

MARGINALIA ON  
TWO TRANSLATIONS OF THE *QIEYUN* PREFACE

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In the study of pre-modern Chinese phonology, no single source has been more important than the *Qieyun* (QY) 切韻; and a correct understanding of the origin and nature of this text has consequently been a primary concern in the field. Perhaps the most significant modern study of these text-historical questions is that of Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 (1966). And this work in turn is best known to Western scholars through the translation of Malmqvist (1968). Indeed, the influence of Zhou's original article, as represented in Malmqvist's translation, has been of paramount importance in the West.

The starting point for text-historical studies of the QY is the work's own preface, appended by its author, Lu Fayan 陸法言. All meaningful discussion of the QY's nature and origin must begin with this document. Zhou Zumo's article includes a partial citation of the preface (pp. 434-35), and it is this abbreviated version that is rendered in Malmqvist's translation (pp. 35-6). And again, it may be primarily through this translated version that the text is generally known in the West today. More recently, the full preface, with minimal abbreviations, has been translated by Ramsey (1987:116-17). This translation is perhaps not so well-known and is seldom if ever cited in discussions of "Qieyunology."

The QY preface, though not a particularly difficult document to read in the original, is nonetheless not totally free of problems; and there are in fact significant differences between the renderings of Malmqvist and Ramsey at

certain points. The purpose of the present paper is to consider some of these differences, with particular reference to current Western understanding of QY history. The edition of the preface used here is that found in Zhou (1960), vol. 1, pp. 14-18, with emendations as given in vol. 2, pp. 2-4. Our discussion of problematic passages will in each case begin with the text of the original, followed by the renderings of Malmqvist (M) and Ramsey (R).

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(1) 昔開皇初。有劉儀同臻。顏外史之推。盧武陽思道。李常侍若。蕭國子該。辛咨議德源。薛吏部道衡。魏著作彥淵等八人。同詣法言門宿。夜永酒闌。論及音韻。

M -- "Formerly, in the beginning of the *K'ai-huang* reign (581--600 A.D.) the *yi-t'ung* Liu Chen, the *wai-shih* Yen Chih-t'ui, the *wu-yang* Lu Ssu-tao, the *chu-tso* Wei Yen-yüan, the *ch'ang-shih* Li Jo, the *kuo-tzu* Hsiao Kai, the *tzu-yi* Hsin Teh-yüan, and the *li-pu* Hsüeh Tao-heng together visited Fa-yen's home. In the evenings, after having enjoyed their wine, their discussions always turned to phonology."

R -- "Once about fifteen years ago Liu Zhen and others — in all eight persons — came to visit me and stayed the night. When it grew late and we had been drinking wine for most of the evening, we began discussing the sounds and the rhymes."

In these translations M's version clearly suggests that the discussions between Lu Fayan and his colleagues took place on a number of occasions, while R's rendering equally clearly limits the encounter to a single evening. The original, however, is entirely neutral on this point. We have no way of knowing how many times the group met. Now, this may appear to be no more than a question of how to reconcile the grammar of literary Chinese with that of English, in which a choice of singular or plural in nouns is obligatory. But the matter is not necessarily so trivial, for it bears on the extent to which the structure

of the QY itself is a product of Lu's own work rather than that of his collaborators. Further on the preface itself states that Yan Zhitui and Xiao Gai had a primary say in the resolution of problematic points: 顏外史蕭國子多所決定; but the fact remains that if the group met only once or twice, then in practical terms the primary responsibility for the ultimate form of this rather complex work must have rested with Lu Fayan himself. Unfortunately, the present passage does not allow us to make a final pronouncement on this point.

2) 欲廣文路。自可清濁皆通。若賞知音。即須輕重有異。

M -- "If one wished to broaden the path of literature [by accepting forms deviating from the norm] the *ch'ing* ["clear"] and the *cho* ["muted"] should obviously be allowed to interchange freely. But if one wishes to appreciate good diction, then it is necessary to distinguish between the *ch'ing* ["light"] and the *chung* ["heavy"]."

R -- "If one wishes to widen the circle of readers, then it is all right to allow clear and muddy pronunciations to be interchanged; but if one has discriminating tastes, then there must be a distinction between light and heavy."

M's rendering of 欲廣文路 is a word for word representation of what must in fact be a figurative expression of some sort. R interprets "broadening the path of literature" as increasing the readership of literature. But is hard to see why liberality in phonological matters would have this effect. More plausible is Kun Chang's interpretation (1979:252): "If our purpose is to encourage more people to write poetry..."

Of primary concern to us here is the phrase 若賞知音, which literally means, "If one appreciates knowing about sounds." Compare Pulleyblank (1984:138): "If one stresses knowledge of phonetics..." R's rendering is too free to be helpful. M's interpretation is essentially correct but adds a subtle and possibly misleading twist to the original. In modern English, "diction" in reference to pronunciation normally denotes clear, accurate, and pleasing delivery **when speaking in public**. The idea of actual oral delivery to listeners is an integral part of the English concept of "good diction," and in modern usage it

normally implies delivery in a spoken language. But the expression 知音 here carries no such connotations of orality and speech. On the contrary, the passage as a whole indicates a more narrow involvement in specifically literary pursuits. It may refer to familiarity with particular sound classes which must be considered in literary composition. Or perhaps even to the aesthetic effects which cognizance of such classes may yield when literary works are read or chanted aloud. But the idea of "diction" as such is not explicitly present.

In passing we may also note M's use of the bracketed expression "by accepting forms deviating from the norm." In the passage as a whole this use of the word "norm" strongly implies to English readers that there were authoritative norms or standards of "diction" in Lu Fayan's society. The concept of such standards is familiar to and easily accepted by modern Western readers, but it is not really present in the original language of the preface. We shall return to this problem of norms and standards in subsequent paragraphs.

3) 因論南北是非。古今通塞。欲更摭選精切。除削疏緩。

M -- "And so we discussed the right and the wrong of South and North, and the prevailing and the obsolete of past and present; wishing to present a more refined and precise standard, we discarded all that was ill-defined and lacked preciseness."

R -- "So we discussed the rights and wrongs of the North and the South and the comprehensible and incomprehensible of the ancients and moderns. We wanted to select the precise and discard the extraneous, ..."

Here R's translation more closely replicates the syntax of the second portion of the passage, where the verb 欲 takes the parallel clauses [更] 摭選精切 and 除削疏緩 as objects. But, in addition to this he also renders more accurately the sense of 摭選精切 when he writes, "to select the precise." For this phrase M, on the contrary, says, "to present a more refined and precise standard." This departs from the original. And, most significantly, its use of the expression "precise standard," echoing M's use of the term "norm" in passage 2)

above, reinforces the reader's impression that the concept of norms or standards is explicitly present in the language of the preface, and by extension that the establishment of such standards was an explicit intent of Lu and his collaborators. But, in fact, what is described here is not the establishment of a standard but rather the selection 摺選 of what is (essential:) finely drawn and accurate 精切.

- 4) 今返初服。私訓諸弟。凡有文藻。即須明聲韻。屏居山野。交游阻隔。疑惑之所。質問無從。亡者則生死路殊。空懷可作之歎。存者則貴賤禮隔。已報絕交之旨。

M -- "...Now I have returned to my original calling, that of tutoring private students.

A knowledge of phonology is necessary for any literary undertaking..."

R -- "Now I have retired from government service and am giving private instruction in composition to several students. Whenever dealing with writing where elegant style is important, one must be very clear about the tones and the rhymes. But since I am living in seclusion in the country with my relationships and contacts cut off, there is no place to ask when there are things that I have doubts about. As for those among my acquaintances who have died, the roads of life and death have parted and in vain do I harbor a regret that I am not able to consult with them again; as for those who are living, there is now a social barrier between those noble people and the base person that I have become, and this has insured the disruption of friendship."

After the phrase 即須明聲韻 there is a long, clearly marked ellipsis in Zhou Zumo's citation of the text, and this is accordingly also skipped by M (who also clearly marks it with dots). R translates the deleted passage, whose content is in fact not without interest. For we learn here that, at the time when Lu Fayan actually compiled the *QY*, he was working alone and no longer in contact with his earlier associates, some of whom were dead and the rest beyond the reach of correspondence. The passage is phrased as an apology for his inability

to consult his collaborators. But, as these things go, it may also be a properly humble claim that the final product of his work is essentially his achievement and should be viewed as such.

It is noteworthy that the term 聲韻 in this section is translated by M as "phonology," while R renders it as "the tones and the rhymes." In subsequent periods the expression did indeed take on something like the technical sense reflected in M's version, but it seems probable that in Lu Fayan's time it really meant the tones 聲 and the rimes 韻, which were a primary concern of Lu and his friends and formed the matrix of the QY classification of syllables. Also significant here is the reiteration of the primary importance of these tones and rimes for specifically literary interests and pursuits (文藻).

This, Lu tells us, is why the book was written. Significantly, there is no mention here of "diction," or of any sort of standards for actual speech as such.

5) 遂取諸家音韻。古今字書。以前所記者定為切韻五卷。剖析毫釐。分別黍累。何煩泣玉。未可懸金。藏之名山。昔怪馬遷之言大。持以蓋齷。今歎楊雄之口吃。非是小子專輒。乃述群賢遺意。

M -- "And so, choosing from the various rimebooks and other lexica, old and new, and basing myself on my earlier notes, I organized the material into the *Ch'ieh-yün* in five *chüan*, analyzing minutiae and making fine distinctions. It is not so that I have been the sole judge in these matters; I have merely related the opinions of my worthy colleagues."

R -- "Consequently, I have taken the sounds and the rhymes of the various specialists and the dictionaries of the ancients and moderns, and by arranging what those before me have recorded, I have made up the five volumes of the *Qieyun*. The splits and analyses are exceedingly fine and the distinctions abundant and profuse. Why should I be concerned with recognition? I would not wish to be like that ancient man whose presentation of jade was repeatedly

and unjustly rejected by the king; nor do I think my work can match that of the ancient master who offered gold to anyone who succeeded in improving a single word of his perfect text. The ancients were amazed at Sima Qian's boasting when he said he would store his work on a famous mountain for future generations; now I sigh in sympathy with the stammering Yang Xiong who was fearful that his book would only be fit for covering sauce jars. The present work is not my wanton invention — I am merely transmitting the ideas that all the worthies have left us."

Here we note at the outset that there is long ellipsis in Zhou's text, deleting the entire passage 何煩...口吃. Zhou indicates this deletion with dots, while M leaves it unmarked, moving directly from "...making fine distinctions.." to "It is not so that..." The content of the ellipsis is perhaps not essential in itself, but removing it without notice subtly changes the flow of the passage as a whole.

M renders the phrase 以前所記者 as "basing myself on my earlier notes." R writes, "by arranging what those before me have recorded," yielding a very different meaning. Now, in literary Chinese the phrase in question has a rather "specific" ring to it, i.e. "that which [someone] recorded earlier," rather than the tone of a general reference to earlier sources, such as R suggests. This is perhaps because it would be somewhat forced to interpret the single word 前 here in the sense "those before me." But there is an even more important consideration, for earlier in the preface we have another passage which bears directly our problem: 魏著作謂法言曰。向來論難。疑處悉盡。何為不隨口記之。我輩數人定則定矣。即燭下握筆。略記綱要。(M -- "The *chu-tso* Wei Yen-yüan said to me, Fa-yen: 'Now that the doubtful cases have been solved through our recent discussions, why not write it all down [記] in accordance with our discourses? Let us few friends settle these matters once and for all.' And so I grasped my brush, and aided by the light of a candle, I wrote down [記] a draft summary..."; R -- "Then Compiler Wei said to me, 'Up to now we have been talking and arguing and all the questionable

points have been resolved. Why don't we write down what we have said? If the several of us decide on something, then it is settled once and for all.' So under the candlelight I took up my brush and jotted down an outline.") The use of the word 記 in our problematic line echos strikingly this earlier double occurrence of the same term. There is almost certainly a connection, and this tends to bear out M's interpretation.

At the close of the entire passage we encounter the phrase 乃述群賢遺意, rendered by M as "I have merely related the opinions of my worthy colleagues" and by R as "I am merely transmitting the ideas that all the worthies have left us." M's version implies a direct and limited reference to the views of those who met with Lu at his house, while R's interpretation points to a much broader corpus of wisdom, including, presumably, the "sounds and rhymes of the various specialists and the dictionaries of the ancients and moderns." The difference in interpretation is significant, for it would be important to know the degree to which Lu viewed his work as primarily a result of his consultations with his contemporaries, or alternatively, as a compendium of sources from different periods. The crux of the matter lies in the expression 群賢遺意, literally "the left-behind/bequeathed ideas of the many worthies." Now it is notable that the word 遺 in literary Chinese, when serving as a noun qualifier, normally refers specifically to things left behind or bequeathed by earlier or deceased persons. And in a phrase such as 群賢遺意 there is thus the implication that the 群賢 "many worthies" here in question have been gone long enough to warrant exalted status. Some of Lu's learned drinking companions were dead, and it is conceivable that he might number them among the 群賢. But, by the same token, we know that some of them were still alive and well, and it would seem to be stretching the range of normal usage to refer to the opinions of such living persons as 群賢遺意. And at this point we may also note the more subtle point that the line about 群賢遺意 is immediately preceded in the original text by the long literary allusion, deleted by Zhou and M, to several illustrious literary figures and works of the past, including Yang Xiong, Sima



Qian, the *Lüshi chungiu* and the *Hanfeizi*. This then produces a sort of "flow" into the final line, which is itself an allusion to the famous statement in *Analects* 7.1: 述而不作，信而好古 "While transmitting, I do not create; I am faithful and love antiquity." All things taken together, then, R's translation is probably the preferable rendering of the original here. The "many worthies" may have included Lu's dead colleagues, but they were almost certainly not limited to this group of individuals.

In connection with some of the above questions in the language of the preface, two passages from other parts of Zhou Zumo's article are also of interest. From his reading of the preface Zhou draws three major inferences. The third and perhaps the most important of these is the following (p. 439):

切韻為辨析聲韻而作，參校古今，折衷南北，目的在於正音，要求在於切合實際。

M translates (p. 41): "The purpose of the *Ch'ieh-yün* was to provide a phonetic analysis; collating the past and the present and bridging the distinctions between the South and the North, the *Ch'ieh-yün* aimed at providing a correct norm of pronunciation conforming to the [linguistic] reality."

With this passage we may compare a related statement further on (p. 445):

...切韻是...一部有正音意義的韻書...

M translates (p. 48): "...the *Ch'ieh-yün* is a rime dictionary aiming at providing the correct norm of pronunciation..."

A more literal rendering of the final two phrases in the first passage above would be, "the goal lay in correcting (sounds:) pronunciation, while the requirement [under which the compilers worked] was to conform to reality." The second passage more strictly says, "the QY is a rime book whose intent was to correct (sounds:) pronunciation." In both cases Zhou states that the object or intent of the QY was to correct pronunciation. Now, in correcting errors of any

kind it is also possible on that basis to move on and establish norms for correct behavior, but the two steps are not necessarily one and the same. And Zhou's statements deal specifically with the former step rather than the latter one. M's translations, on the contrary, specifically refer to the latter activity, and they also echo his renderings of the preface text, where, as we have seen, he speaks of "norms" and "standards" which are not explicitly mentioned in the original.

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We can conclude our examination of the text and translations of certain passages in the QY preface with several observations.

1. There is no doubt that, in compiling the final version of the QY, Lu Fayan relied on notes taken during his consultations with his friends, of whom Yan Zhitui and Xiao Gai played the most prominent roles. But it is not clear how many such meetings there were or how much detail was preserved in the notes. It is therefore possible that the "outline" 綱要 resulting from these consultations was rather brief, perhaps more so than is generally assumed by Western Sinologists today.

2. It is clear that Lu alone is responsible for the final version of the QY and that he did not consult his colleagues at all during the actual compilation of the text. All decisions made during that process were his alone, and the fine-grained detail of the text, including the ultimate selection of *fanqie* readings for individual syllables, is directly attributable only to him.

3. In his work, Lu placed very strong weight on earlier sources. He specifically states that during the period when he was working alone, long after his collaboration with his learned friends, and even more significantly, long after they would have had any opportunity to voice their own opinions on his analytical decisions, he made use of earlier lexica in his work. And, perhaps even

more significantly, in the tradition of Confucius himself, Lu specifically claims to be a transmitter of earlier material rather than an innovator.

4. At no point does the QY preface mention the establishment of or even the existence of norms or standards of pronunciation, such as are often referred to in current Western treatments of QY problems. It is on the contrary the Malmqvist translation which has introduced these terms and concepts into the discussion. Whether they correctly reflect the **original intent** of Lu Fayan or not, as used today they derive from Malmqvist's inferences and wording rather than from the language of the preface itself.

5. The preface indicates clearly that Lu Fayan's interest in "sounds," "tones and rimes," and "sounds and rimes" was informed by literary rather than "linguistic" concerns. At no point does the preface discuss "speech" as such or suggest that the readings given in the QY text were to be used in speaking. On the contrary, what is laid out in the QY would seem to be a set of formulas intended for use in writing literature and in vocalizing literary texts. The suggestion, sometimes heard today, that the QY represents a **standard of correct speech** common to the educated classes of central China in the sixth century, or that it reflects some sort of "Mandarin" of that period, does not derive from the wording of the QY preface. In reading the preface we find no reference to, or even any indication of interest in how anybody actually talked. Like it or not, Lu Fayan was concerned with literature, not speech.

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## 切韵序英译随笔

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切韵是中国语音史上一部最重要的文献。要了解其内容与性质，则必须仔细阅读作者陆法言所写的切韵序。欧美汉学家研究切韵问题经常忽略陆序原文而仅看六十年代所发表的一篇英文翻译。本篇对此译文以及一篇新出的译文加以比较；然后再进一步探讨陆序原意的一些基本问题。