Introduction

Pages ix–xvii of
Chinese Dialect Classification: A comparative approach to Harngjou, Old Jintarn, and Common Northern Wu
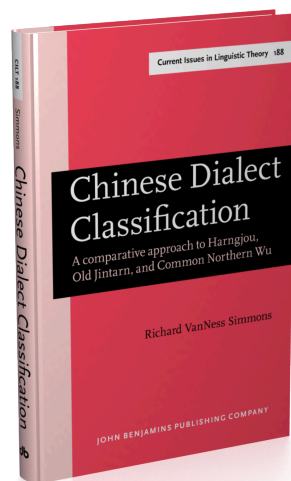Richard VanNess Simmons
[**Current Issues in Linguistic Theory**, 188]
1999. xviii, 317 pp.

INTRODUCTION

This study looks at Wu and Mandarin dialects along the Wu 吳 and Jiang-Hwai 江淮 Mandarin border that are not entirely typical representatives of either the Wu or Mandarin groups. The central reference points of the study are the dialect of Harngjou 杭州 in Jehjiang 浙江 province and the old, now disappearing, dialect of Jintarn 金壇 *shiann* 縣 ("county") in Jiangsu 江蘇 province. Our investigation commences with a discussion of the language of Harngjou, the old Southern Sonq 南宋 (1127–1279) capital whose Mandarin dialect is usually — erroneously — classified as Wu, and questions the traditional standard for Wu classification. We then examine various definitions of Wu, investigate a common comparative system (or framework) that Wu dialects reflect, and outline the Common Northern Wu phonological system. Following, our investigation examines Old Jintarn in detail, compares this dialect to its closest affiliate — Danyang (which has been described as a dialect that is transitional between Mandarin and Wu), compares these to a selected set of other dialects, and determines how and where each of the dialects exhibit Common Northern Wu and/or Mandarin characteristics and features.

The focus of the study is primarily on comparative dialect phonology and lexicon. We depart from the traditional practice of determining dialect character and affiliation by reference to Middle Chinese drawn on the basis of the *Chieh-yunn* and related rime books. Instead, we describe and classify dialects in terms of Common Northern Wu. Besides the description of Common Northern Wu phonology, an additional product of this study is a rigorous and systematic method — a taxonomic procedure — for determining and characterizing Mandarin and Wu affiliation for dialects of the lower Yangtze Valley region. In developing a rigorous classificatory framework, this study helps to lay the groundwork for understanding the true nature of Mandarin and Wu dialects and their history. Indeed, the results of the present investigation add important details to our knowledge about prestige Mandarin dialects spoken in the capital and major cities during Southern Sonq through Ming 明 (1368–1644) times.

The northern Wu region and the southern Mandarin region, comprising the Wu and Jiang-Hwai Mandarin border, are historically closely inter-linked. In modern times the boundary region between the two dialect regions consists of the Tayru 泰如 and Horngchaur 洪巢 sectors of Southern Mandarin in the north and

the Tayhwu 太湖 sector of Wu to the south. Archaeologically this region belonged to the southern reaches of the ancient Yellow River culture. It is the territory where Mandarin and southern dialects have throughout history both mingled in free contact and struggled in subtle opposition.

In general, Mandarin has dominated in waves flowing from the northern edge of the region as the prestige tongue of the literate. However, its influence does vary throughout the region as the waves resulted in a multi-layered Mandarin permeation over an underlying core of ancient southern languages. The region thus preserves an accumulation of the combined historical features of the northern dialects and the Wu regional languages.

The three central cities in the region, Nanjing 南京, Harngjou, and Sujou 蘇州, have all served as central capitals at various times in Chinese history. As capitals, they each held a central role in the Chinese cultural sphere of the Yangtze-Hwai 淮 River region and enormous political, economic, and cultural influence over the entire country. Most recently, following a sudden rise in the 19th century, Shanqhae has emerged as the largest city in the region, and as such is one of the most important economic and cultural centers of modern China.

Well south of the Yellow River and the territory of the dominant dynastic capitals in the North (Shi'an 西安, Luohyang 洛陽, Kaifeng 開封 and Beeijing 北京) the region has belonged to the South in the traditional Chinese geographical consciousness since earliest times. Prior to the great southern expansion of the Hann 漢 dynasty (206 B.C.–220), the area had been on the periphery of the empire unified by the Chyn 秦 (221–206 B.C.). But the Hann's advances south eventually saw the rise of powerful regional families who were well poised to establish an independent southern state as the dynasty began to fail in its later years. Thus, Nanjing — then known as Jiannkang 建康 — served as the capital of the southern Kingdom of Wu in the Three Kingdoms period (220–280). Subsequently, Jiannkang was the capital of the four successive Southern Dynasties, Sonq 宋 (420–479), Chyi 齊 (479–502), Liang 梁 (502–557), and Chern 陳 (557–589). Shortly thereafter, Luh Faayan 陸法言 (fl. 600) in the preface to his comprehensive guide to poetic rhyming, the *Chiehyunn* 切韻 , considered the eastern reaches of the Yangtze River, precisely where Jiannkang is located, to be representative of southern, but not foreign, pronunciation.[1]

Yet the eastern Yangtze Valley was neither completely isolated from the North nor fully immune to influence from northern dialects. The gradual immigration of the Hann expansionist years and following eventually gave way

---

[1] See *Goangyunn* (pp.12-15; I/2b-4a). A convenient translation of the preface is found in Ramsey (1987:116-117).

to a flood following the Three Kingdoms period when the Eastern Jinn 東 晉 (317–420) established its capital in the region. Jiannkang was taken over by the Jinn after that ruling house collapsed and fled the chaos that had undermined it in the North. The Jinn were followed by huge numbers of northern refugees and migrants who were attracted by the relatively peaceful environment in the Yangtze Valley region and the economic opportunities there. No doubt many of the immigrants learned the language of the local populace. For example, Wang Dao 王導 (276–339), who was a principal in the founding of the Eastern Jinn, is noted by an anecdote recorded in Liu Yihchinq's 劉義慶 (403–444) *Shih shuo shin yeu* 世説新語 to have spoken Wu (Mather 1976: 408, 595). Yet the sheer numbers of the immigrants — perhaps as many as 300,000 according to Yan Yihming (1994:22) — probably allowed them to bring their northern tongue with them to establish a foothold in the Wu region. Yan Yihming surmises that it was during this period that a northern dialect crossed the Yangtze and took over the city of Nanjing (1994:22-23). This period also marked the beginning of ever increasing development and economic prosperity in the region. The economy expanded through the Sonq and Liang with only a brief slowdown in the Chern before heading into continued expansion in the Tarng 唐 (618–907).

The Swei 隋 (581–618) saw China's North and South unified again and set the stage for continued regional expansion with the construction of the Grand Canal. Extending as far south as Harngjou via Nanjing and Sujou, the Grand Canal brought the heart of the eastern Yangtze region into direct, easily navigable contact with Luohyang and Beeijing. Communication and intercourse with the North quickly gained in pace and frequency. Advancements in wet rice farming during the mid Tarng brought greater prosperity to the eastern Yangtze Valley and spurred on its ever increasing population. Rice shipments to the North increased by tens of thousands of tons, further increasing the region's economic importance and cultural influence even despite the northern location of the Tarng capitals.

The prosperity of the region lasted through the fall of the Tarng and even beyond into the Southern Sonq. The lower Yangtze Valley was for the most part saved the ravages of war and rebellion that the North suffered at the end of the Tarng. Continuing to flourish through the Northern Sonq (960–1127), the southeastern Yangtze Valley — Jiangnan 江 南 — region was thus poised to serve as a comfortable refuge for the Sonq court when it was chased out of Kaifeng by the Jürchen in 1126. Shortly thereafter Harngjou was anointed the capital of the surviving Sonq dynasty. With the Sonq court, came a rush of northern refugees that was to repopulate Harngjou with Mandarin speakers as Nanjing had been repopulated 800 years earlier. (We will look further at this situation in Chapter 1.)

The wealth of Jiangnan allowed the Sonq ultimately to hold their own against the threats from the north and survive another 150 years, when the Mongols finally succeeded in capturing not only Yangtze China, but also the provinces further south. But the region continued to flourish. Indeed, the Harngjou of the Mongol period may have been one of the greatest cities in the world. Marco Polo, who traveled to China during the Yuan 元 (1279-1368), described the city as "beyond dispute the finest and noblest in the world", based on what he had heard of Harngjou (known to him as Quinsai).[2] A Franciscan who visited Harngjou sometime between 1324 and 1327 was thoroughly awed by the city, which he identified as Cansay:[3]

> I came into the city of *Cansay*, a name which signifieth the 'City of Heaven.' And 'tis the greatest city in the whole world, so great indeed that I should scarcely venture to tell of it, but that I have met at Venice people in plenty who have been there. It is a good hundred miles in compass, and there is not in it a span of ground which is not well peopled. And many a tenement is there which shall have 10 or 12 households comprised in it. And there be also great suburbs which contain a greater population than even the city itself. . . . But if any one should desire to tell all the vastness and great marvels of this city, a good quire of stationery would not hold the matter, I trow. For 'tis the greatest and noblest city, and the finest for merchandize that the whole world containeth.

Ju Yuanjang 朱元璋 (1328–1398) and his band of rebels allied with troops from the Red Turban society plucked Nanjing out of Mongol control in 1359. Ju's troops held Harngjou under siege for over three months a year after that. Less than ten years later, they had gained control of the whole Jiangnan region as well as the territory of Jehjiang to the south. In 1368 Ju founded the Ming dynasty with its capital at Nanjing. The capital would remain at Nanjing for fifty years, until the Grand Canal was restored and the Ming court made its move north to Beeijing, the site of the Yuan capital. Powerfully ravaged by the chaos of Ju's rebellion, but with the capital of the new dynasty in its heartland, the lower Yangtze Valley was to recover fairly quickly once the new dynasty established stability. Thus, while Nanjing had a only brief tenure as national capital at the start of the Ming, the entire Jiangnan region continued to be the principal cultural and intellectual center of the whole Chinese empire throughout the Ming and well into the Ching 清 dynasty (1644–1911).

Perhaps most strongly illustrative of the cultural sway that the region held even into the Ching is it's role as a major center of intellectual activity. The cities

---

[2] Translated by Yule (1929:185). Marco Polo did not actually visit Harngjou himself.

[3] Cited in Yule (1929:212-213).

of Jiangnan were the primary centers of intellectual and academic intercourse in Ching China. Benjamin Elman has determined that fully 87% of the contributors to the *Hwang Ching jingjiee* 皇清經解, a major compilation of Ching classical scholarship, were from Jiangnan (1984:91). The Ming literatus and bibliophile Hwu Yinqlin 胡應麟 (1551–1602) recorded that in his day there were "four places where the books of the empire were collected in the greatest quantity: Ianshyh 燕市 (Beeijing), Jinling 金陵 (Nanjing), Changher 閶闔 (Sujou), and Lin'an 臨安 (Harngjou)".[4] Three out of the four are cities in Jiangnan. A major concentration of influential literary societies, academic associations, libraries, and printing houses ensured that the region maintained its position as a leading bibliographic center well into 18th century (Elman 1984:112-159). Deep in the heart of the region, Harngjou was home to a majority of the most outstanding and complete libraries of Ching times; and fully three out of five of the major contributors to the *Syhkuh chyuanshu* 四庫全書 bibliographic compendium commission were also from that city (Swann 1936; Elman 1984:147-149).

Events of the 19th century, however, were to force an abrupt decline in the Jiangnan's good fortunes. The entire region was besieged by armies of the Taypyng 太平 rebels in the 1850s and '60s. The Taypyng captured Nanjing in 1853 and made it their capital — *Tianjing* 天京, the Capital of Heaven. From their headquarters in Nanjing, the Taypyng armies gradually took control of all of Jiangnan, eventually capturing Harngjou in 1861. Three years later the Ching troops finally fought their way back, first recovering Harngjou and then Nanjing. The protracted struggle between the Taypyng armies and the Ching forces took a tremendous toll on the Jiangnan population and economy. Their fighting cut a swath through the eastern Yangtze Valley that emptied whole cities, large and small alike. The population of the region fell by as much as one third, with Nanjing, Sujou, and Harngjou all suffering huge losses of people.[5] Shanqhae 上海, on the other hand, attractive as a protected haven due to the foreign presence there, suddenly exploded from a sleepy little fishing village into a major metropolis as refugees flooded in from all over Jiangsu and Jehjiang.

The large population declines and shifts thus opened the way for great numbers of new immigrants who eventually moved in from the North and East as well as from further south in Jehjiang, reshaping the region's entire demography.

---

[4] See his *Jingji huitong*, 4.55. Wu Guangching has argued this means that these cities were the four principal book markets in China at that time (1943:254).

[5] Elman (1984:248-253) provides a useful summary of the impact of the Taypyng Rebellion on the lower Yangtze Valley. On the impact of the rebellion on the population of Harngjou, see Simmons (1992:20).

The results are still evident today in places both large and small. For instance, Shanqhae remains Jiangnan's dominant city; and Jintarn, a minor city east of Nanjing, holds a large pocket of Mandarin speakers who descend from people who moved there out of central Jiangsu after the Taypyng Rebellion (see Chapter 4).

The linguistic situation that formed over these centuries of tumult and peace is the stage and subject of the present study. In working out a way to distinguish Wu and Mandarin, and to classify the dialects on their boundary, we begin to know how, where, and how much the repeated incursions from the North affected the dialects of Jiangnan. We can more easily discern which of the region's dialects were able to resist the waves of northern influence and thus maintain their local Wu character, and which show evidence of wholesale importation from, or replacement by, Mandarin in the North.

The focus in the present study is almost exclusively on the Northern Wu boundary and on how the common dialect systems sort themselves out in that region. We do not attempt to draw a clear ring around Wu and justify a boundary in every compass direction. A rigorous comparative delineation of the eastern and southern borders of Wu remains to be drawn, as does a thorough contrastive investigation of Northern and Southern Wu. Yet a lack of a clear demarcation of some of the boundaries of Wu in no way weakens the fault lines that we find and describe for the northern edge of Wu dialect territory. For the data from the dialects along that line, and the comparison sets that can be drawn from it, will not change when more southern or eastern dialects are trolled for their own comparative contrasts to the dialects outside their respective edges of the Wu dialect region. Rather, what we find in those regions will simply reveal how contact and change has evolved and moved at those places themselves.

Though the goal of our study is a better understanding of the history of the languages of the Yangtze Valley region, the present volume concentrates on synchronic description, with only occasional reference to pertinent, verifiable historical data. A deeper probing of historical questions must wait until a much larger number of the dialects in the Wu region and surrounding areas are better described and understood. Once we rigorously, accurately and thoroughly identify and describe the logical common groupings at the synchronic level for dialects throughout Wu territory, we will then be better equipped to see and study the dynamics of dialect interaction and change on the diachronic level. Accurate synchronic classification will facilitate further investigation of the direction and origin of change over time, the nature and shape of successive waves of change, and whether the changes belong, for example, to a Northern superstratum or a Southern substratum.

Where Chinese is Romanized in this study, I use Gwoyeu Romatzyh (GR), the system invented by Yuen Ren Chao. I do this as a tribute to Chao, whose work is the foundation upon which this study is based and whose genius has been a continuing inspiration in my work in the field and office. Though I have challenged some of his findings — including a couple that have come to hold the status of immutable rules in Chinese dialect study — most notably his necessary and sufficient criterion for Wu dialect identification (initial voicing) and classification of Harngjou as Wu, I could not have made the progress I have without Chao's work in front of me to serve as the initial map to guide me as I forge ahead to chart in more detail.

For the convenience of those unfamiliar with Gwoyeu Romatzyh, Tables 0.1 and 0.2 provide a comparison of *Hannyeu pin'in* initials and finals with the equivalent GR spellings in all tones. As the tables indicate, Gwoyeu Romatzyh does not use diacritics to indicate tone. Instead, the tones are indicated by the spelling of the syllable. Hence Chao called his system 'Tonal Spelling'. The following are Chao's spelling rules for GR (1968:29-30) adapted to further explain Tables 0.1 and 0.2:

Tone 1
Rule 1. The 1st Tone spelling of the final is the basic form.
Tone 2
Rule 2. Add *r* after vowels in finals that have no medial, and also excluding finals with *iu* (*pin'in ü*).
Rule 3. Change medial *i* to *y*, medial *u* to *w*, and *iu* to *yu*. Where *i* and *u* form the whole final, they are written *yi* and *wu*, respectively.
Tone 3
Rule 4. Single vowel letters, as well as *e* next to *i* (*ei* and *ie*) and *o* next to *u* (*ou* and *uo*), are doubled.
Rule 5. Change the medial or ending *i, u, iu* into *e, o, eu*, respectively. If the medial is changed, the ending is left unchanged.
Tone 4
Rule 6. Change endings zero, *-i, -u, -n, -ng, -l* into *-h, -y, -w, -nn, -nq, -ll*, respectively.

Pin'in		Gwoyeu Romatzyh					
	Ø initial	Tone 1	Tone 2	Tone 3	Ø initial	Tone 4	Ø initial
a		a	ar	aa		ah	
ai		ai	air	ae		ay	
an		an	arn	aan		ann	
ang		ang	arng	aang		anq	
ao		au	aur	ao		aw	
e		e	er	ee		eh	
ei		ei	eir	eei		ey	
en		en	ern	een		enn	
eng		eng	erng	eeng		enq	
er		el	erl	eel		ell	
i	yi	i	yi	ii	yii	ih	yih
i (after z, c, s & zh, ch, sh, r)		y	yr	yy		yh	
ia	ya	ia	ya	ea	yea	iah	yah
iai	yai		yai				
ian	yan	ian	yan	ean	yean	iann	yann
iang	yang	iang	yang	eang	yeang	ianq	yanq
iao	yao	iau	yau	eau	yeau	iaw	yaw
ie	yie	ie	ye	iee	yee	ieh	yeh
in	yin	in	yn	iin	yiin	inn	yinn
ing	ying	ing	yng	iing	yiing	inq	yinq
iong	yong	iong	yong	eong	yeong	ionq	yonq
iou/iu	you	iou	you	eou	yeou	iow	yow
o		o	or	oo		oh	
ong		ong	orng	oong		onq	
ou		ou	our	oou		ow	
u	wu	u	wu	uu	wuu	uh	wuh
ua	wa	ua	wa	oa	woa	uah	wah
uai	wai	uai	wai	oai	woai	uay	way
uan	wan	uan	wan	oan	woan	uann	wann
uang	wang	uang	wang	oang	woang	uanq	wanq
ueng	weng	ueng			(woeng)		wenq
ui	wei	uei	wei	oei	woei	uey	wey
un	wen	uen	wen	oen	woen	uenn	wenn
uo	wo	uo	wo	uoo	woo	uoh	woh
ü	yu	iu	yu	eu	yeu	iuh	yuh
üan	yuan	iuan	yuan	euan	yeuan	iuann	yuann
üe	yue	iue	yue	eue		iueh	yueh
ün	yun	iun	yun	eun	yeun	iunn	yunn

Table 0.1: *Pin'in to Gwoyeu Romatzyh conversion table for finals*

Supplementary rules

Rule 7. Insert *h* after *m, n, l, r* for the 1st Tone; and <u>use the basic form for the 2nd Tone with these initials</u>.

Rule 8. In finals having zero initial with medials *i, u* or with *iu* as main vowel or medial, add *y-, w-, yu-*, respectively, when spelling the 3rd Tone. But change *-iee* to *yee* and *-uoo* to *woo*.

Rule 9. In finals having zero initial with medials *i, u* or with *iu* as main vowel or medial, change *i, u, iu*, into *y-, w-, yu-*, respectively. But add *y* or *w* to the four finals *-ih, -uh, -inn, -inq*.

Pin'in	Gwoyeu Romatzyh	
	Tone 1	Tones 2, 3, 4
b	b	
ch	ch	
c	ts	
d	d	
f	f	
g	g	
h	h	
j	j	
k	k	
l	lh	l
m	mh	m

Pin'in	Gwoyeu Romatzyh	
	Tone 1	Tones 2, 3, 4
n	nh	n
p	p	
q	ch	
r	rh	r
sh	sh	
s	s	
t	t	
x	sh	
zh	j	
z	tz	

Table 0.2: *Pin'in to Gwoyeu Romatzyh conversion table for initials*