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Two Papers on Sinolinguistics:

1. A Hypothesis Concerning

the Origin of the Term *fanqie* ("Countertomy")

2. East Asian Round-Trip Words

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A Hypothesis Concerning the Origin of the Term *fanqie* ("Countertomy")

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Dedicated to Zhou Yiliang, master of medieval Sino-Indian cultural studies in China.

There is an old scholarly consensus, going back at least to the Song period, that the *fanqie* 反切 method of "spelling" has an Indian basis,[1] but no one has ever demonstrated with precision what that might be. The purpose of this brief paper is to suggest one possible avenue for further investigation toward determining the source of *fanqie*.

As an example of Song views on this subject, Xu Guan 許觀 stated that "The ancients had no countertomy for graphs [i.e., in antiquity there was no way to spell out the sounds of words] 古 者 字 未 有 反 切 .... In fact, it derives from the Brahmanical [i.e., Sanskrit or Indian] learning of the Western Regions." 其實出於西域 梵 學 也 [2]

Another Song scholar, Chen Zhensun 陳 振 孫 (fl. 1211-1249), expressed the same opinion with somewhat greater specificity: "Knowledge of countertomy entered China from the Western Regions. By the Qi (479-501) and Liang (502-556) periods it became prevalent and after that the discussions about phonological defects [in poetry][3] became more detailed." 反 切 之 學 自 西土或 入 中 國. 至 齊 梁 間 盛 行, 然 後 聲 病 之 說 詳 焉 [4]

The celebrated early Song polymath, Shen Gua 沈 括 (1030-1094), had already pointed out the fundamental place of Indian influence in the development of Chinese phonology: "After Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513) established the four tones and Indian Brahmanical learning 天 竺 梵 學 entered China, the techniques 術 of phonology 音 韻 之 學 were gradually refined."[5] "The system of rhyme classification[6] 切 韻 之 學 originally came from the Western Regions."[7]

There can be little doubt that the Chinese were aware of the concept of Indian spelling by no later than the beginning of the fifth century, if only vaguely, for Kumārajīva's (344/350-409) translation of Nāgārjuna's (the patriarch of Mādhyamika) *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* 大 智 度 論   , completed between 402 and 405, has the following sentence: "The 42 graphs are the root of all graphs 四 十 二 字 是 一 切 字 根 本."[8] As stated, of course, this makes no sense, but what Kumārajīva and his assistants must

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certainly have been trying to convey is something like the following: "The 42 letters are the basis of all words." This is obviously a reference to an Indian or Indian-derived alphabet. But fifth-century Chinese phonologists were far from fully comprehending the mechanics of spelling. Indeed, it would be more than a thousand years before true spelling came to the Middle Kingdom.

China never advanced to a system of authentic spelling for one of its own Sinitic languages until the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628) introduced the Latin alphabet and applied it to Mandarin and ultimately to other topolects. Even now, the concept of spelling out words has not won full acceptance in China where we still encounter such monstrosities as *Huanyingwai-bindaojiuquanlaiguanguang* and "Wel come for eign guests for tour ism in Jiu quan." It is clear that the square shape and syllabic nature of the tetragraphs (*fangkuaizi* 方塊字) still exercise a powerful hold over the Chinese mind. The awkward system of *fanqie* is part of the same legacy.

The two sinographs (*hanzi* 漢字) that constitute the word *fanqie* may be literally rendered as "reverse cutting." I used to call this method "cut-and-splice" pseudospelling or quasispelling. *Fanqie* cannot be considered as genuine spelling because it does not consistently employ a single symbol (i.e., letter) to designate the same sound (phoneme) or combination of sounds (phonemes). For example, the final -*ung* of a word may be represented in *fanqie* "spellings" by *dong* 東 , *gong* 公 , *hong* 紅, *gong* 工 , *hong* 洪 , and so forth. Although the *fanqie* system is quite cumbersome and confusing, it constitutes a tremendous advance over the old native system of *duruo* 讀若 or *duru* 讀如 ("read as") which leaves the reader absolutely helpless if he does not know the pronunciation of the graph which is being used to annotate that of the graph in question. Admittedly, the *fanqie* system is subject to the same criticism, but *fanqie* annotators who were sympathetic to their readers tended to restrict themselves to a relatively small group of well-known sinographs. Furthermore, the "read as" method partakes of no analysis whatsoever and hence is of no value in advancing phonological studies.

The word *fanqie* is somewhat peculiar. Upon first encounter, it is impossible to gain an intuitive sense of what this term may mean. Even when told that *fanqie* is a type of spelling, those who are unschooled in this method have no idea how it works. As we have seen above, it is easy enough to figure out what the two individual sinographs that are used to write the word mean ("reverse cutting"), but that is of little help in gaining an understanding of the manner in which it functions, viz., to join the initial of one presumably familiar syllabic graph with the final of another presumably familiar syllabic graph so as to "spell out" a third targeted syllabic graph that is presumably unfamiliar and

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thus requires phonetic annotation. The rules of Chinese word formation and the semantics of the two constituent sinographs used to write *fanqie*, then, cannot adequately explain the origins of the word. Perhaps there is some other credible explanation.

There exists in Sanskrit the term *varṇa-bheda-vidhi* which signifies a method of spelling or letter division. The three components of the expression literally mean "letter-cutting-rules." It is curious that *bheda* corresponds exactly to *qie* and that *varṇa* not only sounds like *fan* but that it has interesting semantic resonances with it.

In Buddhist Hybrid Chinese, Sanskrit words formed from the root of *varṇa*, namely √vṛ ("to cover, screen, veil, conceal, hide, surround, obstruct") may be translated by *fu* 覆 ("to cover; to overturn; backwards and forwards; to reply; to repeat; to return; to alternate"). In the latter five senses, *fu* 復 is used as a substitute for *fu* 復 , which is a synonym for *fan* 反 . Thus we find that there are striking areas of semantic overlap between *varṇa* and *fan*. I propose that it is possible that Chinese monks and scholars who became acquainted with the notion of spelling through *varṇa-bheda-vidhi* may have been inspired by it to invent *fanqie*. This would be another example of the many ingenious adaptations and modifications of Indian intellectual products by Chinese, particularly during the medieval period.

Varṇa-bheda-vidhi is also supposed to be the name of a treatise on spelling,[9] but after expending much effort, I have been unable to locate a copy in America, Europe, or India. Nor have I been able to make any substantial headway in dating the origin of the technique of *varṇa-bheda-vidhi* in India. Finally, I have not succeeded in finding any Sanskrit text (Buddhist or otherwise) in which the term *varṇa-bheda* occurs and which has been translated into Chinese so that we might check whether it was rendered by *fanqie*. Nonetheless, the semantic and phonetic affinities between *fan* and *varṇa*, plus the exact parallel between *qie* and *bheda*, hold out the intriguing possibility that *varṇa-bheda* may have been the source of *fanqie*.

Notes

1. For bibliographical references to scholarly studies on *fanqie*, see Paul Fu-mien Yang, ed., *Chinese Linguistics: A Selected and Classified Bibliography* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974), pp. 77b-78b (entries 1179-1198); Paul Fu-mien Yang, ed., *Chinese Lexicology and Lexicography: A Selected and Classified Bibliography* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1985), pp. 235a-236b (entries 3287-3313);

Beijing Tushuguan [Peking Library] 北京圖書館 , ed., *Minguo Shiqi Zong Shumu [A Comprehensive Catalog of Books from the Republican Period]* 民國時期總書目 (1911-1949), Yuyan Wenzi Fence [Volume on Language and Script] 語言文字分冊 (Beijing: Shumu Wenxian Chubanshe, 1986), pp. 35b-36a (entries 424-427). S. Robert Ramsey's lucid, non-technical account of *fanqie* in his *The Languages of China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 120ff., gives due recognition to Indian influence on this system.

2. *Dongzhai Ji Shi [Notes on Affairs from the Eastern Studio]* 東齋記事 (Baibu Congshu [Collectanea of a Hundred Divisions] 百部叢書 edition), 10a.

3. For a demonstration of the Indian origins of prosodic defects in Chinese poetry, see Victor H. Mair and Tsu-Lin Mei, "The Sanskrit Origins of Recent Style Prosody," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 51.2 (December, 1991), 375-470.

4. *Zhi Zhai Shulu Jieti [Annotations for the Catalog of the Studio of Uprightness]* 直齋書錄解題(Guoxue Jiben Congshu [Basic Sinological Series] 國學基本叢書 edition), ch. 3, p. 87.

5. *Xin Jiaozheng Mengxi Bitan [Newly Collated Dream Brook Sketches]* 新校正夢溪筆談 , ed. Hu Daojing 胡道靜 (Peking: Zhonghua Shuju, 1957), ch. 14 (Yiwen [Literary Arts] 藝文 B), p. 152.

6. More literally, this may be rendered as "tomic rhyme studies."

7. *Xin Jiaozheng Mengxi Bitan*, ch. 15 (Literary Arts B), p. 158.

8. *Taisho Tripiṭaka*, 25 (1509).408b; *Korean Tripiṭaka*, 14 (549).867c.

9. Monier Monier-Williams, ed., *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 924c.

(Engl.) Industrial Cooperative → (Mandarin) *qing gongyeh hezuo* ⟶ (Engl. slang) gung ho

[Movement] (lit.) "Light Industry Cooperative" "loyal; enthusiastic"

(abbrev.) Indusco (abbrev.) *gongho*

"work together"

(Archaic Chinese)

文 學 * *miwən-g'ôk* ⟶ (Japanese) *bungaku* ⟶ (Mand.) *wenxue*

"writing and learning" calque for "literature" "literature"

(Arch. Ch.)

文 化 * *miwən-xwa* ⟶ (Jap.) *bunka* ⟶ (Mand.) *wenhua*

"civil transformation" calque for "culture" "culture"

(Arch. Ch.)

文 明 * *miwən-miăng* ⟶ (Jap.) *bunmei* ⟶ (Mand.) *wenming*

"patterned brightness" calque for "civilization" "civilization"

(Arch. Ch.)

文 法 * *miwən-piwăp* ⟶ (Jap.) *bunpō* ⟶ (Mand.) *wenfa*

"civil rules" calque for "grammar" "grammar"

(Arch. Ch.)

分 析 * *piwən-siek* ⟶ (Jap.) *bunseki* ⟶ (Mand.) *fenxi*

"split apart" calque for "analysis" "analysis"

(Ancient Ch.)

物 理 *miuət-lji* ⟶ (Jap.) *butsuri* ⟶ (Mand.) *wuli*

"principle of things" calque for "physics" "physics"

(Arch. Ch.)

鉛 筆 * *diwan-pljat* ⟶ (Jap.) *enpitsu* ⟶ (Mand.) *qianbi*

"lead writing instrument" transcription-calque for "[graphite] pencil"

"[graphite] pencil"

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演說 (Arch. Ch.)
*dian-śiwad ⟶ (Jap.) enzetsu ⟶ (Mand.) yanshuo
"expatiate" calque for "oration; lecture; address" "speech"

諷刺 (Anc. Ch.)
piung-ts'ie ⟶ (Jap.) fūshi ⟶ (Mand.) fengci
"to make veiled criticism" calque for "satire" "satire"

學士 (Arch. Ch.)
*g'ok-dẓiəg ⟶ (Jap.) gakushi ⟶ (Mand.) xueshi
"scholar" calque for "B.A." "B.A."

藝術 (Anc. Ch.)
ngiäi-dź'juət ⟶ (Jap.) geijitsu ⟶ (Mand.) yishu
"skills and techniques" calque for "art" "art"

議決 (Arch. Ch.)
*ngia-kiwat ⟶ (Jap.) giketsu ⟶ (Mand.) yijue
"decide after discussion" calque for "resolution" "pass a resolution"

具體 (Arch. Ch.)
*g'ju-t'liər ⟶ (Jap.) gutai ⟶ (Mand.) juti
"possess in general" calque for "concrete" "concrete"

博士 (Arch. Ch.)
*pâk-dẓiəg ⟶ (Jap.) hakase (or hakushi) ⟶ (Mand.) boshi
"erudite scholar" calque for "Ph.D." "Ph.D."

保險 (Anc. Ch.)
pâu-xiäm ⟶ (Jap.) hoken ⟶ (Mand.) baoxian
"protect a dangerous/crucial calque for "insurance" "insurance; safe; sure"
place"

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封建   (Arch. Ch.) *pịung-kịän* ⟶ (Jap.) *hōken* ⟶ (Mand.) *fengjian*
"enfeoff"   calque for "feudal"   "feudal"

方面   (Anc. Ch.) *pịwang-mịän* ⟶ (Jap.) *hōmen* ⟶ (Mand.) *fangmian*
"side; direction"   calque for "aspect"   "aspect"

法律   (Arch. Ch.) *pịwăp-lịwat* ⟶ (Jap.) *hōritsu* ⟶ (Mand.) *falü*
"orders; rules"   calque for "law"   "law"

法式   (Arch. Ch.) *pịwăp-śịak* ⟶ (Jap.) *hoshiki* ⟶ (Mand.) *fashi*
"regulations; standards"   calque for "form; formula"   "model"

保障   (Arch. Ch.) *pâu-tịang* ⟶ (Jap.) *hoshō* ⟶ (Mand.) *baozhang*
"protect; secure"   calque for "guarantee"   "guarantee"

表情   (Anc. Ch.) *pịäu-dz'ịäng* ⟶ (Jap.) *hyōjō* ⟶ (Mand.) *biaoqing*
"reveal feelings"   calque for "expression"   "expression"

表象   (Anc. Ch.) *pịäu-zịang* ⟶ (Jap.) *hyōshō* ⟶ (Mand.) *biaoxiang*
"external image"   calque for "representation"   "idea (in psychology)"

意味   (Anc. Ch.) *i-mịwei* ⟶ (Jap.) *imi* ⟶ (Mand.) *yiwei*
"delight"   calque for "meaning; sense; signification; significance"   "meaning; significance; implication"

自由 (Anc. Ch.)
dz'i-i̯ə̯u ⟶ (Jap.) *jiyū* ⟶ (Mand.) *ziyou*
"deriving from self" calque for "freedom; liberty" "freedom; liberty"

住所 (Anc. Ch.)
d'i̯u-si̯wo ⟶ (Jap.) *jūshō* ⟶ (Mand.) *zhusuo*
"place where one is staying" calque for "residence; domicile" "residence; domicile"

會計 (Arch. Ch.)
* *kwâd-ker* ⟶ (Jap.) *kaikei* ⟶ (Mand.) *kuaiji*
"calculation" calque for "accounts; finance" "accounting"

階級 (Anc. Ch.)
kăi-ki̯ap ⟶ (Jap.) *kaikyū* ⟶ (Mand.) *jieji*
"differences in rank" calque for "[social] class" "class"

改造 (Anc. Ch.)
kâi-dz'âu ⟶ (Jap.) *kaizō* ⟶ (Mand.) *gaizao*
"re-establish; re-enact" calque for "reorganize" "reconstruct; reform"

革命 (Arch. Ch.)
* *kɛk-mi̯ăng* ⟶ (Jap.) *kakumei* ⟶ (Mand.) *geming*
"to remove the [heavenly] mandate" calque for "revolution" "revolution"

環境 (Medieval Ch.)
huan-ki̯æn ⟶ (Jap.) *kankyō* ⟶ (Mand.) *huanjing*
"surrounding area" calque for "environment" "environment"

課程 (Anc. Ch.)
k'uâ-d'i̯äng ⟶ (Jap.) *katei* ⟶ (Mand.) *kecheng*
"schedule" calque for "course; curriculum" "course; curriculum"

計劃 (Arch. Ch.)
ker-grwek ⟶ (Jap.) *keikaku* ⟶ (Mand.) *jihua*
"think over" calque for "plan" "plan"

經理 (Arch. Ch.)
kieng-liəg ⟶ (Jap.) *keiri* ⟶ (Mand.) *jingli*
"take care of" calque for "accountant" "manager"

經濟 (Anc. Ch.)
kieng-tsiei ⟶ (Jap.) *keizai* ⟶ (Mand.) *jingji*
"rule [the realm] and calque for "economics" "economics; economical"
succor [the people]"

權利 (Arch. Ch.)
g'iwan-liəd ⟶ (Jap.) *kenri* ⟶ (Mand.) *quanli*
"power to profit" calque for "right[s]" "right[s]"

檢討 (Anc. Ch.)
kiäm-t'âu ⟶ (Jap.) *kentō* ⟶ (Mand.) *jiantao*
"Examining Editor" calque for "examination; investigation" "self-criticism"

機械 (Arch. Ch.)
kiar-g'ɛg ⟶ (Jap.) *kikai* ⟶ (Mand.) *jixie*
"ingenious mechanism" calque for "machine" "mechanical"

機會 (Anc. Ch.)
kjei-ɣwâi ⟶ (Jap.) *kikai* ⟶ (Mand.) *jihui*
"the right moment" calque for "opportunity" "opportunity"

機關 (Anc. Ch.)
kjei-kwan ⟶ (Jap.) *kikan* ⟶ (Mand.) *jiguan*
"stratagem; opportune moment" calque for "engine; means; "mechanism; gear;
facilities" office; organ; body"

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規則 (Anc. Ch.) *kjwiĕ-tsek* ⟶ (Jap.) *kisoku* ⟶ (Mand.) *guīze*
"regular"   calque for "rule; regulation"   "rule; regulation"

抗議 (Anc. Ch.) *k'âng-ngjiĕ* ⟶ (Jap.) *kōgi* ⟶ (Mand.) *kangyi*
"upright argument"   calque for "protest"   "protest"

講義 (Anc. Ch.) *kâng-ngjiĕ* ⟶ (Jap.) *kōgi* ⟶ (Mand.) *jiangyi*
"gist of a discourse"   calque for "lecture"   "[mimeographed or printed] teaching materials; lecture notes"

故意 (Anc. Ch.) *kuo-i* ⟶ (Jap.) *ko-i* ⟶ (Mand.) *guyi*
"sentiments of an old [friend]"   calque for "intention"   "intentionally"

交際 (Arch. Ch.) **kŏg-tsiər* ⟶ (Jap.) *kōsai* ⟶ (Mand.) *jiaoji*
"to receive with etiquette and gifts"   calque for "association; social intercourse"   "association; social intercourse; communication"

交涉 (Anc. Ch.) *kau-źjäp* ⟶ (Jap.) *kōshō* ⟶ (Mand.) *jiaoshe*
"be associated with"   calque for "negotiation"   "negotiate"

構造 (Anc. Ch.) *kạu-dz'âu* ⟶ (Jap.) *kōzō* ⟶ (Mand.) *gouzao*
"make"   calque for "structure"   "structure"

教育 (Arch. Ch.) **kŏg-djôk* ⟶ (Jap.) *kyōiku* ⟶ (Mand.) *jiaoyu*
"teach and rear"   calque for "education"   "education"

教授 (Arch. Ch.)
* *kåg-djôg* ⟶ (Jap.) *kyōju* ⟶ (Mand.) *jiaoshou*
"instruct(or)" calque for "professor" "professor"

共和 (Arch. Ch.)
* *g'iung-g'wâ* ⟶ (Jap.) *kyōwa* ⟶ (Mand.) *gonghe*
"coalition [government]" calque for "republic" "republican"

勞動 (Anc. Ch.)
lâu-d'ung ⟶ (Jap.) *rōdō* ⟶ (Mand.) *laodong*
"gratitude for [another's] toil" calque for "labor" "labor"

領會 (Arch. Ch.)
* *liĕng-g'wâd* ⟶ (Jap.) *ryōkai* ⟶ (Mand.) *linghui*
"fathom" calque for "comprehend; understand" "comprehend; grasp"

流行 (Arch. Ch.)
* *liôg-g'âng* ⟶ (Jap.) *ryūko* ⟶ (Mand.) *liuxing*
"flow [to a distance]" calque for "popular" "popular"

政治 (Anc. Ch.)
tśiäng-d'i ⟶ (Jap.) *seiji* ⟶ (Mand.) *zhengzhi*
"government measures" calque for "government; politics" "politics"

社會 (Anc. Ch.)
źia-ɣwâi ⟶ (Jap.) *shakai* ⟶ (Mand.) *shehui*
"festal gathering around calque for "society" "society"
communal altar"

進步 (Anc. Ch.)
tsiĕn-buo ⟶ (Jap.) *shinpo* ⟶ (Mand.) *jinbu*
"go forward [continuously]" calque for "progress" "progress"

信用	(Arch. Ch.) *siən-djiung "use with trust"	⟶	(Jap.) shin-yō calque for "credit"	⟶	(Mand.) xinyong "credit"

信用 (Arch. Ch.) *siən-djiung "use with trust" ⟶ (Jap.) shin-yō calque for "credit" ⟶ (Mand.) xinyong "credit"

支持 (Anc. Ch.) tśie-d'i "maintain [with effort]" ⟶ (Jap.) shiji calque for "support" ⟶ (Mand.) zhichi "support"

思想 (Anc. Ch.) si-siang "brood about" ⟶ (Jap.) shisō calque for "thought" ⟶ (Mand.) sixiang "thought"

自然 (Arch. Ch.) *dzjier-ńian "self-so" ⟶ (Jap.) shizen calque for "nature" ⟶ (Mand.) ziran "nature"

手段 (Anc. Ch.) śiəu-duân "knack; trick" ⟶ (Jap.) shudan calque for "means; measure" ⟶ (Mand.) shouduan "means; measure"

宗教 (Anc. Ch.) tsuong-kau "doctrine of a sect; teachings of a clan" ⟶ (Jap.) shūkyō calque for "religion" ⟶ (Mand.) zongjiao "religion"

主席 (Arc. Ch.) *ṭju-dzjăk "head of the mat" ⟶ (Jap.) shuseki calque for "chairman" ⟶ (Mand.) zhuxi "chairman"

主食 (Anc. Ch.) tśju-dź'jək "cook [an official position]" ⟶ (Jap.) shushoku calque for "staple food" ⟶ (Mand.) zhushi "staple food"

投機 (Anc. Ch.) *d'əu-kjẹi* ⟶ (Jap.) *tōki* ⟶ (Mand.) *touji*
"congenial" calque for "speculation" "speculator; opportunistic"

運動 (Arch. Ch.) **giwən-d'ung* ⟶ (Jap.) *undō* ⟶ (Mand.) *yundong*
"move" calque for "[social or political] movement" "movement"

預算 (Med. Ch.) *ii-suan* ⟶ (Jap.) *yosan* ⟶ (Mand.) *yusuan*
"plan beforehand" calque for "budget" "budget"

遊擊 (Arch. Ch.) **diôg-kiǎk* ⟶ (Jap.) *yūgeki* ⟶ (Mand.) *youji*
"Brigade Commander" calque for "guerilla" "guerilla"

惟一 (Arch. Ch.) **diwər-iět* ⟶ (Jap.) *yuiitsu* ⟶ (Mand.) *weiyi*
"only" calque for "unique" "unique; sole"

秦 (Arch. Ch.) **dz'iěn* ⟶ (Sanskrit) *Cīna* ⟶ (Mand.) *Zhina* 支那
"name of a dynasty" "China" "China"

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