

Intra-/inter-divisional doublets and their implications for OC

Jakob Dempsey (contact ID = 105) Yuan-ze University, Taiwan

jakob@saturn.yzu.edu.tw

Doublets are a common phenomenon in many languages and can occur for a variety of reasons; they can arise through borrowing from a closely related dialect or language, e.g. *dike* from northern English and *ditch* from southern English, or through repeated borrowing from what may have been the same source-language, with the lapse of time being the reason for variation, e.g. English *feeble* and *foible*, both borrowed from French but at points in time centuries apart.

Internal analysis of modern Chinese dialects also reveals doublets, but many more can be found through a judicious inspection of the early rime-dictionaries. In order to determine the validity of such lexicological doublets, I have followed guidelines for developments in Old Chinese (OC) laid out by William Baxter, Li Fang-kuei and others, but I have also taken into account various sound-change proposals to be found in the literature concerning other East-Asian linguistic phyla that were probably in contact with Chinese-speakers in ancient times. What I assume to be common sense has also been a guideline, e.g. if I find 15 or more words meaning ‘sink, drown’ all ending in OC **-əm* or **-am* and all with initials that are interrelatable according to the above guidelines, I do not believe this is a coincidence, particularly when I do not also find the same ‘sink, drown’ meaning equally associated with other random Middle Chinese syllable-types such as *lak*, *piŋ*, *ʃe* etc. A proper statistical analysis should be done at some point to settle the problem for any doubters.

This paper looks at some of the doublets I have found, with an emphasis on their position in the Song rime-tables’ four divisions. There are examples where both doublets are first (or fourth) division words, where both are second division words, where one is first division and the other is second division, where both are third division, and where one is third division and the other is either second or first/fourth division.

The last two groups, third with third, and third with non-third, are, in terms of theoretical implications, the most important. This is due to the special status of third division words in the history of Chinese. When considering this, and when taking into account how standardisation of pronunciation developed in languages such as English, Russian and German, it is possible to arrive at a startling, new explanation for the special status of the third division.