HISTORY OF CHINESE

By: Adriana Ramon & Rosana Gutierrez
Sino-Tibetan

- Genetic relationship between Chinese, Burmese, Tibetan + other languages was proposed in the early 19th century
- Second-largest number of speakers after Indo-European language family
- Time depth comparable to Indo-European
- Ancestral homeland: Himalayas, Sichuan, Yellow River Valley,
CHALLENGE OF RECONSTRUCTING OLD CHINESE

Writing system
- Because the Chinese writing system is not phonetic, Chinese characters disguise sound change
  - Ex: 人 means "person" and is pronounced as *ren in MSC. The same character was reconstructed as *njin in OC.
Old Chinese

Late Shang Dynasty – end of Han dynasty

Methodology for reconstruction based on five sources of information:

- shijing
- Reconstructed middle Chinese
- Modern Chinese Dialects
shījīng

- Earliest anthology of Chinese poetry
- Records the spoken language in the first millennium BCE
- Speakers of more modern versions of Chinese tried to come up with explanations for why these poems sounded out of rhyme
- It wasn't until the Ming dynasty that scholars started to consider sound change as the reason for these poems not being in rhyme

“there is a temporal difference between the past and the present; and a geographical difference between the south and the north. It is thus inevitable that characters and sounds change accordingly.”

- Chen Di (1541-1617)
How did they come up with the phonetic values?

- Most linguists relied on the phonological system of middle Chinese.
- Theoretical hypothesis of phonetic values of Old Chinese sounds was created by comparing the phonetic values of Middle Chinese finals and initials with the classes of Old Chinese finals and initials.

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### Ode 8: Guó fēng: Zhōu nán: Fúyī 國風·周南·芣苡 rhyme words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Chinese Characters</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>cài cǎi fūyǐ, bō yán cǎi zhī</td>
<td>cài &lt; MC tshoj.X</td>
<td>Colorful is the plantain, we GATHER it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>cǎi cǎi fūyǐ, bō yán yǒu zhī</td>
<td>cóu &lt; MC hjw.X</td>
<td>Colorful is the plantain, we HOLD it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>cǎi cǎi fūyǐ, bō yán duō zhī</td>
<td>duō &lt; MC twat</td>
<td>Colorful is the plantain, we PICK it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Colorful is the plantain, we PLUCK it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Chinese Characters</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>cóu cǎi fūyǐ, bō yán xiē zhī</td>
<td>xiē &lt; MC het</td>
<td>Colorful is the plantain, we HOLD IT IN OUR SKIRTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>cóu cǎi fūyǐ, bō yán xiē zhī</td>
<td>xiě &lt; MC het</td>
<td>Colorful is the plantain, we TUCK IT UP IN OUR SKIRTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.12 Old Chinese rimes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rimes (&gt;open)</th>
<th>Rimes (&gt;checked)</th>
<th>Nasal rimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-id</td>
<td>-it</td>
<td>-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ig</td>
<td>-ik</td>
<td>-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ug</td>
<td>-uk</td>
<td>-um</td>
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<tr>
<td>-ab</td>
<td>-ap</td>
<td>-am</td>
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<tr>
<td>-ad</td>
<td>-at</td>
<td>-an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ag</td>
<td>-ak</td>
<td>-an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ag*</td>
<td>-ak</td>
<td>-an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ab</td>
<td>-ap</td>
<td>-am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ad</td>
<td>-at</td>
<td>-an</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.11 Old Chinese initials*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonetic features</th>
<th>Voiceless unaspirated</th>
<th>Voiceless aspirated</th>
<th>Voiced</th>
<th>Nasal</th>
<th>Lateral</th>
<th>Fricative</th>
<th>Flap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labial</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>pʰ</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alveolar</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>tʰ</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>r</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alveolar</td>
<td>s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velar</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>kʰ</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>η</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laryngeal</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*RECONSTRUCTION BY LI (1971)*
Middle Chinese

- Spoken during the Tang Dynasty
- One of the major records of the sounds of Middle Chinese is found in the rime dictionary Qièyùn by Lu Fayan written in 601 AD
- Dictionary tells us of regional variations and why the dictionary was written: to set standard literary pronunciation
- MC reconstruction based on Guǎngyùn
  - Fǎnqiè method was used
    - Two character indicate pronunciation of a third character
    - Initial served as pronunciation guide, the second served as rime and tone guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle Chinese</th>
<th>kwok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>[kwok]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>[kwok]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>[koʔ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiamen</td>
<td>[koʔ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-Korean</td>
<td>[kuː]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-Japanese</td>
<td>[kuː]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-Vietnamese</td>
<td>quèe [kwok D1]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modern Standard Chinese

- 22 initial sounds
- Tone change
- MC ping tone split according to voicing quality of the initial
  - from Yīnpíng to yángpíng
- Major sound change between MSC and EMC
- Appearance of palatal sounds \([tɕ, \, tɕʰ, \, ɕ]\)
- These were developed from alveolar \([ts, \, tʂʰ, \, s]\) and the velar \([k, \, kʰ, \, ɕ]\) when followed by high-front vowels \([i]\) and \([y]\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9.2 Modern Standard Chinese initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilabial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pʰ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Naming

- During the 1st Millennium BCE, only members of the Chinese Royal family could possess names
  - Personal names
  - Clan names
  - Lineage names
  - Style of courtesy names

- During this time, commoners only possessed common first names
  - Family names were not prevalent
  - *shì* and *xing* clan names were adopted by some commoners around 500 BC
  - However, it wasn’t until 1st century AD that most commoners adopted surnames
Dialects

Seven classifications within Sinitic:
- Northern
  - Mandarin
- Southern
  - Wu
  - Yue
  - Min
  - Xiang
  - Kejia
  - Gan

Reason for such difference is due to:
- Immigration
- Geography
Mandarin (North)

- Basis for "standard" Chinese
- Largest dialect in terms of location and speakers
- Phonological features shared by most Mandarin dialects:
  - A single syllable can contain no more than four phonemes
  - Three vowels maximum
  - No consonant clusters
  - Retroflex consonants [ʈʂ ʈʂʰ ʂ] are distinguishable from sibilants [ts tsʰ s]
  - Dropping of stops -p, -t, -k and adopting glottal stop
  - Rimes from -m to -n
Language contact in the time of Old Chinese

- "Jiang" and "he" is used interchangeably to refer to rivers in modern standard Chinese.
- During the first millennium BCE, the Baiyue (non-Sinitic peoples) resided in the lower Yangtze region, and the huaxia (what would become Chinese people) in the yellow river basin up north.
- The Baiyue referred to their river as jiang 江 (*kroŋ) which then later extended to the general word for "river".
Writing System

- Oracle Bone: Bears some degree of resemblance to the objects they represent
- Bronze: similar to oracle bone script but on bronze ware
- Small Seal:
  - Qin empire
  - Time of standardization
- Clerical:
  - same time as Small Seal
  - Used by government employees
  - Became more and more popular
- Regular Script:
  - Tang Dynasty to present
Character Classification

- Characters are classified into 6 categories:
  - *Pictograms:*
    - abstract representations of pictorial originals
  - *Indications*
    - like pictograms except with extra strokes to indicate the focus of the meaning
  - *Ideogrammic compounds*
    - combining components in a meaningful way
  - *Rebus*
    - when a character is used for its phonetic value rather than for its meaning
  - *Phono-Semantic compounds*
    - Consists of a meaning component and a sound component
  - *Derivative cognates:*
    - Characters that once shared the same graph, pronunciation, and meaning, but at some point developed into different characters.

