

Chinese Urban Language in Historical Perspective: Guānhuà and Dialect in the Late Qīng

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Three contemporaneous descriptions of Guānhuà from the beginning of the 19th century collectively provide a rich and evocative representation that contains a trove of details regarding the nature of that koine and its relationship to Mandarin and local dialects in the urban linguistic milieu of the late Qīng. The descriptions are those of Gāo Jìngtíng (fl. 1800-1810), Lǐ Rǔzhēn (c. 1763–1830), and Robert Morrison (1782-1834). We find that all three note the existence of two forms of Guānhuà, a northern type, and a southern type. The three authors all present a mix of northern and southern types in their descriptions, though each also gives greater prominence to the southern type. This southern type has a close connection to the southern Jiāng-Huái Mandarin dialects, and takes the dialect of Nánjīng as a primary representative. In overall perspective, these three authors' descriptions also reveal there was widespread acceptance of, and social accommodation for, linguistic diversity in Qīng China, within which Guānhuà served as the lingua franca that promoted easy communication across China's vast territory.

Keywords: Guānhuà, *zhèngyīn*, southern Mandarin, northern Mandarin, koine, Nánjīng dialect

I. Introduction

In its character and widespread regional utility, the Guānhuà 官話 of the Qīng dynasty was a classic koine (*tōngyǔ* 通語). This koine was clearly a socially accepted common supra-regional vernacular language standard that formed through contact between two or more mutually intelligible varieties or dialects of Mandarin. Its speakers did not abandon their own native vernaculars or dialects, but rather used the Mandarin koine for communication across China's vast territories, in cities and towns, while continuing to use their own local languages at home and with their provincial compatriots. This article explores various historical records and anecdotes that survive from the Qīng period to illustrate the lively and diverse use of language in China's cities in the late imperial period. We also consider traditional views about dialect and their place in the speech communities of traditional China.

Specifically, we examine the work of three scholars who described the Guānhuà koine from the beginning of the 19th century for what they reveal about the interplay between Mandarin and local dialect in the urban linguistic milieu in late Qīng, especially with regard to Mandarin spoken in south China: Gāo Jìngtíng (fl. 1800-1810), Lǐ Rǔzhēn (c. 1763–1830), and Robert Morrison (1782-1834). Gāo Jìngtíng's *Zèngyīn cuōyào* 正音撮要 [Essentials of model pronunciation] was the first indigenous textbook of Mandarin and contains many passages that provide fascinating glimpses of language use in urban areas along the corridors of travel between Guǎngzhōu and Běijīng. In his *Lǐshì yīnjiàn* 李氏音鑑 [Mr. Lǐ's discriminating appraisal of pronunciations] and *Jìng huā yuán* 鏡花緣 [The destinies of the flowers in the mirror], Lǐ Rǔzhēn reveals the flexible, adaptable attitude toward Mandarin varieties that prevailed in his day. Robert Morrison compiled his comprehensive Mandarin dictionary and grammar working entirely in Guǎngzhōu and Macau. As the first such works in the English language, Morrison's achievement in their compilation is a witness to Mandarin's prevalence and utility in China's distant southern urban areas, far away from the metropolises of Nánjīng and Běijīng that gave Guānhuà its powerful linguistic luster.

Together, the three authors and their works reveal much about the history of Mandarin and of language attitudes in south China during the early years of the 1800's. They are first-

hand witnesses that allow us to sketch out an outline of the multilingual character of urban language use in late Qīng speech communities. We see therein the nature and utility of the Guānhuà koine that served as the precursor of, and model for the development of China's national language in the 20th century.

II. The two types of Mandarin

The Qīng dynasty linguistic milieu encompassed a bifurcated Guānhuà tradition that had evolved out of an evolutionary split of the Mandarin dialects into two types: a northern and a southern type. The northern type, which began to come to prominence in the Yuán period, is the younger and more innovative type. It arose following the collapse of the Northern Sòng (960-1127) as an evolved form of Mandarin spread from China's northeast into the central plains in the wake of the Mongolian conquest, which had established its capital in Dādū 大都 in the locale of modern Běijīng. The southern type is older. It evolved out of a dialect base that had been dominant in the central plains around the northern Sòng capital of Kāifēng 開封 in the early period but that was pushed south with the Southern Sòng (1127-1279) retreat below the Yangtze river.¹ After establishing a foothold in the Jiāng-Huái 江淮 region from the lower reaches of the Yangtze to the Huái 淮 River in the north, southern Mandarin dialects thus settled into the territory surrounding Zhū Yuánzhāng's 朱元璋 (1328-1398) hometown and their descendant type was subsequently reenergized when Zhū defeated the Mongol Yuán and established the Míng (1368-1644), with his capital in Nánjīng 南京.

Centered in the region between modern Héfěi 合肥 in Ānhuī 安徽 and Nánjīng in Jiāngsū 江蘇, quite precisely between the Huái and Yangtze Rivers, the Jiāng-Huái Mandarin dialects came to serve as the informal prestige model for the Guānhuà koine spoken north and south of the Yangtze from Míng times onward. This Mandarin koine is thus also often identified with the Jiāngnán ('south of the Yangtze') region, for example in this passage by the 18th century French historian, Père Jean Baptiste Du Halde:

"The Mandarin-Language is properly that which was formerly spoken at court in the province of *Kiang nan*, and spread into the other Provinces among the polite People; and hence it is that this Language is better spoken in the Provinces adjoining to *Kiang nan* than in the others, but by slow degrees it was introduced in all Parts of the Empire, which is very convenient for the government;..." (DuHalde 1741:389-390; emphasis added.)

DuHalde had not been to China and is describing the linguistic situation of early mid-Qīng on the basis of what he learned from missionaries who had been to China. His sources were accurate, and what DuHalde describes is a realistic characterization of the actual state of affairs. What he calls "the Mandarin-Language" is the the Guānhuà koine we are concerned with in the present study, in this case specifically the southern variety. DuHalde's characterization of a Mandarin that is spoken at varying levels of proficiency throughout the Chinese empire is consistent with the nature of a koine that has become the *lingua franca* of a broad territory.

A koine is a socially accepted common supra-regional vernacular language standard formed via contact between mutually intelligible varieties or dialects, varieties of Mandarin in this case. A koine is different from a mixed language or a creole as the latter two have a regional identity and have become the mother tongue of their speakers. The speakers of a koine do not usually abandon their own native vernaculars or dialects, but rather use the koine language for communication across a broad region. The word koine can be translated

¹ The southern Sòng established their capital in Línān 臨安 (modern Hángzhōu 杭州), which thus evolved into a dialect island that preserved a conservative form of the Kāifēng dialect as a result (Simmons 1999: 1-27, 179-181).

by the Chinese term *tōngyǔ*, though that term was not contemporaneously used in the Míng or Qīng to refer to Guānhuà despite its much earlier origins. (The word Guānhuà first shows up in the mid to late Míng, in the 15th century, while *tōngyǔ* was used frequently in Yáng Xióng’s [53 BCE-18 CE] *Fāngyán* 方言 [Regional words].)

In Míng and Qīng China, the Guānhuà koine was simply called Guānhuà 官話 ‘the speech of officials’. Imperial government (and military) officials were the most frequent users of the koine, as they found it essential for communication across China’s vast territory and for use in official posts both near and far from the capital. Guānhuà was also adopted by anyone who needed to travel afar in China, such as merchants, and those who needed to interact with them, such as tradespeople at ports of call and major cities.

Having arisen out of two separate and distinct Mandarin dialect bases, it was common knowledge in the Míng and Qīng that Guānhuà had northern and southern varieties, these were often referred to respectively as *běiyǔ* 北語 ‘northern language’ or *běiyīn* 北音 ‘northern accent’ and *nányǔ* 南語 ‘southern language’ or *nányīn* 南音 ‘southern accent’. Both varieties coexisted and appear to have been equally accepted. But we will see that the southern variety was the dominant type throughout the Míng and the Qīng and was the type given the greatest prominence in the records and descriptions of the three scholars we look at in the present study.

All of the various terms for the Míng-Qīng koine noted above—Guānhuà, *běiyǔ*, *běiyīn*, *nányǔ*, and *nányīn*—refer specifically to *spoken* forms of communication and their pronunciation. They do not refer to reading pronunciation or reading traditions. Thus by nature, the koine belonged to the realm of oral communication in China and spoken linguistic usage. In their spoken forms, Mandarin dialects for the most part share very similar vocabulary and basic lexicons, and all have similar grammar. The essential difference between the northern and southern types was in the area of pronunciation. Hence the Guānhuà varieties, and their similarities and differences, can be characterized primarily in terms of pronunciation and oral usage. The divergence in pronunciation between *běiyīn* and *nányīn* was a major focus in the descriptions of Gāo Jìngtíng, Lǐ Rǔzhēn, and Robert Morrison. Each of the three had to decide, explicitly or implicitly, which type of pronunciation would be the chief basis of their pronunciation guides and phonological presentations. Through examination of the Guānhuà phonologies that they present, and their discussions of *běiyīn* and *nányīn* differences, we are able to see which type they considered primary. To do that we need to understand the salient features of Mandarin phonology and how the two types differed within that framework.

III. The essentials of the phonologies of the two types of Mandarin and their difference

By the start of the Míng and into the Qīng, all Mandarin varieties were characterized by the following set of phonological developments following the Middle Chinese period:

1. Denasalization of two categories of initials, traditionally known as *rì* 日 and *wéi* 微. This change was parallel to a change in non-Mandarin, southern dialects in which the nasalization was preserved, but in which the initial category distinctions were lost as they merged with other nasal initials.
2. Shift of Middle Chinese voiced obstruent initials to voiceless initials. Of these, in most Mandarin dialects those in the (*yáng*)*píng* (陽)平 tone also became aspirated while those in the other three tones, *shàng* 上, *qù* 去, and *rù* 入, became unaspirated.
3. Merger of the lower register *yángshàng* 陽上 tone with the *qù* tone, with the exception of syllables having voiced sonorant initials, which remained in the upper register *yīnshàng* 陰上 tone.

4. Maintenance of a two register *píng* tone, with *yīnpíng* 陰平 and *yángpíng*. There may or may not have been other mergers of tonal categories, such as the merger of upper and lower *qù* (*yīnqù* 陰去 and *yángqù* 陽去) into a single *qù* tone, or the merger of upper and lower *rù* (*yīnrù* 陰入 and *yánggrù* 陽入) into a single *rù* tone.
5. Loss of Middle Chinese final consonants p, t, and k.

The tonal developments set the stage for the split of Mandarin into northern and southern types. The primary distinction between northern and southern types is the preservation or loss of the *rù* tone:

- A. In older, southern Mandarin dialects the *rù* tone was preserved as a category, and the Middle Chinese final consonants evolved to a weak final glottal stop ?.
- B. In the more recently evolved northern Mandarin dialects the *rù* tone was lost altogether and the syllables belonging to that category merged into the other tones, with the specific pattern of merger varying depending on the dialect.

The dialects underlying the southern Mandarin koine preserved the *rù* tone that had formed from the merger of upper and lower *rù* and had a resulting system of five tones: *yīnpíng*, *yángpíng*, *shǎng*, *qù*, and *rù*. These dialects were located in northern Ānhuī and southern Jiāngsū, primarily around Nánjīng, which had been the imperial capital in the Míng and the early Qīng. The dialects underlying the northern Mandarin koine were primarily those in Běijīng 北京 and the surrounding region. Having lost the *rù* tone, they had a resulting system of four tones: *yīnpíng*, *yángpíng*, *shǎng*, and *qù*. There were other, usually more subtle, features that distinguished northern and southern Mandarin. We will encounter some of these in the descriptions of the three scholars we examine below. But the difference in the tonal systems was the most obvious and served as the clearest marker of distinction between the two types.

IV. Three Views of Mandarin as a Koine within the Diversity in the 18th–19th c.

Below we will look at three descriptions of Mandarin from the mid-to-late Qīng (early 19th century). These descriptions are essentially contemporary with each other, though the author of each was likely unaware of the others. All three also grapple with the two major varieties of the Guānhuà koine, presenting both types to their readers as essentially equally viable alternatives, though revealing a preference for the southern type by their common choice to emphasize or focus on that variety in major portions of their descriptions. We first look at the description of a contemporary witness, Gāo Jìngtíng 高靜亭 (n.d.) and explore the social context of Guānhuà use that he describes in his Mandarin textbook *Zhèngyīn cuōyào* 正音撮要 [Essentials of model pronunciation], as well as nature of the Mandarin pronunciation that he presents to his readers. Following that we will examine Lǐ Rǔzhēn's 李汝珍 (c. 1763–1830) fictional representation of language use in his well-known novel *Jìng huā yuán* 鏡花緣 [The destinies of the flowers in the mirror] with reference also to the non-fictional description of Mandarin that he presents in his rime table *Lǐshì yīnjiàn* 李氏音鑑. Finally we will examine the first comprehensive English language description of Mandarin made by a Westerner, that of Robert Morrison 馬禮遜 (1782–1834) in his Mandarin Dictionary and Grammar.

1. Gāo Jìngtíng, the contemporary witness

Gāo Jìngtíng 高靜亭 (n.d.) was born and raised in Xīqiáo township 西樵鎮 in what is modern Nánhǎi 南海 in Guǎngdōng 廣東 (within Fóshān 佛山 next to modern Guǎngzhōu 廣州). He most certainly grew up speaking the Cantonese language of the region. At the age of 13 he accompanied his father to Northern Zhíli 北直隸 (in the area of

modern Héběi 河北). The pronunciation of the Mandarin spoken in Northern Zhílì was the preferred pronunciation of the Qīng imperial court and in 1752 had been designated as the standard for the pronunciation of the court rituals administered by the Hónglúsi 鴻臚寺, the Court of Imperial Ceremonies (Hirata 2000). It would have been the most prestigious model for the northern Mandarin version of the Guānhuà koine, a fact that Gāo points out quite emphatically in his Preface to *Zhèngyīn cuōyào* (*Zhèngyīn jíjù xù* 正音集句序):²

Not only are there differences in pronunciation between north and south, even within the same prefecture there is variance. Thus, for those who pursue pronunciation [models], the county seat is taken as standard for the county; the circuit town is taken as standard for the circuit; the provincial capital is taken as standard for the province; and within the empire, the imperial capital is taken as standard. Thus among all who tie on the official's sash and who distinguish themselves after attaining office, there are none who are not inclined to look up to Beijing speech. So the speech of the capital is the path to settle upon. 語音不但南北相殊，即同郡亦各有別，故趨逐語音者，一縣之中以縣城為則，一府之中以府城為則，一省之中以省城為則，而天下之內以皇都為則。故凡搢紳之家及官常出色者，無不趨仰京話，則京話為官話之道岸。(Zhèngyīn jíjù xù, p. 2)

Being at the optimal age for learning second languages while living in Northern Zhílì with his father, Gāo Jìngtíng obtained a good command of Mandarin, what he called *zhèngyīn* 正音 ‘model pronunciation’.³ He tells us in his Preface:

I was born in an isolated corner in the southern town of Xīqiáo. In my youth I did not learn model pronunciation. At age thirteen I went with my father when he took a position in Northern Zhílì, following which I did my studies in Dàxīng in the Capital. After a few years under Master Shí Yúnzhū's tutelage in the classics and instruction in phonology, I picked up a smattering of Northern Mandarin. 僕生於南邑西樵隅僻之地，少不習正音，年十三隨家軍赴任北直。因在都中受業於大興石雲朱夫子數年，講解經書，指示音韻，故得略通北語。(Zhèngyīn jíjù xù, p. 2)

Though humbly disparaging his Mandarin speaking ability, Gāo must have actually mastered the Guānhuà patois of Northern Zhílì quite well. His Preface continues:

After reaching adulthood and returning to my native place, I entered the provincial Yamen to fill a minor post. From time to time I was sent to the capital on business. After twenty-years of horse and carriage travel in the windy dust, I completed meticulous study of northern and southern dialects. Following my retirement to the spring-blessed groves, the rising generation of my clan, as well as friends and family, came one after another to ask me about model pronunciation. 及壯返里，入撫轅充當弁職，不時奉公入都，車馬風塵，廿年奔逐，南北方言，歷歷窮究。告致之後，小隱泉林，鄉族後進及附近戚友問正音者，接踵而至。(Zhèngyīn jíjù xù, p. 2)

Thus Gāo Jìngtíng was motivated to write his textbook, the *Zhèngyīn cuōyào*, which he completed in 1810. Gāo's text is the first indigenous textbook of Guānhuà and the first to present a model of the language's pronunciation for learners.⁴ The text also contains many passages that colorfully describe the linguistic milieu of Qīng China, revealing it as a vast and variegated collection of speech communities. We learn in its pages that those who travelled and conversed across regions, with a need to engage in interprovincial intercourse, including not only governmental officials but also traveling merchants and soldiers, all found it important to learn the empire's lingua franca. Gāo describes the situation delightfully well in a passage he titled ‘Guānhuà affords easy passage’ (*Lùn Guānhuà néng tōngxíng* 論官話能通行):

² Passages are cited from the 2018 annotated edition of *Zhèngyīn cuōyào* by Zhōu Chénméng.

³ Gāo Jìngtíng unequivocally equated Guānhuà with *zhèngyīn*, telling his readers “*Zhèngyīn zhě, sù suǒwèi Guānhuà yě* 正音者，俗所謂官話也 ‘*Zhèngyīn* is what is popularly called Guānhuà’ (Zhèngyīn jíjù xù, p. 1)

⁴ Wáng Wèimín (2006: 53) calls it “the earliest standard pronunciation text of the Qing dynasty 目前所見最早的清代 ‘正音课本.’”

What the *Kāngxī zìdiǎn* refers to as local colloquial (*xiāngtán*), can hardly be simply northern and southern differences. All adjoining prefectures are naturally different. It can generally be said that all of the provinces and prefectures in the empire each has its own local colloquial and regional patois. The people of one county do not understand the speech of another county; and such is the case in all the provinces, not simply in Fújiàn and Guǎngdōng. I have traveled in Jiāngnán, Zhèjiāng, Hénán, Húběi and Húnán. The local language and regional patois is different in each place. Even among neighboring counties and prefectures they do not understand each other. Only when traveling on the canals and at the wharves, the people of those businesses engaging in commerce all know how to speak Guānhuà. But they speak the local patois to the people of their neighborhood; and we do not understand. It is even stranger when one goes to stay in Běijīng. There are great numbers of people strolling on the avenues, in groups of three or five, speaking their local colloquial in a great cacophony. One has no idea what they are saying. But when they enter the shops to make purchases, they are fully conversant in Guānhuà, of which northern and southern vernaculars can both be heard, all spoken quite clearly. When asked where they are from, we learn they are from towns and villages in all the provinces. Not one of those who wish to journey forth in search of fame and fortune does not learn Guānhuà. If one does not learn it, it is not possible to get around. Yet in all the provinces, most have a fairly standard accent; and when they speak Guānhuà, one feels no difficulty, all are easy to understand. Only people from Fújiàn and Guǎngdōng have poor accents; and in their terms for things and forms of address, they differ greatly. 《康熙字典》有云，鄉談豈但分南北，每郡相鄰自不同。蓋謂天下州郡，各有鄉談土話，這府縣的人就不曉得那府縣的人說話，各省皆是，非獨閩廣為然。余嘗經過江南、浙江、河南、兩湖地方，一處處方言土話不同，就是他們鄰府鄰縣的人也不通曉。惟有經過水路大馬路頭，那些行戶買賣人都會說官話，但他望他的街坊的人說土話，我們又一句都聽不得了。後來進京住着，更奇怪了，街上逛的人多着呢，三五成群，唧唧呱呱打鄉談，不知他說什麼，及至看他店裡買東西，他又滿嘴官話，北話也有，南話也有，都說的清清楚楚的。問起他們來據說各省鄉邨的人，要想出門求名求利，沒有一個不學官話的。不學就不能通行。但是各省人，口音多是端正，他說官話，不覺為難，人都易懂。獨閩廣兩省人，口音多不正當，物件稱呼又差得遠。(p. 4)

Gāo is describing a vibrant and dynamic set of effectively multilingual speech communities in urban centers. Běijīng was his primary example. But surely a similar mix of languages could be found in many other Qīng urban centers, such as county-seats and other cities large and small. Guānhuà served as the common tongue between these various speech communities and along the corridors of travel between them, primarily along the rivers and canals that crisscrossed the traditional Chinese countryside. Below, we will see the reach of this multilingualism reflected in Robert Morrison’s ability to learn Guānhuà in the far south, in spite of the “poor accent” that Gāo attributed to the speakers in Guǎngdōng. We will also see the multilingual profile of speech communities in the north that Gāo describes outlined in Lǐ Rǔzhēn’s embrace of Mandarin variance and his fictional representation of linguistic diversity.

Yet first, we briefly examine the nature of the Mandarin which Gāo presented to his readers. In the first passage cited above from the Preface, Gāo noted that most officials “look up to Beijing speech” and concluded that “the speech of the capital is the path to settle upon.” However, in ‘Guānhuà affords easy passage’ he tells us that both northern and southern vernaculars of Guānhuà can be heard in the capital: “*běihuà yě yǒu, nánhuà yě yǒu*”. So which variety did Gāo choose to use in teaching pronunciation in his textbook? Looking closely at the features of the Mandarin in Gāo Jìngtíng’s text we find that he favored the southern variety.

While Gāo Jìngtíng’s text does not present any sophisticated description of the phonology of Guānhuà, it does make use of the traditional *fǎnqiè* 反切 ‘cross-cut’ method of glossing pronunciation. This method indicates the pronunciation of a syllable with pairs of speller characters. The first of the paired speller characters shares an initial (alliterates) with the glossed syllable, and the second shares the final and tone (and thus rhymes) with the glossed syllable. The fourth chapter (*juàn* 卷) of *Zhèngyīn cuōyào* contains an extensive

syllabary of homophones for the Guānhuà, all with pronunciations provided in the *fǎnqiè* system. This provides a rich resource that can be analyzed to discern the outlines of the phonology of the Guānhuà that Gāo presented in his textbook.

The overwhelming majority of Gāo’s pronunciation glosses present a clear distinction of the five tones of southern Mandarin:⁵ *yīnpíng*, *yángpíng*, *shǎng*, *qù*, and *rù*. This is an unmistakable indication that the phonology of *Zhèngyīn cuōyào* gives greater prominence to the southern variety of Guānhuà. Further southern coloring is found in the presence of the *jiān-tuán* 尖團 ‘sharp-round’ distinction in Gāo’s pronunciation glosses. The *jiān-tuán* distinction refers to the maintenance of dental affricate initials before high front vowels. These forms were called *jiān* ‘sharp’ and contrasted with palatal initials that occurred before high front vowels (which had been derived from velars). This distinction was common in southern Mandarin, whereas in the northern type of Mandarin these initials had palatalized and the contrast was lost. For example, Gao glosses the pronunciation of both *qiè* 切 and *qiè* 妾 as *cǐ+jié* (此節切), which means that they would be pronounced “*cié?*” ([tʂ‘ieʔ^{ri}]) not [tʂ‘ieʔ^{ri}]), while he glosses *zài* 再 and *zài* 在 as *jìng+dài* (靜代切), revealing that *jìng* 靜 was “*zìng*” ([tʂiŋ^{qu}] not [tʂiŋ^{qu}]). But there is some instability in this situation in Gāo’s glosses, which is evidence that these dental affricates may have been in transition in Gāo’s day.⁶ That would have been a natural consequence of the comingling of the southern and northern types of Guānhuà in the broader speech community. The influence of the northern type in Gāo’s phonology is also seen in the fact that his glosses maintain a clear distinction between initials *n-* and *l-*, and between syllable finals *-n* and *-ng*. Both of these distinctions tend to merge in many varieties of southern Mandarin related to the Nánjīng type.

An additional clear feature of southern Mandarin in Gāo’s phonology is the preservation of a final /on/ (or /uan/) after labial initials. For example, in Gāo’s system *pán* 盤 ‘plate’ was “*pón*”, *mǎn* 滿 ‘full’ was “*mǒn*”, and *bàn* 扮 ‘dress the part of’ was “*bòn*”.⁷ This final is merged with /an/ in northern Mandarin and so is not found in the Běijīng type pronunciation represented by *Hànyǔ pīnyīn*, for instance.

In overall perspective then, Gāo’s phonology tends to favor the southern Guānhuà, but shows influence from the northern type as well. This fuzzy mingling of Guānhuà koine types must have been a prominent feature of the broader linguistic environment in Qīng China, where there was greater tolerance for variance in the lingua franca. This variegated linguistic milieu contrasts with the situation in modern China in which Modern Standard Chinese is strictly defined and variety is less tolerated in Pǔtōnghuà—certainly not variety as great as the allowance for an additional tone category such as we see in the preservation of the *rù* tone in southern Guānhuà.

2. Lǐ Rǔzhēn’s fictional representation of variegated linguistic speech communities

Lǐ Rǔzhēn 李汝珍 (c. 1763–1830), who went by the sobriquet Sōngshí 松石, was born and raised in Dàxīng 大興 in Northern Zhílì (now within modern Běijīng). He thus grew up speaking the Běijīng dialect. When he was 20 years old, in 1783 he moved to Bǎnpǔ 板浦 in Hǎizhōu 海州 (within modern Liányúngǎng 連雲港 in Jiāngsū 江蘇) where with his elder brother, Huáng Rǔhuáng 李汝璜 (n.d.), had taken a post as salt-tax collector (*yánkē* 鹽課司). There Lǐ Rǔzhēn married a woman from a family of local scholars, a sister

⁵ See Simmons 2019: 30 for details of the analysis of the tones in Gao’s phonology. Also, Huáng Wēi 2014 provides a complete analysis of the phonology presented in *Zhèngyīn cuōyào*.

⁶ See Mài Yún 2000.

⁷ Based on Huáng Wēi 2014: 278, who writes the final as /uan/. We prefer to render it as /on/ following labial initials to maintain the rounded vowel contrast (which clearly is present in Gāo’s phonology) when following the convention of dropping medial *-u* after those initials, as is done in *Hànyǔ pīnyīn*.

of the brothers Xǔ Qiáolín 許喬林 (n.d.) and Xǔ Guílín 許桂林 (1778-1821), and essentially settled down in Bǎnpǔ for the ensuing decades.⁸

Lǐ Rǔzhēn developed a strong friendship with the Xǔ brothers, with whom he shared many scholarly interests. He also learned the southern Mandarin of the region from them. He noted that “Yuènan [Xǔ Guílín], especially, was helpful in assisting me to distinguish *nányīn* pronunciations 珍於南音之辨，得月南之益多矣” (*Lǐshì yīnjiàn*, juàn 5, p. 19b). At the same time, Lǐ Rǔzhēn honed his deep interest in language while studying traditional phonology with Líng Tíngkān 凌廷堪 (1757-1809), a scholar of the Chinese classics and phonology whose family lived in Bǎnpǔ (though his official native place is listed as Shèxiàn 歙縣 in Ānhuī). As the years passed, Lǐ Rǔzhēn combined his knowledge of the northern Mandarin of his Běijiāng roots with the southern Mandarin he learned from the Xǔs, bringing both together under the framework of traditional phonological practice in his rime book *Lǐshì yīnjiàn* 李氏音鑑 [Mr. Lǐ’s discriminating appraisal of pronunciations] that he published in 1805.⁹

Twelve years later, Lǐ Rǔzhēn came out with the work that he is best known for, the vernacular (*báihuà* 白話) novel *Jìng huā yuán* 鏡花緣 [The destinies of the flowers in the mirror] (1817). *Jìng huā yuán* can be compared to Jonathan Swift’s (1667-1745) *Gulliver’s Travels* that was published about 90 years earlier, with which it has many similarities.¹⁰ Both novels present stories of travel to strange lands, and embed satirical commentary on their respective societies within their tales. *Jìng huā yuán* also shares elements seen in Lewis Carroll’s (1832-1898) *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and the sequel *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, not only in the depiction of fantastical places, people, and things, but also in a shared delight in language and word play.

Of particular relevance to the present study is the episode that takes place in Chapters 28 through 31 in *Jìng huā yuán*, depicting a visit to Qíshéguó 歧舌國 ‘the land of the branching tongued’ where the people speak a baffling, difficult language. In this episode, the protagonist, Táng Áo 唐敖, and his fellow travelers seek the key to understanding impenetrable languages such as that of Qíshéguó. The people of this country are said to have a secret formulaic way to breaking through the unfamiliar sounds of other languages known as the *yīnyùn* 音韻 ‘phonology’ and the *zìmǔ* 字母 ‘spelling system’.

As the story begins, when they arrive in Qíshéguó, the boatman Old Duō remarks that “of all the countries overseas, the language of the Branching Tongued is the most difficult to understand,” later adding that, “They have a saying abroad that ‘if one visits the Branching Tongued without learning rime (*yùn* 韻), it is as if one has come back empty handed from Treasure Mountain.’ One can observe from this that the study of rime (*yùnxué* 韻學) is produced here.” Old Duō had managed to learn the language of the branching tongued in a previous visit. So Táng Áo suggests to him, “since you know the language here, why not seek out the origin of the rime scheme (*yīnyùn* 音韻)?” But upon inquiry it turns out that “The way of rimes is a secret that our country [Qíshéguó] will not transmit [to outsiders].” They thus set about trying to find some means to get a hold of the rime scheme some other way. In the end (spoiler alert!), the king of Qíshéguó agrees to give them the key to the rime scheme if they can cure his two ailing concubines, but only on the condition that they not open the note with the key on it until after they leave the country. They accept the King’s condition

⁸ On Lǐ Rǔzhēn’s life and activities, see Li Míngyǒu 2011; Xú Zífāng 2000; Yáng Yímíng 1992: 6-11, 45ff.; and Hummel 1943-1944: I.472-473.

⁹ See Simmons 2018 on the mixed northern and southern Mandarin phonology contained in *Lǐshì yīnjiàn*.

¹⁰ The full title of Jonathan Swift’s novel is: *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships.*

a pause indicates the initials is *f*; then 1 tap followed by a pause indicates that the final is *ang*; and a final 4 taps indicates that the tone is #4, *qù*. Together these four numbers represent *fàng*, which represents the pronunciation of the character 放 ‘put’.¹³ Going through this process, Tāng Áo and his friends discover that the *zìmǔ* are a way to represent the pronunciation of any character. In this way then, the *zìmǔ* indeed represent a kind of key to language, in that they provide a means of identifying the pronunciations of characters and words.

1. 昌 <i>ch</i>	12. 方 <i>f</i>	23. 香 <i>xi</i>
2. 茫 <i>m</i>	13. 低 ^秩 <i>di</i>	24. 當 <i>d</i>
3. 秧 <i>yi</i>	14. 姜 <i>ji</i>	25. 將 <i>zi</i>
4. 梯 ^秩 <i>ti</i>	15. 妙 ^秩 <i>mi</i>	26. 湯 <i>t</i>
5. 羌 <i>qi</i>	16. 桑 <i>s</i>	27. 瓢 <i>r</i>
6. 商 <i>sh</i>	17. 郎 <i>l</i>	28. 兵 ^秩 <i>bi</i>
7. 槍 <i>ci</i>	18. 康 <i>k</i>	29. 幫 <i>b</i>
8. 良 <i>li</i>	19. 倉 <i>c</i>	30. 岡 <i>g</i>
9. 囊 <i>n</i>	20. 昂 <i>∅</i>	31. 臧 <i>z</i>
10. 杭 <i>h</i>	21. 娘 <i>ni</i>	32. 張 <i>zh</i>
11. 批 ^秩 <i>pi</i>	22. 滂 <i>p</i>	33. 廂 <i>si</i>

Table 2: Lǐ Rǔzhēn’s initials and their order

Plain finals			
1. 張 <i>zhang</i>	2. 真 <i>zhen</i>	3. 中 <i>zhong</i>	4. 珠 <i>zhu</i>
5. 招 <i>zhao</i>	6. 齋 <i>zhai</i>	7. 知 <i>zhi</i>	8. 遮 <i>zhe</i>
9. 詁 <i>zhan</i>	10. 氈 <i>zhan</i>	11. 專 <i>zhuan</i>	12. 珠鷗 ^珠 <i>zhuou</i>
13. 珠鴉 ^珠 <i>zhuo</i>	14. 珠鴉 ^珠 <i>zha</i>	15. 珠透 ^珠 <i>zhuuei</i>	16. 珠均 ^珠 <i>zhuen</i>
17. 珠鶯 ^珠 <i>zheng</i>	18. 珠帆 ^珠 <i>zhan</i>	19. 珠窩 ^珠 <i>zhuo</i>	20. 珠窪 ^珠 <i>zhuua</i>
21. 珠歪 ^珠 <i>zhuai</i>	22. 珠汪 ^珠 <i>zhuang</i>		
Rù tone finals			
1. 張 <i>zhaq</i>	2. 真 <i>zhenq</i>	3. 中 <i>zhongq</i>	
9. 詁 <i>zhanq</i>	10. 氈 <i>zhanq</i>	11. 專 <i>zhuanq</i>	
			16. 珠均 ^珠 <i>zhuenq</i>
17. 珠鶯 ^珠 <i>zhengq</i>	18. 珠帆 ^珠 <i>zhanq</i>		

Table 3: Lǐ Rǔzhēn’s finals and their order

This story in *Jing huā yuán* reveals Lǐ Rǔzhēn’s conceptualization of the multilingual world that he lived in and observed on a daily basis. It was a world in which one encountered different languages as one travelled through it, just as Lǐ Rǔzhēn did when he travelled between Běijīng and Jiāngsū and Ānhuī. Those various languages could all be related to each other through a kind of phonological key that could represent pronunciation. We see therein that Lǐ Rǔzhēn conceived of language differences primarily as differences of pronunciation, which could be apprehended by mastering a key to a common phonology. In Lǐ Rǔzhēn’s experience, the two languages whose differences had to be mastered were northern Mandarin, which was his native tongue and what he called *běiyīn*, and southern Mandarin, the language of his adopted southern home in Bǎnpǔ and what he called *nányīn*. Though his linguistic experience was likely overall much narrower than Gāo Jìngtíng’s, their depictions of a multilingual speech community that spread broadly throughout Qīng China resonate with

¹³ This is in fact a game called *shèzì* 射字 ‘tossing out a character[’s pronunciation]’ that Lǐ Rǔzhēn advocated as a way to learn phonology in *Lǐshì yīnjiàn*, and which also has a rather long history among the Chinese literati in historical times. See Saarela 2018 and Simmons 2018: 286-287.

each other in many ways, matching particularly closely in their recognition of two types of Mandarin, with the southern type being the one both chose to give greater focus to.

Lǐ Rǔzhēn in his *Lǐshì yīnjiàn* and in the key to the *zìmǔ* of Qíshéguó in *Jìng huā yuán* represents a phonology that has the same southern Mandarin features that we saw in Gāo Jìngtíng’s pronunciation glosses:

- It has the 5 southern Mandarin tones.
- It maintains the *jiān-tuán* distinction.
- The final *uon* (/on/) is found following labial initials and is not merged with *an* (/an/).

And also like Gāo, Lǐ Rǔzhēn’s system maintains important northern distinctions:

- The initials *n-* and *l-* are distinct.
- Syllable finals *-n* and *-ng* are distinct.
- It has the palatalized initials *ji-*, *qi-*, and *xi-*, which were still unpalatalized in much of southern Mandarin in the early 19th century.¹⁴

Lǐ Rǔzhēn additionally has a full set of retroflex initials, *zh-*, *ch-*, *sh-*, and *r-*. But this is not exclusively a feature of northern Mandarin. These initials are also present in southern Mandarin in close correspondence to the northern pattern, except for a small number of syllables that are sibilants where northern Mandarin has retroflex initials. Y.R. Chao characterized the situation as a contrast in the distribution of initial types in Mandarin, with the Běijīng based National Pronunciation (*guóyīn* 國音 of the early 20th century), the northern type, contrasting with the Nánjīng dialect pronunciation, the southern type (1929: 1021). Table 4 illustrates, identifying representatives of the shared retroflex set between arrow brackets (as >蒸真<) and the set where southern Mandarin has sibilants with wavy underlining (as 將酒). The southern Mandarin set in Table 4 also includes the so-called *jiān* set of initials that we discussed earlier. This combination of *jiān* initials not found in northern Mandarin together with dental sibilant initials where northern Mandarin has retroflex initials is a hallmark of southern Mandarin in the Qīng. As he was from Běijīng, Lǐ Rǔzhēn probably adhered closely to the northern pattern in the distribution of retroflex initials in his phonology.¹⁵ But we will see below that this hallmark combination is quite clearly seen in the Mandarin that Robert Morrison recorded, and is closely matched by Gāo Jìngtíng as well.

	Northern			Southern		
	te ⁱ	ts	tʂ	te ^{ci}	ts ^c	tʂ ^c
	(j) tuán	(z) jiān	(zh)	(q) tuán	(c) jiān	(ch)
k ⁱ /te ⁱ (j) tuán	姜					
ts (z) jiān (sibilant)	將酒	臧	章			
tʂ (zh) (retroflex)			>蒸真<			
k ^{ci} /te ^{ci} (q) tuán				羌		
ts ^c (c) jiān (sibilant)				槍秋	藏	長
tʂ ^c (ch) retroflex						>稱插<
x ⁱ /e ⁱ (x) tuán						
s (s) jiān (sibilant)					香	
ʂ (sh) (retroflex)					廂瀟	桑 商
						>聲山<

Table 4: Differing north-south distribution of sibilant and retroflex initials (adopted from Chao 1929: 1021)

¹⁴ See Simmons 2017: 68-72, and Simmons 2018: 294-295. Huáng Wēi 2014 considers this palatalized set to be present in Gāo Jìngtíng’s Mandarin phonology. But these initials were derived from the palatalization of velar initials before high front vowels, which process had not widely spread south in the early 19th century. So we consider the situation in Gāo Jìngtíng to be indeterminate or variable. Indeed, we will see below that in Morrison’s record they are velar initials.

¹⁵ The limited number of examples included in Lǐ Rǔzhēn’s rime table makes this difficult to confirm, however.

3. Robert Morrison, a learner from the West

Robert Morrison (1782-1834), whose Chinese name Mǎ Lǐxùn 馬禮遜, came to China in roughly the same period that Gāo Jìngtíng and Lǐ Rǔzhēn were active in compiling their works on Mandarin, though surely none of the three ever met. Morrison is often revered as a pioneer for his work as the first English missionary in China, one who was deeply devoted to the pursuit of his goals though maybe less than charming at the task. The historian Austin Coates remarked of him:

For all his peculiarities—irritating, narrow minded, scornful, and completely humourless—the man who by his endurance, his achievement and his moral bravery stands out inescapably as the most considerable European in China in the early nineteenth century (Coates 2009: 107).

Morrison's most significant achievements were in his compilation of the first English language references for learning Chinese, primarily Mandarin but also Cantonese. These include *A Grammar of the Chinese Language*, published in 1815, *Dictionary of the Chinese Language* in 6 volumes published over the course of eight years, from 1815 to 1823, and *Vocabulary of the Canton Dialect* published in 1828. Morrison learned Mandarin and compiled these volumes primarily in Guǎngzhōu in China's south, far from the urban centers to the north that lent Mandarin its powerful prestige—Nánjīng and Běijīng. That Morrison was able to master Mandarin and compile his dictionary and grammar of the language in that location is witness to Mandarin's prevalence and utility in China's distant southern urban areas.

Morrison was prepared for the task by the London Missionary Society (LMS) in a specialized program of preparation and mission strategy that had only recently been established when he started his training.¹⁶ The program was led by David Bogue, who founded the Gosport Academy in England specifically for the that purpose and included transcribing Bogue's lecture notes to use in implementation of the program after arrival in the land of one's mission. Bogue's program and mission model laid particularly strong emphasis on linguistic skills and developing a strong foundation in the language of the land that a missionary worked. He exhorted his students that they should master the relevant local languages and compose dictionaries and grammars for them, so as to be able to translate the Bible. He told his student missionaries that they should establish a printing press in the land of their work so as to be able to publish their reference works and translations, and also should found a local version of the Academy for converts, who they would teach with Bogue's lecture notes, while continuing to translate other theological manuscripts, all from a list provided by Bogue. After arriving in China, Morrison followed this model to the letter. His impressive accomplishments were in fact built according to Bogue's blueprint and upon Bogue's foundation (Daily 2013: 196).

To hone their linguistic skills, at the Gosport Academy the students studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and French if time allowed (Daily 2013: 67-68). Bogue had his students learn these languages through independent study, analyzing and memorizing grammars and texts, which he maintained was the best way to train them to acquire the languages of the lands of their missions. After new missionaries arrived in their appointed post, Bogue advocated:

- “Conversing very often with the natives and acquiring the knowledge of their words and phrases.
 - “Writing what he has learned and fixing it in memory.
 - “Daily application.
 - “Habitual assiduity and labor, morning, noon, and night.
 - “Speaking the language as much as he can and receiving the conviction of the Natives.
 - “Writing frequently, exercises, translating it out of the Heathen language into his own, and out of his own into theirs.”
- (From Daily 2013: 70)

¹⁶ Our summary of Morrison's training for missionary work is drawn primarily from Daily 2013 and Morrison 1839, the latter being his *Memoirs* compiled by his wife Eliza Armstrong.

Strikingly like a modern prescription for immersion language learning, this routine also contains elements of the methodology for language recording and description in work with linguistic informants.

Morrison Began Study at Gosport in 1805. Though it was intended to be a three-year program, Morrison was provided with expedited training and completed it in 14 months. Following which he spent 20 months in London studying Chinese, helped off and on by a Chinese tutor named Yong Saam Tak (容三德).¹⁷ In London, Morrison also was able to purchase a Chinese-Latin dictionary. This he made a transcribed copy of, while also transcribing a manuscript of the Chinese translation of part of the New Testament of the Bible by Jean Basset (1662-1707) that was held in the British Museum (Daily 2013: 93).¹⁸

Morrison Left for China on January 31, 1807 at age 25 (his birthday was 5 January 1782). Because missionaries were not allowed to travel on the ships of the East India Company, he had to go via America, and so did not arrive in China until September 4 of that year, when he landed in Macao. Soon after that, he learned that Chinese citizens were prohibited from tutoring foreigners in Chinese by decree of the Qīng government, and that doing so was at the risk of capital punishment (Huiling Yang 2014: 300). This restriction was compounded by the fact that Morrison, as a Protestant missionary, was also not able to study Chinese in Macao, the reason for which he explained in a letter to a friend in 1809:

The Portuguese Roman Catholics at Macao do not do anything violent against us. They have forbidden their Chinese to assist me in learning the language. One who aided me in Canton, where he was not noticed by them, did not dare to call upon me when in Macao (Morrison 1839: I.288).

This restricted his avenues for study of Chinese, but did not deter him and he proceeded from Macao to Guǎngzhōu, where he had to take the guise of an American due to the East India Company's prohibition of missionaries, as explained in his *Memoirs*:

Mr. Morrison's first residence at Canton was in the Old French Factory, then occupied by Messrs. Milnor and Bull, the American Super-cargoes to whom he was introduced by letters from New York. These gentlemen received him with great kindness, and immediately offered him an apartment on their premises, which, ... he gratefully accepted. As an Englishman he dared not be known, and it was as an American that he remained (Morrison 1839: I.158).

As he was settling in, Morrison wrote to his sister with his initial impressions of Guǎngzhōu on September 8, 1807:

To-day I took a walk through the suburbs of Canton, which, as it respects the houses, and streets, and shops, are the same as within the city. The Chinese followed me, called me names, crowded the doors of the shops into which I went, as children in Newcastle do when a Turk or other foreigner passes along (Morrison 1839: I.173-174).

In Guǎngzhōu, Morrison set about trying to locate Chinese who would be willing to tutor him in their language. Within a short time he located two, who he wrote about in a letter to Joseph Hardcastle, Esq. written in 1807:

The name of one is Le Sēnsang. He possesses considerable knowledge of Chinese, writes an excellent hand, and having obtained one degree as a man of letters, is not so afraid as the trades-people are. The other person, Abel Yun, was sent to me by Sir George. Abel is, here, the agent of the missionaries at Peking, a native of Shan-si [Shānxī 山西], where the Mandarin language is generally spoken. A great part of his life (he is now about thirty year of age) has been spent with the missionaries at Peking. They have taught him the Latin language, which he speaks fluently. (Morrison 1839: I.168)

Of Abel Yun, whose Chinese name was Yun Kwan-ming 袁光明 (Zetzsche 1999: 39-40), Morrison wrote that "he has not had time to learn the characters of his native language. All that he will be able to teach, will be the pronunciation of the Mandarin tongue, which is common to the province where he was born." Morrison noted that Le Sēnsang's son

¹⁷ Characters for Saam Tak are from Zetzsche (1999: 32).

¹⁸ A discussion of Morrison's transcription process is found in Ride 1957: 46, which also includes copies of a few pages of the actual transcription now held by the University of Hong Kong Library.

(identified as Lǐ Shí gōng 李十公 in Zetzsche 1999: 39-40), would teach him the dialect of Canton (Morrison 1839: 162-163). Unlike the Jesuit missionaries in China, Morrison was keen to learn the local dialect in addition to Mandarin, noting:

The polite people of Canton say they cannot understand the country people and the crowd of coolies [sic] (labourers) who are about. But I think it is affectation. There is a great difficulty that now occurs to me. Neither the Mandarin tongue, nor fine writing, is understood by the great bulk of the people. The number of poor people is immense; and the poor must have the gospel preached to, and written for, them. (Morrison 1839: I.163)

Sometime subsequently, in 1808 or 1809 Morrison also contracted an additional Mandarin teacher, Kǒ-sēen-sang, possibly surnamed Gě 葛 or Gāo 高, about whose background nothing is known (Morrison 1839: I.238; Zetzsche 1999: 39-40; Coblin 2003: 341). Morrison also continued to have interaction with Yong Saam Tak, who had been his Chinese tutor in London and also subsequently returned to Guǎngzhōu. But Yong Saam Tak was unwilling to interact with Morrison in Chinese once back in China (Morrison 1839: I.167-168).

Thus shortly after arriving in Guǎngzhōu, Morrison would begin to further his study of written Chinese with a Cantonese speaker, whose son would also teach him that dialect; and he would learn Mandarin pronunciation from a native of Shānxī, who knew Latin but was illiterate in written Chinese! Though on the surface this seems to have been a rather poor avenue to learning Chinese, there are a couple of important implications that we can infer from this circumstance:

1. The literate Cantonese of this period in the Qīng must have also been able to relate the Mandarin that Morrison was learning to the written language that they were teaching him, in addition to revealing its connection to the spoken Cantonese dialect. Indeed, Morrison learned quite well how to write the Mandarin he was learning in Chinese characters. With regard to the language he used with his Chinese assistants in compiling his dictionary, Morrison was emphatic that he “always spoke to his native assistants in the Mandarin tongue, in which dialect he has conversed with Chinese of every rank and of every province in the empire” (Morrison 1839: II.454). This is clear indication that Mandarin (Guānhuà) would have been understood to one degree or another by most or all well-educated speakers of non-Mandarin dialects in non-Mandarin speaking speech communities.
2. The Mandarin that Morrison would learn was likely a rather pure oral form of the Mandarin vernacular koine, unencumbered by excessively bookish language. Morrison’s transcription of Mandarin pronunciation also would have been based primarily on the speech of his teacher who was probably not bound by the conventions of a literate Mandarin speaker. While we do not know all that much about Abel Yun’s language background, the fact that he hailed from Shānxī meant that it was possible he spoke a form of Mandarin with the *rù* tone, as the Shānxī dialects preserve that tone. Hence the pronunciation he would be teaching Morrison would be more closely aligned to the older, southern type of Mandarin, and not the northern type which lacks the *rù* tone.

With this in mind, we now turn to an examination of the Mandarin that Morrison eventually recorded and described in his dictionary and grammar.

Morrison defined Guānhuà as “public officer’s speech” and described it as the “*proper* and *general* language of the [Chinese] empire” (Morrison 1815: 259, emphasis in the original). But like both Gāo Jìngtíng and Lǐ Rǔzhēn, Morrison was quite aware of the concurrent existence of two prevalent Mandarin types, northern and southern. That being the case, also like Gāo and Lǐ, he chose to make the southern type the basis of his dictionary.

Morrison identified the two varieties more specifically with regard to geographic location than did Gāo and Lǐ. He saw Mandarin generally as having developed in the region

of the Qīng provinces of Hénán 河南 and Jiāngnán 江南 (the latter comprising the areas of modern Ānhuī, Jiāngsū, and Shànghǎi), as these were the locations of previous imperial capitals in which the southern Mandarin variety originally arose, a view that coincides well with the brief historical outline provided in Part II of this paper. But he notes that another variety, a “Tartar-Chinese Dialect,” had arisen around the imperial court (in Běijīng) that was beginning to challenge the prestige of the more widespread, older Mandarin. Morrison thus identified the language of Běijīng (“the Peking Dialect”) as a “Tartar” dialect, which corresponds to the newer, northern type of Mandarin; while the language of Nánjīng (“the Nanking Dialect”) of his conceptualization would correspond to the older, southern type of Mandarin. It was the latter that he chose as the pronunciation basis for his Romanization (Morrison 1815-23: 1, I-I, x & xviii; Coblin 2003).

In spelling out the Mandarin in his dictionary and grammar, Morrison represented its pronunciation with an English-based Romanization of his own design (Morrison 1815-23: 4, II-I, xvii; Coblin 2003: 342). A detailed analysis of the phonetics represented by Morrison’s Romanization is found in Coblin 2003, who provides a precise interpretation of the underlying pronunciation. But for the comparative purposes of the present article the phonological and phonemic contrasts embodied in Morrison’s system are the more salient features to focus on. Doing so, we find that the Nánjīng based variety of Guānhuà that Morrison learned and described embodied subtle characteristic features of that prestige dialect remarkably well, despite the fact that he was studying in Guāngzhōu and far away from the Jiāngnán region where Nánjīng was located. We also find that Morrison’s description of Mandarin coincides quite closely with those of Gāo Jīngtíng and Lǐ Rǔzhēn.

An unmistakably Nánjīng element of the Mandarin that Morrison spelled is seen where its distribution of sibilant and retroflex initials adheres fairly closely to the southern pattern that we discussed earlier and illustrated in Table 4. Morrison’s spellings clearly reveal the southern pattern. We illustrate in Table 5, in which we find that Morrison’s Romanization gives retroflex initials to all the syllables in Sets A through D, and sibilant initials in Set E. As can be seen by comparison with the actual modern Nánjīng dialect forms provided next to Morrison’s in Table 5, his distribution of the initials in these sets matches the Nánjīng pattern quite precisely.¹⁹

	<i>Morrison</i>	<i>Nánjing Dialect</i>		<i>Morrison</i>	<i>Nánjing Dialect</i>		<i>Morrison</i>	<i>Nánjing Dialect</i>		<i>Morrison</i>	<i>Nánjing Dialect</i>
	<i>(Set A)</i>			<i>(Set B)</i>			<i>(Set C cont.)</i>			<i>(Set E)</i>	
車	Ch‘ay	tɕ‘e ¹	出	Ch‘ūh	tɕ‘u ²	床	Ch‘wang	tɕ‘uā ²	師	Sze	sɿ ¹
耻	Ch‘e	tɕ‘ɿ ³	豬	Choo	tɕu ¹	桌	Chō	tɕo ²	事	Sze	sɿ ⁴
抽	Ch‘ow	tɕ‘əu ¹	船	Ch‘uen	tɕ‘uā ²	<i>(Set D)</i>			色	Sīh	sɛ ²
十	Shīh	ʃɿ ²	竹	Chūh	tɕu ²	詩	She	ʃɿ ¹	虱	Sīh	sɛ ²
舌	Shě	ʃɛ ²	<i>(Set C)</i>		茶	Ch‘a	tɕ‘a ²		澀	Sīh	sɛ ²
真	Chin	tɕəŋ ¹	春	Ch‘un	tɕ‘uəŋ ¹	時	She	ʃɿ ²	省	Sang	səŋ ³
聲	Shing	ʃəŋ ¹	刷	Shwǎ	ʃua ²	炒	Ch‘aou	tɕ‘ɔ ³	撐	Ts‘āng	ts‘əŋ ¹
			睡	Shwūy	ʃuəi ⁴	山	Shan	ʃā ¹			

Table 5: *Nánjīng pattern of retroflex and sibilant initials in Morrison*

This and other characteristics of the southern Mandarin nature of Morrison’s phonology are highlighted in a brief passage that he included in his dictionary describing how the

¹⁹ Morrison’s spellings follow Morrison 1815-23. Nánjīng forms are from Jiāngsū sheng 1998. Also see Coblin 2009 for an in-depth examination of this nature of the retroflex-sibilant contrast in the history of southern Guānhuà phonology.

Běijīng dialect differs from his rendering of the Nánjīng dialect.²⁰ The differences he describes can be characterized as reflecting certain developments in northern Mandarin, including:

1. Palatalization of velars and dental sibilants before high front vowels.
2. Concomitant loss of *jiān-tuán* distinction in initials.
3. Final /on/ (rendered by Morrison as “wan”) becomes /an/ after labial initials.
4. Loss of the *rù* tone (marked by Morrison with a breve “̆” over the vowel) and accompanying vowel changes.

Table 6 illustrates these differences by contrasting Morrison’s (RM) southern Guānhuà Nánjīng spellings with Běijīng (Bj, in *Hànyǔ pīnyīn*), representing the northern type. Under numbers 1 and 2 we see that the Běijīng forms all have palatal initials, *j-*, *q-*, or *x-*, whereas Morrison’s Nánjīng based Guānhuà has a contrast between velars, *k-*, *k’-*, *h-*, and dental sibilants *ts-*, *ts’-*, *s-*. This demonstrates the results of the palatalization and also the loss of the velar (or palatal) initial contrast with dental sibilants in Běijīng.

Points number 1 and 2 are also among the differences between *běiyīn* and *nányīn* that Lǐ Rùzhēn specifically described (Simmons 2017: 69-70). Also, while Lǐ Rùzhēn did not explicitly discuss the finals of point number 3, his Guānhuà phonology incorporated the contrast, as we noted above, which was probably based on the Jiāng-Huái regional *nányīn* he learned from his friends and in-laws in Bǎnpǔ. The same would be true for Lǐ Rùzhēn’s inclusion of the *rù* tone in his system, even though it was not a part of the Běijīng based *běiyīn* that was his native dialect. The phonology presented by Gāo Jìngtíng also included the southern Mandarin distinctions of numbers 1 and 2 and does not reflect the Běijīng changes. Also, as we noted earlier, Gāo Jìngtíng’s system maintained the contrast between /on/ and /an/ as well as the *rù* tone. In overall perspective then, the phonologies of our three authors are remarkably similar with respect to these characteristic features of the southern Mandarin koine.

1. Palatalization before high front vowels in north					3. Final /on/ (“wan”) becomes /an/				4. Loss of the <i>rù</i> tone with accompanying vowel changes		
2. Loss of <i>jiān-tuán</i> distinction											
		tuán		jiān							
	Velar	Palatal		Sibilant	Palatal						
	RM	Bj		RM	Bj		RM	Bj		RM	Bj
九	Kew	Jiǔ	酒	Tsew	Jiǔ	半	Pwan	Bàn	肉	Jūh or Jow	Ròu
景	King	Jǐng	井	Tsing	Jǐng	盤	P’wan	Pán	讀	Dūh or Tow	Dú
欺	Kl’le	Qī	威	Ts’eih	Qī	滿	Mwan	Mǎn	月	Yuě	Yuè
肩	Kēen	Jiān	情	Ts’ing	Qing	搬	Pwan	Bān	白	Pīh	Bái
牽	K’ēen	Qiān	尖	Ts’ēen	Jiān				客	Kīh	Kè
掀	Hēen	Xiān	千	Ts’ēen	Qiān				木	Mūh	Mù
			仙	Sēen	Xiān				七	Tsīh	Qī
									曲	Keūh	Qū

Table 6: Differences between the Mandarin of Nánjīng and Běijīng as captured by Morrison’s description

Morrison’s southern Mandarin Romanization was adopted in the early decades of the 19th century by scholars and others who needed to write Chinese with the Latin alphabet. It was used by James Legge (1815-1897), for example, in the first editions of his well-known translations of the *Chinese Classics*. This is not surprising, as Legge had served as a missionary in Malacca at the Anglo-Chinese College that Morrison had established, and “had free access to the all the treasures in its library” that Morrison had stocked (Legge 1861: vii).

²⁰ See Morrison 1815-23: 1, I.I, xviii. This passage is also summarized and discussed in Coblin 2003: 353-354.

V. A note on the vocabulary and grammar of the Mandarin described by Gāo, Lǐ, and Morrison

Our focus has been primarily on the Mandarin phonology represented by the three authors, as that is the area in which their work is most comparable. Yet, while grammar and vocabulary also most certainly differed between southern Mandarin and northern Guānhuà in the Qīng, such differences are subtle and difficult to pin down. However, a rough examination finds that the vocabulary and grammar of the Mandarin described by Gāo Jīngtíng, Lǐ Rǔzhēn, and Robert Morrison in each case presents a mixed and uneven picture overall.

Lìshì yīnjiàn, being a rime table, focuses only on phonology and has nothing to offer us regarding vernacular lexicon or grammar. On the other hand, Lǐ Rǔzhēn's *Jīng huā yuán* contains extended text and dialogue in the *báihuà* literary form that is based on spoken Mandarin. But the language of the novel is nevertheless rather bookish, frequently mixing literary and colloquial forms. Consider, for example, the following passage from Chapter 31 of the novel discussing an illness that has afflicted Lányīn:

林之洋道：“這個甥女，據俺看來：只怕是個‘離鄉病’。”唐敖道：“何謂‘離鄉病’？”林之洋道：“一經患病，離了本鄉，登時就安，就叫‘離鄉病’。這個怪症，雖是俺新諺的，但他父親曾說此女必須投奔外邦，方能有命。果然到了智佳，病就好了；如今送他回來，才到他國交界，就患這個怪症。看這光景，他生成是個離鄉命。俺們何苦送他回去，枉送性命？據俺主意：快離此地罷。”(Zhōnghuá shūjù 1965 edition, page 220) Lín Zhīyáng said, “As I see it this niece is suffering from ‘departing homesickness’.” Táng Áo said, “What is ‘departing homesickness’?” Lín Zhīyáng replied, “If one has fallen ill, but recovers quickly after departing from one’s hometown, that is called ‘departing homesickness’. Though I have only just newly fabricated the name of this strange affliction, her father did say that this girl must seek refuge in a foreign land in order to preserve her life. Indeed, once we arrived at Zhijiā, she recovered; but now that we are bringing her back home and have only just made it back to the border of her country, the symptoms arose right away. From these circumstances it appears that she was born to a destiny of leaving her homeland. Why should we go to the trouble to bring her home only to see her die for no reason? I suggest that we should quickly leave this place.”

We see, for example, the demonstrative ‘this’ in both literary, *cǐ* 此, and colloquial, *zhège* 這個, forms used in the spoken dialogue. The same is true of the adverb ‘only then’, with the literary *fāng* 方, and the colloquial *cái* 才 both appearing. Also the first-person pronoun in both singular and plural forms, *ǎn* 俺 and *ǎnmen* 俺們, is a form that is common in the written vernacular, but was likely not what Lǐ Rǔzhēn himself used in his daily conversation.

The vocabulary and grammar recorded by Morrison is similarly mixed in the illustrations of usage that he provides. Huiling Yang has noted that Morrison “cited extensively from both Chinese classics and miscellaneous contemporary sources which reflect oral and colloquial usages of the language” (2014: 315). We can characterize it as a kind of southern Mandarin colloquial that is often colored by literary forms and usage. An example can be seen in his dictionary entry for the third-person pronoun T’HA (*tā*) 他 ‘he, him, she, her’, which includes a variety of usage examples. The more colloquial of these include: *tā de* 他的 ‘his, hers’, *tāmen de* 他們的 ‘theirs’, *tāmen* 他們 ‘they, them’, *tā shuō shénme?* 他說什麼? ‘What does he say?’, *nǐ hé tā chūqu* 你和他出去 ‘You go out with him.’, *nǐ jiàn nà nǚzǐ jiào tā lái* 你見那女子叫他來 ‘If you see that woman tell her to come here’; the more literary examples are: *tārén* 他人 ‘some other man’, *tāfāng* 他方 ‘some other place’, *tārì* 他日 ‘another day’, *tānián* 他年 ‘another year’, *bù yǔ tārén hégàn* 不與他人何干 ‘It is nothing to any other person’.²¹ In Morrison’s grammar we also see a

²¹ From Morrison 1815-23, I, I.68. These examples use Morrison’s translations, but add *Hànyǔ pīnyīn*, as Morrison did not include transcriptions of the examples in Romanization.

clear mixing of idiom, including Mandarin colloquial, local dialect influence, and literary Chinese, such as in this example sentence, in which *wǒmen* 我們 ‘we’ is colloquial, *wèiyǒu* 未有 ‘did not’ is influenced by southern dialect usage, and *cǐ* 此 ‘this’ is literary:

Cǐ shìqíng wǒmen zǒng wèiyǒu jiànguò, wéiyǒu rénjiā shuōguò wǒmen zhīdao
 此事情我們總未有見過，惟有人家說過我們知道
 ‘We never saw this affair, only there are persons who have informed us of it’.
 (Morrison’s translation, 1815: 88)

The Mandarin presented in Gāo Jingtíng’s *Zhèngyīn cuōyào* in general has a more colloquial cast. It appears that Gāo deliberately intended to present a true representation of spoken Mandarin vernacular. The following sentence, for example, is strongly colloquial throughout:

Wǒmen tiāntiānr chījiǔ, dōu shì zhè jǐyàng cài, yě chī sù le, jīnr nàoge shénme xīn yàngr ne?
 我們天天兒吃酒，都是這幾樣菜，也吃俗了，今兒鬧個什麼新樣兒呢？
 ‘With our daily drinking we always have these same dishes, and have grown sick of them, what new thing can we muster up today?’
 (Annotated edition of 2018: 39)

Yet while the phonology of his volume tends to be more strongly southern in character, the vocabulary and usage that Gāo Jingtíng presents mixes southern Mandarin and northern Mandarin forms in fairly equal measure, though with northern forms slightly more predominant (Huáng Wēi 2014: 242). Table 7 provides examples of some northern and southern Mandarin forms that are found in the dialogues of *Zhèngyīn cuōyào* as identified by Huáng Wēi (2014: 238-242).

	<i>Northern</i>		<i>Southern</i>	
<i>Both northern and southern are found:</i>				
‘today’	<i>jīnr</i>	今兒	<i>jīntiān</i>	今天
‘tomorrow’	<i>míngr</i>	明兒	<i>míngtiān</i>	明天
‘rat’	<i>hàozǐ</i>	耗子	<i>lǎoshǔ</i>	老鼠
‘here’	<i>zhèr</i>	這兒	<i>zhèlǐ</i>	這裏
‘where’	<i>nǎr</i>	哪兒	<i>nǎlǐ</i>	哪裏
‘room’	<i>wūzi</i>	屋子	<i>fángzi</i>	房子
‘soap’	<i>yízi</i>	胰子	<i>fěizào</i>	肥皂
‘cold’	<i>liáng</i>	涼	<i>lěng</i>	冷
‘break’	<i>shé</i>	折	<i>duàn</i>	斷
‘drink wine’	<i>hē jiǔ</i>	喝酒	<i>chī jiǔ</i>	吃酒
‘sun’	<i>rìtou</i>	日頭	<i>tàiyáng</i>	太陽
<i>Only the southern is found:</i>				
‘shopkeeper’	<i>(zhǎngguìde)</i>	(掌櫃的)	<i>lǎobǎn</i>	老板
‘shop’	<i>(pùzi)</i>	(鋪子)	<i>diàn</i>	店
‘toss’	<i>(rēng)</i>	(扔)	<i>diū</i>	丟
<i>Only the northern is found:</i>				
‘know’	<i>zhīdao</i>	知道	<i>(xiǎode)</i>	(曉得)
‘say’	<i>shuōshuō</i>	說說	<i>(jiǎngjiǎng)</i>	(講講)
‘throat’	<i>sǎngzi</i>	嗓子	<i>(hóulóng)</i>	(喉嚨)
‘top of’	<i>shàngtou</i>	上頭	<i>(gāotóu)</i>	(高頭)
‘alley’	<i>hútong</i>	衚衕	<i>(xiàngzi)</i>	(巷子)

Table 7: Mix of northern and southern Mandarin vocabulary in *Zhèngyīn cuōyào*

VI. Conclusion

The above discussion reveals that the three contemporaneous descriptions of Mandarin from the early 19th century, those of Gāo Jingtíng, Lǐ Rǔzhēn, and Robert Morrison, all reflect a similar view of a Guānhuà that is highly heterogeneous in nature. All three comment upon the existence of two forms of Guānhuà, a northern, *běihuà*, *běiyīn*, or Peking Dialect, and a southern *nánhuà*, *nányīn* or Nanking Dialect. And each of them presents a mix of northern and southern types in their descriptions, though each also gives greater prominence to the southern type. In overall perspective, our three authors also reveal there was widespread acceptance of, and social accommodation for, linguistic diversity in Qīng China.

To recap, the basic characteristics of the southern type of the Qīng Guānhuà koine that we have found in the descriptions of Gāo Jingtíng, Lǐ Rǔzhēn, and Robert Morrison are:

1. Five-tones, with a *rù* tone in addition to upper *píng*, lower *píng*, *shǎng*, and *qù*.
2. Reflection of the (small) Nánjīng set of sibilants where northern Mandarin has retroflex initials.
3. Preservation of dental sibilants (*jīanyīn*) before high front vowels.
4. Preservation of final /on/ after labials.

These features are still seen in modern dialects of the region that served as the prestige base for the southern type of Guānhuà but are not found in Běijīng and other dialects that served as the model for the northern type of Guānhuà. To illustrate, Table 8 summarizes the correspondence with examples of forms that embody these features from the works of our three authors in comparison to their forms in Héféi, Nánjīng, and Běijīng. The connection of the southern type Guānhuà of Gāo, Lǐ, and Morrison to the Héféi-Nánjīng Jiāng-Huái type of southern Mandarin is clear and unmistakable in these examples.

The Guānhuà collectively reflected in these three works, with its mixing of phonological types and variegated idiom, can thus be seen to be a pan-regional and pan-dialectal koine.²² Together, the three authors provide a vivid snapshot of the cross-dialect nature and broad geographical base of the Guānhuà speech community in early 19th century China. Merchants, travelers, officials—both civil and military, foreign visitors, and missionaries, all relied on this koine to communicate across China's vast territory. In character and utility, Guānhuà was a lingua franca for all of China that had a common and generally accepted set of phonological features, grammar, and lexicon, within the parameters of which variation and difference were widely manifest and accepted. While the koine itself allowed for either southern or northern Guānhuà pronunciations, our three witnesses reveal a stronger preference for the southern type.

Following the Tàipíng rebellion, Western scholars and translators gradually came to prefer the Běijīng based northern type of Mandarin, as reflected in the Romanization developed by Sir Thomas Wade (1818-1895), which was later modified by Herbert Allen Giles (1845-1935). For example, James Legge adopted this new preference and revised the Romanization used in the 1893 edition of his *Chinese Classics* to that of Wade and Giles. Concomitantly, Morrison's southern Guānhuà based Romanization fell out of favor. But this shift in preference to the northern type on the part of diplomats, scholars, and others from the West was due primarily to the greater accessibility they had to Běijīng and the Qīng court following the defeat of the Tàipíng rebels, and not because of a shift in the perception of the comparative prestige of northern and southern types in the broader Chinese Mandarin koine speech community. A relatively larger sector of the general Chinese literate population continued to prefer the southern type of Guānhuà phonology well into the first decades of the 20th century (Simmons forthcoming). Thus the prestige of, and partiality for, the southern

²² W. South Coblin was among the first to make this observation with regard to the Mandarin recorded by Morrison, in particular see Coblin 2003: 353.

type that is depicted by our three authors was not a short-term anomaly and had greater strength and tenacity than heretofore has generally been thought to be the case.

Examples	Zhèngyīn cuōyào*	Lìshì yīnjiàn	Morrison's Dictionary	Modern Héféi**	Modern Nánjīng	Běijīng
Characteristic 1: Has five tone system with rù tone						
	✓ yes	✓ yes	✓ yes	✓ yes	✓ yes	✗ no
Characteristic 2: Reflects the "Nánjīng set" of sibilants						
	✓	✗ (unlikely)	✓	✓	✓	✗
拆 'dismantle'	tʂʰʔ ⁵	--	Tʂih, (Chǐh)†	tʂʰʔ ⁵	tʂʰʔ ⁵	chāi
澀 'puckery'	sʂʔ ⁵	--	Sih	sʂʔ ⁵	sʂʔ ⁵	sè
色 'color'	sʂʔ ⁵	--	Sih	sʂʔ ⁵	sʂʔ ⁵	shǎi, sè
師 'teacher'	(ʂi ¹)	--	Sze	si ¹	si ¹	shī
事 'business'	(ʂi ⁵)	--	Sze	si ⁴	si ⁴	shì
初 'beginning'	tʂʰu ¹	--	(Chō)	tʂʰu ¹	tʂʰu ¹	chū
處 'place'	tʂʰu ³	--	(Choo)	(tʂʰu ⁴)	(tʂʰu ⁴)	chǔ
楚 'Chǔ'	tʂʰu ³	--	(Choo)	tʂʰu ³	tʂʰu ³	chǔ
助 'help'	tsu ⁴	--	Tsoo, (Choo)	tsu ⁴	tsu ⁴	zhù
爭 'contend'	tʂəŋ ¹	--	Tsāng	tʂən ¹	tʂəŋ ¹	zhēng
箏 'zither'	tʂəŋ ¹	--	Tsāng, (Chāng)	tʂən ¹	tʂəŋ ¹	zhēng
生 'life'	(ʂəŋ ¹)	--	Sāng	sən ¹	səŋ ¹	shēng
Characteristic 3: Preserves jiānyīn						
	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
寫 'write'	siē ³	siē ³	Seay	ɕi ³	se ³	xiě
濟 'aid'	tsi ⁴	tsi ³	Tse	tsi ⁴	tsi ⁴	jì
切 'cut'	tʂʰiēʔ ⁵	tʂʰiēʔ ⁵	Tsěē	tʂʰiēʔ ⁵	tʂʰiēʔ ⁵	qiē
西 'west'	si ¹	si ¹	Se	si ¹	si ¹	xī
笑 'laugh'	siau ⁴	siau ⁴	Seaou	ɕiəu ⁴	siəu ⁴	xiào
酒 'wine'	tsiəu ³	tsiəu ³	Tsew	teiəu ³	tsiəu ³	jiǔ
cf. 九 'nine'	teiəu ³	teiəu ³	Kew	teiəu ³	teiəu ³	jiǔ
牆 'wall'	tʂʰiāŋ ²	--	Tseang	tʂʰiā ²	tʂʰiā ²	qiáng
尖 'pointed'	tʂʰiān ¹	tsien ¹	Ts'ēen	tʂʰi ¹	tʂʰi ¹	jiān
Characteristic 4: Preserves /on/ final after labials						
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
盤 'tray'	p'uon ²	p'uon ²	P'wan	pʰuō ²	p'ā ²	pán
扮 'dress up as'	puon ⁴	p'uan ⁴ , (pan ⁴)	(Pan)	(pā ⁴)	pā ⁴	bàn
判 'distinguish'	p'uon ⁴	p'uon ⁴	P'wan	pʰuō ⁴	p'ā ⁴	pàn
盼 'hope for'	p'uon ⁴	p'uan ⁴	--	(pʰā ⁴)	p'ā ⁴	pàn
饅 'steamed bun'	muon ²	muon ²	--	mō ²	mā ²	mán
瞞 'hide truth fr.'	muon ²	--	Mwan	mō ²	mā ²	mán
滿 'full'	muon ³	muon ³	Mwan	mō ³	mā ³	mǎn

Table 8: Southern Mandarin dialect characteristics in the phonologies of Gāo, Lǐ, and Morrison

*Renderings of Zhèngyīn cuōyào forms follow Huáng Wēi 2014, with the exception of Huáng's [uan], which we write [uon].

**Héféi data is from Yáng Yǒngchéng 2015. Nánjīng data is from Jiāngsū shěng 1998.

†Parentheses mark exceptions.

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