

## FOREWORD

A number of the papers in this collection were originally presented as part of the *Panel on Chinese Dialect Comparison and Classification* at the 206th Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society (AOS) on March 17-20, 1996 in Philadelphia. The panel was designed to address issues of Chinese dialect classification — as issues of criteria, methodology, and proposed groupings, and to promote fresh contributions to knowledge of the nature and relationships of Chinese dialects through comparative studies. The idea for the present collection was first proposed by William S-Y. Wang, who noted that the papers of the panel would fit nicely together in the form of a monograph. Since then we have been able to add a couple of other contributions to the original panel collection, making a total of eight papers in the present volume. The publication of this collection was made possible by a grant from the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (USA), for which the editor and all the contributors are sincerely grateful.

Dialect description is the foundation of dialect study and comes before comparison, which in turn develops the basis for dialect classification. This basic footwork of dialectology, the steps of description, comparison, and classification, ultimately allows us to piece together the history of dialects and their relationships. The March 1996 panel at AOS intended to facilitate new efforts, and promote innovative approaches in these three basic activities of dialectology; and this collection of eight essays conceived out of that panel contains thought-provoking, path-breaking studies that strive toward those goals.

Description of a historical form of Chinese is represented in W. South Coblin's paper exploring the identity of the language behind the 'Phags-pa texts

of the Yuan. Li Zhuqing's examination of the syntactic features of neutral tone in Fwujou [Fuzhou], is a description of a little understood facet of a dialect with extremely complex tone sandhi. Comparison identifies a set of retroflex initials for proto (or common) Mandarin in William Baxter's paper utilizing the tool of comparative reconstruction, a method that has so far been little used in investigations of post *Chiehyunn* phonological systems. Gù Qián's paper complements Baxter's study in presenting comparative evidence for a retroflex series of initials in the Southern Mandarin Tongtay [Tongtai] dialect group of Jiangsu, an area originally thought to have lost all trace of retroflex initials.

Classification is the focus of the remaining four studies. Jerry Norman presents the innovative idea of using vocalism as a comparative classificatory criterion to distinguish Mandarin, Wu, and Gann, a set of dialect groups whose mutual boundaries are somewhat unclear when traced using the traditional criteria of features in initials. Yu Zhiqiang incorporates Norman's vocalism criterion, lexical criteria, as well as features of initials, into his evaluation of a large set of classificatory features for Wu, and proposes a very workable set of features to identify Wu dialects. David Branner examines classificatory methodology through the lense of a dialect in western Fwujiann [Fujian, Fukien] and utilizes a systematic comparative approach to set up a new regional dialect group he calls "Northern Miinnan." Finally, in my paper I argue that the classification of dialects should be undertaken prior to attempts to solve questions of dialect history and that classification and the determination of dialect relatedness should be based primarily on direct comparison of dialects. I illustrate my argument using comparison to show how extensive and systematic parallels between the Harnjiou [Hangzhou] dialect in Jehjiang [Zhejiang] and the Southern Mandarin dialect of Jennjiang [Zhenjiang] identify the former as a Mandarin dialect despite a traditional assumption that it is a Wu dialect.

Most of the papers in this collection challenge or call into question certain longstanding assumptions in Chinese dialectology. They provoke us to reconsider several issues that are usually considered to have been satisfactorily

solved. We hope that the essays will not be passively accepted as the final word to any suggested approach, but rather will serve to offer fresh perspectives that contribute to constructive dialogue and debate.

William Baxter undertakes his exercise in reconstruction skeptical that the dialects currently classified in the Mandarin group "actually constitute a valid historical grouping." Further, he goes about his comparative work without using the *Chiehyunn* or other rhyme books. This is certainly an appropriate approach in an attempt to determine the features of a system that is usually considered descendant from, or at least subsequent to, the Middle Chinese of the *Chiehyunn* system. Yet most examinations of individual dialect groups inevitably draw upon *Chiehyunn* features and terminology to characterize them. The traditional perspective is thus to stand in the Middle Chinese past and look toward the dialects of the present to try to see how things have changed, unquestioningly accepting the assumption that *Chiehyunn* Middle Chinese is the sole, or at least primary, ancestor of the present dialects. Rigorous comparative reconstruction, however, demands that we look through the languages of the present to describe the ancestral languages of the past. What Baxter tentatively identifies as proto-'Mandarin' is a language of the past that must be identified and described primarily from the perspective of the present. Baxter's paper initiates such a description using evidence from modern dialects to demonstrate that the Mandarin ancestral language had a single series of retroflex initials. Though the scope of his present effort is insufficient to evaluate definitively whether or not Mandarin is a valid historical entity, Baxter does succeed in tracing out the lines of one feature of an ancestor common to that group.

David Branner's paper examines the dialect of the county seat of Longyan, in western Fukien. Longyan appears have much in common with the Jangjou variety of Miinnan. But, based on systematic comparative method, Branner assigns Longyan to a new group he calls "Northern Miinnan" or "Inland Miinnan," whose primary characteristic is that it displays two conservative features of Coastal Miin: it distinguishes several categories of sibilant initials in

lower-register words; it also displays an incomplete distinction between the Common Miin tones 5 and 6, pointing perhaps to the imperfect division of the Miin proto-*chihsheng* tone category. The first of these conservative features is characteristic of Miinnan and not of Miindong, and the second of Miindong but not of Miinnan. Branner argues that the unique retention of two conservative features marks Longyan and its neighboring dialects as a historically significant group separate from either Miinnan or Miindong, and perhaps typologically prior to both of them. His paper begins with a statement on classificatory methodology and concludes with an examination of some of Longyan's structural likenesses to Jangjou dialect.

W. South Coblin reassesses the assumption that 13th century 'Phags-pa Chinese reflects the standard, or even a formal official, dialect of the Yuan — and presumably that of the Yuan capital, Dahdu [Dadu] — whose departures from Yuan colloquial may have been influenced by the rhyme book tradition. Through a careful comparison of 'Phags-pa phonology with the phonologies of the *Jongyuan inyunn* [Zhongyuan yinyun], the Guanhuah (Mandarin koine) represented in later Ming and Ching [Qing] period sources, and the *Chiehyunn* phonological tradition, Coblin determines that 'Phags-pa was not based on the language of Dahdu. He also finds that the rather large number of places where 'Phags-pa differs from *Jongyuan inyunn* phonology show a far stronger resemblance to later varieties of Guanhuah than to any earlier rhyme table system. In a broader perspective, this state of affairs suggests that the language of the national capital did not automatically and swiftly take up reign as a standard language, as is usually thought to be the case in Chinese linguistic history. Instead it appears that forces of tradition and social and cultural convention could allow a language very different from that of the capital to hold a greater prestige and currency.

Gù Qián refutes a widely accepted, and broadly disseminated view that the Tongtay dialects have no retroflex series of initials. She draws this conclusion through a comparison of a large number of rural and urban dialects in the Tongtay region within the framework of the *Chiehyunn* Middle Chinese phonological

categories. The key to her argument is her use of data from village dialects, which brought her to an innovative conclusion even through a very traditional methodology. Hence, Gù Qián's study underscores the importance of gathering and analyzing data from rural dialects before drawing any conclusive characterizations of dialects, or dialect groups, and their history.

The topic of Li Zhuqing's essay, the neutral tone of the Fwujou dialect in Fwujiann [Fujian], is so new and so little understood, that no assumptions concerning the phenomenon exist that might lend themselves to reevaluation. Instead, Li Zhuqing's contribution is to point out that the southern dialect of Fwujou also possesses a feature of tone that is most commonly associated with northern dialects in China. In her extensive, detailed description of the phenomenon in Fwujou, she demonstrates that the dialect's neutral tone is closely associated with syntactic and phonological features, and is not lexically determined as it commonly is in the north.

Jerry Norman suggests a novel method of dialect classification in which patterns of vocalism are used to distinguish dialect groups. The longstanding practice has been to classify dialects primarily on the basis of consonantal distinctions, usually of initials. Comparative characteristics of initial consonants are fairly straightforward and transparent when viewed from the perspective of the *Chiehyunn*, the traditional framework for representing classificatory criteria; and the customary method is thus easy to follow and preserve. Yet this practice is not without drawbacks. For example, determining Wu dialect affiliation by the presence of a set of voiced initials is not completely successful in excluding some dialects of other groups. On the other hand, vocalic distinctions in dialects are often badly splintered when viewed through the *Chiehyunn* framework; and generalizations are extremely difficult to discern. Norman clarifies the picture by redrawing the *Chiehyunn* vowel contrasts to more closely conform to distinctions actually found in modern dialects. With this simple move, a set of useful general vocalic distinctions reveal themselves in strikingly sharp relief. Norman is then able to show how differing patterns of preservation and/or mergers of the

distinctions can singularly characterize the Mandarin, Wu and Gann dialect groups and their divergent lines of evolution. His paper is a succinct demonstration of the gains that can be made by pushing beyond traditional assumptions and methods.

The question of exactly what constitutes a Wu dialect is the subject of Yu Zhiqiang's article, in which he proposes a feature oriented system for identifying dialects of the Wu group. Yu Zhiqiang derives his classificatory features through an objective review and evaluation of previously suggested characterizations of Wu against the published data of a large number of dialects. His final group of 11 criteria incorporates features of lexicon, initial and tone, as well as Norman's Wu vocalism. Yu's initial and tone features are in origin derived from *Chiehyunn* based analyses, though he redefines the former without reference to *Chiehyunn* categories. He ranks all of his criteria as some degree of either sufficient or necessary or both. In Yu's scheme, criteria that are labeled 'sufficient' are found in some or most Wu dialects, but not found in non-Wu dialects. Yu notes that sufficient criteria are strong in their ability to include a dialect in the Wu group when they are present, but weak in excluding dialects — marking them non-Wu — if they are absent. The criteria Yu labels 'necessary' are found in all Wu dialects, and in some non-Wu dialects. Necessary criteria are strong in their ability to exclude dialects from the Wu group when they are absent, but weak in including dialects — marking them as Wu — when they are present. Yu then ranks his features as 'highly valuable' or 'mid-valuable'. His system of value weighted features is useful in quickly determining a dialect's possible affiliation with Wu.

With my contribution to these essays, I adopt a slightly polemic tone in the hope of sparking debate on issues of dialect classification. I believe that Chinese dialectologists need to reevaluate the accepted classificatory divisions and standards on the basis of comparative evidence alone and without slavish resort to *Chiehyunn* modes of analysis. While I have every confidence that the outcome of such a reevaluation will affirm generally accepted notions about the

overall relatedness of Chinese dialects, I believe that a strictly comparative approach will substantially alter our understanding of the details of their divisions and interrelatedness. Norman's essay in this collection is an independent corroborative illustration of this point.

The illustrative case I bring to the argument is the Harngjou dialect, which is widely acknowledged to contain a great number of Mandarin characteristics, but is still classified as a Wu dialect due to features in its initials which parallel a general Wu dialect reflection of *Chiehyunn* voiced initials. Comparing Harngjou to Jennjiang, a small city on the southern bank of the Yangtze just east of Nanjing, I show that Harngjou possesses an extensive set of phonological correspondences to the latter, a Southern Mandarin dialect. These correspondences far outweigh any congruence that Harngjou shares with even nearby Wu dialects and urge us to acknowledge that the language of this Jehjiang provincial capital is fundamentally a dialect of the Mandarin group. Significantly, if we apply the methods proposed in these pages by Jerry Norman and Yu Zhiqiang to assess the Harngjou dialect, we come to the same conclusion: Yu Zhiqiang's feature system disqualifies Harngjou as Wu, while the dialect conforms to a Southern Mandarin pattern of vocalism in Norman's scheme. This is clear evidence that the 'city's dialect was completely replaced by the language of immigrants from the north when Harngjou — then known as Lin'an — was established as the capital of the Southern Song [Song] in 1138.

There is much more that remains to be discovered concerning the relationships and history of the all the Chinese dialects. We only have a very sketchy understanding of their evolution even during the most recent half of the past millennium. Still, there is a great deal we can sift out if we continue to add to the raw data of dialect description, rigorously press forward in evaluating the data through comparison and classification, are willing to adopt innovative techniques, and do not confine ourselves to traditional assumptions, views, or methodologies. This collection is a small set of examples of such labor that also

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makes a few initial contributions toward the end goal. I am greatly pleased to have the opportunity to present these efforts in the forum of a JCL monograph.

RVS

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### Romanization

Authors were free to choose the form of Romanization used in their individual contributions. Half the contributors used Hanyueu *pin'in* [Hanyu *pinyin*], while half preferred Gwoyueu Romatzyh.