

A Prosodic Explanation for Chinese Poetic Evolution*

Feng, Sheng-li

Department of Chinese Language and Literature
Chinese University of Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes an independent system of prosodic application used in *Lisao* 離騷 (attr. Qu Yuan, c.340-278 B.C.), different from the one in *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes). It is shown that while a fixed dipodic prosody (二步律) was used in *Shijing*, a caesura-based prosody (頓歎律) was developed in *Lisao* during and after the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.). By the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) however, flexible caesura prosody was gradually replaced by syllabically-fixed patterns: first trisyllabic, then pentasyllabic and finally heptasyllabic. To date, there has been no reasonable explanation proposed for why and how only odd numbers of syllables in lines developed. This paper deals with this question from a prosodic point of view. It is argued here that poetic evolutions in classical Chinese are determined by the grammar of poetic prosody.

Key words : poetic evolution, trisyllabic line, pentasyllabic line, poetic prosody, prosodic grammar

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1. Different Prosodic Structures in *Shijing* and *Lisao*

Both *Shijing* and *Lisao* contain poetic verses and thus both are rhythmically structured. However, as I will argue in this paper, they are formed with two different types of prosodic structures. *Shijing* is constructed by dipodic prosody (二步律) while *Lisao* is formed by what I would like to call *caesura* prosody (頓歎律). The rhythmic structures of *Shijing* can be exemplified as follows.¹

(1) 〈關雎〉

關關雎鳩

guan guan ju jiu,

‘Kuan-kuan, the ospreys’

在河之州

zai he zhi zhou.

‘On the river’s isle’

窈窕淑女

yao tiao shu nü,

‘Delicate, a good girl:’

君子好逑

jun zi hao qiu .

‘A gentlemen’s fit mate.’

〈黍離〉

彼黍離離

bi shu li li,

‘Millets in full rows’

彼稷之苗

bi ji zhi miao.

‘Sorghum in sprouts’

行邁靡靡

xing mai mi mi,

‘Long walk so slow’

中心搖搖

zhong xin yao yao.

‘A heart all tossed’

知我者謂我心憂

zhi wo zhe wei wo xin you,

‘Those who know me say: He is distressed’

不知我者謂我何求

bu zhi wo zhe wei wo he qiu.

‘Those who do not know me say:

What is he up to?’

1. Translations from Yip (1997).

Although there are five, six, seven, eight and even nine-syllable lines in *Shijing*, its basic rhythmic structure is formed by tetrasyllabic lines, and thus the metrical structure of *Shijing* is dipodic prosody (二步律), which is different from the metrical structure of *Lisao*. *Lisao*, which legendarily attributes to Qu Yuan of the Warring States period, has broken through the dipodic prosody of *Shijing*, as shown by the following. ('X' represents 'syllable', '兮=*ha' is an exclamation particle)

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| (2) X 兮 | 魂兮歸來! (《楚辭 招魂》 <i>Zhaohun</i>)
Soul! Turn back! |
| XX 兮 | 王孫兮歸來! (《招隱士》 <i>Zhaoyinshi</i>)
O, Prince, return! |
| XXX 兮 | 君不行兮夷猶,蹇誰留兮中洲。(《湘君》 <i>Xiangjun</i>)
The goddess comes not, she holds back shyly. Who keeps her delaying within the island? |
| XXXX 兮 | 滔滔孟夏兮,草木莽莽。(《懷沙》 <i>Huaisha</i>)
In the teeming of early summer, when flowers and trees burgeon. |
| XXXXX 兮 | 鷲鳥之不羣兮,自前世而固然。(《離騷》 <i>Lisao</i>)
The bird of prey does not go in flocks, so it has been from times long ago. |
| XXXXXX 兮 | 帝高陽之苗裔兮,朕皇考曰伯庸。(《離騷》 <i>Lisao</i>)
Of the god-king Gao Yang, I am the far offspring, my late honored sire bore the name of Boyong. |
| XXXXXXXX 兮 | 紛吾既有此內美兮,又重之以脩能。(《離騷》 <i>Lisao</i>)
Such bounty I had of beauty within, this was doubled with fair appearance. |
| XXXXXXXXX 兮 | 靈氛既告余以吉占兮,曆吉日乎吾將行。(《離騷》 <i>Lisao</i>)
Since Holy Fen told me my lot of good fortune, I choose a day of good fortune, and I will set out. |
| XXXXXXXXXX 兮 | 苟餘情其信誇以練要兮,長顛頷亦何傷。(《離騷》 <i>Lisao</i>) |

If my nature be truly comely, washed utterly pure,
what hurt can I have in long wanness from hunger? ²

Clearly, the syntactic as well as the prosodic positions of **ha* 兮 can be located between any two syntactic constituents (i.e. NP, PP, VP, AP, etc.) with different numbers of syllables. This implies that 兮 is a phrasal exclamation particle which gives rise to a *caesural* prosody.

What is interesting to note here is the fact that the dipodic prosody of *Shijing* had been standardized as a norm of metrical structure for poetry of that time, i.e. before the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 BC). As a model of poetic prosody, dipodic poems were always used for formal, official and diplomatic purposes, as well as to represent one's social and educational status in everyday life.³ Given the sociolinguistic function of *Shijing* prosody, it would be expected that the pragmatic results of the standardization and unification of dipodic poetry would inevitably lead to a process of fossilization (cliché). While *Shijing* had been socio-politicized during the Eastern Zhou period (770-256 BC), *Lisao* represents a totally different scenario: it is closer to folk songs in the sense that (1) its caesural prosody has more metrical freedom; (2) it is more easily used for oral expressions and (3) it is favored by personal lyricism.

Given the prosodic breakthrough created by *Lisao*, it is natural to expect that there would be various new prosodic structures after the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.). That is, not only trisyllabic poems, but also poems of five, six, seven, eight or even nine syllables per line would have developed. This prediction is borne out, albeit only partially, by the fact that poems created in the Western Han dynasty were in fact formed by lines with mixed numbers of syllables. Thus, it is not surprising that there was a period of time not long after *Lisao* during which poetic forms were prosodically structured with mixed numbers of syllables.

2. Translations from Owen(1996).

3. This can be seen in the following documents: "A man may be able to recite the three hundred Songs; but, if when given a post in the government, he cannot turn his merits to account, or when sent on a mission to far parts he cannot answer particular questions, however extensive his knowledge may be, of what use is it to him? 誦詩三百，授之以政，不達；使于四方不能專對，雖多何為？" See *Zilu* in *Lunyu*《論語·子路》，translation from Waley (2005) *The Analects of Confucius*, and "If they show themselves men who are mild and gentle, sincere and good, they have been taught from the Book of Poetry 其為人也，溫柔敦厚，詩教也。" See *Jingjie* in *Liji*《禮記·經解》，translation from James Legge (1967), *Li Chi: Book of Rites: An Encyclopedia of Ancient Ceremonial Usages, Religious Creeds, and Social Institutions*, vol.2; see also Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 *Shijiao* in *Wenshi Tongyi*《文史通義·詩教》.

However, the prediction for mixed syllabic lines is only partially true because later stages of poetic developments are not fully predicted by the caesural prosody. As seen below, there are syllabic constraints in later poetic developments which are not as free as allowed by caesural prosody:

- (3) a. Trisyllabic poems can be found only after the Western Han, developing in folk songs (“穎水清，灌氏甯，穎水濁，灌氏族 When the Ying river is clearing, the Guan family is well-off, when the Ying river is turbid, the Guan family is executed.”《史記·灌夫傳》) and used in imperial ritual songs, i.e. *Jiaosiyue* 《郊祀樂》;
- b. Tetrasyllabic verse is still active, though not as dominant as it was in pre-Qin times (Cui 2006);
- c. Pentasyllabic poems did not appear until the Eastern Han and later played a central role in the poetic literature of the Six Dynasties (220-589, Zhong Rong 鐘嶸: “Pentasyllabic lines are essential in literary composition 五言居文詞之要.”);
- d. Hexasyllabic poems have never been popular in classical Chinese literature. It is true that in the Western Han, six-syllable lines were used increasingly in *fu* (賦) and later in *pianwen* (駢文). In the Wei-Jin period (220-420), hexasyllabic poems were developed by Kong Rong 孔融, Cao Pi 曹丕 and Cao Zhi 曹植, and in the Song dynasty, there existed some hexasyllabic poems. However, hexasyllabic prosody never functioned as a standard poetic formula in Chinese poetic history;⁴
- e. Heptasyllabic verse appeared as early as pentasyllabic verse (in the Western Han 206 B.C.-23 A.D.). However, as Chu (1990:125) has pointed out, the flourishing of five syllable poems began earlier than seven syllable poems even though both started around the same time. In the Han-Wei period, five-syllable poems had already become “the essence of literary composition 居文詞之要 (鐘嶸《詩品序》), but seven-syllable poems did not become popular until the Tang dynasty.”

4. The unpopularity of hexasyllabic lines cannot be attributed to anything but prosody.

All these facts raise many interesting and important questions. First, what are the crucial factors that determine the choice among all the possibilities for later developments of ancient poetic forms? Second, although trisyllabic prosody developed quite early (during the Western Han), why did it not evolve into an independent poetic form?⁵ Finally, why did pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic forms develop differently, even though both appeared at roughly the same time during the Western Han? All of these phenomena call for linguistic as well as literary explanations.

2. A Tentative Explanation

Before I turn to the questions posed above, I will make some hypotheses. First, following Sperber and Wilson (1995), the notion of poetic effect is defined as:

(4) Poetic Effect (Sperber and Wilson 1995:222)

Poetic effect is a peculiar effect of an utterance which achieves most of its relevance through a wide array of weak implicatures.

5. Some have considered it to be too short with too little information in a monotonic prosody 語句短促·容量太少·音節單調。See Chu (1990:229). However, the trisyllabic word poem can be formed either by 2+1 or 1+2 syllabic structures, hence it is more flexible than the 2+2 four syllable combination. For example (taken from Bao Zhao 鮑照 *Dai chun ri xing* 《代春日行》):

入蓮池	折桂枝	芳袖動	芬葉披
enter lotus-pond	break cassia-twigs	fragrant-sleeve move	redolent-leaves shedding
V+O	V+O	S+P	S+P
1+2	1+2	2+1	2+1

Hence, inflexibility is not the cause of the unpopularity of trisyllabic poems in poetic tradition. Furthermore, trisyllabic lines can also be used to create beautiful poems, even if the lines are short. For example (taken from Bao Zhao 鮑照 *Dai chun ri xing* 《代春日行》):

入蓮池，折桂枝。Enter lotus-pond and break cassia-twigs;

芳袖動，芬葉披。fragrant-sleeves are moving with redolent-leaves shedding;

兩相思，兩不知。the two are lovesick but the two do not each know about it.

Shen Diqian 沈德潛 in *Gushi yuan* 《古詩源》 has commented on this poem as “full of emotion and heart-moving 盛情駘宕。” Obviously, there were some good trisyllabic poems (see also 李賀 Li He's 《蘇小小墓》 *Suxiaoxiao Mu*). This being the case, the unpopularity of the trisyllabic poem cannot be attributed to its literary quality.

We can see from the following utterance that weak implicatures, in a strict sense, cannot form a poem by themselves, at least in Chinese:

- (5) 院子裡的樹葉已經巴掌一樣大了，爸爸什麼時候回來呢？(Zhu, 1998:198)
The tree leaves in the courtyard are already as big as my palm. When will father return?

As pointed out by Zhu (1998:198), there is a strong sense of poetic implicature in the above utterance. However, it cannot be considered a poetic line because it lacks proper poetic prosody.⁶ Since poems must be formed with poetic prosody, we may revise the definition of Poetic Effect as follows:

(6) **Poetic Effect** (Revised, Feng 2006)

Poetic effect is a peculiar effect of an utterance which achieves most of its relevance through (1) a wide array of weak implicatures and (2) a proper prosodic structure.⁷

Poetic implicature and poetic prosody together give rise to what is called Poetic Effect in literature. What is poetic prosody then? Below I will demonstrate that poetic prosody is derived from several prosodic and poetic principles. The first and most important one is what I call the Principle of Poetic Rhythm:

(7) Principle of Poetic Rhythm

The prosody of poems is organized by rhythm, which in Chinese is realized through both pause and rhyme.⁸

Given this principle, we are able to derive default structures of poetic prosody for Chinese based on metrical phonology in modern linguistics. First, rhythm is a structure with at least two elements (Liberman 1975, Liberman and McCarthy 1977). This is because there can be no rhythm in terms of stress, length, pause, etc. with only one

6. This utterance can best be considered poetic prose 散文詩, but this is not a poem as we will see below. Zhu also calls it a 話(utterance), not a 詩(poem).

7. If implicature(詩意) is mainly realized by image, then poetic taste(詩味) is mainly realized by melody.

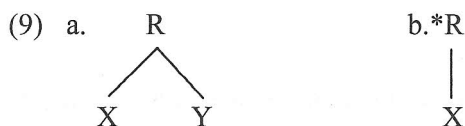
8. In Chinese poetic prosody is realized through rhythm, which is realized by means of rhymes and pauses (cf. Zhu G. 1979).

element. Thus, we have the first rule of Rhythmic Binarity, first proposed by Liberman (1975):

(8) Rule I. Rhythmic Binarity

Rhythm must be licensed by at least two rhythmic units.

This is because stress or pause or whatever form a prosodic unit takes cannot produce a rhythm without at least two elements. Thus a binary structure is a minimal requirement for rhythm (below 'R' stands for the notion of 'rhythm'; '*' denotes 'non-existent' or 'ungrammatical'; 'X' and 'Y' stand for any minimal prosodic unit).



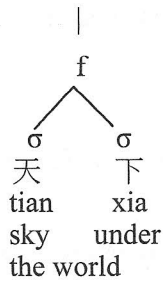
What is a rhythmic unit then? Given the theory of prosodic morphology (McCarthy 1993) and prosodic syntax in Chinese (Chen 2000, Duanmu 2000, Feng 2000, 2005), rhythmic units can be defined as:

(10) Rule II. Rhythmic Unit

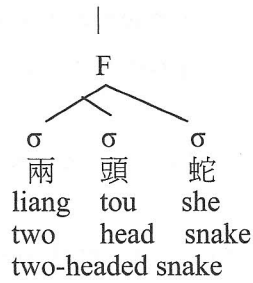
A rhythmic unit is formed by a prosodic unit which consists of a Foot (PrWd, Prosodic Word), a Super-Foot (super-PrWd) or a Compound Foot (PrWd Compo- und).

An elementary prosodic unit is defined in terms of a foot in metrical phonology. A standard foot in Chinese is formed by two syllables while a super-foot is formed by three. Thus, a standard PrWd contains two syllables while a super-PrWd contains three (Feng 1995, Chen 2000).

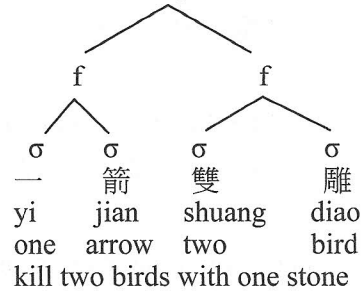
(11) PrWd



Super-PrWd



PrWd-Compound



The notion of a metrical foot is defined in terms of a syllable or mora in metrical phonology:

(12) Foot Binariness Principle

A Foot must be formed by at least two syllables (as in Chinese) or at least two moras (as in Japanese).

Given the above rules and principles, it is then necessary to rewrite the non-poetic utterance above in (5) into poetic lines as follows:

(13) Yuanzhong shuye jin you da

園 中 樹 葉 今 又 大 The tree leaves in the courtyard are now
getting bigger again.

tianya jiafu he shi gui

天 涯 家 父 何 時 歸 When will father return from his long journey?

The necessity of reforming (5) as (13) is due to the fact that Chinese utilizes a syllabic foot structure. Unlike the syllabically irregular utterance in (5), the two lines in (13) are syllabically-footed rhythmic structures. However, these two parallel seven-syllable lines have no rhyme. Of course, there are unrhymed poems in many languages, but nearly all Chinese poems rhyme. Hence, the perfectly footed parallel lines in (13) must be rewritten to observe the rhyming requirement of Chinese. Rewriting, the result is similar to:

(14) Yuanzhong lüye jin you chang

園 中 綠 葉 今 又 長 The green leaves in the courtyard are now
growing bigger again,

he shi a ba wei huan xiang

何 事 阿 爸 未 還 鄉？ What stops father from returning home?

In addition to the footing rhythm in (13), we must further employ rhyme to create a poem in traditional Chinese, as in (14). I will not discuss the reasons why Chinese poetic lines must rhyme here, but will simply take this for granted and propose a rule to capture the fact that poems in Chinese must rhyme:

(15) Rule III Rhythmic Melody

Rhythm must be licensed by rhyme, which is realized between at least two lines, that is:

[L_{R1} # L_{R2}]

where 'L' denotes 'line,' 'R' is 'rhyme (at the end of a line),' and '#' is 'break between two lines.' Thus L_{R1} and L_{R2} form a minimal melodic unit, i.e. a couplet in poetic terms.

Poetry makes use of the musical properties of language, and the intrinsic property of melody is repetition. Thus, there are no one-line poems in classical literature because such poems would lack melodic effect.⁹ The melodic property of poetry is captured in the rule of Rhythmic Melody in (15).

Based on the principles outlined above, we can now propose some general conditions that govern the process of poetry-making in traditional Chinese, namely the minimality and optimality conditions:

(16) a. **Minimality Condition** (of Chinese poetic structure)

One syllable cannot form a foot, one foot cannot form a poetic line and one line cannot form a poem. (單音不成步、單步不成行、單行不成詩)
Thus,

9. Even if there is a monostich, as pointed out by Hollander (2001:11-12), "the one-line poem is almost always really a couplet, an epigram formed by the title and the line itself."

a minimal foot = two syllables

a minimal line = two feet (or two prosodic units)

a minimal melodic unit = two lines (a couplet)

a minimal poem = two melodic units (a stanza, quatrain or 絕句)

b. **Optimality Condition** (of Chinese poetic structure)

According to the system of Chinese poetic structure, minimal is optimal, and thus the optimal poetic structure is:

$$\left(\left\{ \left[\left(\sigma \times 2 \right) \times 2 \right] \times 2 \right\} \times 2 \right)$$

where ‘()’ stands for foot, ‘[]’ for poetic line, ‘{ }’ for minimal structure of a poem, i.e. a couplet, and ‘()’ denotes a stanza, a minimal combination of couplets.

The implication of the Optimality Condition is that the poetic effect in Chinese is both minimally and maximally realized within two lines as a melodic unit with each line consisting of two prosodic units. As a result, two syllables make up one poetic unit, two poetic units make up one poetic line, two poetic lines form a melodic unit (or couplet), two couplets form a minimal poem (stanza, quatrain, v) and two minimal poems make a compound or regularized poem (律詩), which is the basic structure for the so-called new style poem (近體詩) in the later development of Chinese poetry.¹⁰

Given the theory outlined above, most of the known facts about regulated poetry in the history of Chinese literature can be explained systematically, as will be seen below.

3. Monosyllabic and disyllabic lines

The theory of poetic prosody developed above can generate not only the basic rules of Chinese poetry, but also predict some of the historical developments of poetic changes. Here I will outline briefly the development of classical Chinese poetry in terms of different lengths of syllabic lines, from poems of monosyllabic lines to those of heptasyllabic lines.

10. This system can be rendered in Chinese as 兩音 = 詩步、兩步 = 詩行、兩行 = 詩聯、兩聯 = 絕句、兩絕 = 律詩. See Feng (2008).

Let us start with monosyllabic lines. According to the Foot Binarity Principle (12), if a foot is formed minimally by two syllables, then one syllable cannot stand alone (cannot form a standard foot).¹¹ This implies that there will be no disyllabic line poems in classical Chinese, which has been borne out (see Feng 2008).

Of course, an independent phrase formed by a monosyllabic word must use a zero syllable (pause) to license a foot. This is also borne out, as seen in *Zuozhuan*《左傳·僖公二八年》:

(17) Jin jun qibai sheng, xian___, yin___, yang___, ban___。
 晉 車 七 百 乘， [鞬 ___]、[鞞 ___]、[鞅 ___]、[鞞 ___]。

‘The Jin army has seven hundred military carriages, belly-harnesses, chest-harnesses, bridles, heel-ropes — fully equipped.’

As a result, a one-syllable foot (‘xian___, yin___, yang___, ban___’) must occur in a parallel environment, making monosyllabic lines in Chinese extremely context-dependent.

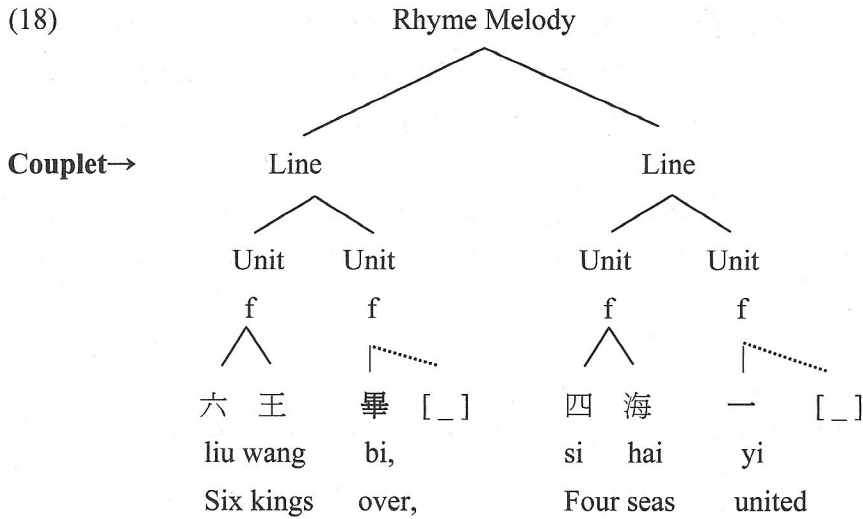
Two syllables will form a standard foot and are thus perfectly balanced and function as a basic and formal unit in poetic language (a binome or a compound). However, they cannot serve a rhythmic purpose for poetry due to the violation of Rule I in (8), and thus cannot form a poetic line.¹² If the Syllabic Foot structure is observed in Chinese (after the Spring and Autumn period, 722-481 B.C.), there will be no disyllabic Chinese poetry, which is predicted by the theory and confirmed by the fact.

4. Trisyllabic and Tetrasyllabic lines

A trisyllabic poem can be analyzed using the following poetic structure:

11. There is mounting evidence for such awkward and ungrammatical monosyllable words used alone in both modern and classical Chinese. See Feng (2000, 2005).

12. Note that the existence of disyllabic lines in *Tan’ge*《彈歌》and *Yijing*《易經》can be taken as evidence for an archaic moraic foot structure. They are different from the syllabic foot structure we are discussing here. See Feng (2008) for a detailed discussion of this topic.



As seen in (18), the rhyming melody is built upon the minimal repetition of two lines, each formed minimally by a repetition of two feet: one is formed in a standard way by two syllables, the other is formed in a non-standard way by a syllable with a pause. Given this structure, we are able to explain why trisyllabic lines were not an orthodox poetic form. First, it is well-known that trisyllabic lines are heavily constrained by the prosodic system and tend to cause ungrammatical results.¹³ Second, there are syntactic constraints on trisyllabic forms as well. For example, the structures subject+predicate and verb+object are very commonly used in literature.

(19) Subj+Pred: 雲從龍、風從虎。(《易》*Yi*)

Cloud follows dragon, wind follows tiger.

歲將暮、時既昏、寒風集、愁雲繁。(《雪賦》*Snow Fu*)

The year was coming to an end, the day was already dark, Cold winds blew hard, sad clouds thickly gathered.

13. For example, *何罪有 *what guilt is there* for classical Chinese and *澆灌花 *water flowers*; *種植樹 *plant trees*; *閱讀報 *read newspapers*, *購買書 *purchase books*, etc. for modern Chinese, are all ungrammatical. See Feng (1997).

Verb+Obj: 置旨酒，命賓友；召鄒生，延枚叟。(《雪賦》*Snow Fu*)

He set out fine wine, and called over guests and friends. He summoned scholar Zou, invited Elder Mei.¹⁴

However, there are hardly any trisyllabic forms which are formed by a combination of a disyllabic adjective and a monosyllabic adjective, i.e. [AA+A] or [A+AA]. For example,

(20) 散漫交錯、紛氳蕭索。(《雪賦》*Snow Fu*)

Scattering and spreading, mingling and merging. It swells up, then thins out.¹⁵

*散交錯、*紛蕭索

*散漫交、*紛氳蕭

Also, there were hardly any disyllabic and monosyllabic noun combinations, i.e. [NN+N] or [N+NN] before the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220) such as:

(21) 西郊有上囿禁苑、林麓藪澤。(《西都賦》*Xidu Fu*)

In the western suburbs there are imperial enclosures and the forbidden park. There are woods and forests, meres and marshes.¹⁶

*上囿苑、*林麓藪

*囿禁苑、*林藪澤

As a result, the prosodic and syntactic constraints together force trisyllabic combinations to occur favorably in VP, but not in AP and NP structures.

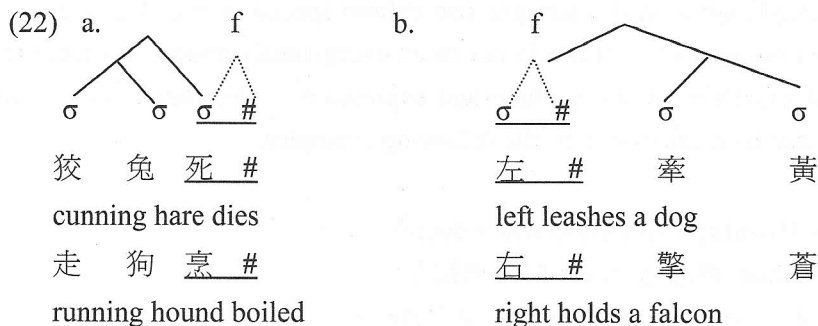
Another characteristic of a trisyllabic unit is that it is bigger than a standard prosodic unit which has only two syllables, i.e. [σσ]_{foot}. On the other hand, it is smaller than a dual-rhythmic-unit, i.e. the tetrasyllabic template (四字格). In order to make a three-syllable line a dual-rhythmic-unit with two feet, the single stray syllable within the trisyllabic unit must take a pause as a place holder,¹⁷ as in:

14. Translation from Knechtges (1996).

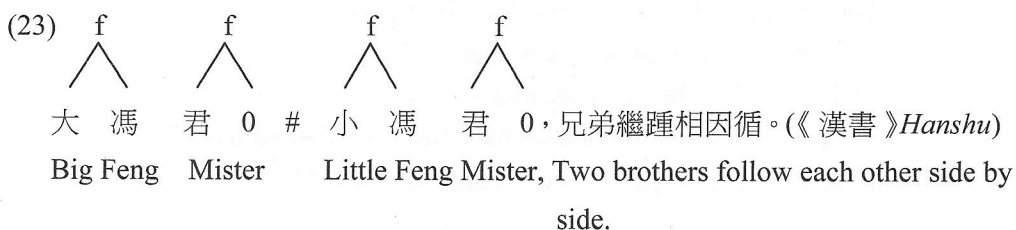
15. Translation from Knechtges (1996).

16. Translation from Knechtges (1987).

17. In the *Wenjing Mifu Lun* 《文鏡秘府論·天卷》 by Bianzhao Jingang 遍照金剛(1974:17), it says: "In



Given this, trisyllabic expressions are strictly limited to a couplet environment only by means of which a place holder (zero) can be realized:¹⁸



Obviously, trisyllabic forms have some unique prosodic properties.¹⁹ First, as pointed out in Feng (2006), the unbalanced prosody [2+1] or [1+2] characterizes informal or even jocose features in casual speech (i.e., a colloquial style in the language). For example, *bei heiguo* 背黑鍋 'to take the rap (for someone),' *dai gaomao* 戴高帽 'to brown-nose,' *sa yazi* 撒鴨子 'take to one's heels,' *liao juezi* 尅蹶子 'to kick back,' *shua dapai* 耍大牌 'to be a diva,' etc. all function like limerick expressions in Chinese.²⁰

general, there is a pause after the first character and another pause after the last two characters, or a pause after the first two characters and then another pause after the last character -- this is for three-character lines 凡上一字為一句，下二字為一句；或上二字為一句，下一字為一句：三言。” (the word 'ju 句' used here refers to 'pause' as denoted by Shaoyu Guo 郭紹虞 1975). Accordingly, the three syllable strings were chanted either as (22a), or (22b) in ancient times.

18. This is called a half-pause prosody (半逗律) by Lin Geng 林庚.

19. See Feng (2008) for a detailed characterization of trisyllabic forms.

20. "The limerick form is apparently inappropriate for the serious treatment of serious material." Laurence (1963:200).

Secondly, trisyllabic lines in literature also exhibit special poetic effects when used in dramatic or action events.²¹ It would not be an overgeneralization to characterize the literary usage of trisyllabic forms as rhetorical expression. This rhetorical function of trisyllabic expressions is illustrated by the following examples:

(24) **Event Opening** (with a dramatic effect)²² :

Xie Huilian 謝惠連 *Snow Fu* 《雪賦》:

歲將暮， The year approaching its close,

時既昏， The season getting dark,

寒風急， Cold winds gathering,

愁雲繁。 Gloomy clouds clustering.²³

Du Mu 杜牧 *E-Pang Palace Fu* 《阿房宮賦》:

六王畢， The six states are no more,

四海一， The four seas are united,

蜀山兀， The Shu mountains have been shorn of all trees,

阿房出。 And E-pang Palace stands before us.²⁴

Event Processing (with a kinetic effect):²⁵

Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 *Rhapsody on Sir Vacuous* 《子虛賦》

浮文鷁，揚旌拽。 Drifting on figured heron prows, they hoist banner poles.

21. This is sometimes called "magic-religious power." We can also find this poetic function of trisyllabic forms in history. For example, in *Fu Pu* 《賦譜》: "Energetic (is the effect of) three-character phrases 壯，三字句也。" And in《文鏡秘府論·南卷》: "To pursue the matter more closely, the achievement of the six- and seven-syllable line is to open up the beginning or to write the ending of a piece. To discuss the reasons for things and to create harmonious tones is the ability of the four- and five-syllable lines. To embody objects and describe forms, to alternate emotions and ideas, is the essence of the three-syllable line. Although a piece of writing should embody both change and continuity, there is no fixed form to hold on to. Here I have stated the general principles 開發端緒，寫送文勢，則六言、七言之功也；泛敘事由，平調聲律，四言、五言之能也；體物寫狀，抑揚情理，三言之要也。雖文或變通，不可專據，敘其大抵，實在於茲。" Translation from Bodman (1978).

22. Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1979:1295) made the following comment on these three-word opening lines: "open with a hard-shocked effect like singing in a rapid tone 發唱驚挺，操調險急。"

23. Translation from Owen (1974).

24. Translation by Wong Sui-kit (2003).

25. Knechtges (2002:364) has characterized the effect of the three-word line as "kinetic effect."

- 張翠帷，建羽蓋。 Spread halcyon-plume curtains, raise feathered sunshades.
- 罔璫瑀，鉤紫貝。 They net hawksbill turtles, angle for purple cowries.
- 攢金鼓，吹鳴籟。 They strike the metal bell-gongs, blow the singing panpipes.
- 榜人歌，聲流喝。 The chief oarsman sings, his voice fluid then sobbing.
- 水蟲駭，波鴻沸。 The water creatures are startled, waves grandly surge.
- 湧泉起，奔揚會。 While bubbling fountains spurt, and the dashing swells converge.
- 蠡石相擊，硠硠磕磕。 Giant boulders scrape together, grinding and grating, clashing and clattering.²⁶

Event Closing (with an aphorist effect):²⁷

- Yang Xiong 揚雄 *Plume Hunt Rhapsody* 《羽獵賦》
- 因回軫還衡， Thus he wheels round his carriage,
- 背阿房， Turns his back on E-Pang,
- 反未央。 Returns to the Everlasting Palace.²⁸

Given all these three-syllable effects, it has been shown (Feng 2006) that trisyllabic patterns will not characteristically be used in formal or solemn situations such as in a eulogy or monody.²⁹

The prosodic restrictions and the rhetorical functions of trisyllabic forms prevent them from being used as prevalently as other syllabic patterns in poetry. However, they

26. Translation from Knechtges (1987).

27. Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書 (1979:1295) commented on the three-word ending effect as “snapping shut, in a vigorous and abrupt manner 嘎然而止，簡勁頓宕。”

28. Translation from Knechtges (1987).

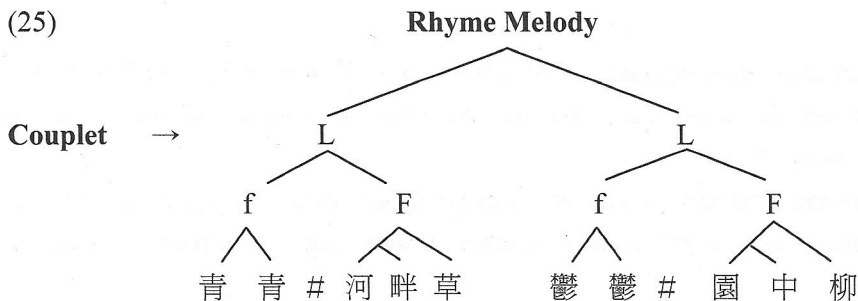
29. Note that The Three-word Classic 《三字經》 was not designed for formal occasions, and is more like a jingle (if not doggerel) for children. It is the kind of prosody that children like, i.e. ballad prosody such as “小胖子，坐門墩，哭著喊著要媳婦兒 Little fatty sitting by the door, a little missus is what he is, weeping and wailing for”; or “狼來了，虎來了，和尚背著個鼓來了 Here comes the wolf, here comes the tiger; Here comes the monk, on his back a sort of trunk.” More importantly, in *Hanshu*《漢書·禮樂志》: “(The emperor) often participated in suburban sacrificial ceremonies and none of the royal court music was elegant...all the suburban temple poems are nothing but lascivious songs of the Zheng Style (天子)常禦及郊廟皆非雅聲...今漢郊廟詩歌...皆以鄭聲施於朝廷.” Thus, even though trisyllabic forms were used in Jiaosi 郊祀 (suburban imperial sacrificial) events, they were still not free from colloquial and folklore influences.

can be used for what Liu Xie described as the function of a prosodic-rhetoric adjustor (應機之權節) in his *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* 《文心雕龍》. In short, it is their prosody that prevents the trisyllabic patterns from being accepted as erudite poetic forms in Chinese.

I will not go into details here on tetrasyllabic prosody and poems because it is clear that the [1+1][1+1] rhythm is a perfectly balanced poetic structure. It is the most popular and powerful poetic pattern in Chinese literature as expected by the theory of poetic prosody³⁰ and demonstrated by the corpus of extant Chinese literature.

5. Pentasyllabic and Hexasyllabic Lines

According to the principles that “one foot cannot make a poetic line” and “one line cannot make a poem,” pentasyllabic lines should be favored by poets as much as trisyllabic lines because they satisfy the Rhythmic Binarity and Rhythmic Melody requirements as shown in the following structure:



Green beyond green, the grass along the river. Leaves on leaves, willows in the garden.

30. There are insightful comments on the poetic effects of tetrasyllabic forms, such as “for rhythms of a grand style, one must consider the four-syllable pattern to be the standard, other possibilities are not upright even if they can serve a variety of different styles 雅音之韻，四言為正，其餘雖備曲折之體，而非音之正也” (摯虞《文章流別論》); “the four-word line is orthodox, refining and smoothing are its essence 四言正體，雅潤為本” (劉勰《文心雕龍》); and “in poetry, the four-word line is graceful and gracious, the five-word line is upright and disdainful; the seven-word line is relaxed and flowing; the three-word line is rigid and falling, the six-word line is sweet and pleasant; mixed-length lines are like fragrant flowers. The four-word line is the sound of Daya and thus the pneuma of poetry. (‘詩四言優而婉，五言直而倨，七言縱而暢，三言矯而掉，六言甘而媚，雜言芬葩，頓跌起伏。四言《大雅》之音也，其詩中之元氣乎?’陸時雍《詩鏡總論》)

However, the [2+1] in the [2+[2+1]] line cannot be analyzed as a single unit if the [2+1] trisyllabic element is analyzed as $[[1+1]_{\text{foot}} + [1+0]_{\text{foot}}]$, where [1+0] forms an independent foot. In fact, trisyllabic lines can usually be analyzed as two feet in the early stages of trisyllabic development. Take the following:

(26) 江有汜，之子歸，不我以！不我以，其後也悔。

The Kiang has branches breaking out and reverting; this young lady went to her new home, but she would not take us; she would not take us, but afterwards she had to repent.

江有渚，之子歸，不我與！不我與，其後也處。

The Kiang has islands; this young lady went to her new home, but she would not associate with us; she would not associate with us, but afterwards she had to live with (us).

江有沱，之子歸，不我過！不我過，其後也歌。 *Shijing* 《詩經·江有汜》
The Kiang has the (tributary) T'o; this young lady went to her new home, but she would not pass us on; she would not pass us on, but (now) crooningly she sings.³¹

In the above poem, the last two characters of the first line (也悔) show that $[[1+1]+[1+0]]$ parallels $[[1+1]+[1+1]]$ with or without a phonologically realized placeholder ('也' is a common word inserted into a line of verse for balance or euphony, an extra-metrical character 襯字). According to this, pentasyllabic lines of the form $[[2+[2+1]]$ may be analyzed as $[[1+1]+[1+1]+[1+0]]$, which is perfectly allowable in a mixed line of a poem, as in:

(27) South of the Walls We Fought 《戰城南》

戰城南，死郭北，

South of the walls we fought, north of the
ramparts we fell,

野死不葬烏可食。

fell in the meadows, left unburied, food for
the ravens.

為我謂烏：

Speak to the ravens for us, say:

「且為客豪，

“We were brave men, far from home,

31. Translation from Karlgren (1974).

野死諒不葬，	we fell in the meadows, left unburied,
腐肉安能去子逃？」	how can our carrion flee you? ”
水深激激，蒲葦冥冥：	Where the waters run deep and clear, the reeds and the rushes are dark:
梟騎戰鬥死，驚馬徘徊鳴。	the horsemen all died in battle, their tired mounts linger and neigh.
「築室，何以南何北，	“On the bridge a guardhouse is built- how can we cross south? How can we cross north?
禾黍不獲君何食？	If the grain is not taken in harvest, how shall our lord eat?
願為忠臣安可得？」	We want to be loyal liegemen, but how can this be done? ”
「思子良臣，	“We think on you, good liegemen,
良臣誠可思，	good liegemen should be in our thoughts,
朝行出攻，暮不夜歸。」	at dawn you went forth to battle, and at evening did not return. ” ³²

This mixed length line poem is written in an irregular meter and could possibly be chanted as:

(28) 水深 / 激激，	Where the waters run deep and clear,
蒲葦 / 冥冥。	the reeds and the rushes are dark.
梟騎 / 戰鬥 / 死__，	The horsemen all died in battle,
驚馬 / 徘徊 / 鳴__。	their tired mounts linger and neigh.
築室 / 何以南 / 何北...	On the bridge a guardhouse is built- how can we cross south? How can we cross north?

Obviously, this type of metrical structure is incapable of motivating a regular prosody of pentasyllabic lines in later ages. This is because if $[\sigma\sigma\sigma]$ is analyzed as $[(\sigma\sigma)(\sigma_)]$, the resulting $[(\sigma\sigma)(\sigma\sigma)(\sigma_)]$ (a three-foot structure) will be a violation of the Minimality and Optimality conditions in (16).

32. Translation from Owen (1996).

One way to meet the poetic requirements of a maximum of two poetic units per line is to force the trisyllabic form to behave like one foot (a super-foot) in poetry as in the following:

- (29) 子為王，母為虜。 Zi wei wang, mu wei lu. Son is king, his mother is
prisoner.
終日 / 春薄暮， Zhong ri chong bo mu, All day she pestles till night,
常與 / 死為伍。 chang yu si wei wu. With death she lives.
相離 / 三千里， Xiang li sanqian li, Three thousand miles away.
當誰 / 使告汝。 dang shui shi gao ru. Should ask whom to tell you?
—— *Hanshu* 《漢書·呂後紀》

However, trisyllabic feet required time to evolve from two feet (or strictly speaking, one and a half feet) into a single foot.³³ Given this, it follows that pentasyllabic poetry could not fully develop until trisyllabic lines became a single prosodic unit (a super-foot). This analysis is supported by the following phenomena.

First, there were no pentasyllabic poems before the Western Han, nor were there trisyllabic compound word formations.

Second, only in the Eastern Han were trisyllabic compounds produced freely and only then did pentasyllabic poems flourish.

The following trisyllabic examples gathered from throughout the Eastern Han *Lunheng* 《論衡》 show the correlation between trisyllabic compounds and pentasyllabic poems (from Han Music Bureau, *Long Song* 漢樂府《長歌行》):

- (30) a. 養性書、封禪書、甘泉頌、功曹史、軍下卒、馬下卒、偃月鉤、喪家狗、
繭栗牛、兩頭蛇、桃象人、魍魎鬼、日月道、日廷圖、四坎壇、太陽氣、
無妄氣、五行氣、陰陽氣、東南方、西北方、圖宅術、五音術、博士宮、
明光宮、建章宮、濟陽宮、梁山宮、萬歲宮、都尉府、甘泉殿、穀城山、
霍太山、勞盛山、勞成山、度朔山、平原津、上虞江、皖侯國、會稽郡、
永昌郡、錢塘縣、昆陽城、泉陵城

33. See Feng (2008) for a detailed analysis of why trisyllabic strings must be analyzed as more than one foot before the Western Han.

- b. 青青 園中葵， Qingqing yuanzhong kui, Green, green, garden sunflowers,
 朝露 待日晞。 chaolu di ri xi. morning dew waits for brightness.
 陽春 布德澤， Yangchun bu de ze, The spring sun spreads its
 goodness,
 萬物 生光輝。 wanwu sheng guanghui. Brightly, all things are shining.
 常恐 秋節至， Chang kong qiujie zhi, Afraid of autumn's coming,
 焜黃 華葉衰。 kunhuang huaye shuai. yellow and weak are the leaves.
 百川 東到海， Baichuan dong dao hai, To the sea, a hundred rivers flow
 east,
 何時 復西歸？ heshi fu xigui? when will they return to the west?
 少壯 不努力， Shao zhuang bu nuli, Young man, if you don't work
 hard,
 老大 徒傷悲。 laoda tu shangbei. You will sigh when you are old.³⁴

—— Han Yuefu, *Long Song* 漢樂府《長歌行》

The correlation between trisyllabic compounds and pentasyllabic poems indicates that pentasyllabic poetry was formed when trisyllabic forms became a single foot.³⁵

I will not go into a detailed discussion here about hexasyllabic forms, but will simply point out that they are made neither by a basic rhythmic structure (because it would be 3+3, and 3 is not a basic foot structure) nor by an optimal structure (because it would be 2+2+2 which is not minimally composed of two units). As a result, hexasyllabicity is not an ideal poetic pattern according to the Optimality Condition for rhythm as given in (16b). This can be seen from the fact that a hexasyllabic line can only be balanced if it is formed by a structure of either $[[1+2]+[1+2]]$ or $[[2+1]+[2+1]]$. However, a metrical pattern of $[[2]+[2]+[2]]$ is possible, though it disrupts the balanced norm. Given these poetically undesirable conditions, the prosodic characteristics and poetic functions of hexasyllabic forms turned out to be only suitable for parallel prose

34. Translation from Zhang H. (2007).

35. Note that pentasyllable and trisyllable lines are found in complementary distribution: when five-syllable poems flourished, three-syllable poems declined 五言成而三言衰. This observation also supports the analysis given here, in the sense that the maturity of the three syllable (super) foot encourages pentasyllabic poetry on the one hand, but discourages trisyllabic poems on the other.

(駢文). That is to say, their special rhetorical properties are best employed in prose (as prose prosody), not in poetry (as poetic prosody).

6. Heptasyllabic lines

The most difficult question involving the development of heptasyllabic poems is why they developed so late. There have been attempts to account for their slower development, however most of the explanations are focused on external reasons, not the internal system of the language that gives birth to poetic forms. For example, Yu (1942) cites two main reasons: first, there were few good seven-syllable poems composed in the Western and Eastern Han “(兩漢七言)佳制太少,” and second, they were not collected by the Han Music Bureau 不曾被采入樂府.” The first is more of a result than a reason, while the second is also problematic because even though trisyllabic poems were collected by the Han Music Bureau, their production declined after Han, indicating that even though it certainly had an influence, the development of poetic forms may not have been determined by the Han Music Bureau. Chu (1990:136) proposed another possibility: “it was difficult for poets to master the use of too many characters in a line during the early period of seven-syllable poem formation 字數增加過多不能很快御駕” and thus seven-syllable poetry developed very late. However, as seen in the following, it is difficult to attribute the slower development of heptasyllabic poetry to the hypothesis that “seven-syllable lines were difficult to handle within a short period of time.”

(31) Qu Yuan	<i>Lisao</i>	
屈原	《離騷》	帝高陽之苗裔兮 Of the god-king Gao Yang I am the far offspring
Xiang Yu	<i>Gaixiage</i>	
項羽	《垓下歌》	力拔山兮氣蓋世 My energy can lift a mountain, my strength can cover the world
Anonymous	<i>Bronze Mirror</i>	
佚名	《銅華鏡》	千秋萬歲樂未央 Everlasting happiness in Weiyang Palace ³⁶

36. Taken from Li (2001:87)

兵起事大令願違， War launched and the situation severe destroying hopes;
 博求親戚在者誰？ Everywhere searching for relatives but who can be found?
 立廟置後魂來歸。 Build a temple, pray to the gods, and hope that the spirits
 will return home.

There appear to be three couplets of heptasyllabic lines in this poem. However, *The History of the Liu Song* has shown us something surprising: this six-line poem was actually recorded as having twelve lines. *Music Record* 《宋書·樂志·四》 states: “The above is *Old Country Song* which consists of twelve lines; among them, six are formed with three characters, and the other six are formed with four characters 右《舊邦曲》凡十二句，其六句句三字，六句句四字。” So this apparently seven-syllable poem was in fact viewed differently in ancient times. The following metric groups are more likely how it was parsed at that time:

- (35) 舊邦蕭條 jiu bang xiaotiao， When the old country declined,
 心傷悲 xin shangbei。 my heart was full of sadness;
 孤魂翩翩 guhun bianbian， A solitary spirit drifting,
 當何依 dang he yi。 and where it belongs;
 遊士戀故 you-shi lian gu， A traveling scholar suffering homesickness,
 涕如摧 ti ru cui。 and torn with grief;
 兵起事大 bing qi shi da， War launched and the situation severe,
 令願違 ling yuan wei。 destroying hopes.
 博求親戚 bo qiu qinqi， Everywhere searching for relatives,
 在者誰 zai zhe shui？ but who can be found?
 立廟置後 li miao zhi hou， Build a temple, pray the gods,
 魂來歸 hun lai gui。³⁷ and hope that the spirits will return home.

The historical record reveals clearly that the prosody of these heptasyllabic lines was actually “4+3” broken-lines. This not only supports the theory of Optimality Condition given above in (16), but also the conclusion that the so-called hepta-syllabic poems of early times were not actually heptasyllabic, but rather formed by a tetrasyllabic line

37. There are more examples of this type in Wang Y. (1962:161).

joined to a trisyllabic line.

The theoretical assumptions and empirical analysis given above are further supported by the fact that in the early period of seven-syllable verse, the fourth and seventh syllables usually rhymed,³⁸ as in:

- (36) Wu jing wu shuang [*doŋ] 五經無雙 Within the five classics, there is no
equal to
Xu Shuchong [*sroŋ] 許叔重 (Mr.) Shuchong Xu
—— *Hou Hanshu* 《後漢書》

As noted in Wu (2002), “there is a break (comma) between the fourth and fifth characters in this type of line 這樣的句子，四字和三字之間都可以加一個逗號。” Also according to Wu, there are 151 examples of seven-syllable lines with this internal rhyming in the collection of ancient verse *Old Folk Songs* 《古謠諺》，145 of them containing the above 4:3 rhyming structure.³⁹ This lends support to our analysis that these seven-syllable lines are actually broken-line poems,⁴⁰ which in turn supports our theory that heptasyllabic lines were not easily regularized (七言尚未“律化”) at the beginning of their poetic evolution.

According to the above analysis, it might appear that heptasyllabic rhapsodies (賦) of the Han dynasty could not develop into a poetic prosody. However, this is not what actually occurred. Heptasyllabic poems became more and more popular during the Sui-Tang dynasties. What was actually happening? Why must seven-syllable lines be broken up into four plus three-syllable lines at the beginning? How did the original two

38. In *Gaiyu Congkao* 《陔餘叢考》 Zhao Yi 趙翼(2003) states: “Most Han proverbs are made up of seven syllables and in general the fourth character rhymes with the seventh 漢人諺語多七字成句，大率以第四字與第七字葉韻。”

39. According to Wu (2002), there are 145 instances of seven syllable lines of this type in *Gu Yaoyan* 《古謠諺》，but there are none in *Shiji* 《史記》. In *Hanshu* 《漢書》 there are only three instances, while in *Hou Hanshu* 《後漢書》 there are 29 examples. These show that seven-syllable broken-lines began in Western Han and became popular in Eastern Han.

40. The so-called heptasyllabic poem in 《漢書·東方朔傳》 can therefore be analyzed as:

臣以為龍，又無角；I consider it dragon, but it has no horn;
謂之為蛇，又有足。I call it a snake, but it has feet;
躋躋促促，善緣壁，Mounting and ascending, it is good at climbing;
是非守宮，即蜥蜴。It is not a gecko, but a lizard.

lines [4]+[3] become joined into a single line in their later development?

Heptasyllabic strings cannot form a poetic line if they contain more than two prosodic units, since this is a violation of the Minimality condition. If this is the reason why they are not able to form a single poetic line, then one possibility for making seven-syllable poetry is to force the seven syllables into two, rather than three prosodic units. How can this happen? We know that within a seven-syllable string (2+2+2+1), the last three syllables can newly be analyzed as a single (super) foot after Eastern Han as in five-syllable poems. What about the first four syllables? They must also be re-analyzed as one prosodic unit, otherwise there will still be three prosodic units (2+2+3) in the line. In other words, the Minimal and Optimal Conditions will not be satisfied unless the [2+2] part of the [2+2+3] string becomes a single prosodic unit. This is probably what happened, as will be demonstrated below.

In current studies of metrical phonology and prosodic morphology, the [2+2] bi-footing unit can be characterized as a Prosodic Word Compound (see McCarthy and Prince 1993, and Feng 2000). In other words, it is theoretically possible that the [2+2] foot forms a single prosodic unit. It is well known that Chinese four-syllable idioms (四字格) are pronounced in an independent stress pattern: 3124 (Yu, 1989:105). And there can be no doubt that the [2+2] metrical pattern is an independent prosodic unit in modern Chinese.

However, theoretical possibility does not imply empirical reality. If the four-syllable template is a single prosodic unit in modern Chinese, the question then becomes: when was it formed in history? We must look for historical evidence of four-syllable strings in classical Chinese which function as one prosodic unit in essentially the same fashion as they do in modern Chinese. Although it is not possible to acquire acoustic data for the thousand year-old four-syllable template, the modern theory of prosodic syntax can tell us some of the basic prosodic structures. For example, recent studies on historical syntax have revealed that tetrasyllabic verbs start to appear only after the Eastern Han dynasty (see Shimura, 1995:230):

(37) a. 但能護持宣助佛之政法。(*Fahuajing* 《法華經·五百弟子受記品》)

Dan neng huchi-xuanzhu fo zhi zhengfa.

Only can protect-promote Buddha's doctrine.

b. 要當推求選擇名女，形容色狀，殊姿越群。(*Xianyujing* 《賢愚經5》)

yao dang tuiqiu-xuanze mingnü...,

Need to inquire-select a famous girl....,

- c. 比居一母，聞歎佛尊，馳出求索。(Zhongbenqijing 《中本起經·下》)

Bi ju yi mu, wen tan fo zun, **chichu-qiusuo**

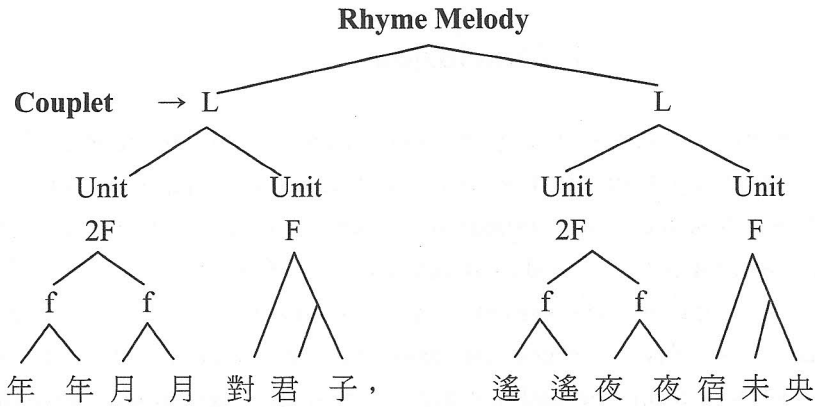
There is an old woman nearby, she heard the Buddha's story, then went out and sought.

These examples are among the earliest instances, occurring in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (南北朝 420-589), where tetrasyllabic units began to be used in verbal and verb-object structures, indicating that tetrasyllabic verbs must have been used as a single prosodic unit. Otherwise, such lines would have been prosodically ungrammatical if, for example, *huchi-xuanzhu* 護持宣助 'to protect-promote' was being used as two separate prosodic units.

Another important piece of evidence for this tetrasyllabic unit comes from Liu Xie's (劉勰) characterization of tetrasyllabic prosody: "the tetrasyllabic unit is dense but not hurried 四字密而不促." The word "dense" (密) here is key to characterizing four-syllable strings: the elements of this four-character unit are "tightly bound together." This implies that the four-syllable unit had become a single prosodic template. It is the first time in the history of Chinese that the tetrasyllabic string has been recognized as a single unit with the prosodic property of being "dense but not hurried."⁴¹

When this [2+2] template became a recognized prosodic unit, we then had the following poetic structure:⁴²

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41. Another important piece of evidence for the tetrasyllabic-unit comes from the development of four-syllable idioms. As calculated by Zhang T. (1999), among the 6593 four-syllable idioms collected in the *Etymological Dictionary of Chinese Idioms* 《漢語成語考釋詞典》, 68.07% were produced after the Han 漢朝 and mostly in the Tang-Song 唐宋 and Ming-Qing 明清 dynasties (59.33%), appearing especially in poetry and lyrical songs such as "qingtian bairi (blue sky and white sun – transparent and good political system)" coined from the poem "qingtian bairi ying loutai 青天白日映樓臺" by the Tang poet Yu Han 韓愈. Though future research is needed, the above statistics indicate that the four-syllable template may have been lexicalized as Prosodic Word Compounding after the Wei-Jin 魏晉 Period. I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for providing the evidence.
42. Note that eight-syllable lines are too unstable for any footing possibilities, giving rise to unfavorable usage in poetic lines in Chinese. Since only odd numbers of syllable lines can avoid multiple footing possibilities, while observing the Minimality Condition, only five and seven-syllable lines are favorable in Chinese poetry.



Every year, every month facing my lord, Long nights sleeping in Weiyang palace.

Wu Jun *Xinglunan* 吳均《行路難》

The poetic RM (Rhyme Melody) is built upon the minimal repetition of two lines, each formed by a repetition of two prosodic units: one is a compound-foot and the other is a super-foot, satisfying the Minimality and Optimality Conditions.

All of the above phenomena support the hypothesis that only when the [2+2] structure became a single prosodic unit could seven-syllable poems 七言詩 become rhymed on the seventh syllable at the end of each line, as in Bao Zhao's 鮑照 *Ni Xinglunan* 《擬行路難》. Thus, based on this analysis, it follows that heptasyllabic verse, as would be expected, developed later than pentasyllabic poetry because when three-syllable lines developed into a trisyllabic unit (superfoot), four-syllable strings had not yet developed into a single unit. And when these four-syllable strings were still two distinct prosodic units, seven-syllable strings could not serve as optimal poetic lines. What we find in the history of Chinese literature is exactly what the theory predicts.⁴³

43. As one of the reviewers questioned, in light of the development of the heptasyllabic line from tetrasyllabic and trisyllabic lines, why do we not expect hexasyllabic lines to evolve from [3]+[3]? Though I do not have a definite answer to this question, a tentative suggestion can be made as follows. First, the parallel [3]+[3] rhythmic structure is easily broken into a 3-syllable line with another 3-syllable line, resulting in a trisyllabic, rather than a hexasyllabic line poem. Second, the trisyllabic rhythm (either [2+1] or [1+2]) is too unbalanced, resulting in a strong limerick-sense. See Feng (2008) for detailed argumentation. These may be the reasons why hexasyllabic poems are rarely composed of a [3]+[3] rhythm. Nevertheless, further research is needed in this area.

7. Conclusion

Disyllabic foot formation developed during the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 BC, see Feng 1997). Only later did trisyllabic foot structure develop, requiring the maturity of disyllabic Prosodic Word Formation. It took even longer for Prosodic Word Compounding in the form of four-syllable structures (四字格) to fully develop. Observing the development of the prosodic system from Old Chinese up to Middle Chinese, it would be expected that the development of pentasyllabic lines would have to wait for the maturity of the super-foot formation and that heptasyllabic lines would have to wait for the maturity of PrWd Compounding. The former is seen in the trisyllabic compound formation of the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220), while the latter appears in tetrasyllabic verb formation during the Southern and Northern dynasties (420-589). According to the theory presented here, these prosodically conditioned poetic effects might become the basis for a theory of prosodic stylistics (韻律文體學), an interesting area for future studies.

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漢語詩體發展的韻律解析

馮勝利

香港中文大學中國語言及文學系

摘 要

本文根據詩經和離騷韻律結構的差異提出兩者分屬兩種不同的韻律體系：詩經以雙音節音步建立的二步律（*dipodic prosody*）為基礎，而離騷則屬靈活多變的頓歎律（*caesura prosody*）。文章認為，西漢以降，隨情而異的頓歎律逐漸取代了音節固定的二步律，於是先三音節、後五七音節的詩行相繼而見。然而，為什麼只有奇數音節的詩行得到發展的原因及其如何發展的機制，迄今沒有很好的解釋。本文即在嘗試回答這些問題的基礎之上，提出古代詩體的形成與演變，是由當時語言的韻律語法所決定的觀點與分析。

關鍵詞：詩體發展，三言詩，五言詩，詩歌韻律，韻律語法

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