntax and diction find their way into the content of the text, whereas tones do not. Primers of tonal prosody, such as the Shengliuh chiimeng 聲律啟蒙 of Che Wannyuh 車萬育 (jinnshyh 1664) and the Lihueng dueyyunn 笠翁對韻 of Lii Yu 李漁 (1611–1680),

1. I am grateful to Dr. Pei-Yi Wu for informing me that “double reed” also refers to a kind of Chinese vaudeville act in which one singer hides behind another, who lip-synchs.
2. Chao and Liou were members of the “Shurhen Huey 數人會 [Society of a Few Men],” named after Yan Jytuel’s quip in Luh Faayan’s preface to the Chiheyunn.
3. The refrain of Chao and Liou’s best known song, of the same name.
appear relatively late, but always make their presentations in verse, evidently as a matter of pedagogical convenience.

I have found two sources on the prosody of parallel prose. The first is that of James Hightower (1965: 66–67) citing research by David Farquhar. Hightower takes as his examples the “Beeishan yiwen” 北山移文 of Koong Jyhguei 孔稚珪 (447–501) and the “Yuhtair shinyeong shiuh” 玉臺新詠序 of Shyu Ling 徐陵 (507–583). Hightower writes,

“[Farquhar] noticed two types of pattern: the sequence of tones in one line could be simply repeated in the next [...]

[●●●●●●]

or, more commonly, the tones would be in inverted order in the second half of a couplet, the sort of mirror-image relationship found in [liuhshy 律詩 ...]

[●●●●●●●●]. (!)

[...] To accord better with his data Mr. Farquhar suggested a looser definition of tonal parallelism:

Type I: One member of a parallel pair is the mirror image of its mate, with one exception.
Type II: One member of a parallel pair is the identical with its mate, with one exception.

[...] It is apparent that while the tonal symmetry is not absolute, tonal parallelism has been deliberately exploited as a prosodic element in the composition of these pieces.

I am not sure what to make of the description of “mirror image” lines. Prosodic “mirroring” in both poetry and prose is, in my observation, always parallelistic (e.g., the first couplet in the present essay) and never palindromic as described by Hightower and Farquhar. I believe Hightower’s statement must have been the result of some kind of error in the production of his essay, but in any case the correction is worth making here.

The second description of pyanwen prosody is that of Chang Jen-ching [Jang Renching] 張仁青 (1984: 4–5; 1986: 237–38), part of his extensive life-long work on parallelism in general. Chang does not actually spell out the rules of tonal prosody, but he marks the tonal values of the syllables in a way that allows us to extrapolate general principles. I cite here an example by Horng Lianqjyi 洪亮吉 (1746–1809), “Dongchingshuh yuehfuu shiuh” 冬青樹樂府序:

\[\text{Chang’s notation:}\]

江山半壁 非仙人劫外之棋
金粉六朝 盡才子傷心之賦

\[\text{notation used in the present paper:}\]

1 江山半壁 ※○※●
2 世故仙人劫外之棋 ※●※○※○之○
3 金粉六朝 ※●※○
4 盡才子傷心之賦 ※※※※※之●

We can see that lines 1 and 3 are parallel, and that lines 2 and 4 are also parallel. This quatrain, like the woanlian of Y. R. Chao, above, is a so-called gerjiuh duey 隔句對, a quatrain consisting of a pair of interlarded “couplets with alternating lines.” Chang’s notation, though not explicit, implies the following four rules of prosodic order:
(1) The smallest prosodic unit is the couplet, although writers most often use quatrains, sometimes formed of gerjih duey.

(2) The tones of most syllables in any given line are irrelevant to prosodic order. Those that are important prosodically are the ones immediately preceding the caesura and the end of the line. That is, in four-syllable lines, syllables 2 and 4 are prosodically important (caesura is marked by II):

\[ \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \]  
\[ \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \]

In lines with a “key” word, the final syllable and the syllable preceding the key word are prosodically important, and (if there are seven or more syllables in a line) also the second syllable of the line:

\[ \ast \ast \| \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \]  
\[ \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \]  
\[ \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \]

(3) The prosodically important syllables within a given line ordinarily alternate with respect to pyng and tzeh. Within a couplet, the prosodically important syllables always contrast from one line to the other. If the last syllable of the opening line of a couplet is pyng, then the last syllable of the second line is tzeh, and vice versa. If the pre-caesural syllable of the opening line of a couplet is pyng, then the pre-caesural syllable of the second line is pyng, and vice versa. Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-syllable line</th>
<th>“3-key-2” line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or

\[ \ast \ast \| \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \]  
\[ \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \]  
\[ \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \| \ast \circ \]

(4) Couplets themselves generally alternate as to the pyng or tzeh of the last syllable. If we observe consecutive quatrains written in this style, at the ends of the lines there seem to be runs of two pyng syllables followed by two tzeh syllables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>run</th>
<th>run</th>
<th>run</th>
<th>run</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td>[ \ast \circ | \ast \circ ]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. The “key” word is a grammatical particle (而, 之, 於, etc.) that serves to break up the prosody of lines longer than four syllables. Grammatically, the keyword generally has its usual meaning, unless it is a “nonce” or “refrain” word (Hawkes 1985: 39–41) such as shì 史. With regard to its tone, a keyword is never in a prosodically significant place in the line. In a parallel couplet, both lines have their keywords in the same position, although the specific particles used may differ, depending on the strictness of the composition.
It is a significant fact that this fourth rule automatically precludes standard rhyming, in which every couplet must end in the same tone. There are, therefore, at least two kinds of parallel prose possible: rhyming parallel prose, such as we find in refined compositions such as fuh 賦 and ming 錦, and non-rhyming parallel prose in which tonal prosody is applied. In practice, there is a third kind: the ancient style of “ordered prose,” in which neither rhyme nor tonal prosody are admitted, and in which parallelism is abundant though not necessarily composed rigorously from a syntactic point of view.5

Which of the two models of prosody described above is more useful? Chang’s model involves only the syllables at the caesura and foot of each line, and so I will call it the “caesural” model. The Hightower-Farquhar rule involves almost every syllable in the line, so I will call it the “epigrammatic” model, recalling the densely composed epigrams of the classical West. The caesural model holds a number of advantages over the epigrammatic model:

(1) The great strength of the caesural model is that it acknowledges the prosodic significance of the caesura. In other words, it accords with the aesthetic needs of reading aloud.

(2) The caesural model matches the “alternation rule” that became dominant in shì 詩 and tsyr 詞 prosody, in that not every syllable counts (see Branner 1999: 46–47).

(3) The caesural model sets a smaller number of syllables as prosodically crucial, but the behavior of those syllables is more rigorously constrained. That shows a more realistic expectation of the amount of work an author would have to do in order to write a long piece.

(4) In the caesural model there is no need for palindromic “mirroring,” which does not fit in with the rest of the parallelistic style (i.e., in syntax, diction, etc.).

Why does the caesural model highlight only two or three syllables in each line? There are by all means cases in which pyngtzeh prosody seems to extend to all the syllables of the line, especially in four-syllable lines. Here are two prosodically flawless stanzas from the Yih-tair shinyeong preface:

既而
89 椒宮宛轉 〇〇●●
90 拙館陰岑 ●●〇〇
91 綏鶴晨巖 ●●〇〇
92 銅錫晝靜 〇〇●●
93 三星未夕 〇〇●●
94 不事懷僈 〇〇●●
95 五日猶餘 ●●〇〇
96 誰能理曲 〇〇●●

5. It might be useful for us to assign distinct names to these three forms. I would like to propose that “parallel prose” be reserved for compositions that do not rhyme but do observe tonal alternations, and “ordered prose” for the more ancient style of composition without tonal alternations, in which syntactic parallelism may occur to a greater or lesser degree. And I propose that Chinese literature that rhymes should, after all, be treated as a form of poetry, even if it is classified as wen 文 in China.
Pyng and tzeh syllables appear in pairs. The neatness of this arrangement cannot be accidental, but it must have been hard for writers to maintain for long passages; in practice we find that they rarely did so. Here are three more examples from the Yuhtair shineyong preface. I have shown the tonal value of all four syllables in the center column, and in the right-hand column I have eliminated those syllables that I claim are prosodically neutral. Second example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Tonal Value</th>
<th>Neutral Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>五陵豪族</td>
<td>●●●●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>充軍候庭</td>
<td>〇〇〇〇</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>四姓良家</td>
<td>●●●●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>頒名永巷</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

亦有

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Tonal Value</th>
<th>Neutral Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>穎川新市</td>
<td>●●●●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>河間觀津</td>
<td>〇〇〇〇</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>本號嬌娥</td>
<td>●●●●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>曾名巧笑</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Third example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Tonal Value</th>
<th>Neutral Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>天情開朗</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>遊思巡華</td>
<td>●●●●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>妙解文章</td>
<td>●●●●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>素工詩賦</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>素味親臣</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>終日隨身</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>翡翠筆牀</td>
<td>●●●●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>無時離手</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fourth example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Tonal Value</th>
<th>Neutral Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>露飛六甲</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>高棟玉函</td>
<td>●●●●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>鴻烈僉方</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>長摧丹枕</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

至如

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Tonal Value</th>
<th>Neutral Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>青牛帳裏</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>餘曲既終</td>
<td>●●●●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>朱鳥窗前</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>新妝已竟</td>
<td>〇〇〇●</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The situation is even more complex in the six- and seven-syllable lines. Plainly the neat order of the earlier example (lines 89–96) is, if not a fluke, then a relative rarity within the style. It seems clear that the caesural model is preferable.

3. THE QUESTION OF TONAL PARALLELISM IN THE “BEEISHAN YIWEN”

In the “Beeishan yiwen,” there are places here and there where these contrasting tonal patterns do appear, at least within couplets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Tonal Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>終始參差</td>
<td>※●※〇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>蒼黃翻覆</td>
<td>※〇※●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
but on the whole they are quite rare. Below I have listed the first eighteen or so couplets of each type of line. Clearly the couplets do not display the kind of alternation I have been describing, and also do not form themselves into neat stanzas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>line</th>
<th>4-syllable text</th>
<th>tones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>還鄉入幕</td>
<td>●⊙⊙ ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>蠟握出檻</td>
<td>●⊙ ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>慨遊子之我欺</td>
<td>●●● ●⊙</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>悲無人以赴弔</td>
<td>●⊙●以● ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>促裝下邑</td>
<td>●● ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>浪梗上京</td>
<td>●●⊙</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>雖情投於魏闕</td>
<td>●⊙●於● ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>或假歩於山肩</td>
<td>●⊙●於● ○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

line 4-syllable text tones
1    鍾山之英    ●●●●  ○
2    草堂之靈    ●●●●  ○
3    驅煙驛路    ●●●●  ●
4    勤移山庭    ●●●●  ○
10   亭亭物表    ●●●●  ●
11   皎皎霞外    ●●●●  ●
17   終始參差    ●●●●  ○
18   蒼黃翻覆    ●●●●  ○
24   尚生不存    ●●●●  ○
25   仲氏既往    ●●●●  ●
26   山阿寂寥    ●●●●  ○
27   千載誰賞    ●●●●  ●
28   世有周子    ●●●●  ●
29   隨俗之士    ●●●●  ●
30   既文既博    ●●●●  ●
31   亦玄亦史    ●●●●  ●
32   學遍東魯    ●●●●  ●
33   習隱南郭    ●●●●  ●
34   偶吹草堂    ●●●●  ○
35   濃巾北岳    ●●●●  ●
36   誘我松桂    ●●●●  ●
37   數我雲壑    ●●●●  ●
45   風情張日    ●●●●  ●
46   霧氣横秋    ●●●●  ○
53   鳴臥入谷    ●●●●  ●
54   鶴書赴隴    ●●●●  ○
55   形駕魂散    ●●●●  ●
56   志變神動    ●●●●  ●
57   眉軒席次    ●●●●  ●
58   足聲筵上    ●●●●  ●
71   道帙長殞    ●●●●  ●
72   法筵久埋    ●●●●  ○
As may be confirmed in the full transcription that begins below, tonal parallelism is equally lacking in various other types of line.
That should not be surprising. Because the “Yiwen” rhymes, the last syllable of every couplet must rhyme, and all rhyming words must be in the same tone. That precludes the kind of tonal alternation used in the Yuhair shinyeong preface. Even the non-rhyming lines in a given stanza very carefully avoid the tone category of the rhyme words in that stanza;6 so if the rhyme-word is in a tzech tone, the non-rhyming feet may legitimately be in a different tzech tone. Almost every time Koong changes the rhyme, he also changes the tone category of the rhyme.

Such tonal avoidance is very characteristic of Yeongming-style poetry, whose prime prosodic feature is contrast. Even though it does not exhibit caesural prosodic regulation, then, the “Beeyishan yiwen” reflects a Yeongming aesthetic of tonal prosody, in its own way. High-tower was right to take it and the Yuhair shinyeong preface as representatives of the high parallel prose style, even if he did not realize that they were written according to opposed prosodic systems. In terms of its formal structure, the “Yiwen” is a Six Dynasties fuh, and such fuh do not regularly exhibit pyngtzeh prosody, although individual couplets sometimes obey various prosodic strictures. Furthermore, some Liang lam-time poets did indeed compose fuh that are deeply imbued with tonal prosody. An example is Yeu Shinn 庚信, a most sensitive poet in matters of sound.

Below is the complete Chinese text of the “Beeyishan yiwen,” with pyngtzeh and rhyming words shown at right. Rhyme-words are transcribed following Branner 1999.

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<tr>
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<th>rhyme-word</th>
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夫以

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<td>9</td>
<td>吾方知之矣</td>
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若其

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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>固亦有焉</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

6. Avoiding the so-called shangwoei 上尾 transgression. In another paper (2002b) I have attempted to show that this transgression first begins to be avoided to a significant degree in the tzunn 贊 of Fann Yeh’s 范軻 Hou Hann shu 吳漢書.

7. The character 脱 (line 13) is read thwai, in the Chiehyunn 切韻, and seems out of place in a rhyming sequence with ngweiH1b 乖 and leiH1b 災. However, the rhyming of -at (12-heryun 赫韻) with -eiH1b (14-tayyun 淚韻) was not unusual before about the middle of the fifth century (Zhou Zumo 1996: 31–32; cf. Ting Pang-Hsin 1975). It is rather conservative by Koong Jhygwei’s time, possibly representing a survival of a much more common tendency in Hann and pre-Hann rhyming.
In terms of Chiehyunn phonology, one would desire to use a shyeyunn reading *thweiHlb (Mandarin *tuey) here. The Jyiyunn actually contains such a reading (1986: 519/1/7, H?ki-J11), although gA in this case is a variant for a different graph and is associated with a meaning unrelated to “to remove (clothing).” However, the same homophone group (sheauyunn) contains two clearly related morphemes: tuey FA, as in charntuey 4t_lA “slough of the cicada” (i.e., molted exoskeleton, still in use today medicinally); and a rare form *tuey jt (or ~f) glossed “the molting of fur or feathers by a horse or beast.” Since there is no other evidence of conservative rhyming in this piece, I propose that tuo may indeed have been intended to be read tuey here.

8. The fact that line 28, the first of a new rhyming group, enters into the rhyming, indicates that a new section of the piece begins here.

9. In line 35, ngok2 (嶽) appears in a rhyming sequence with kwak1 郭, hak1 郭, and tsak3 相, which is not an unusual sort of rhyme in this period. Possible shyeyunn readings would be *ngak1 (Mandarin *woh or *ngak1 (Mandarin *yueh-iau).
BRANNER: Tonal Prosody in Chinese Parallel Prose

51 慳光何足比
drou\textsubscript{3b} ④
52 涧子不能僝

及
53 嗚駑入谷
lung\textsubscript{3c} ⑨
54 鶯書赴巖
55 形馳魄散
56 志變神動
dung\textsubscript{1b} ⑧

爾乃
57 眉軒席次
dzyang\textsubscript{3} ⑤
58 裂聲筵上
dzyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
59 焚茟製而裂荷衣
50 抗塵容而走俗狀
dzrang\textsubscript{3} ⑧
dzrang\textsubscript{3} ②
60 風雲懊其帶憤
shrang\textsubscript{3} ⑤
62 石泉嘯而下憤
tsrang\textsubscript{3} ⑤
tshrang\textsubscript{3} ⑤
63 望林密而有失
tshang\textsubscript{2b} ⑦
tshang\textsubscript{2b} ⑦
tshang\textsubscript{2b} ⑦
64 顧草木而如喪
sang\textsubscript{1} ⑥

致其
65 紹金章
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
66 墨縉緌
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
67 跨域城之雄
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
68 冠百里之首
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
dyou\textsubscript{3b} ④
69 張英風於海甸
70 福妙譽於浙右
71 道俠長鷄
72 法筵久埋
73 敲扑誄囂犯其盧
74 僇訴俠德裝其懷
75 琴歌既断
76 酒賦無績
77 常織織於結課
78 每紛紛於折欵
79 籠張興於往徑
80 架卓倫於前譌
81 希蹤三輔豪
82 驚聲九州牧
83 高霞孤映
84 明月獨舉
85 青松落陰
86 白雲誰侶
87 磚戶摧絕無與歸
88 石遊荒涼徙延什
druo\textsubscript{3b} ②
druo\textsubscript{3b} ②
druo\textsubscript{3b} ②
druo\textsubscript{3b} ②

使我
89 還飄入幕
90 窩露出櫛
yeing\textsubscript{3b} ②

10. This line ends in a \textit{chiuh} tone even though the rhyme of the stanza is also \textit{chiuh}. It therefore violates the Yeongming-style tonal avoidance I have mentioned. Or does the fact that it is the first line of the stanza excuse the \textit{shanqwoei} violation?
4. DIGRESSION ON NON-PARALLEL LANGUAGE IN PARALLEL PROSE

Of course, the usual practices of parallelistic writing are still observed whether or not tonal prosody is involved. Below is a section of the “Shiongdih” chapter of the Yan-shyh jiashiunn of Yan Jytuei (531–591; Chou Fa-kao 1960: 7a.). Yan’s
voice is that of a conservative *paterfamilias*, and he writes in old-fashioned parallel phrases, with neither rhyme nor tonal alternations.\(^{11}\)

1. 二親既殁  
   After the parents have passed away,
   當如  
   They should be [to each other] as

2.  兄弟相顧  
   brothers look after one another.
   形之與影  
   shadow is to body,

3.  聲之與響  
   echo is to voice.
   愛先人之遺體  
   They look after the bodies left to them by their forebears,

4.  非兄弟何念哉  
   if not brothers, then who would consider doing this?
   惜己身之分氣  
   and care for the mortal spirits of their own selves —

11. Yan’s parallelism plays a role in the syntactic analysis of Wang Xiaohua et al. (1998).
This means that between ruler and retainer, superior and inferior rank, father and son, elder and younger brother, clansmen and non-clan kin, and in every unequal relationship—all of these involve awe-inspiring demeanor.

5 周詩曰
6 朋友攸攝
7 攜以威儀
8 言朋友之道必相教訓以威儀也

This means that the way friends act is always to admonish each other through their awe-inspiring demeanors.

9 周書數文王之德曰
10 大國畏其力
11 小國懷其德
12 言畏而愛之也
13 詩云
14 不識不知
15 順帝之則
16 言則而象之也

The Odes say,

“Unthinking, unknowing,
following the pattern set by the Ancestor.”

This means acknowledging the pattern and taking it as one’s own image.

Lines 2–3, 6–7, 10–11, and 14–15 are couplets cited from canonical texts. They are first introduced, then quoted, and finally commented on. This dignified formal style is the model on which the parallel prose style appears to have been based. The passages presented here—Tzuoojuann speeches and the Yanshyh jiashium—are examples of traditional parallel writing, lacking the refinements of either rhyming and tonal prosody. But the rhyming and tonally conscious styles also make use of lead-in and comment lines.

5. MEMORIALS BY WANG RONG 王融

The caesural style (involving limited tonal parallelism) is most common in “prefaces” or “narrations” (shiuh 序/敘), formal letters (chii 數), and certain memorials. It was the dominant pyanwen style in the Tarng and Sonq; the great majority of the pieces in the pyanwen volume of Gau Buhng’s representative Tarng Sonq wen jeuyaw (1976) exhibit this style. I will call it the “preface style” of parallel prose, in contrast to the rhyming style characteristic of the “Beishan yiwen” and the “plain style” of tradition. The preface style is not used in any consistent way in the Wenshin diaulong 文心雕龍 or at all in the Wensheuan or Shypiin 詩品 prefaces and must have been considered insufficiently formal at that time. Indeed, it is a post-Wensheuan style, being scarcely evident at all in the prose selections of that anthology; the clearest example is Wang Rong’s (467–493) “Sanyueh sanryh chou sho-eishy shiuh” 三月三日曲水詩序. Wang Rong’s memorials in the Nan Chyi shu 南齊書, one of them dating from the beginning of his short career, are the earliest dated examples I have yet found of this “preface” style, and indeed of the plain alternation of pyng and tzeh (the true Yeongming style in poetry involved not the binary alternation of pyng and tzeh tones, but the four-way alternation of pyng, shaang, chiuw, and ruh). That is fitting, as the Shypiin preface names Wang as the originator of Yeongming-style prosody. There also seem to be short stretches of preface style in some of the writings of Sheen lue (441–513) 沈約 and Shieh Teau (464–499) 謝朓. It is even possible to find individual couplets in pre-Yeongming literature that seem to display Yeongming-style prosodic order. But the Yeong-
ming innovation was pervasive prosodic organization, and solitary ordered couplets should not be considered its antecedents.

Below are two of Wang Rong’s early pieces, parsed prosodically. Note that only the line-feet actually obey the prosodic pattern with regularity. The caesura-feet obey the pattern in the first twelve lines, but thereafter diverge widely from it. In the first piece I have marked with a box (e.g., □ or ○) those syllables not found in the expected tone. There are other irregularities in these pieces, which make me think that they are indeed early, from before the style had fully formed, rather than later forgeries. One important irregularity is that *pyng* and *tzeh* foot-syllables sometimes alternate one after another (○/○/●/○/●/○/○/○), rather than in pairs, as expected (●/○/○/●/○/○/○/○). For a clear example, see lines 43–54 in the second piece.

Let me repeat that although poetic prosody in Wang Rong’s time was based on the four-way contrast of the tones *pyng*, *shaang*, *chiuh*, and *ruh*, it is evident that his parallel prose (assuming it is genuine) already displays the *pyng-tzeh* contrast, which must be much older than has previously been believed. Actually, the crucial idea that is new here is that the three tones *shaang*, *chiuh*, and *ruh* constitute a single category. That the *pyng* tone category was felt to be something special is already seen in the rhyming practice of much earlier periods, but here for the first time we recognize *tzeh* being opposed to *pyng* in a systematic way.


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<td>6</td>
<td>且或有心</td>
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臣聞

1. 情懸自中 ★★★〇  
2. 事符則感 ★★★●  
3. 象構於始 ★★★●  
4. 機勤於彰 ★★★〇  
5. 莊敬之道可宗 ★★★★★〇  
6. 會歸禮其疆廓 ★★★★★●  
7. 勇烈之士足貴 ★★★★★●  
8. 應纂釋以增思 ★★★★★〇  
9. 肇植生民 ★★★〇  
10. 厥詳既範 ★★★●  
11. 隨及興運 ★★★●  
12. 命道有徵 ★★★〇  
13. 莫不有所因循而升逹業者也 [comment]
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<th>Branner: Tonal Prosody in Chinese Parallel Prose</th>
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<td>30  齊民先覺者也</td>
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<td>31  臣亦喪逢</td>
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<td>32  生此嘉慶</td>
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<td>33  篤飲耕食</td>
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<td>34  自幸唐年</td>
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<td>* * * 之 * * 〇</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>44  霹電光價</td>
<td>* * * ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45  把足草覆</td>
<td>* * * ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46  廣身朝序</td>
<td>* * * ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>復得</td>
<td>[lead-in]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47  拜賀歲時</td>
<td>* * * ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48  預望日月</td>
<td>* * * ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49  於臣心願</td>
<td>[comment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50  曾言並矣</td>
<td>[comment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>但</td>
<td>[lead-in]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51  千祀一逢</td>
<td>* * * ○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52  休明繼再</td>
<td>* * * ●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53  思策鉾鷹</td>
<td>* * * ○ 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54  樂陳涓壇</td>
<td>* * * ●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Following Gau Buhong’s emendation of 鉾 for the Nan Chyi shu’s 鉾.
竊習
55 戰陣攻守之術
56 農桑牧藝之書
57 申商韓墨之權
58 伊周孔孟之道

常願
59 詩詠朱闕
60 俯對青蒲
61 請閔宴之私
62 談當世之務
63 位賤人微
64 徒深傾飲

方今
65 九服清怡
66 三靈和晏
67 木有附枝
68 輪無異轍
69 東UIKit
70 南變傳歌
71 無獻諸山
72 秦巡越海
73 舌象叢委體之態
74 蘇譯髯巡之數

固將
75 開桂林於鳳山
76 創金城於西守

而
77 鑫爾麗狄
78 歡(parseFloat)大邦
79 假息蘘河
80 豬命鹵谷
81 濁故京之爽墳
82 變舊邑而荒涼
83 息反佔之儒衣
84 久伊川之被髮
85 北地殘氓
86 東都遺老

莫不
87 茹泣吞悲
88 傾耳載目
89 魌心仁政
90 延首王鳳

若
91 試馳咫尺之書
92 具甄戎旅之卒
93 徙其隘城
94 納其降虜
可
95 弗勞弦箏
96 無待千戈
97 真皇王之兵
98 征而不戰者也

臣乞以
99 執令先遇
100 武道中原
101 澄澈清之恆流
102 掃牒山之積霧
103 恤單子之頸
104 屈左賢之膝
105 習呼韓之舊儀
106 拜鸞輦之巡幸

然後
107 天移雲動
108 勒封岱宗
109 威五登三
110 追蹤七十
111 百神肅警
112 萬國具僚
113 瑛弁星隸
114 玉帛雲聚
115 集三煽於蘭席
116 聆萬歲之納聲
117 豈不盛哉
118 豈不誇哉

昔
119 桓公志在伐莒
120 郭牙審其幽趣
121 魏后心存去漢
122 德祖詔其深言
123 臣愚昧忖誠
124 不足以知微

然
125 伏揆聖心
126 規模弘遠

既
127 圖載其事

必
128 克就其功
129 臣不勝歡喜

14. 赫 has a better-known reading in the shaangsheng.
15. 懷 has a better-known reading in the chiuhsheng.
16. This and the preceding line are punctuated following Gau Buhyng.
6. VALUE OF TONAL PROSODY

Apart from the influence of the Yeongming prosodic movement generally, how concretely is the writer’s craft affected by the application of the principles of tonal alternation?

Of course, the living sound of poetry is a crucial part of its expressiveness. It is really astonishing that so few Western students of traditional Chinese poetry write much about its aural æsthetics. Then again, perhaps few of us have been adequately trained in formal prosodic analysis. But it is true the principles I have described here do not directly affect the content, by which I mean the explicit “semantics,” of a composition. Apart from the question of having to choose words of a certain tone for a certain place in the line, they are largely a matter of superficial ornamentation. Parallelism in syntax and diction have a much greater effect on the content of a piece.

Both the rhyming and preface styles of parallel prose form lines into couplets and couplets into stanzas, and this assuredly affects where the writer can place “comment” lines. Before the development of the preface style, non-rhyming parallel prose allowed comment lines to be placed more haphazardly.

In both the rhyming and preface styles, the last syllable of each line cannot often be a grammar particle. There is a tendency for line-final grammatical particles (yee 也, yii 矣, tzai 該) to appear in comment lines, where they contribute to the line’s impression of finality and judgment.

Since it is necessarily distinct from rhyming parallelism, the preface style represents a later and less intrusive form of ornamentation. Victor Mair and Tsu-lin Mei (1991) have argued that the introduction of the Yeongming prosodic system in its original, complex form (that is, before the simplification of tonal alternation to pyng vs. tzeh) was an attempt to reproduce the æsthetics of Sanskrit chanting in Chinese. If so, the relatively simple tonal contrasts of the preface style may be the most perfect expression of that goal. Because the contrasts occur only at caesuras and the ends of lines, it is easy to give voice to them even in modern times, as will be shown below. In sum, the preface style in parallel prose involves an unobtrusive ornamentation that may slightly increase the aural sensuousness of a piece, but has few other effects.

In order to illustrate this “aural sensuousness,” I now present a piece of preface-style literature as chanted to traditional principles, in which attention is drawn to the pyng and tzeh tonal values only at the caesuras and line-feet. Below is a transcription of Lii Bair’s (701-762?) “Chuenyeh yann tзонqдih taurhua yuan shiuh” 春夜宴從弟桃花園序, first the text alone and then a transcription of two recent chanted performances in Taiwanese. Here is the text alone, with its tonal prosody illustrated.

夫
天地者、萬物之逆旅也
光陰者、百代之過客也

而
浮生若夢　　※※※●
為歡幾何　　※※※〇

古人
秉燭夜遊　　※※※〇
良有以也　　※※※●

況
陽春召我以烟景　　※※※※以※●
大塊假我以文章　　※※※※以※〇
After two introductory lines, syntactically parallel but not tonally regulated, the piece consists of four quatrains. It will be seen that only the final syllable of each line enters into the prosodic order. That is frequently the case in Lii Bair’s memorials and shiu h, as it is in Wang Rong’s memorials. What is the meaning of such limited prosody?

The through-composed ideal of tonal prosody, as seen in the grave inscription at the beginning of this essay, has remained perpetually in use in ceremonial couplets. What I have termed the “preface” style of tonal prosody, incorporating caesural tonal alternation, is nonetheless more widespread. However, in actual practice even the preface style is sometimes so diminished that the only token of caesural prosodic order is found at line-feet. Truly, this preface style is often no more than a minor embellishment in composition. I believe most modern readers are simply unconscious of it.

Below is a transcription of the chanting of this piece in traditional Taiwanese practice by the eminent Âng Tek-lâm 洪澤南 and by his student Phoaº Giók-lâm 潘玉蘭 (Âng 1999b: 2/8). The performances differ in their musical qualities, but the phonetics and prosody used by the two artists are nearly identical.17

In the past few years, as part of the larger beentuú 本土 (“nativism”) movement in many aspects of culture as well as in academia, Taiwan has been undergoing a rebirth of interest in classical literature read in Taiwanese. The monumental dictionary of Khê Sêng-chiong 許成章 (1992) was doubtless a harbinger of this movement. Recent recordings of classical literature in the traditional Taiwanese reading accent include Âng Tek-lâm (1999a and 1999b) and Niú (1999a-c). For discussion of reading practices generally see Âng Tek-lâm (1999a), Chiou (1991), Lin (1989), and Wang (1997). Musical transcriptions may be found in Chiou (1991) and Wang (1997).

Despite Lii Bair’s tendency, in his parallel prose, to limit tonal prosody to final syllables, the Taiwanese performances nonetheless accentuate the pyng or tzeh value of each syllable in the other caesural positions that are usually important prosodically. Pyng-tone words appearing before the caesura are generally prolonged and sometimes treated with melisma; tzeh-tone words in the same positions are generally not prolonged and the singer continues

17. One superficial phonetic difference is that the breathy quality of voice in Phoaº’s performance gives the impression of an initial h- in several words where no such sound is expected (the syllable 以 in 陽春召我以烟景, 大塊假我以文章, the syllable 詠 in 吾人詠歌).
singing without a break. That is a general rule of Taiwanese prosodic observance in chanted poetry as well as prose. A similar effect appears in the syllables ending each line, except that in the first line of each main section (浮生若夢; 陽春召我以時景; 幽賞未已) and the last line of the piece (詈依金谷酒數) the final tzeh syllables are also prolonged, evidently as a way of making these lines stand out.

In the transcription I use Taiwanese Church romanization, with a few additional symbols. Tones vary more than is generally realized; in my preferred accent they sound as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>example</th>
<th>Taiwanese name</th>
<th>standard name</th>
<th>basic value</th>
<th>sandhi value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>chiō-piō</td>
<td>inpyng</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>⊥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>á</td>
<td>chiō-chiō</td>
<td>inshaang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>⊥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à</td>
<td>chiō-khi</td>
<td>inchiuh</td>
<td>⊥</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ap, at, ak</td>
<td>chiō-jip</td>
<td>inruh</td>
<td>⊥</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>á</td>
<td>e-piō</td>
<td>yangpyng</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>⊥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ē</td>
<td>e-khi</td>
<td>yangchiuh</td>
<td>⊥</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ēp, ēt, ēk</td>
<td>e-jip</td>
<td>yangruh</td>
<td>⊥</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is the case in spoken Taiwanese, the normal pronunciation of every syllable is ordinarily that of its sandhi tone value. “Basic” tone values are heard only in certain exceptional syntactic environments:

1. the last syllable in a sentence;
2. the last syllable of the grammatical subject or the “topic” (when grammar is analyzed according to the “topic-comment” principle); one exception is a pronoun in subject position.
3. the last syllable of a coverb-noun phrase modifying a verb or adverb;
4. the last syllable of a noun-modifier followed by the particle ê;
5. certain phrase-initial conjunctions.

In addition, many particles are unstressed, and the syllable preceding such a particle does not undergo tone sandhi. This principle sometimes also applies to one-syllable pronouns serving as object to a verb (mainly chi 之).

I have added several symbols to illustrate tone sandhi, stress, and length:

- indicates that the preceding syllable does undergo regular tone change;
# indicates that the preceding syllable does not undergo tone change;
— indicates that the preceding syllable is drawn out or followed by a pause;
0 indicates that the preceding syllable is pronounced unstressed.

Syllables that are drawn out are generally subjected to melisma, or at least given a falling cadence.

Transcription:

夫天地者，萬物之逆旅也
光陰者，百代之過客也

而

浮生若夢

為歡幾何

Transcription:

夫天[地者，萬物之逆旅也]
光[陰者，百代之過客也]

而

浮生若夢

為歡幾何

Transcription:

jiō— thien-tiō chia0, bûn-bût# chi giōt-liō— ia0
kong-im# chia0, bek-tâi# chi kō-khek# ia0

而
7. ADDENDUM: THE HISTORICAL UNITY OF THE CHINESE PYNG TONE

In the end, what can we say about the meaning of the pyng-tzeh distinction? Medieval tonal prosody is difficult to articulate in most modern varieties of Chinese, because the basic contrast of the categories pyng and tzeh has ceased to exist: the medieval pyngsheng 平聲 is now almost universally divided in two, and the three tzehsheng 仄聲 have little in common in most Chinese dialects. For modern Chinese it is more natural to classify the three medieval tones pyng, shaang, and chiuh as “long” (shu 舒) and the medieval ruhsheng 狀聲 alone as “checked” (tzeh). But however attractive such a system may now seem, it does nothing for medieval prosody.

The disunity of the tzeh tones would matter less if only the pyng tone were still a cohesive category. What evidence is there of a unified pyng tone category in spoken Chinese?
This question is at issue not merely in the æsthetics of performance; it is also has historical ramifications. Virtually all modern forms of Chinese have a divided \textit{pyngsheng}, and therefore one is tempted to suppose that all modern forms of Chinese descend from an ancestor that also had a divided \textit{pyngsheng}.

It is also possible that the bifurcation of tones took place areally, in dialect groups that already contained a large amount of material predating the putative ancestor of the other dialects. The Miin group may be such an example, since it exhibits phonological features thought to be much older than those in the rest of Chinese. See Branner (2000: 166–73).

The fact that Miin dialects nevertheless show the split of the canonical four tones into eight may mean that the tone split happened within Miin some time after Miin was already formed, and not that Miin derives in a linear way from a single ancestor of all of Chinese.

The main exception to the divided \textit{pyngsheng} rule is the city of Tayyuan in Shanxi 山西 太原, and a number of nearby county seats (Hou Jingyi 1993: 349, map 25). Does this cluster of dialects around Tayyuan represent a survival of a unified medieval \textit{pyngsheng} category or does it represent a more recent, local development? If a similar group of dialects can be identified elsewhere in China, then and only then would we have a sound basis to propose that Tayyuan’s \textit{pyngsheng} is a survival. Without such evidence, it is more responsible to treat the unified \textit{pyngsheng} as a local development.

Within Shanxi province itself, there is some evidence that the Tayyuan pattern has eroded geographically. There is a cluster of county seats around Tayyuan (Wenshoei 文水, Loufarn 洛頤, Pyngyau 平遙, etc.) that have only a single, unified \textit{pyngsheng} category. North and south of these sites there are bands of dialects in which the \textit{inpyng} and \textit{yangpyng} are distinct, as in most of Chinese. Then, further to the north and south, there are a few other county seats with a unified \textit{pyngsheng} category (Shan’in 山陰 and Farnyjh 濱崎 to the north, Gaupung 高平 and Hourmaa 侯馬 to the south; for Shan’in phonology see Yang Zengwu 1990). This is the geographic pattern we would expect if Tayyuan’s unified \textit{pyngsheng} had once been found over a larger area than it is now, and was encroached upon by dialects with a divided \textit{pyngsheng}, leaving Shan’in and Gaupung as islands separate from the Tayyuan cluster. In my view, this is good evidence for arguing that the Tayyuan type was once typical of the whole Jinn 晉 group, but it should not lead us to conclude that it was ever typical of all of Chinese.

Certain dialects of Korean, spoken in the provinces of Hamgyŏng 咸鏡 and Kyŏngsang 延尚, preserve a distinction between the \textit{pyng} and \textit{tseh} categories in syllables of Chinese origin. The contrast is expressed morphophonemically, but remains most clearly evident in two-syllable compounds of Chinese origin. This contrast is found in the accents even of completely illiterate peasants who speak the relevant dialects. Hamgyŏng and Kyŏngsang are far apart on the map, and so it certainly appears that this feature is a relic of their common ancestor, Middle Korean (see Ramsey 1978: 81–113; also 2001). But does the Middle Korean feature itself really reflect the phonetics of contemporary (15th century) Chinese, or does it derive from some prescriptive source, such as the influential \textit{Humnin chŏngun} 訓民正音 of 1446 (Ramsey 1978: 13–16)? Unless some form of colloquial Chinese can be identified as the source of the Middle Korean \textit{pyng-tseh} distinction, Korean alone is not a reliable proof of the unity of the \textit{pyngsheng} in Chinese.

Above, I have been weighing evidence for a unified \textit{pyngsheng} category in recent Chinese. Let us view the problem from a different angle: what evidence is there of a divided \textit{pyngsheng} in early times? Zhou Zumo, in his study of ninth century materials by the Bud-

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18. In other words, the distinction is not ordinarily heard when these syllables are pronounced in isolation, but they affect the overall pitch accent of compounds in which they occur, producing different effects depending on whether they are \textit{pyng} or \textit{tseh} in Chinese.
dhist monk Annen 安然 (1958), concluded that the great majority of Tarng-time (mid-800s) Chinese dialects did not have a unified pyngsheng. Most phonetic descriptions since that time have reported the pyngsheng to be divided. In today’s dialects, a divided pyngsheng is almost universal, apart from the one important example of Tayyuan; and the simplest conclusion one can draw from this fact is that all modern Chinese derives from an ancestor with a divided pyngsheng. Yet, in all the centuries since Annen’s time, traditional rhyming in Chinese has always treated the pyngsheng as a unified category, while all along virtually every living form of Chinese must have had a divided pyngsheng.

Indeed, it does not seem to be unusual for the literary readings in various Chinese dialects to violate even the most common rhyming patterns in canonical literature (see Branner 2002a). So it is evidently not true (as I myself long believed) that the regional reading traditions were maintained solely in order to vivify that literature for people whose spoken language did not match ancient norms. (Actually, it is not even clear that the regional reading traditions ever had a single, common function.)

Chinese is not alone in having bastardized the sound of its highest literature in this way. William Gedney (1997[1978]) and Thomas Hudak (1992) have described a situation in Thai poetry where modern phonology obscures the integrity of traditional prosodic patterns. The sound of classical Latin poetry became altered fundamentally in medieval times, when vowel length was replaced by vowel quality in vulgar language. If Harold Copeman’s careful descriptions of historical Latin accents since 1250 are correct, then it would seem that few students of classical Latin poetry until recent centuries have been able to hear it read in a way that brought out its fundamental acoustic order.

Latin scansion may make a particularly good parallel to the Chinese case. Classical Latin authors adopted the principle of moraic prosody from Greece, alien though it was to the native Roman stress-based poetic tradition. Although it was adopted as the educated standard for ordering verse, it was all along something foreign to the language, and even its original phonetic basis was lost long before Latin itself died. The situation is much the same with the pyng-tzeh distinction in Chinese, which was introduced as a prosodic artifice perhaps to imitate Sanskrit syllable length, and which ceased to be a simple phonetic feature in spoken Chinese long, long ago.

As we consider all this, we would do well to remember—no matter whether we study linguistics or poetry—that the language of literature is something separate from ordinary speech. We have confounded the two for much too long.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has three main conclusions. First, the organizing principle in an important sub-genre of medieval parallel prose is not pyng-tzeh alternation affected every syllable, but a limited alternation affecting final syllables and sometimes those preceding the cæsura. Because it prescribes symmetry within the quatrains, this “preface” style cannot be used in rhyming passages, which require not symmetry but parallelism within the quatrains in order to allow every other line to rhyme. There are therefore two distinct forms of tonal prosody in use in parallel prose: one for the “preface” style and one for rhyming compositions.

Second, the pyng-tzeh alternation appears as early as the parallel prose of Wang Rong in the late fifth century, long before it began to replace the four-way contrast of pyng, shaang, chiuh, and ruh in Yeongming-style poetry. It is much earlier than had been believed.

Finally, it appears that the unified pyngsheng has, for most of the past millennium, been a literary fiction unrelated to the actual phonology of spoken Chinese. Mair and Mei (1991) suggest that the unadulterated Yeongming prosodic system itself may have been a highly artificial concoction from the first. In the “preface” style, then, we see a contrived form of
ornamentation subdued tastefully so to interfere as little as possible with the organization of literature.

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