A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON EXPANDING THE RESEARCH BOUNDARY OF CHINESE PHONOLOGY

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Abstract - This paper tries to explain that studying the phonology of Chinese traditional Xiqu is a new perspective to expand the research field of Chinese Phonology. So little has been done and there is much to do. The essence of the word "new" is twofold within this paper. The first is venturing into a new research field/s to enrich and enhance the results and principles already established in Chinese phonology. The second refers to, within the context of Xiqu, applying methods or theories of Chinese phonology as means of research, which have not yet been utilized before, to achieve innovative results that might help, or even guide the study of Xiqu. This paper will choose the phonological studies on Jing Ju as an example to elaborate.

Keywords - Chinese Phonology, Hui and Han tones and dialects, Jing Ju, Spoken and stage language

I. INTRODUCTION

Chinese phonology studies the phonological system of the Chinese language and its principles of evolution. This paper tries to explain that studying the phonology of Chinese traditional Xiqu (中國傳統戲曲) is a new perspective to expand the research field of Chinese Phonology. The idea comes into being based on an over-20-years observation on the academic circles of Chinese phonology in Asia focusing mainly on China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau. Those in Europe and America have been brought into attention within recent years with the same finding, little has been done and there is much to do. The essence of the word "new" is twofold within this paper. The first is venturing into a new research field/s to enrich and enhance the results and principles already established in Chinese phonology. In other words, this is to analyze materials in traditional Xiqu with the standpoint of Chinese phonology. The second refers to, within the context of Xiqu, applying methods or theories of Chinese phonology as means of research, which have not yet been utilized before, to achieve innovative results that might help, or even guide the study of Xiqu. The first fold is more commonly seen. Therefore, this paper will elaborate more on the second fold by using phonological studies on Jing Ju (京劇) as an example.

II. SOME BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE ON JING JU

Jing Ju is, under a bit loose and simplified summary, a combination of drama and opera. It is the most prominent member of the traditional Xiqu and, on a higher level, a by-product of the well-developed and sophisticated Chinese language. In this paper, by-product means forms of literature and performing art derived from, or mainly from, the spoken language. Other outstanding examples include the Shi and Ci poetry and folk songs. Some important background information needs to be revealed before the explanation begins. One needs such information to fit into the context of Jing Ju before applying the means of Chinese phonology. For the time being, most members of the Jing Ju circle do not have any background in Chinese phonology. This means that Jing Ju has to rely on the work of Chinese phonologists to make the second fold come true. However, again, for the time being, quite a number of the Chinese phonologists do not have, or, have not paid enough attention to acquire such information. This paper wishes to emphasize that the information is essential and should be kept in mind for it sincerely believes that solid and plausible findings will not be feasible if the researcher does not have enough understanding of Jing Ju. A great deal is needed to form an "enough" understanding. An all-rounded illustration is not possible in one paper. Therefore, the knowledge of the development of Jing Ju is selected hereafter to illustrate.

Two major characteristics can be extracted from Jing Ju's course of development. Firstly, it emerges based on the spoken language or dialect of its place of origin. Secondly, singing and reciting are essential components of its artistic presentation. These two are so closely bonded that one cannot survive without the other. The first ranks Jing Ju legitimately among other "by-products" and, more importantly, provides the ground for the second to turn actual the spoken language into the stage language of Jing Ju. The word "turn" means that the spoken language has to be gradually transformed into a mean of artistic presentation to suit the need for stage performance or, in short, a stage language. The process of transformation is gradual and lengthen with two major characteristics. Minor ones will be discussed in time, in another paper. Firstly, from the moment that the transformation starts, it takes on its way to lead the

stage language further and further away from its original form until fully establishing itself. The full establishment is achieved when the stage language has acquired enough unique features to distinguish itself from the original spoken language. In plain words, this is accomplished when one can tell immediately the difference of intonation and volume between daily conversation and stage performing and, vice versa. Secondly, the phonological phenomena of the spoken language will be absorbed into the stage language during the time of its origin. During which, such phenomena will be present simultaneously in the spoken and stage language. However, the absorbing process will drastically decrease in speed and scale or even come to a stop when the above-mentioned establishment is completed. Languages change, stagewise or not. Both languages will keep on evolving according to their principles. Spoken language will keep cultivating new features. The stage language, however, focuses on transforming the already absorbed phenomena to suit the needs of stage performance. This is to say, that the pace and path of evolvement are different between the two languages. There will be less or even none timely appearance of new features of the spoken language in the stage language. In other words, phenomena of the stage language have to be analyzed within the context of Jing Ju, a form of performing art, not as actual figures of the spoken language. Bearing these in mind, one can start exploring Jing Ju with Chinese phonology.

III. AN EXAMPLE ON STUDYING JING JU WITH CHINESE PHONOLOGY

As long as Jing Ju is concerned, nothing can be more important than to clarify its origin. Unfortunately, it has been said, and said only, for over a century that the main structure of Jing Ju is formed by the combination of the Hui Tone (徽調) and Han Tone (漢調). It is then, not difficult at all to see that quoting and re-quoting what has been "said" in the late-Qing monographs is not sufficient to sustain the most important claim concerning the origin of Jing Ju . Mobilizing Chinese phonology to study the rhyming system of Jing Ju will enhance the claim from a new perspective and, with some solid evidence. There is a unique feature in Jing Ju's rhyming system that [-n] will rhyme with the [-ŋ]. The most distinguished feature is [uŋ] rhyming with [ụŋ]. The word "Jing" in Jing Ju refers to Beijing. [-n] and [-ŋ] will not rhyme in Beijing dialect. Therefore, it has to come from somewhere else. Taking the above-mentioned claim as valid, the Hui Tone and the Han Tone should be taken into first consideration. Such rhyming is common in both Tones. Therefore, it is natural to take one step forward to look for evidence in the spoken language of the places of origin of the two. The Hui Tone originated from Tongcheng (桐城) and Congyang (樅陽) of the Anhui Province (安徽省). The above rhyming can be found in dialects of these places.

	零 [-n]	菱 [-n]	斤 [-n]	今 [-n]	林 [-n]	窮 [ụŋ]	胸 [ụŋ]	用 [ụŋ]
Tongcheng	niən	niən	tɕiən	tɕiən	niən	$tʂ^hụən$	ʂụən	ụən
Congyang	niən	niən	tɕiən	tɕiən	niən	$tʂ^huən$	ʂuən	zuən

Table 1. Rhyming of Tongcheng、Congyang Dialects: [-n] with [ụŋ]

	爭 [-n]	蒸 [-n]	村 [-n]	痕 [-n]	針 [-n]	公 [uŋ]	終 [uŋ]	從 [uŋ]
Tongcheng	tsən	tʂən	$ts^hən$	xən	tʂən	kən	tʂụən	$ts^hən$
Congyang	tsən	tsən	$ts^hən$	xən	tsən	kuən	tʂuən	$ts^hən$

Table 2. Rhyming of Tongcheng、Congyang Dialects: [-n] with [uŋ]

The following are excerpts from the arias of Hui Tone with the rhyming words underlined. They are from the same play Zhan Xiao He (斬蕭何).

Excerpt 1, Zhan Xiao He (斬蕭何)
昔日仲尼遇項橐，用瓦作阻車路中
古今興亡彈一過，孔子之師鑒前人。[1]

Excerpt 2, Zhan Xiao He (斬蕭何)
賢德妻她能守四德三從，喜得我戴明放寬心。
辭老母別賢妻抽身起動，為求名顧不得跋涉途中。[2]

Excerpt 3, Zhan Xiao He (斬蕭何)
我今死叫蕭何定把命送，莫負我囑託言照計相從。
捨不得老娘親心中悲痛，實難捨結髮妻無依孤仃。
忍不住雙目中如刀絞痛，眼見得大數到時刻難存。[3]

	人	心	存	仃	痛	送	從	動	中
Tongcheng	zən	ɕiən	$ts^hən$	tiən	$t^hən$	sən	$ts^hən$	tən	tʂụən
Congyang	zən	ɕiən	$ts^hən$	tiən	$t^hən$	sən	$ts^hən$	tən	tʂuən

Table 3. Pronunciation of rhyming words of the above excerpts in Tongcheng and Congyang Dialects

From Table 3, the rhyming of [-n] in all excerpts is identical to the dialects of Tongcheng and Congyang. [-ŋ] disappears totally into [n]. The audience, local or otherwise, will not hear any difference between these finals. This is why such rhyming appears and survives in the Hui Tone. However, this is not the case with Jing Ju and Beijing dialect. Tables 4 to 6 show clearly that [uŋ] and [ụŋ] stand separate from [-n] in Jing Ju and Beijing Dialect. This is surely the influence of another Tone and furthermore, the original spoken language of this Tone. The Han Tone is the other major component of Jing Ju. When the fact from Table 4 to 6 does not correspond with that in Tongcheng and Congyang dialects. The Han Tone needs to be

[1] 安徽省文化局: *徽戲傳統劇目選集·皮黃卷*, 合肥: 安徽人民出版社, vol. 4, pp. 83, 1961.
[2] *徽戲傳統劇目選集·皮黃卷*, vol. 4, pp. 85.
[3] *徽戲傳統劇目選集·皮黃卷*, vol. 4, pp. 98.

considered. The Han Tone is originated from Wuhan, Hubei Province. The pronunciation of the words in Table 1 in Wuhan Dialect is as follows.

	斤	今	林	零	菱	窮	胸	用
Tongcheng	tɕiən	tɕiən	niən	niən	niən	tʂʰuən	ʂuən	zuən
Congyang	tɕiən	tɕiən	niən	niən	niən	tʂʰuən	ʂuən	zuən
Jing Ju	ɕin	ɕin	Lin	lin	lin	tɕʰuŋ	ɕuŋ	uŋ
Beijing Dialect	ɕin	ɕin	Lin	liŋ	liŋ	tɕʰuŋ	ɕuŋ	uŋ

Table 4. Pronunciation of words in Table 1. in Jing Ju and Beijing dialect

	村	痕	針	爭	蒸	公	終	從
Tongcheng	tsʰən	xən	tʂən	tsən	tʂən	kən	tʂuən	tsʰən
Congyang	tsʰən	xən	tsən	tsən	tsən	kuən	tʂuən	tsʰən
Jing Ju	tsʰwən	xən	tʂən	tʂən	tʂən	kuŋ	tʰuŋ	tsʰuŋ
Beijing Dialect	tsʰwən	xən	tʂən	tʂəŋ	tʂəŋ	kuŋ	tʰuŋ	tsʰuŋ

Table 5. Pronunciation of words in Table 2. in Jing Ju and Beijing dialect

	人	心	存	仃	痛	送	從	動	中
Tongcheng	zən	ɕiən	tsʰən	tiən	tʰən	sən	tsʰən	tən	tʂuən
Congyang	zən	ɕiən	tsʰən	tiən	tʰən	sən	tsʰən	tən	tʂuən
Jing Ju	zən	sin	tsʰwən	tin	tʰuŋ	suŋ	tsʰuŋ	tuŋ	tʂuŋ
Beijing Dialect	zən	ɕin	tsʰwən	tin	tʰuŋ	suŋ	tsʰuŋ	tuŋ	tʂuŋ

Table 6. Pronunciation of words in Table 3 in Jing Ju and Beijing dialect

Word	Wuhan Dialect	Jing Ju	Beijing Dialect
斤	tɕin	tɕin	tɕin
今	tɕin	tɕin	tɕin
林	Lin	Lin	lin
零	Lin	Liŋ	liŋ
菱	Lin	Liŋ	liŋ
窮	tɕʰioŋ	tɕʰuŋ	tɕʰuŋ
胸	ɕioŋ	ɕuŋ	ɕuŋ
用	Ioŋ	uŋ	uŋ

Table 7. Pronunciation of words in Table 1. in Wuhan dialect, Jing Ju and Beijing Dialect

From Table 7, it is clear that [-ŋ] are mingled with [-n], except for [uŋ] and [uŋ]. This can be illustrated further by looking into other dialects in Hubei Province.

	村	痕	針	爭	蒸	公	終	從
Wuhan	tsʰən	xən	tsən	tsən	tsən	koŋ	tsoŋ	tsʰoŋ
Hanchuan	tsʰən	xən	tsən	tsən	tsən	koŋ	tsoŋ	tsʰoŋ
Huangmei	tsʰən	xən	tsən	tsən	tsən	koŋ	tsoŋ	tsʰoŋ
Yingshan	tsʰən	xən	tsən	tsən	tsən	koŋ	tsoŋ	tsʰoŋ
Chongyang	tsʰən	xən	tsən	tsən	tsən	koŋ	tsoŋ	tsʰoŋ
Tongcheng	tsʰən	xən	tsən	tsən	tsən	koŋ	tsoŋ	tsʰoŋ
Jing Ju	tsʰuən	xən	tʂən	tʂən	tʂən	kuŋ	tʂuŋ	tsʰuŋ
Beijing Dialect	tsʰuən	xən	tʂən	tʂəŋ	tʂəŋ	kuŋ	tʂuŋ	tsʰuŋ

Table 8. Pronunciation of words in Table 2. in six places of Hubei Province

Table 8 confirms the above fact. Such a phenomenon is common in the Han Tone. The following are Han Tone excerpts, again within one play. The Rhyming words have been underlined.

Excerpt 1. Liehu Pei (烈虎配)
臉如紫漆眼銅鈴，兩道濃眉賽天神。
全憑跨下飛毛腿，打虎驅蛇逞英雄。[4]

Excerpt 2. Liehu Pei (烈虎配)
屈得我少主張叫天無應，罵一聲老賊子逆理欺心。
受皇恩督兩廣朝庭欽命，因何故重奴僕敗壞家風。[5]

	神	心	命	鈴	應	風	雄
Han Tone	sən	ɕin	min	lin	in	foŋ	ɕioŋ
Jing Ju	ʂən	sin	min	lin	in	fuŋ	ɕuŋ
Beijing Dialect	ʂən	ɕin	miŋ	liŋ	iŋ	fəŋ	ɕuŋ

Table 9. Pronunciation of rhyming words in Han Tone excerpts, Jing Ju and Beijing Dialect

Tables 8 and 9 confirm that [-n] stands separate from [uŋ] and [uŋ] in the Han Tone, Jing Ju, and Beijing Dialect. Rhyming [-n], [uŋ], and [uŋ] together is very strange because the audience would surely hear the significant difference between them. Evidence has not been found to explain the existence of such a rhyming feature in the Han Tone and how it has worked to obliterate such difference. Singing and reciting are the most important means of presentation in Xiqu. If two different Tones were to combine, similarities in the phonology of their stage language are vital prerequisites. In other words, the two tones are more easily combined if there is much similarity in the sound of words and the rhyming system. The discussion concerning Tables 1 to 9 can show the similarity in rhyming finals belonging to different groups in the Hui and Han Tones which can serve as evidence to sustain the claim that the two may combine. The evidence delivers two important messages. The first is undoubtedly that the same way of rhyming [-n] with [-ŋ] is helpful. The second is that there is a greater and more important ground for the two to combine. The ground is that an overwhelming number of words with [-ŋ] have disappeared into [-n] in both tones except [uŋ] and [uŋ] in the Han Tone. It will be far more difficult to reach the combination otherwise. For example, words with the finals [in], [ən] and [iŋ], [əŋ] occupy a vast number of common vocabulary, assuming the situation of the Hui Tone remains status quo while [iŋ], [əŋ] have not become [in], [ən] in the Han Tone, it will be much harder for the two to obliterate the difference between the sound of such a large number of words.

IV. CONCLUSION

The above is an illustration of applying Chinese Phonology on merely one aspect of the phonological

[4] Old Manuscript, *新鐫楚曲十種*, vol.1, pp. 3.
[5] Old Manuscript, *新鐫楚曲十種*, vol.1, pp. 19.

systems of the Hui and Han Tones to provide the claim that the two have combined to form Jing Ju with a new perspective of substantiation. The whole systems of the two Tones are there to be analyzed and there are numerous claims to be sustained and questions to be answered. More importantly, there are hundreds more members of Chinese traditional Xiqu besides Jing Ju, the Hui and Han Tones waiting to be analyzed and, rather surprisingly, have not yet been touched. Therefore, this paper would like to conclude by stating once more that venturing into the realm of Chinese traditional Xiqu is a new perspective to expand the research boundary of Chinese phonology. So little has been done and there is much to do.

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