Chapter 5 *Jinti* sub-grammar

5.1 General description of the raw corpus

The corpus for this chapter comprises of 121 poems of the *Jinti* genre, which encompasses verse composed during the middle and late *Tang* dynasty (ca. 700 - 907). As such, *Jinti* verse is also known as *Tang* poetry. The *Jinti* genre is widely acclaimed to be the peak of the classical Chinese literary tradition due to the great number of profoundly influential poets and vast collection of poems that are thematically extensive and artistically ingenious; the *Tang* dynasty (618-907), in particular the so-called 'high Tang' around the 8th century, is accordingly known as the golden age of classical Chinese poetry.

As mentioned in Section 4.1 of Chapter 4, *Guti* verse becomes, towards the end of its period, i.e. early *Tang*, more restricted, which is reflected in two aspects: first, the line length is drastically limited to either 5 or 7 syllables in contrast to the large variety of line lengths in its predecessors *Shijing*, *Chuci* and the early *Guti* verse; second, the line exclusively consists of lexical words in contrast to the use of function words in previous genres and early *Guti* verse. *Guti* verse developed as such is actually already *Jinti* verse in its embryonic form, although in addition to these two features, the full-fledged *Jinti* verse is characterized by a further restriction on the number of lines within a poem to either 4 or 8: *Jinti* poems consisting of 4 lines are referred to as *Jueju* (literally meaning 'truncated line') and those consisting of 8 lines as *Lüshi* (literally 'regulated verse'). The two variables of line length and verse length result in four sub-genres of *Jinti*: 5-syll *Jueju*, 5-syll *Lüshi*, 7-syll *Jueju* and 7-syll *Lüshi*. Yet another distinctive feature of *Jinti* verse is the conscious use of lexical tones[1]: the *Tang* poets were believed to follow an artificially defined canon of tonal patterns, although preliminary results from an empirical study have cast doubts upon to what extent the tonal patterns were being strictly observed (Ripley 1979, 1980).

The vast reservoir and preeminent literary achievement of *Jinti* poems have invited the compilation of hundreds of anthologies. As many as 49,000 *Tang* poems by 2200 poets have survived till today; of them 320 better-known poems by 77 of the better-known poets have been selected with great care and collected in '*Tang Shi San Bai Shou*' (300 *Tang* Poems) compiled in 1763 by *Heng-tang-tui-shi* (Sun Zhu) of the *Qing* dynasty. Ever since its compilation, this anthology has remained a mainstay of classical Chinese literature and enjoyed tremendous and long-lasting popularity till today. As suggested by the compiler, the popularity of the poems served as the main criteria for the selection and the 320 poems included in the anthology represent the best works by the most prominent *Tang* poets that have enjoyed the popularity with generations of poem-readers. The anthology has been reprinted in countless editions for over two hundred years and today it is still a well-recited classic with its charm

---

[1] It is an open issue whether the use of tones in *Jinti* verse coincided with the appearance of tones in the ambient language, or tones were first developed in the ambient language before they were actively and consciously used in verse composition by *Tang* poets. Yip (1984) holds the former opinion, but Pulleyblank (1978, 1998) and Li (1986) argues for the latter based on diachronic works. Norman (1988), on the other hand, assumes a more conservative attitude in making no further speculations beyond the argument that Old Chinese was a toneless language.

and popularity undiminished for the modern speaker, which renders it especially suitable for the present study.

It needs to be pointed out that the 320 poems included in 300 *Tang* Poems cover the best ones written during the whole *Tang* period, including early *Tang* (618 – ca. 700) which witnessed the transformation from the *Guti* genre into the *Jinti* one. Although admittedly, the boundary between *Guti* and *Jinti* verse might be less than clear-cut, in this collection, the genre in which a poem belongs to was nonetheless explicitly specified next to its title, which shows that 89 of the 320 poems belong to *Guti* and the remaining 231 to *Jinti*. The 121 poems comprising the present corpus of *Jinti* verse are randomly selected from these 231 *Jinti* ones: we take the odd-numbered ones, attempting to strike a balance between on the one hand, 5- and 7-syll lines, and on the other hand, 4- and 8-line verse pieces, i.e. the two sub-genres of *Jueju* and *Lüshi* as mentioned above. As a result, it contains 21 5-syll *Jueju*, 43 5-syll *Lüshi*, 31 7-syll *Jueju* and 26 7-syll *Lüshi*, which makes a total number of 764 lines, 434 being 5-syll and 330 7-syll.

5.2 Methodological issues and preview of the sub-grammar

The analytical approach remains the same as those in previous chapters and will be omitted here. The chapter is also structured similarly to previous ones, except that this chapter features a section (Section 5.5) which briefly addresses certain issues presented specifically by the *Jinti* genre such as the role of lexical tones. Section 5.3 is devoted to the development of the scansion sub-grammar and Section 5.4 discusses the formal grounding of the metrical harmony. As Section 6.3 is organized according to the line type, it is particularly noteworthy that *Jinti* verse lines are either 5- or 7-syll long, and as is to be seen below, they are scanned by the modern speaker in a simple and uniform way. Consequently, this significantly simplifies both the analytical task and the sub-grammar per se.

To offer a glimpse of the sub-grammar, all 5-syll lines are scanned as (SS)(S)(SS), and 7-syll ones as (SS)(SS)(S)(SS). This indifference to the grammatical structure of the line implies that only markedness constraints are active in scansion: BINMAX and BINMIN take care of the binarity parsing, while *IP-FINAL-MONOFT guards against IP-final monosyllabic feet and ALIGNR (Ft, IP) encourages the rightward alignment between the foot boundaries and the IP boundary. However, interestingly, if faithfulness constraints, in particular ANCHOR, play no active role in the scansion sub-grammar, they prove crucial in accounting for the native judgment on metrical harmony, and as such should be included in the sub-grammar.

5.3 *Jinti* sub-grammar

The scarcity of the line types and the uniformity in their scansions drastically simplify the analytical task of developing the sub-grammar. Nonetheless, to enrich the analysis with a descriptive dimension, examples of certain grammatical structures are still to be presented below.

5.3.1 BᴏɴMᴀх, *IP-Fɪɴᴀʟ-MᴏɴᴏFᴛ >> BɪɴMɪɴ, AʟɪɢɴR (Fᴛ, IP): evidence from 5-syll lines

The 434 5-syll *Jinti* lines display seven grammatical structures; they are uniformly scanned as (SS)(S)(SS)[2]. Some grammatical structures are illustrated below:

(1)   (i)   *[han2 deng1] [si1 [jiu4 shi4]]*   → *(han2 deng1) (si1) (jiu4 shi4)*
             cold   light   think old   happening
             '(I) think of old happenings by the cold light'

       (ii)   *[tian1   di4] [[ying1 xiong2] qi4]*   → *(tian1 di4) (ying1) (xiong2 qi4)*
             heaven   earth hero hero   spirit
             'The heroic spirit (fills up) between the heaven and the earth'

       (iii) *yi2   [shi4 [[di4 shang4] shuang1]]*   → *(yi2 shi4) (di4) (shang4 shuang1)*
             doubt be   ground on   frost
             '(I) doubt (whether the moonlight) is the frost on the ground'

       (iv)   *zao3 [zhi1 [chao2 [you3 xin4]]]*   → *(zao3 zhi1) (chao2) (you3 xin4)*
             early know wave   have tiding
             'Had (I) knew earlier that the waves can carry tidings'

To begin with, the uniform scansion in spite of the grammatical structures shows that the sub-grammar comprises exclusively of markedness constraints. We now consider what such markedness constraints are. First, that a monosyllabic foot rather than a trisyllabic one occurs in the optimal scansion shows two things: first, BɪɴMᴀх >> BɪɴMɪɴ, and second, BɪɴMᴀх is inviolable. The ranking is shown below. The input structure is unspecified due to its irrelevance.

(2)

SSSSS	BɪɴMᴀх	BɪɴMɪɴ
☞ (SS)(S)(SS)		*
(SS)(SSS)	*!	

Second, consider other potential but suboptimal scansions. For one thing, (S)(S)(S)(SS) can be combed out by its multiple violations of BɪɴMɪɴ, as shown below:

(3)

SSSSS	BɪɴMᴀх	BɪɴMɪɴ
☞ (SS)(S)(SS)		*
(S)(S)(S)(SS)		**!*

---

[2] As is the case with 5-syll *Guti* lines, although the grammatical structure of a line has no effect on its scansion, it does bear on how it is cognized in term of the metrical harmony.

For another thing, that (SS)(SS)(S) is suboptimal offers evidence for *IP-FINAL-MONOFT; furthermore, *IP-FINAL-MONOFT does not conflict with BINMAX. Indeed, both are inviolable as neither (SS)(SSS), which violates BINMAX, or (SS)(SS)(S), which violates *IP-FINAL-MONOFT, wins. *IP-FINAL-MONOFT does not conflict with BINMIN either: both the suboptimal form (SS)(SS)(S) and the optimal form (SS)(S)(SS) violate BINMIN.

Consider yet another suboptimal form (S)(SS)(SS), which satisfies *IP-FINAL-MONOFT and BINMAX: it loses to the optimal form (SS)(S)(SS) only in the rightward alignment between the foot boundaries and the IP boundary, respectively being 6 (=2+4) and 5(=2+3). This calls for ALIGNR (Ft, IP). As to its ranking, first the pair of (SSSSS) versus (SS)(S)(SS) shows BINMAX >> ALIGNR (FT, IP). This is shown below:

(4)

SSSSS	BINMAX	ALIGNR (FT, IP)
☞ (SS)(S)(SS)		5
(SSSSS)	*!	0

Second, consider the suboptimal form (SS)(SS)(S): it loses to the optimal (SS)(S)(SS) due to its violation of *IP-FINAL-MONOFT, in spite of its better satisfaction of ALIGNR (FT, IP) than (SS)(S)(SS). This constitutes the ranking argument for *IP-FINAL-MONOFT >> ALIGNR (FT, IP), shown below:

(5)

SSSSS	*IP-FINAL-MONOFT	ALIGNR (FT, IP)
☞ (SS)(S)(SS)		5
(SS)(SS)(S)	*!	4

Third, ALIGNR (FT, IP) does not conflict with BINMIN. In fact they are working in the same direction: the more monosyllabic feet an IP has, the greater the number of syllables between the right boundaries of the individual feet and the right boundary of the IP, thus the more violations of ALIGNR (FT, IP). To illustrate this point, consider the pair (SS)(S)(SS) and (S)(S)(S)(SS) where the latter incurs more violations of BINMIN and, as a result of the multiple monosyllabic feet, 9 (= 2+3+4) violations of ALIGNR (FT, IP) compared with 5 (=2+3) violations by (SS)(S)(SS).

Fourth, even though ANCHOR plays no active role in the sub-grammar, it must be crucially dominated by ALIGNR (FT, IP), which is the lowest-ranking, albeit still active, constraint in the sub-grammar. The ranking argument is provided by the scansion of the *Jinti* line of the structure S[[SS][SS]] as (SS)(S)(SS):

(6)

S[[SS][SS]]	ALIGNR (FT, IP)	ANCHOR
☞ (SS)(S)(SS)	5	**
(S)(SS)(SS)	6!	

Thus, the sub-grammar now is

(7)   BINMAX   *IP-FINAL-MONOFT

        BINMIN   ALIGNR (FT, IP)
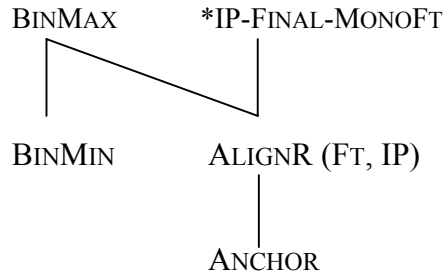
                  ANCHOR

For simplicity sake, in the tableaux in this section, ANCHOR is omitted due to its inactiveness. However, it will be included in the tableaux des tableaux in Section 5.4 below, where it becomes crucial in accounting for the metrical judgment.

To conclude the discussion of 5-syll lines, we illustrate how this sub-grammar is adequate to select (SS)(S)(SS) as the invariable winner irrespective of the input structure. The input structure is again unspecified:

(8)

SSSSS	BINMAX	*IP-FINAL-MONOFT	BINMIN	ALIGNR (FT, IP)
☞ (SS)(S)(SS)			*	5
(SS)(SS)(S)		*!	*	4
(S)(SS)(SS)			*	6!
(SS)(SSS)	*!			3
(S)(S)(S)(SS)			**!*	9

5.3.2 7-syll lines

The 7-syll *Jinti* lines display a richer pattern than the 5-syll ones in terms of grammatical structures: altogether 23 grammatical structures are identified for the 330 7-syll lines. But it resembles 5-syll lines in that lines of these diverse grammatical structures all share the optimal scansion (SS)(SS)(S)(SS). For practical concern, below only a handful of grammatical structures are illustrated:

(9)   (i)   *[[lian2 wai4] [chun1 han2]] [ci4 [jin3 pao2]]*
            curtain out   spring chilly   issue silk garment
            'Although it is spring, it is still chilly outside the curtain, so (the emperor) orders
            to issue (the dancer) silk garment'

            →   *(lian2 wai4) (chun1 han2) (ci4) (jin3 pao2)*

(ii) *[[wu1 yi1]   [xiang4 kou3]] [[xi1   yang2] xie1]*
     black clothes lane   mouth   evening sun   slant
     '(There is a man) in black at the entrance of the lane, and the evening sun slants'

→ *(wu1 yi1) (xiang4 kou3) (xi1) (yang2 xie1)*

(iii) *[zhou1 ren2]   [ye4 yu3] [jue3 [chao2 sheng1]]*
      boat   person night talk feel tide   rise
      'The people on the boat talk at night and feel that the tide is rising'

→ *(zhou1 ren2) (ye4 yu3) (jue3) (chao2   sheng1)*

(iv) *[jiu4 ye4] [yi3   [[sui2[zheng1 zhan4]] jin4]]*
     old   feat already with travel battle   end
     'The old feats are already gone with the travels and battles'

→ *(jiu4 ye4) (yi3 sui2) (zheng1) (zhan4 jin4)*

(v) *zong3 [wei4 [[fu2   yun2] [neng2 [bi4 ri4]]]]*
    always think floating cloud can   cover sun
    '(I) always think that floating clouds can cover the sun'

→ *(zong3 wei4) (fu2 yun2) (neng2) (bi4 ri4)*

As it turns out, the sub-grammar (7) turns out sufficient to select (SS)(SS)(S)(SS) as the optimal scansion, which may be seen as resulting from adding a disyllabic foot in front of the optimal scansion for 5-syll lines. The scansion of 7-syll lines is illustrated below where the input structure is again unspecified due to its irrelevance:

(10)

SSSSSSS	BINMAX	*IP-FINAL-MONOFT	BINMIN	ALIGNR (FT, IP)
☞ (SS)(SS)(S)(SS)			*	10
(SS)(SS)(SS)(S)		*!	*	9
(SS)(S)(SS)(SS)			*	11!
(S)(SS)(SS)(SS)			*	12!
(SS)(SS)(SSS)	*!			8
(SSS)(SS)(SS)	*!			6
(S)(S)(S)(SS)(SS)			**!*	17

This brings the analysis to a quick end: the scansion sub-grammar for *Jinti* lines is that presented in (7).

5.4 Formal grounding of the metrical harmony

This section seeks to formally account for the native judgment on the metrical harmony of *Jinti* lines. As is our practice so far, we will only focus on lines whose grammatical structures are cognized as being metrically most harmonious; they are respectively [SS][S[SS]] for 5-syll lines and [[SS][SS]][S[SS]] for 7-syll ones. As will

be seen below, *Jinti* constitutes a unique case in that although the constraint ANCHOR is inactive for the scansion, it turns out crucial in accounting for the metrical harmony.

We start with 5-syll lines. As mentioned in Section 5.3.1, seven grammatical structures occur in the corpus and are all scanned as (SS)(S)(SS). This gives rise to seven candidate parses from different input structures to the same output structure (i.e. (SS)(S)(SS)). The faithfulness constraint ANCHOR, which ranks the lowest in the sub-grammar and is inactive in selecting the optimal scansions, becomes crucial in distinguishing between these parses due to its reference to the input structures. This is shown below:

(11)

Candidate parses	BINMAX	*IP-FINAL-MONOFT	BINMIN	ALIGNR (FT, IP)	ANCHOR-IO	ANCHOR-OI
a. ☞ [SS][S[SS]] (SS)(S)(SS)			*	5		
b. [SS][[SS]S] (SS)(S)(SS)			*	5	*!	*
c. S[S[SS]S] (SS)(S)(SS)			*	5	*!*	*
d. S[S[S[SS]]] (SS)(S)(SS)			*	5	*!	
e. [[SS][SS]]S (SS)(S)(SS)			*	5	*!	*
f. ☞ [[SS]S][SS] (SS)(S)(SS)			*	5		
g. [SS][SSS] (SS)(S)(SS)			*	5		*!

Nonetheless, although ANCHOR succeeds in winnowing out parses (b), (c), (d), (e), and (g), it fails to distinguish between (a) and (f). Observe these two parses, and we note that they are the same in the foot-level parsing, but differ in the PhP-level parsing, which is not marked out in the above tableau. This scenario is similar to that in the discussion of 7-syll *Guti* lines in Section 4.4.2.2 of Chapter 4, and following our practice there, the sub-grammar is extended with the sub-hierarchy for PhP boundary delimitation, which selects (a) as the ultimate winner. This is shown below:

(12)

Parses	BINARITY	EVENNESS	LONG-LAST
a. ☞ [SS][S[SS]] (SS)|(S)(SS)	*	*	
f. [[SS]S][SS] (SS)(S)|(SS)	*	*	*!

This way, the optimal parse is that from [SS][S[SS]] to (SS)(S)(SS). 5-syll lines corresponding to this parse are exactly what are cognized as metrically most harmonious. As the PhP boundary delimitation constraint hierarchy is part of the *Jinti* sub-grammar, this shows that the metrical harmony can be grounded in the sub-grammar.

7-syll lines present a similar case: lines of the 23 different grammatical structures all share the same scansion (SS)(SS)(S)(SS) and out of the corresponding parses, the optimal one can be selected thanks to the operation of ANCHOR and PhP boundary delimitation ranking hierarchy. This is shown in the following tableau des tableaux. For simplicity sake, only five parses corresponding to five out of the 23 grammatical structures are presented. The data here provides no evidence for crucial ranking between the constraint hierarchies respectively for foot-level and PhP-level parsings, but as argued in (52) in Chapter 3, the former dominates the latter, indicated below with a solid line between them.

(13)

Candidate parses	BINMAX	*IP-FINAL-MONOFT	BINMIN	ALIGNR (FT, IP)	ANCHOR-IO	ANCHOR-OI	BINARITY	EVENNESS	LONG-LAST
a. ☞ [[SS][SS]][S[SS]] (SS)(SS)|(S)(SS)			*	10				*	
b. [[SS][SS]][[SS]S] (SS)(SS)|(S)(SS)			*	10	*!	*		*	
c. [SS][[SS][S[SS]]] (SS)|(SS)(S)(SS)			*	10			*!*	***	
d. [SS][S[S[SS]S]] (SS)|(SS)(S)(SS)			*	10	*!*	*	**	***	
e. S[S[SS][S[SS]]] (SS)(SS)|(S)(SS)			*	10	*!			*	

This way, parse (a) emerges as the winner; again it coincides with the line felt to be metrically most harmonious.

To conclude, we have shown that the native judgment of the metrical harmony for *Jinti* lines can be formally accounted for by the sub-grammar, which consists of constraint hierarchy for both foot-level and PhP-level parsing. Specifically, for both 5- and 7-syll lines, the line corresponding to the optimal parse under the sub-grammar is exactly the one cognized as metrically most harmonious by the native speaker. In other words, metrical harmony can be correlated to the formal OT harmony.

5.5 Some additional issues

This section briefly addresses three additional issues of particular relevance to the *Jinti* genre, upon which, as we shall see, the discussion so far has shed light. They are as follows. First, why are *Jinti* lines exclusively 5- or 7-syll long? Second, will the uniformity in the scansion of 5- and 7-syll *Jinti* lines lead to monotony? Third, what is the role of lexical tones in the meter of *Jinti* verse?

5.5.1 Exclusive use of 5- and 7-syll lines

One notable feature of the *Jinti* genre is its exclusive use of 5- or 7-syll lines; indeed, as mentioned earlier, this pattern was under development throughout the *Guti* period and became firmly established towards its end. A natural question is how to account for this strong preference of 5- and 7-syll lines. Is it accidental for *Jinti* lines to consist of either 5 or 7 syllables? Why for example are *Jinti* lines not 4-, 6- or 8-syll long?

We suggest that this preference of 5- and 7-syll lines is because when a line containing an odd number of syllables is scanned, the preference of binary feet renders the occurrence of a monosyllabic foot inevitable. The presence of this monosyllabic foot serves to introduce a sense of 'malleability' into the performance of the line. This is because each foot tends to be performed with roughly the same duration, and a monosyllabic foot apparently offers an extra degree of fluidity and room for artistic maneuvering by the performer which is not possible when the line consists of an even number of syllables and accordingly is scanned into a series of disyllabic feet. Consequently, while an overuse of lines containing an even number of syllables might risk leading to monotony, lines containing an odd number of syllables are less likely so. Indeed, as Sung (1998) points out, the extensive use of 4-syll lines in *Shijing* creates a somewhat simplistic impression and may risk drifting into a singsong melody. As Chiang Yee also wrote in the introduction to Herdan (2000), largely impressionistically, on the development of 5-syll lines out of the 4-syll line that had dominated in the pre-*Qin* period, 'the employment of five characters to the line was found to be a more rewarding measure, permitting a smoother and more melodious effect and the evocation of subtler human feelings'.

In addition, as far as the specific number of syllables in the line is concerned, of the available odd numbers, 5 and 7 are the most appropriate in terms of both its capacity for content and the human memory mechanism. 3-syll lines are too short to effectively convey messages or express emotions that are often rich and complex, while 9-syll lines extend beyond the average capacity that human short-term memory system can host, which is argued in Miller (1970) to be the magic seven chunks of information. Some also suggest that seven syllables make the longest line which can be comfortably performed within the stretch of one breath (Zhang 1996).

We may better understood this preference of 5- and 7-syll lines in the late *Guti* and *Jinti* periods by tracing the historical evolution of poetic genres that leads to their birth and boom. Recall that on the one hand, in both *Guti* and *Jinti*, 5-syll lines preceded 7-syll ones with the latter being developed by adding a disyllabic foot at the beginning of the former; on the other hand, it has been argued that the 5-syll line, which made its debut in *Guti* where the influence of *Shijing* was still palpable, was developed on the basis of 4-syll lines which were overwhelmingly predominant in *Shijing* (Chen 1994)[3]. Thus, one might suggest that 4-syll lines first appeared, were

---

[3] One piece of compelling evidence for this argument comes from the slightly different poems collected in different anthologies which are identical except that one comprises of 4-syll lines and the other of 5-syll ones. For example, compare the following two poems and pay attention to how straightforwardly each 5-syll line is constructed out of a 4-syll one by inserting an extra syllable (which is in bold form) into the latter:

(1)   5-syll lines
        bei3   fang1   **you3**   jia1   ren2,

subsequently developed into 5-syll ones to reduce the risk of monotony (among other reasons), and then further developed into 7-syll ones in an effort to expand the capacity of the line.

5.5.2 Risk of monotony

That the 5- and 7-syll *Jinti* lines respectively share one scansion which is totally blind to their grammatical structures might lead one to wonder whether from the perspective of the poem reader, the uniformity of the scansion will quickly result in monotony, thus undermining the esthetic beauty of this art form.

The fact of the matter is, however, *Jinti* lines are never monotonous to the modern poem-reader; on the contrary, *Jinti* verse, representing the peak of literary accomplishment of classical Chinese poetry, never fails to offer the reader a pleasant and exciting reading experience. This is attributable to the rich diversity exhibited in the grammatical structure of the line, which, although not playing an active role in the scansion, nonetheless bears closely on how the line is experienced by the reader, which is captured via the notion of metrical harmony. As shown in Section 5.4, metrical harmony may be formally correlated to OT harmony, which, as evident from the tableau des tableaux, can be specifically captured via the constraint satisfaction/violation of ANCHOR. LONG-LAST and BINARITY.

That lines of different grammatical structures may differ in their cognitive consequences and in particular, 5- and 7-syll lines of the structures [SS][S[SS]] and [[SS][SS]][S[SS]] are respectively felt as the most harmonious is a well-acknowledged observation in various literary commentaries (cf. Chen 1979), but it has typically been accounted for in an impressionistic way. The discussion in Section 5.4 has offered a formal account by grounding the vague notion of metrical harmony in the sub-grammar via the robust analytical tool of OT harmony measured in the concrete terms of constraint satisfaction/violation. Specifically, the constraints responsible for the metrical harmony, i.e. ANCHOR, LONG-LAST and BINARITY, are all related to the grammatical structure of the line, although in the case of LONG-LAST

---

north   place   have   beautifulperson
'In the north there is a beautiful person'

jue2   *shi4*   **er3**   *du2*   *li4.*
stun   world   and   single   stand
'She stuns the world (with her beauty) and stands single'

yi2   *gu4*   *qing1*   ***ren2***   *cheng2,*
one   glance   collapse people   city
'If she casts a glance, the city could (be charmed to) collapse'

zai4   *gu4*   *qing1*   ***ren2***   *guo3.*
again   glance   collapse people   country
'And if she casts another glance, the country would fall'.

(2)   4-syll lines:
    bei3   *fang1*   *jia1*   *ren2,*
    jue2   *shi4*   *du2*   *li4.*
    yi2   *gu4*   *qing1*   *cheng2,*
    zai4   *gu4*   *qing1*   *guo3.*

and BINARITY, the effect of the grammatical structure is exerted indirectly via the PhP boundary which is determined by the strongest boundary (SB) in the grammatical structure.

Therefore, although all the 5- or 7-syll *Jinti* lines are scanned in a uniform way indifferent to their grammatical structures, the different grammatical structures of the lines nonetheless induce different judgment on the metrical harmony on the part of the reader. As a consequence, the reader experiences a rich spectrum of metrical harmony corresponding to the large variety of line structures, constantly moves between metrically harmonious lines and metrically tense ones, and enjoys an exciting rather than a monotonous reading experience[4].

5.5.3 Lexical tones and meter

Although as stated back in Chapter 1, this research is not concerned with the meter of classical Chinese verse, the use of lexical tones in the *Jinti* genre once triggered a lively debate about the meter of this genre (cf. inter alia, Chen 1979, 1980; Schlepp 1980; Yip 1980). And we feel tempted to chip in with a different voice on this issue on the basis of our discussion in this chapter.

As mentioned back in Section 5.1, lexical tones began to be consciously used in *Jinti* verse, although it remains a moot point whether tones appeared around the same time or earlier in the ambient language. That Chinese is widely known as a textbook case of tone languages and that the tone is phonemic in Chinese seductively invites the argument that Chinese poems have a 'tonal meter' in Lotz's (1960) work on the typology of meters, based on the assumption that a language only employs its

---

[4] The variation of metrical harmony between the lines within one poem is welcome and in fact crucial for the success of a poem. Similar observations are made in Nespor and Vogel's (1986:295) discussion of English art verse, or Hanson and Kiparsky (1996:295)'s INTEREST constraint which calls for a maximalization of esthetic interest of the verse. This is evident from the fact that it is most rare for a piece of art verse to contain lines of the same structure, even though the repeated structure is the metrically most harmonious one. For example, none of the 121 verse pieces in the *Jinti* corpus is like this. Such poems where every line has the same degree of metrical harmony would most likely result in monotony for the reader and seem to be a bit more acceptable in the more tolerant 'folksy' poetic styles such as limericks etc. For example, in the following limerick all the four lines have the (metrically most harmonious) structure [SS][S[SS]], but it reads as rather boring and would hardly be taken as a serious poem.

gao1	*shan1*	*you3*	*hao3*	*shui3,*
high	mountain	have	fine	water

'There is fine water on the high mountains'

cao3	*di4*	*you3*	*hao3*	*hua1.*
Grass	land	have	good	flower

'There is beautiful flowers on the grass'

ni3	*wo3*	*shi4*	*peng2*	*youin1,*
You	I	are	friend	friend

'You and I are friends'

bi3	*ci3*	*xin1*	*huan1*	*xi3.*
Each other		heart	happy	happy

'We are happy with each other'

phonemically significant features in establishing meter for its verse. This position has been followed in works such as Chen (1979, 1980), Yip (1980, 1984) and Xue (1989).

We argue that this proposal on 'tonal meter' is untenable for at least three reasons. First, according to the advocates of 'tonal meter', tones play a vital role in the meter of the Chinese verse, and in fact constitute the meter. Notably, they are all merely concerned with the so-called 'Regulated Verse', which is the sub-genre *Lüshi* of the *Jinti* genre, as mentioned in Section 5.1. This sub-genre is conventionally believed to be characterized by the imposition of a rigid canon of tonal patterns. The question is thus: if we temporarily accept that tones constitute the meter for such verse, what about the other genres of classical Chinese verse? Will the fact that tones are absent in them lead us to conclude that they do not have meter? This obviously cannot be true. Moreover, as already mentioned in Section 5.1, the conventionally held assumption that all *Lüshi* (as well as the other *Jinti* sub-genre, i.e. *Jueju*) poems follow the strict and arbitrary tonal patterns, which serves as the de facto point of departure in these works, is thrown into doubt by the empirical study of Ripley (1980). Duanmu (2001) for example flatly concludes that this pattern is actually not valid.

Second, even if the tonal patterns had been strictly followed by the ancient poets, and were indeed essential to the establishment of meter, it is noteworthy that the tones have undergone significant change over the time (see e.g. Haudricourt 1954, 1961; Mei 1970; Pulleyblank 1978; also see Chapter 1 of Chen (2000) for a review). Accordingly, for the modern speaker, in the majority of cases the tones diverge from those back at the time when the verse was composed. Consequently, the tonal pattern is not so much a synchronic reality as a mere abstract diachronic construct. If the tonal meter theory was correct, will the meter of the verse be lost on the modern speaker who, in many cases, recites the verse in a drastically different tone pattern? The answer is again evidently negative.

Third, the advocates of 'tonal meter' have argued that the lexical tone serves as a basis for foot parsing. This raises the immediate concern why the two syllables within a foot should share the same tone; indeed, this was admitted to be merely an artificial and stipulative requirement in these works (e.g. Chen 1979; Xue 1989). This problem has been pointed out in Napoli (1979) and Schlepp (1980). Furthermore, in an attempt to capture this mapping between tones and foot structure, various rules have been proposed, which are often ad hoc.

All this indicates that tones cannot be of direct relevance to meter and that the so-called 'tonal meter' is but an untenable myth; indeed, the role of tone in the metrics of Chinese verse has been seriously challenged in Buring (1966) and Schlepp (1980). Rather we propose that tones only bear an indirect and secondary relation to meter. Specifically, the meter of classical Chinese verse is constituted by the boundary matching between the grammatical and the prosodic structures and lexical tones of the syllables in a line join together to form the melody on top of this underlying meter. This meter is referred to as 'phrasing meter' in my work elsewhere (Zuo 2000) and as such, bears considerable resemblance to the meter in Japanese verse (Hayes 2000a). However, hugely interesting it may be, this topic will not be belabored here, as it is not the main concern of the present study. We will briefly return to it in Chapter 7 below.