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Parallelism in the *Hanvueng*: A Zhuang Verse Epic from West-Central Guangxi in Southern China

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Introduction[1]

Parallelism is ubiquitous in Zhuang poetry and song and hence also occurs in ritual texts and a range of oral genres. Curiously, this salient fact has generally escaped the notice of scholars writing on the subject of Zhuang poetics. Discussion has generally been concentrated on line length, rhyming patterns, and stanzaic structures as found in Zhuang traditional song genres.[2]

This essay looks specifically at the phenomenon of parallelism in one particular ritual text from west-central Guangxi. The *Hanvueng* is a long verse narrative that is recited at rituals intended to deal with cases of unnatural death and serious family quarrels, especially fraternal feuds. The plot involves an old king and his son by his first wife, Hanvueng. After his wife dies, the king remarries a widow from a commoner family, who brings a son with her. She and her son, Covueng, then set out to disenfranchise Hanvueng and drive him out. Hanvueng goes into exile, but the old king becomes ill and has him recalled. The struggle continues when Covueng attempts to kill Hanvueng while the two are hunting. He finally succeeds in having Hanvueng sent down a well to search for water, and then murders him. After his death Hanvueng flies into the sky and establishes a realm there, from which he rains pestilence down upon his former domain. Covueng sends an eagle and a crow up to the sky to resolve his dispute with Hanvueng. In the end Covueng retains the earthly domain, but pays an annual rent to Hanvueng in the sky.

Meng Yuanyao and I have recently published an annotated edition of a *Hanvueng* manuscript (Holm and Meng 2015). With a total length of 1,536 lines, this text is quite long for a Zhuang vernacular ritual text. In some ways it provides a reasonably close parallel in form and

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[2] The classic studies are by Huang Yongsha (1983, espec.). See Wei Xinglang (1986) for a useful summary of traditional Zhuang song genres.

content to the forms of epic poetry discussed elsewhere in this volume. It also serves as a useful platform for analysis because the manuscript is undamaged (there are no missing lines), the plot line is clear, and any difficulties in interpretation have either been resolved or at least fully explored in an extensive set of textual and ethnographic notes accompanying the text in the published edition.[3]

In this essay I deal specifically with the question of parallelism. In the book parallelism is discussed from time to time as pertinent in particular contexts (see the Subject Index of Holm and Meng 2015 for details) but the present essay was written subsequently and uncovers newer aspects of the topic. The book, of course, presents much more cultural and linguistic background information. Owing to limitations of space, I give only an abbreviated presentation here. The Zhuang language examples in this essay are given in *Zhuangwen*, the official Chinese transcription system for Zhuang. *Zhuangwen* allows readers familiar with Chinese to access a wide range of dictionaries and reference materials on the Zhuang language.[4]

The present contribution has a primarily empirical focus, based on one particular ritual text from the Zhuang-speaking highlands of western Guangxi in southern China. My aim here is to present a typology of the various kinds of parallelistic patterning found in this text, to serve as a basis for wider comparative work in the future. Currently in international scholarship, parallelism in the oral cultures of the Tai people of southern China is almost completely unknown, with the exception, perhaps, of Catherine Ingram's work on the "big song" traditions among the Kam (Dong) in Guizhou and Hunan provinces (Ingram 2012). For the Zhuang, a much larger group, there is a more or less complete blank, so I begin with a description of the basic facts on Zhuang song culture.

My discussion of parallelism here is based on a close philological analysis, but it is important to highlight the fact that in ritual context and in its continuing presence in Zhuang village society, this text is recited by vernacular priests and is performed orally in an actual ritual, with an audience that includes the priests themselves, family members, and other villagers. Without these continued acts of performance, the written text would be useless and serve no ritual or social function. Therefore the presentation here includes discussion about the ritual context in performance, looking at the sonic and rhythmic dimensions of the recitation, and also at the ways in which vernacular priests acquire their performative competence, and the ways in which the ritual content is open to interpretation by village people.

Zhuang is the official designation for the most populous Tai-speaking nationality in the province of Guangxi in southern China. With a population approaching 17 million, the Zhuang are concentrated in the western two-thirds of the province, and are also found in contiguous

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[3] These notes address questions of cultural background, explore the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of words and phrases, and compare the forms of expression of the ritual language of the text systematically with the everyday language of the Zhuang people (Holm and Meng 2015:283-469).

[4] For a systematic description and IPA equivalents, see Holm (2003:223-28). Here, Zhuang tones are represented in this transcription by final consonants: -z for tone 2, -j for tone 3, -x for tone 4, -q for tone 5, and -h for tone 6; none of these consonants is pronounced as a consonant, but rather as a tone. Final -b, -d, and -g represent tone 8 syllables, and are pronounced the same as -p, -t, and -k, which represent tone 7 syllables. Zhuang has long and short vowels, long "a," "e," and "o" represented by "a," "e,' and "o"; long "i," "u," and "w" (ɯ) represented by "ie," "ue," and "we"; short "a" and "o" represented by "ae" and "oe"; and short "i," "u," and "w" (ɯ) represented by "i," "u," and "w."

provinces. The Zhuang language belongs to the Tai-Kadai language family and is not genetically related to Chinese, which belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family.[5] Typologically, Zhuang is predominantly monosyllabic and tonal, although in ritual language there are also some binoms (bisyllabic morphemes) and traces of earlier prefixes. Zhuang is now classified by Ethnologue as a "macrolanguage," meaning a language grouping with large numbers of disparate and mutually non-intelligible dialects.[6] The northern dialects are similar to the Bouyei language of Guizhou province and Sha in eastern Yunnan, while the southern dialects form a linguistic continuum with the Tày and Nùng languages of northern Vietnam. The present text, from the region of the former chieftaincy of Tianzhou in west-central Guangxi, is predominantly in the Youjiang ("Right-hand River") sub-dialect of northern Zhuang.[7]

Linguistically and culturally, the Zhuang share many features with Tai speakers elsewhere in East and Southeast Asia, such as the Thai, the Lao, the "tribal Tai" groups (White Tai, Black Tai, and Red Tai) in northern Vietnam, and the Shan in Myanmar. Although they have been in contact with the Chinese state and Han Chinese people for over 2,000 years, the Zhuang in many areas have retained their own language and traditions.[8]

Song, Versification, and Orality

Until very recently, song was ubiquitous in Zhuang social and cultural life. In rural areas boys and girls of marriageable age would congregate with their friends once a year at customary times, usually in springtime, troop out to a designated spot—an open area outside the village such as a river bank, the mouth of a large cave, or an open hillside—and there, groups of the opposite sex would engage in antiphonal singing contests. These gatherings went by a number of names, the most widespread of which was "song markets" (Zh. *hawfwen*). Singers would first form groups of four or eight boys or girls, and then groups of two, and finally, if there was serious interest, boys and girls would sing antiphonally one-on-one. The lyrics were mostly traditional but partly extempore, and allowed young people to test out the cultural knowledge, temperament, and degree of mutual interest of their song partner. These singing contests often led to more serious liaisons, including love-making and long-term relationships (Pan Qixu 1991). Up until well within living memory in these areas, it was unusual for boys and girls to be unable to sing in the local style by the time they were in their teens, or to lack a readily available stock of song lyrics and some ability to extemporise. Particularly for the boys who might be worried about being bested in song by clever young women, there were little chapbooks of song lyrics,

[5] This is the internationally accepted view. Inside China, the Tai-Kadai languages are often classified as a branch of Sino-Tibetan, along with a wide range of other probably unrelated minority languages such as Hmong-Mienic (Miao-Yao). On the other hand, it is now accepted that the Tai-Kadai language family is genetically related to Austronesian. See Sagart (2008:150-52).

[6] Ethnologue Languages of the World: https://www.ethnologue.com/language/zha.

[7] Zhang Junru et al. (1997:62-65). See also Holm and Meng (2015:34-47).

[8] For an overview see Holm (2003:159-71).

written in a variant of the Chinese script, that could be tucked up a sleeve and pulled out and quickly consulted when at a loss for words.

The song repertoire was not confined to these wooing songs: there were ritual songs and also ceremonial songs for almost any occasion, including weddings, funerals, house-building, drinking, particular festivals, calendrical events, and the commemoration of historical events.[9] Even in everyday life there was a tendency in rural Zhuang society to use song where other cultures would use speech. If strangers met on the road, they would often burst into song, asking the other party where they were from and where they were going.[10] All these practices formed the cultural and social basis for versification and song-making in Zhuang traditional society, including the widespread ability to sing and make up songs for any occasion. A person who is able to sing well in the traditional style and make up song lyrics extempore is currently regarded with great respect. They also provide a broad social basis for parallelism in song and verse, as all the above-mentioned song genres employed pervasive parallelism.

It is obvious, as soon as one hears them, that Zhuang songs and lyrics are radically different from those of the Han Chinese (Holm 1999). Most Zhuang singers can also sing in the Chinese style, but distinguish between the two activities by giving them different names. Zhuang singing in the traditional style is called *eu fwen* ("sing + Zhuang airs"), while Chinese singing is called *ciengq go* ("sing + Chinese songs").[11] In these phrases both the noun (*fwen* versus *go*) and the verb (*eu* versus *ciengq*) are different. There is a good reason for this: Zhuang singing uses different modes and cadences, employs different voice production techniques, including falsetto, has different musical phrase structures, and employs two and even three-part harmony.[12] By contrast, traditional Chinese singing typically lacks harmony. Any Chinese person listening to Zhuang singing will know immediately that what they are hearing comes from a completely different song culture, and is not Chinese.

Written Scriptures and Oral texts

While a generic category corresponding to "epic" is not found in Zhuang culture, the *Hanvueng* text otherwise appears to exhibit the social and cultural significance considered characteristic of epics.[13] The text also exhibits formal characteristics common to oral epics such

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[9] See especially the collection of songs from Pingguo in Nong and Tan (2005).

[10] Xin Gu 辛古, "Shange wenlu" 山歌問路, in Nanning diqu (1990:8). It is worth noting that in this context song functions as an indicator of identity, just as much characteristic of a person's home locality and social status as clothing or ordinary speech.

[11] The words for Chinese-style singing are themselves Han loan-words, from *chàng gē* 唱歌.

[12] For numerous examples, see Fan Ximu (2009), which comes complete with two CDs.

[13] Lauri Honko's (1998:28) often-cited description of epic is "great narratives about exemplars, originally performed by specialised singers as superstories which excel in [. . .] power of expression and significance of content over other narratives." In East Asian, poems in the category corresponding to epic are known as *shishi* 史詩 ("historical poems").

as the repetition of lines, conventional epithets, and formulaic composition. It equally exhibits thematic content similar to epic traditions such as its central theme of enmity which for Western readers will be strongly reminiscent of the theme of "wrath" (*menis*) in Homer's *Iliad*. As we comment in the book (Holm and Meng 2015:2):

> Many of [the] key characteristics of epic are found in the Hanvueng. The Hanvueng is not just a chiefly chronicle; it involves interactions between human beings and gods; character and incident are sufficiently well developed to invoke emotional involvement in the fate of the hero; there is a fateful struggle between the two protagonists, leading to a war of words and exchange of dire threats; and the themes are of central importance in the Tai-speaking stratified societies in the south of China.

The text in its present form is, however, not simply a product of oral composition. Internal evidence in the manuscript suggests that certain sections of the text were imported from elsewhere after they had been written down: that is, the present text shows signs that it was put together from disparate written sources (*ibid*.:22.).[14]

In the wider western Guangxi-southern Guizhou area, the *Hanvueng* narrative appears in a number of different forms. Like other myths and narratives, its widest form of circulation is as a prose narrative, which anybody—laypersons as well as Taoists, ritual masters, mogong, and female spirit mediums, all of whom receive ordination—can recite; it is not confined to ritual occasions and can be recounted in a wide variety of social contexts. In Wangmo county in southern Guizhou and probably also in other areas, there was also an orally-transmitted narrative song that "circulated among the people":[15] that is, it was performed in non-ritual contexts.[16] Inspection of the Wangmo narrative song indicates that the language and poetic framework, including pervasive employment of parallelistic devices, is strikingly similar to the text analyzed here.[17]

Many of the scriptures recited by Zhuang vernacular priests also circulated as orally-transmitted "ancient songs" (Zh. *fwengeq*), at least in some areas. On numerous occasions, "ancient songs" were many times the length of corresponding written texts and were regarded as sacred. They were only performed on important ritual occasions by senior men who had good voices and flawless command of the oral text. Such "song kings" were not necessarily vernacular priests—*mogong* or ritual masters—but often were. For this form of performance, a premium

[14] The existence of "boilerplate" in the present text shows up in the distribution of the various graphs used to represent common words. "Boilerplate" is a term used to refer to texts, oral or written, that show clear signs of having been patched together from disparate sources. Full information on this variation is given in the Chinese and vernacular character indices in Holm and Meng (2015:511-54).

[15] The use of quotes here and elsewhere, unless otherwise marked, indicates a phrase is taken from the local language, either Zhuang or Chinese.

[16] The version of the text presented in Wangmo xian (1984:256) is 1,765 lines in length, and is of this type.

[17] Comparison with the *Haansweangz* text from Wangmo is made in Holm and Meng (2015:10-14). Many individual lines and couplets are identical or very close matches. The point here is that the *Hanvueng* and other written scriptures existed in relation to longer versions that also circulated locally.

was placed on accuracy: "The singer could not leave out a single line, nor mis-render a single word, or else he would call forth criticism from the old men in the community" (Holm 2004:22). The words of the "ancient song" were regarded as the "words of the ancestors," in local parlance, and a premium was placed on accurate transmission of the entire song. Naturally, not everybody in the local community had the capacity or dedication to master "ancient song," but all members of the community were present on occasions when such songs were performed, often many times in their lifetime, and would therefore gradually acquire familiarity with both the narrative content and the poetic language and soundscape of these longer narratives (see Holm 2004:20-23).[18]

The *Hanvueng* text analyzed here is a liturgical scripture recited by vernacular priests during rituals in order to effect ritual purposes such as rescuing the souls of people who died violent deaths, obviating outbreaks of smallpox and other disasters, and resolving intractable family quarrels. While the central portion of the text is devoted to the narrative of Hanvueng and his step-brother, the beginning of the text includes an introit that is cosmogonic in nature (lines 1-14), an account of the origins of enmity (lines 19-38 and 52-76), an invocation of the demons of enmity (lines 39-49) who are summoned to be present in the ritual arena, and similar invocations and announcements. Towards the end of the text, but within the narrative, there is a passage giving ritual instructions on how news of the ritual just conducted should be despatched to the heavenly deities (lines 1402-1424).

The Recitation as Soundscape

The recitation of the *Hanvueng* scripture takes the form of a chant, accompanied by a small hand-bell, and takes about two hours. During this time, the priest sits cross-legged on a mat in front of an altar table, facing the main house altar to the ancestors, with the text in front of him and with other accoutrements of priestly power near by: a seal of office and sometimes a solid block of hardwood known as a "thunder block." For the priest and the other participants, the recitation takes the form of a reading from sacred scripture, taking place in real time and according to a certain rhythm, with phrase units delineated by pauses and major sections by short interludes punctuated by the ringing of the hand-bell and the clack of the thunder block against the surface of the altar table.

If the ritual is conducted for the benefit of a family or specific family members, it occurs in the central hall of the house. This room is typically located inside the front door at the south side of the house. The hall houses the family's altar table or altar shelf ,which faces the south and is placed against the center of the north wall of the house, and is where offerings to the ancestors are made. In traditional Zhuang houses, this room and the bedrooms to either side of it are occupied by family members, and would be well above ground level, with domestic animals—oxen, buffaloes and pigs—housed in the space "below the floorboards," and with the main part of the house accessed by means of a house ladder or wooden stairway. The walls of the house are made of wooden planking or bamboo slats, which means that the sound of any ritual proceedings

[18] This information dates from the early 1980s before the full onslaught of Chinese-style modernisation. While we have yet to record an "ancient text" form of the *Hanvueng*, other *mogong* scriptures are described as being drawn directly from these longer narratives, but in abbreviated form.

or family quarrels carries widely throughout the village neighborhood. By the same token, the house as a ritual space serves as a kind of resonating soundbox, that is open to the lowing and grunting of the animals below, other village noises, and the cries of birds in the forest. In modern concrete houses, this symmetric arrangement of space gives way to a pattern of people on ground level and the animals in out-buildings.

With regards to the ritual, the entire soundscape is relevant, or at least cannot be ruled out as irrelevant *a priori*. If a bird is heard crying in the forest at a critical juncture in the recitation, this would be interpreted as significant in some way. Moreover, during a typical ritual, children may run in and out of the room, family members may attend to ancillary tasks, and other people may move about or talk in subdued voices. The atmosphere is decidedly not church-like . That does not mean, however, that the business of the ritual is not serious. Rituals for which the *Hanvueng* is recited are not typical rituals, since what is at stake is the expulsion of the demons of enmity and the resolution of serious family quarrels or the rescue of the souls of dead relatives who died unnatural deaths. Family members remain linked at this psychic level to the ritual proceedings, and other people present maintain a respectful silence.

It is important to note that for most of the recitation the priest does not move around the room, but remains sitting cross-legged for its duration. There are none of the lively ritual dances that characterize the ritual performances of Taoist priests or ritual masters. From a visual point of view, as well as acoustic, the ritual process is concentrated on the act of recitation, of reading from the sacred scripture. What this means is that, for the family and other participants, all that is left as a focus of attention is the chanting of the ritual narrative as it unfolds.

This raises the question: does the "audience"—or the priest for that matter—understand the words of the scripture as recited? Bear in mind that the local audience would be more or less deeply familiar with local song traditions, including any surviving "ancient song" traditions. Based on this consideration, we have approached this question in two ways: firstly through fieldwork, by asking local people and priests how much they understand of the recitation, and secondly by internal evidence, by exploring the ways in which words are used in ritual recitation as opposed to their patterns of everyday usage. Generally what we have found is that the words of the recited text are broadly comprehensible to local audiences and priests, but there are several words and phrases and sometimes entire lines of verse that are either not understood ("don't know") or are understood only in a vague, general fashion ("it means something like . . ."). This makes sense. The recitation itself is in Zhuang, pronounced as in the local dialect or rather local lect, with recitation tones (or melodic pitch in song) related to the eight tones and tonal contours of local speech. The specific ways in which priests and local song artists adapt local speech in order to fit in with rhythmical delivery in song or ritual recitation are mainly the elongation of syllable-final nasals, in cases where syllables contain a short rather than long vowel, and the elongation of line-final syllables and their tone contours, sometimes giving rise to distinctive or elaborated tone contours at the ends of poetic lines.

The words or phrases that are typically not understood, vaguely understood, or misinterpreted are those that have come from elsewhere (Holm 2015), from other Zhuang lects or dialects, or are words that are no longer current in the local lect.[19] So to return to the main

[19] See, for example, the discussion in Holm (2003 and 2004, *passim*).

point here, the words of the recitation are generally accessible to local audiences, and they can follow the main line of the ritual narrative, invocations of deities and other spirits, and other content as recited. It is open to their comprehension and interpretation.

This does not mean, however, that either priests or "audience" parse the recitation on a word-for-word basis. Comprehension begins with larger chunks, line by line, or more often couplet by couplet. Here the effect of parallelism markedly enhances intelligibility, since the second parallel line confirms the meaning of the first.[20] For the "audience," the ritual language forms part of their life experience, and they have heard the same or similar recitations many times since childhood. The insistent patterning of parallelism within this verse form also naturally forms part of their cultural conditioning and also, before modern times and *mutatis mutandis*, part of their own performative repertoire.

In relation to the ritual, this chant is efficacious on two levels: on one level it invokes the demons of enmity, who are summoned into the ritual arena and then at the conclusion of the ritual are banished into the outer darkness of the primeval forest. On another level , the narrative summons into the present the events of the remote past, and replays them, thereby harnessing the energies of the heroic antagonists for the purpose of intervening at the psychic or unseen spiritual level in order to break the bonds of a specific interpersonal antagonism in the present—or alternatively, to break the bonds that shackle the soul of a dead relative in the limbo-like realms below the earth. To put it another way, the overtly ritual portions of the text are clearly intended as "speech acts," in which saying something has the force of making it happen (Austin 1975), but it is also clear that the cultural logic of the ritual process requires us to understand the narrative portions of the text not just as a story, but also as an invocation and a reenactment.[21] This is part of a wider conception whereby the social and natural order are subject to entropic forces and need to be periodically renewed (re-charged, as it were) through the performance of prescribed rituals.

Priestly Transmission and Performative Literacy

In western Guangxi and in several parts of the Zhuang-speaking highlands, the act of reading from a ritual text is an oral performance, and the specific form and content of the recitation itself is orally transmitted. To explain briefly: vernacular priests typically come from families with priestly traditions, or from villages where there are vernacular priests. Typically, as small children they accompany older relatives to rituals, and gradually learn to recite a good part of the repertoire from memory. Later, when they apprentice themselves to a master priest, they are given more systematic instruction, but the form of recitation is always based on the performed oral version. At the point of their ordination or just before it, they are given ritual texts belonging to the master priest and asked to make copies for their own use. At this point they

[20] Compare with Lauri Honko's (1978:31) comment on this effect in parallelism in Karelian laments.

[21] To quote Webb Keane (1997:51) on the function of ritual narrative: "Their linguistic form remains the same, but their function shifts. Rather than being construed as accounts of actions that were carried out in the past, the words are taken as reports on and directives for the action they themselves carry out in the moment of speaking."

might have gone to a village school or had family-based instruction in Chinese, and they copy the texts faithfully, character by character.[22]

What this means is that the textual transmission and the transmission of the recitation take place separately: at different times in a priest's life and through different modes of instruction. In performance priests learn to turn the pages at more or less the right time, but otherwise the recitation of the text during a ritual takes place without any act of actual reading. Over the generations various discrepancies have arisen between the text as recited and the text as written, but these discrepancies are not usually noticed by the priests themselves unless they have an unusually high level of literacy in Chinese. It frequently happens in our interviews with Zhuang vernacular priests that the priest is unable to comment on the meaning of verses taken from the middle of a passage, or is unable to give any more than a general meaning to a line of verse. This is not a sign of backwardness or lack of sophistication, but it is perfectly normal in village society in this part of southern China.

Versification

The structure of lines of verse, including song lyrics, is Tai rather than Han Chinese. Both Chinese and Zhuang have five-syllable lines, and at first sight these look the same on paper. However, the Zhuang have waist-rhymes and lack a mid-line caesura (Wei Xinglang 1986). Waist-and-tail rhymes (*yaoweiyun* 腰尾韻) are rhymes in which the last syllable in one line rhymes with one of the first few syllables in the following line. In Chinese verse this rhyming pattern is completely absent. The cadence of poetic lines is also different. Whereas five-syllable lines in most Chinese poetic genres have a caesura after the third syllable, dividing the line into a pattern of 3 + 2 syllables,[23] Zhuang verse lacks this and simply has five syllables arranged *seriatim*, often with line endings marked by elongation of the final syllable, or in some song genres, the insertion of a brief interlude filled with extra-metrical vocables. Similarly, in seven-syllable verse, Chinese lines of verse are typically divided by a caesura into groups of 4 and 3, whereas Zhuang seven-syllable lines lack such a caesura. Finally, in Chinese versification there is a binary distinction between *ping* 平 (level) and *ze* 仄 (deflected) tone-categories, with—depending on the genre—a word in one or the other tone-category obligatory at certain positions in the poetic stanza. In Zhuang, however, there is a four-way distinction in tonal categories, with words that rhyme normally required to correspond in tone category. As it happens, these four tone categories correspond to the four tone categories reconstructed for Proto-Tai (see Holm and Meng 2015:30-31).[24]

Rhyming in Zhuang operates in a somewhat looser fashion than in Chinese. Rhyme in classical Chinese poetry was regulated by the rhyme categories in the pre-modern rhyme books

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[22] For further discussion of performative literacy, see Holm (2013:61-62).

[23] For a useful overview of Chinese versification rules see Liu (1962).

[24] Proto-Tai A tones correspond with modern tones 1 and 2 (syllable endings nil (no symbol) and -z in *Zhuangwen* transcription), B tones with modern tones 5 and 6 (endings -q and -h), C tones with tones 3 and 4 (-j and -x), and D tones with consonant stop endings (-p, -t, -k, and -b, -d, -g).

and other authoritative and quasi-official sources, but rhyme in Zhuang verse, as a vernacular medium, was based on local rhyming conventions rather than rules. A person's mastery of the local song repertoire provided an internalized range of examples and a storehouse of specific pairs of rhyming words that could be deployed in extempore versification. In general, apart from the observation of the tonal distinctions mentioned above, the end of each rhyming syllable is often identical in vowel quality and final consonant, but there are some exceptions: syllables with final -t are permitted to rhyme with those with a final -k, and syllables with different nasal endings (-n, -m, -ng) also often rhyme. Different short vowels such as short "o" (-oe-), short "u" (-u-), short -"a"- (-ae-), and short "ɯ" (-w-) can all rhyme with each other. Different localities, however, may have different practices.

Zhuang verse is often organized in the form of stanzas, most typically of four lines. The *Hanvueng* text, however, like most ritual songs, is set in a verse form called *fwen baiz* ("songs lined up"), in which there is no stanzaic structure and no fixed line length (Holm and Meng 2015:30-31; Huang Yongsha 1983:74-91). Most lines are five syllables long, with an admixture of couplets with lines of seven or occasionally nine syllables.

These features of the verse structure are instantiated in the opening lines of the *Hanvueng* (the words that rhyme have been underlined):

三	盖	三	王	至。	1
ɬaːm˨˩	kaːi˧˥	ɬaːm˨˩	βuəŋ˧˩	çiː˧˥	
sam	gaiq	sam	vuengz	ciq	
Three	Worlds	Three	Kings	Establish	

The Three Realms were established by the Three Kings,

四	盖	四	王	造。	2
ɬˠiː˧˥	kaːi˧˥	ɬˠiː˧˥	βuəŋ˧˩	çaːu˥˧	
seiq	gaiq	seiq	vuengz	caux	
Four	Worlds	Four	Kings	Create	

The Four Realms were created by the Four Kings.

王	造	立	造	連。	3
βuəŋ˧˩	çaːu˥˧	lɐp˧	çaːu˥˧	liːᵊn ˧˩	
vuengz	caux	laep	caux	lienz	
Kings	Create	darkness	Create	light	

The Kings made the darkness and made the light,

王	造	天	造	地。	4
βuəŋ˧˩	çaːu˥˧	tiɛn˨˩	çaːu˥˧	tiː ˨	
vuengz	caux	dien	caux	deih	
Kings	Create	Heaven	Create	Earth	

The Kings made Heaven and made the Earth.

In this example, the first of the parallel lines represents the manuscript text, the second is a relatively narrow IPA transcription of the priest or original owner's recitation in local dialect, the third line is a transcription in *Zhuangwen* representing standard Zhuang orthography, and the fourth line contains word glosses in English, with Han Chinese loan-words capitalized.[25]

Here, *ciq* at the end of the first line rhymes with the first syllable *seiq* in the second line, *caux* at the end of the second line rhymes with the second syllable in the third line, and *lienz* at the end of the third line rhymes with the third syllable *dien* in the fourth line.[26] The tone categories are as follows: *ciq* and *seiq* are both fifth-tone syllables, Proto-Tai category B, *caux* is a fourth-tone syllable, Proto-Tai category C, and *lienz* is a second-tone syllable rhyming with *dien*, a first-tone syllable, both Proto-Tai category A.

Parallelism

As demonstrated above, the opening lines take the form of two couplets that exhibit strict parallelism. By "strict parallelism" I mean that each word in one line corresponds in word class and semantic field to the corresponding word in the parallel line—syllable by syllable—and that the syntactic relations between words in one line are replicated in the parallel line. The fact that most morphemes in Zhuang are monosyllabic makes this strict parallelism particularly salient. By contrast, if some of the words in otherwise parallel lines are displaced forwards or backwards, or if there are additional elements in one line, then we would say that the lines are not strictly parallel (see further below). By word class, we mean basic categories such as noun, adjective, transitive verb, and so on. Incidentally, parallelism in semantic fields does not imply that words used in parallel will necessarily be synonymous in a dictionary sense; it is often sufficient if two words are understood locally as referring to "the same kind of thing." I use the term "strict parallelism" in contra-distinction to "canonical parallelism."[27]

We would, of course, expect to find strict parallelism in the opening lines of a Zhuang ritual text. The fixed formulaic lines mark off the sacred recitation that follows from the essentially different character of whatever ritual business was being conducted previously. Parallel members of each of these couplets are both semantically and grammatically parallel: each word in the first line is matched to the word in the corresponding metrical position in the second line by word class (noun, verb, and so on) and semantic field. Thus *sam* ("three") in the first line is parallel to *seiq* ("four") in the second line, and *ciq* ("establish") in the first line is

[25] In these lines there are no instances of mis-match between written graph and recited pronunciation, or between local dialect pronunciation and the morpheme represented in the orthographic *Zhuangwen* transcription. Such mis-matches, however, do appear elsewhere in the text, and are discussed in the "Textual and Ethnographic Notes" section in Holm and Meng (2015:283-469).

[26] Readers will note that the words *vuengz caux* at the end of line 2 are repeated at the onset of line 3 (anadiplosis). This repetition does not violate constraints of the meter and thus completes the metrically required rhyme in position 2 of line 3.

[27] On canonical parallelism, see Fox (1988:4, 6-11). Parallelism is "canonical" if strict parallelism is obligatory according to the conventions of the speech or poetic genre. In the present text, as we note below, parallelism is pervasive but not required.

matched with *caux* ("create") in the second line; the other words are identical. In the second couplet, *caux* ("create") appears twice in each line, in the second and fourth places, and *laep* ("darkness") and *lienz* ("light") are paired with *dien* ("Heaven") and *deih* ("Earth"), respectively. We can identify these four opening lines as two parallel couplets, rather than four parallel lines, because lines 3 and 4 have a different basic pattern from lines 1 and 2.[28] In these lines the rhyme carries through from one couplet to the next, but further on, in the main body of the narrative, rhyming is frequently confined to the parallel couplets themselves or concatenations of parallel lines.

A Typological Overview

As will become evident from the review below, the tradition centers on strict parallelism, with the parallel couplet as the most basic form. Parallelism between verses is therefore organized so that each word in the first verse corresponds with a word in the parallel verse without lexical repetition (mostly), ellipsis, or addition. The typology developed here therefore treats strict parallelism as a base form in relation to which variations are distinguishable. This overview presents example lines from the epic in *Zhuangwen* transcription, accompanied by English translation and occasional underlining to indicate rhyme. The accompanying brief analysis looks at line composition in terms of individual lexemes, word classes, and semantic fields to clarify parallelistic relationships between lines of verse on the formal level. This objective analysis is a necessary first step, though of course it presents the text in the form of written poetic lines, complete with word breaks and abstracted from real time.[29]

Given the discussion above about the acoustic qualities of the text as recited, it is, however, also useful to supplement this analysis with a second step, considering the same poetic material as a phonic and temporal experience, and re-analysing the analysis in light of relevant aspects of the performance context, as emerging from the ongoing recitation. At this level we will find that parallelism becomes a fluid phenomenon in organizing text and its rhythms, rather than a set of fundamentally different and distinct categories. This procedural move draws inspiration from the work of other scholars studying oral cultures, new theoretical approaches in phonetics to the analysis of rhythmical speech, notably the work of Robert F. Port (2009) and others, and recent work on emergence and complexity in human cultures focussing on self-organising systems (Agazzi and Montecucco 2002; Prigogine 1997).

In this ritual text parallelism is pervasive, with the parallel couplet as the most frequent form. However, parallelism is not confined to simple couplets; other more elaborate forms of parallelism also appear. This is a statement to which we can put some numbers. Fig. 1 reviews

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[28] On another level, we can say that lines 3 and 4 continue the same thematic line as lines 1 and 2, *viz*., the creation of the world. In other ritual texts within the same tradition, such sequences of lines form fixed assemblages. See, for example, Holm (2003:102-103, Text 3 and pp. 146-147, Text 5).

[29] Actually, the transcription represents a triple abstraction from the text as recited: first from an audible signal through time onto a digital recorded medium, then from audio recording to narrow phonetic transcription in IPA, on paper, and finally through a complex process of morpheme identification, into the orthographic form of written *Zhuangwen*. At each stage in this process an element of selection and simplification inevitably intrudes.

the examples of line-based parallelism that I counted in a text that is made up of 1,536 lines. These examples have been distinguished according to typological categories labelled alphabetically A-E. These different formal categories are summarized in this section for the sake of offering a general overview. Each type of parallelism will then be discussed more fully in relation to illustrative examples in the sections that follow:

Category	Examples	Lines
A. Parallel couplets, Quasi-parallel couplets, and Augmented couplets		
A1. Parallel couplets	371 examples	742 lines
A2. Quasi-parallel couplets	15 examples	30 lines
A3. Augmented parallel couplets:		
parallel couplets + 1	10 examples	30 lines
1 + parallel couplet	3 examples	9 lines
1 + parallel couplet + 1	1 example	4 lines
B. Three or four lines parallel	22 examples	66 lines
3 lines parallel + 1	1 example	4 lines
4 lines parallel	2 examples	8 lines
4 lines parallel + 2	1 example	6 lines
C. Special patterns:	108 lines	
Parallel lines ABAB	10 examples	40 lines
Parallel lines AABB	2 examples	8 lines
Parallel lines ABCD	1 example	50 lines
Parallel lines with 1 line between	5 examples	10 lines
D. Lines with repetition of line head, coda, or mid-section:93 lines		
repetition of line head	5 examples	49 lines
repetition of line coda	3 examples	40 lines
repetition of mid-section	1 example	4 lines
E. Lines without parallel lines	441 lines	

Fig. 1. Typological categories and number of examples in the *Hanvueng* text.

We will discuss most of these categories further below. First, by way of clarification:

A1. Parallel couplets are couplets that are strictly parallel, not preceded or followed by quasi-parallel lines or other strictly parallel lines.

A2. Quasi-parallel couplets are couplets that are in parallel relation to each other, usually for part of the line (for example 3 out of 5 syllables). They thus fall short of being strictly parallel.

A3. Augmented parallel couplets are strictly parallel couplets either preceded or followed by a line or lines partially parallel in structure and meaning to the parallel couplet.

B. Three lines parallel: three lines in parallel relation to each other. The augmented 3 + 1 example is a tryptich followed by a line that is partially parallel. Similarly, four lines parallel means a series of four lines, all in parallel relation to one another. The augmented 4 + 2 example is a quadruplet followed by two lines that are partially parallel.

C. Special patterns: strictly parallel lines are also found in special patterns, more or less elaborate.

D. Lines with repetition of a line head, coda, or mid-section are parallel lines that include a repeated phrase. Typically, this is a two or three-syllable phrase, found either at the beginning, end, or middle of the line.

E. Isolated lines without a preceding or following parallel line, and not incorporated in any wider special pattern. These are also sometimes called "orphan lines" (Sarv 1999).

It is interesting to note the total numbers and percentages of lines in these broad categories, as shown in Fig. 2:

category	no. of lines	%
strictly parallel lines[30]	1049	68.2
lines in parallel couplets[31]	770	50.1
lines in special patterns[32]	201	13.1
lines in couplets parallel but not strictly	30	1.9
lines parallel but not strictly	48	3.1
lines not parallel	441	28.7

Fig. 2. Total numbers of parallel lines in the *Hanvueng* text.

For a text of this length,the recitation of which takes well over two hours, 68.2% is a very high percentage of lines in strictly parallel relation to each other. On the other hand, parallel couplets predominate, but not to such an extent that the result is boring or predictable.

[30] The number of strictly parallel lines is the number of strictly parallel couplets, triptychs, quadruplets, parallel lines in special pattern formations, and lines with repeated segments, taken together, that is, the parallel couplets in A1 and A3, tryptichs and quadruplets in B, and parallel lines in categories C and D .

[31] Category A1 above, plus the strictly parallel lines in category A3.

[32] Category C plus category D.

Other more elaborated forms of parallel lines are often used for heightened rhetorical effect: to increase narrative tension, to provide extended lists and inventories, and to increase the moral force of praise and blame. These elaborated patterns and extended runs of parallel lines, the longest being some 50 lines long, are not evenly distributed throughout the text, but are used for special effect at particular points in the narrative. The narrative power that is generated through these devices is quite considerable: I have seen people moved to tears at the pathos of Hanvueng's fate. These rhetorical devices and their powerful emotive effects would incidentally seem to have no direct parallels in Chinese narrative verse. We will now turn to some examples, in order to illustrate the above points.

A1. Parallel Couplets

The main features of parallel couplets have been discussed in the section "Parallelism." Here it is necessary to mention a common characteristic of strictly parallel couplets in the poetic tradition of this locality. In addition to other word classes, mimetic phrases of two connected syllables are often used in pairs at the end of a line. Such syllables alliterate, and typically the first syllable is the same in each line. Mimetic phrases, usually called expressives in linguistic scholarship (Aikhenwald 2007:43), are phrases that by their sound pattern are understood to be directly expressive of the *Gestalt* of some physical phenomenon or situation, such as prominence in the visual field or general shape (like a mountain), perceived weight (like a boulder), the quality of sound emitted (like animal noises), speed and overall pattern of movement (smooth or jerky), heightened emotion, effort, tactile qualities, or any combination of these. The following example describes the matchmaker as she hastens back to the widow's village in order to finalize her marriage to the king:

Gvaq doengh daeuj lih-laz	Crossing the open fields she came in a hurry,
Gvaq naz daeuj lih-langh	Crossing the wet-fields she came in haste.
	(H 374-375)

Here the mimetic phrases are *lih-laz* and *lih-langh*, with the final syllable *laz* in the first line rhyming with *naz* ("wet-field") in the second line. While I have translated these phrases in a way that makes it seem as if they were fully lexicalized, in fact both terms refer to the *Gestalt* of a person walking in a hurried fashion: the hurried gait, the flapping of loose clothes (visual and acoustic, as well as tactile), and the intensity of effort and concentration. Elsewhere in the *Hanvueng* scripture, the same pair of line endings is used to express the haste, effort, and flapping of wings with which the eagle and crow ascend to the sky.

A2. Quasi-Parallel Couplets

Couplets in which the words are partly in correspondence are not uncommon throughout the text. The following example is taken from the hunting episode. In it, *heuh* ("call to") at the beginning of the first line has no counterpart in the line following. The lines are thus not grammatically parallel, yet the parallelistic structure of the couplet allows the verb to be omitted

but inferred in the second line. The noun head for male animals *daeg* in the middle of the second line also lacks any counterpart in the first. Thus the numbers *sam-cib* ("thirty") and *caet-cib* ("seventy") correspond semantically, but are mutually displaced by one syllable:

Heuh sam-cib ma maeg	He called to his thirty ink-black dogs
Caet-cib daeg ma daeuq	His seventy male hunting dogs.
	(H 714-15)

Attributive adjectives follow nouns in Zhuang, so *maeg* ("ink-black") and *daeuq* ("hunting") correspond semantically. Here there is a rhyme between *maeg* ("ink-black") at the end of the first line and *daeg* ("male animal") in the second; in addition, both of these words happen to form alliterations with other words in their respective lines. Calling these "quasi-parallel" lines is fine from an objectivist and analytical point of view, but in recitation at normal speed, the overall effect of such lines is hardly different from that of lines that are strictly parallel. The audience finds the same echoes of sound and imagery, and no departure from the overall poetic *Gestalt*.

A3. Augmented Parallel Couplets

There are ten examples in which a parallel couplet is followed by a semi-parallel line that echoes and continues the train of thought.[33] In the following lines, Covueng is reporting to his brother Hanvueng that their father is gravely ill:

Boh raeuz gwn raemx lwt	Our father drinks water from a small bamboo cup
Boh raeuz swd raemx rong	Our father drinks water through a rolled-up leaf
Boh raeuz fuz mbouj hwnj	Our father, even if supported, cannot stand up.
	(H 666-668)

It can be observed that in this example, the couplet rhymes (*lwt* "small bamboo container" and *swd* "sip"), but the rhyme does not carry through to the appended third line. The beginnings of the three lines are the same, but in the third line the grammatical structure is different, with *boh raeuz* ("our father") as the topic rather than the subject.

Parallel couplets are also found with a quasi-parallel line leading in, rather than following the strictly parallel lines. These passages exhibit a range of variations in line structure similar to those with a quasi-parallel line following. Here is an example from the matchmaker's visit to the widow's house:

Raeuq fwx rox raeuq raeuz	Are they barking at someone else or barking at us?
Raeuq fwx cit ma haeb	If it's barking at someone else send the dogs to bite [them],

[33] This can also be regarded as semantic parallelism complemented by additive information. This sort of parallelism is conventional to the semantic parallelism of Karelian laments as discussed by Eila Stepanova in this volume. Frog (this volume) notes this sort of parallelism frequently entails reference to a single image or motif at a higher order of representation (rather than semantic parallelism at the level of lexica or the propositional structure of individual lines of verse).

Raeuq raeuz gyaep ma dauq	If it’s barking at us then chase the dogs back.
	(H 197-199)

In this highly alliterative passage the first line presents alternatives, which the following couplet repeats and expands upon. *Raeuz* (“us”) at the end of the first line rhymes with *raeuq* “bark” at the beginning of the second line, and *haeb* (“bite”) at the end of the second line rhymes with *gyaep* (“chase”) in the middle of the third line. The second and third lines are strictly parallel syntactically, while the preceding line poses a question to which the lines in the couplet are the response. This particular example comes from a fixed sequence of lines.

B. Three or Four Lines Parallel

There are 22 examples in which a triptych of parallel lines appears. Here there are three lines that are fully parallel and typically, as in the next example, the rhyme as well as semantic correspondences run through. This example is from the same speech by Covueng:

Boh raeuz get mbouj ndaej	Our father is in pain and not recovering
Boh raeuz gyaej mbouj nyinh	Our father is sick and not coming round
Boh raeuz bingh mbouj ndei	Our father is ill and not getting well.
	(H 663-665)

Here *ndaej* (“get well”’ rhymes with *gyaej* (“sick,”) and *nyinh* (“regain consciousness”) rhymes with *bingh* (“sick”).

There is one example of a tryptich followed by an additional quasi-parallel line. Again, the same kinds of variations and displacements are found as in category A1 above. The point here, as with quasi-parallel lines generally, is that these are likely to be perceived by listeners and reciters in the performance context as not different from lines with strict syllable-by-syllable matching and complete syntactic correspondence. For reasons of space I will not analyze the examples of four parallel lines, which simply present longer concatenations of strictly parallel and quasi-parallel lines.

C. Special Patterns

There are altogether 108 lines that exhibit various special patterns, in which strictly parallel lines are incorporated in more complex patterns.

Parallel Lines ABAB

There are altogether ten examples, a total of 40 lines, that conform to this pattern. It is often found when more complex sets of relationships are being discussed, or when an analogy is drawn between two realms of experience. The next example is a comment on the functions of chiefly governance, serving as a transition from a disquisition on the dangers of enmity to the beginning of the actual story, which is about a particular chieftain (“king”):

Lag cib soem gouj soem	For a wicker fence ten spans long or nine,
Aeu diuz ndeu guh dongh	Takes one piece of wood to serve as a post.
Biengz cib boux gouj boux	In a realm with ten men or nine,
Aeu boux ndeu guh saeq	Take one man to serve as the chieftain.
	(H 88-91)

The analogy of fenceposts and chiefly functions is a commonplace in Zhuang society.[34] It should be noted that the ABAB pattern here is syntactically motivated; that is to say, these lines could not also appear in the order: "For a wicker fence ten spans long or nine / In a realm with ten men or nine // One takes one piece of wood to serve as a post / One takes one man to serve as the chieftain."

Another example of this pattern appears in the speeches of the old king's prospective father-in-law and mother-in-law, explaining to the matchmaker why it is unthinkable to allow their daughter to marry the king:

Baz vuengz baenz baz vuengz	Only the wife of a king can be the wife of a king,
Boux biengz lawz ndaej ciemq	How can a subject of the realm usurp [this position]?
Byacoeg vanz byacoeg	Only a green bamboo carp returns to a green bamboo carp,
Byandoek lawz ndaej ciemq	How can a pond-corner fish usurp [its place]?
	(H 269-272)

The reference is to a well-established practice of status endogamy among Zhuang royal lineages. Commoners were generally not allowed to marry into royal families, and if they did, the children of such unions were themselves regarded as commoners and had no rights to an inheritance (Wilkerson 2013). In this set of lines, commoners and royal families are set in metonymic juxtaposition with different fish species, the *byacoeg* "green bamboo carp" being highly prized as a fine-tasting fish and the *byandoek* ("pond-corner fish") being a common and not particularly tasty fish. The green bamboo carp and the pond-corner fish, of course, do not mate.

In some cases the ABAB pattern is used to link Zhuang conceptions of the social order with Chinese Taoist-style categories of cosmic powers:

Doengfueng ien roengz daeuj	Let the Enmity of the Eastern Quarter come down,
Ien beix-nuengx doxdwk	The Enmity of older and younger siblings who hit each other.
Namz fueng ien roengzdaeuj	Let the Enmity of the Southern Quarter come down,
Ien boh-lwg doxndoiq	The Enmity of father and son who club each other.
Saefueng ien roengzdaeuj	Let the Enmity of the Western Quarter come down,
Ien gvan-baz doxndaq	The Enmity of husband and wife who curse each other.
Baekfueng ien roengzdaeuj	Let the Enmity of the Northern Quarter come down,
Ien yah-bawx doxceng	The Enmity of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law who quarrel with each other.

[34] The same analogy is found in a scripture on the origins of chieftaincy. This is also part of a wider pattern of discourse in Zhuang society, rather than an isolated metaphor.

Cunghyangh ien roengzdaeuj	Let the Enmity of the Center come down,
Ien da-daiq baihnaj	The Enmity of father-in-law and mother-in-law on the husband's side.
	(H 39-48)

This passage is found at the point in the text where the Enmities of the Five Cardinal Directions are summoned down into the ritual arena and installed in their spirit-seats, prior to the beginning of the actual narrative. The five cardinal directions, listed in this particular order, are a Chinese ordering mechanism, and in Chinese Taoist texts one frequently finds sets of five deities ruling over the East, South, West, North, and Central directions. This framework here has been imported into a Zhuang-language scripture through the collaboration of local vernacular priests with Maoshan Taoists, and the Enmities have been linked to discord between specific sets of Zhuang family members. The ordering principle in this case is Taoist and Chinese, but the kin categories themselves remain indigenous.

Parallel Lines AABB

This is not a common pattern, with only two examples and eight lines altogether in this formation. Like the ABAB formation, it is often found where more complex comparisons are drawn between two realms of experience. The following example is a series of lines spoken by the matchmaker to the parents of the widow as she tries to persuade them to allow her to be married off to the king:

Bouxlawz ndaem haeuxfiengj	"Whoever plants foxtail millet,
Bouxlawz ciengx lwgmbwk	Whoever raises daughters.
Lwgmbwk haq bae rog	Daughters are married off to the outside,
Haeuxfiengj doek bangxbaq	When foxtail millet is sown it falls on the wild slope."
	(H 283-286)

The poetic structure here is double-layered, with the first and second lines in parallel relation and the third and fourth lines likewise. The focus is, however, on "foxtail millet" in the first line, and then again in the fourth line, with the comment on "daughters" sandwiched in the middle. These lines instantiate a form of chiasmus, which we could label $A_1A_2B_2B_1$. Rhyme is found throughout, going from *fiengj* ("foxtail millet") to *ciengx* ("raise"), and then from *lwgmbwk* ("daughters") to *lwgmbwk*, and finally from *rog* ("outside") to *doek* ("drop"). Agricultural analogies with sex, marriage, and human reproduction frequently appear in this text, and reflect a wider pattern of metaphorical discourse in Zhuang and Tai village society. In this society, listeners would readily understand the connection between planting crops and raising children. (see lines 272-273 and 294-295).[35]

[35] In this particular example, listeners would know that foxtail millet is a crop that is planted on the non-irrigated hill slopes, on marginal agricultural land, rather than on the irrigated wet-fields in the valleys. Raising sons, by contrast, is compared with planting wet-field rice on the best land.

D. Lines with Repetition of a Line Head, Coda, or Mid-Section

Long series of parallel lines with persistent repetition of a line segment are sometimes used for special purposes, and often for great rhetorical effect. The following example on the origins of Enmity is 22 lines long. The first three words are mostly in subject-verb-object formation, and the lines end either with *baenz ien* ("created enmity") or *goj ien* ("also [created] Enmity") The rhyming pattern is the third syllable (the "end rhyme") rhyming with the first. In the following passage, I have underlined rhyming syllables:

Ndwi mbouj miz maz ien	Originally there was no Enmity at all,
Vaiz dangh gyaj baenz ien	The buffalo trod on the rice-seedlings and created Enmity,
Max haeuj naz baenz ien	The horse got into the wet-field and created Enmity.
Yiengz roemx lag goj ien	The goat barged through the fence and likewise created Enmity.
Euj rangz ndoek goj ien	Breaking off bamboo-shoots also creates Enmity,
Ngoeg rangz faiz goj ien	Wiggling loose the shoots of sweet bamboo also creates Enmity.
Lai coenz hauq goj ien	Too many words also create Enmity,
Gauq beix-nuengx goj ien	Suing your elder or younger sibling also creates Enmity,
Laeg bya daemz goj ien	Stealing fish from the pond also creates Enmity.
Guh laux vunz goj ien	Being a village elder may also create Enmity,
Caux guh swq goj ien	Acting as a go-between also creates Enmity,
Baz bae youx goj ien	Wives going to their lovers also create Enmity.
Buenq lwg vaiz goj ien	Peddling buffalo calves creates Enmity,
Gai lwg vunz goj ien	Selling other people's children creates Enmity.
Cuengq caengh mbaeu goj ien	Selling things with a balance that weighs light creates Enmity,
Aeu caengh naek goj ien	Buying things with a balance that weighs heavy creates Enmity.
Laeg haeux yiu goj ien	Stealing rice from a granary creates Enmity,
Daeh bak lai goj ien	Putting forth wordy arguments creates Enmity.
Lingz sing mak goj ien	Monkeys quarreling over fruit create Enmity,
Nag sing bya goj ien	Otters quarreling over fish create Enmity,
A sing gaeq goj ien	Crows quarreling over chickens create Enmity.
Saeq sing biengz goj ien	Chieftains quarreling over domains create Enmity,
Vuengz sing inq goj ien	Kings quarreling over Seals of Office create Enmity.

(H 53-74)

The tight formation with rhyming syllables in this text suggests that this passage is a fixed segment. Lexical repetition is, however, evidently given precedence over metrically motivated rhyme in this series.[36] Discursively the passage begins as an origin myth, but then is transformed

[36] Absence of rhyme is otherwise not uncommon in parallel verses in this text, and the proportion of non-rhyming lines would not seem to be noticeably higher than average.

quickly into a list of reasons for enmity in present-day village society. The purpose of this passage is not just to explain but to warn.

An example of an extended series of parallel lines later on in the scripture is an instance of the opposite pattern: here, it is the two syllables at the beginning of the line that are repeated. This passage, a total of 18 lines, describes the murderous enmity between Hanvueng and his step-brother Covueng, and their struggle over the inheritance:

Dox sing biengz gaem inq	You struggle over the realm to grasp the seal.
Dox sing inq roeg venz	You struggle over the seal with the lark-shaped handle,
Dox sing cienz ciuh boh	You struggle over the money of your father's forebears.
Dox sing mboq bya raiz	You struggle over the springs with their spotted murrel,
Dox sing ngaenz ciuh boh	You struggle over the silver of your father's forebears.
Dox sing mboq ngaenz caw	You struggle over the springs of silver and pearls,
Dox sing re sam hoih	You struggle over the fishnets three turns in size.
Dox sing hoiq bingz daeuz	You struggle over the slaves with their flat-topped hair,
Dox sing maeuz ningx nauh	You struggle over the royal bonnet with its crown of red jasper.
Dox sing cauq seiq rwz	You struggle over the cooking pot with its four handles,
Dox sing ruz cib cauh	You struggle over the boats with their ten oars.
Dox sing mbauq coengmingz	You struggle over the smart young men,
Dox sing rin baenz cax	You struggle over the stone on which to grind the knives.
Dox sing nangz byoem baij	You struggle over the young ladies with their hair that sways,
Dox sing naih fwed lungz	You struggle over the women with their hair like soaring dragons.
Dox sing vunz lingzleih	You struggle over the people who are quick and capable,
Dox sing gyu daengx gaen	You struggle over the salt by the pound.
Dox sing ngaenz daengx bak	You struggle over the silver by the hundred.

(H 539-556)

Here the opening two syllables *dox sing* ("mutually contend") are followed in each line by a noun phrase, with a noun as the third syllable and the next two syllables following adjectivally. Waist-end rhyming is quite pervasive, and falls on the fifth and the third syllables. Here as elsewhere, lexical repetition is acceptable for rhyming syllables. Incidentally this passage is fascinating for its insight into royal inheritance and the material and social bases of chiefly power. Even modest chiefly domains could be quite rich, with wealth and power concentrated in the hands of the royal lineage. This wealth extended to ownership of people (slaves, commoners, women, and young men) as well as natural resources. This litany provides an inventory as it were of this chiefly wealth.

A very similar list is found near the final resolution of the conflict toward the end of the scripture, when Covueng is told to return all of the old king's inheritance to Hanvueng. In that

passage (lines 1466-76), however, the first two words are *Nuengx doiq* ("Younger brother return") (various items). Most of the items listed are the same, and in the same order.[37]

Single parallel couplets beginning with repetition of one or two words also appear, as we saw in section A3, where there is a couplet beginning with the words *Boh raeuz* ("Our father . . ."). Rather than seeing such couplets as a variation on the textual strategy discussed here, it makes more sense to see such extended series of lines as a development from such couplets.

Series of lines with repeated words in the middle of the line are also found. Here is one example, with an adjective in the first syllable position, the next three syllables repeated, and different verbs as the final syllable. The context here is that the old king has been widowed, and is living all alone without a wife to care for him. The topic of these lines is the king's clothes:

Lengq mbouj miz boux fong	When they were worn out there was no one to mend them,
Mong mbouj miz boux saeg	When they were dirty there was no one to wash them,
Ndaek mbouj miz boux dak	When they were wet there was no one to dry them,
Nwk mbouj miz boux sah	When they were filthy there was no one to rinse them.
	(H 102-05)

The rhyme pattern here is quite regular throughout, with the last word in each line rhyming with the first word in the next line.

E. Non-Parallel Lines

Typically a series of lines in parallel couplets is brought to an end by an isolated line that is not in parallel relation with the following line, and does not rhyme with either the preceding or the following line. This isolated line (or lines) can be viewed as a marked variation that serves as a kind of punctuation. The effect of this is significant. Whereas we would usually think of strictly parallel couplets as marked, and isolated poetic lines as unmarked, in this particular tradition, rhetorically, the reverse can be true.

One or more single non-parallel lines, also without rhyme, often occur at the end of long sequences of parallel couplets or parallel lines with special rhetorical patterns. Such single lines are used to insert a sonic break from the regular and insistent sonic patterning of what went before them. Typically, there is either a succinct summing up of the situation at that point, or an important transition. Changes of scene or scope are frequently signaled by a series of staccato single lines, and single lines are also used frequently in the second half of the text to signal a change of speaker. Sometimes, longer runs of parallel couplets are brought to a close by one or two isolated non-rhyming lines, but often there are longer passages consisting of non-parallel lines. The following passage describes an incident during Hanvueng's sojourn in the land of Geu, when his father ordered two youths to find him and bring him back to his own domain:

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[37] This is an example of what Greg Urban (1986:15) refers to as macro-parallelism, defined as "formal similarity or parallels between larger blocks of discourse, wherein a cluster of sentences, occurring at one point in the narration, is repeated with certain substitutions at a later point."

Hanqvuengz cingqcaux hauq	Hanvueng thereupon spoke:
Gou mbouj dauq biengz laeng	"I will not return to the domain that is my own,
Gou mbouj un biengz boh	I will not covet the domain of my father."
Song mbauq dauq daengz ndwi	The two youths returned empty-handed
Boh caux hauq dih-danz	The father then spoke emphatically:
Sou bae raen rox miz	"Did you go to see him or not?"
Song mbauq lwnh cih-cangz	The two youths told him all a-chatter,
Raen Hanqvuengz doengh-naz	"We saw Hanvueng in the midst of the fields,
Bak maeq lumj doq-cingz	His mouth was as pink as a hornet's,
Caen lumj vuengz liux-nauq	He truly was the image of a king entirely.
De mbouj dauq biengz raeuz	He is not returning to this domain of ours,
De mbouj aeu biengz boh	He is not taking the domain of his father."
	(H 630-41)

There are only two parallel couplets in this passage, the first one being the second and third lines (631-32) and the second one being the last two lines (640-41). Rhymes are also sparse: the first one is *hauq* ("speak") at the end of line 630 which rhymes with *dauq* ("return") in the middle of line 631, then *laeng* ("one's own place") at the end of line 631 rhymes with *un* ("covet") in the middle of line 632. After that we have to wait until *nauq* ("altogether") at the end of line 639 rhymes with *dauq* ("return") in the middle of line 640 before waist-end rhyming is restored. There are also two single lines announcing the beginning of direct speech, with mimetic phrases at the ends of the lines (634 and 636, *dih-danz* and *cih-cangz*); neither of these is followed by the anticipated second line.[38] In this short passage we have three separate direct quotations, and a change of scene from the land of Geu to the home domain. The youths' journey is not described. The long series of single lines provides a change of narrative pace, and the lack of rhyme creates an effect that is quite stark compared with the sonic landscape of waist-and-tail rhymes preceding and following it.

There is a definite relation between isolated non-parallel lines here and their actual semantic content and narratological function. Important turning points in the narrative, and lines containing salient information, are often found in the form of isolated lines or a series of isolated lines. In certain sections of the narrative, where there are passages of direct speech, the beginning of the speech and sometimes the end point of the direct quotation are marked by isolated lines. The effect heightens listeners' attention: when the normally expected second-half of a parallel couplet fails to follow on, listeners become alert to the abnormality and, as one would imagine, pay particular attention to what follows.

[38] Compare the example cited in Section A above, where *dih-danz* is echoed by *dih-dad* in the following line.

Concepts in Tandem

Apart from a classification of the various forms taken by parallel lines, we can also point out at least some of the main categories of words or phrases used in parallel relation to each other. These concepts include: numbers, kinship terms, personal names or titles, mimetic phrases, natural kinds (father and mother, crow and eagle), and Chinese-native parallels. All of these categories are culturally significant at different levels in the Zhuang and Tai conceptual world. As in Chinese popular religion, numbers are often generally freighted with cosmological significance, and choice of specific numbers may involve calendrical or astral categories connected with otherwise hidden constellations of benign or baleful forces (see Holm 2004:261-80, Text 12). However, some of them tend to be less meaningful than others. Numbers are sometimes chosen for the sake of the rhyming requirements, and do not necessarily refer to actual specific numbers with ritual significance. Pairing and alternation of numbers, in other words, can be one of the more mundane devices for generating parallel verses.

The same can often be said of the two-syllable mimetic phrases frequently found at the ends of lines of verse. As noted above, two-syllable mimetic phrases are a characteristic feature of parallel couplets in the poetic tradition of this region. In fact, they are also widespread in other Zhuang-speaking regions. Mimetic phrases are typically also used to signal the beginning of a speech:

Yahdaiq hauq dih-danz	The mother-in-law spoke deliberately,
Goengda han dih-dad	The father-in-law answered emphatically.
	(H 267-68)

In this text the paired phrases *dih-danz* and *dih-dad* are frequently found together in successive lines, as in this example, and always in this order. These words actually have some lexical content, indicating that someone is speaking insistently, so they are translated here and elsewhere as "deliberately" and "emphatically." Elsewhere in this text these lexical meanings are, however, often either very attenuated or inappropriate. Used in this way, they are reminiscent of the way in which epithets are frequently used in Homeric verse, that is, in a formulaic fashion. In this text, however, their main function is not to suggest ironic distance, as so often is the case in Homer, but simply to signal the beginning of direct speech by a different speaker.

Mimetic phrases operate on a different level from other word classes, that of direct sensual perception. In village society such phrases are an important part of ordinary people's use of language, forming a repertoire of items that reflect people's experience of the world more directly than ordinary description. Their deployment in ritual verse taps directly into this perceptual universe. Even here we find, however, that in some contexts these phrases seem semantically less full, and pairings seem to be chosen for the sake of rhyme.

Beyond these categories, the subject matter and narrative line of the poem themselves generate a set of pervasive paired oppositions, most notably between the two protagonists, Hanvueng and Covueng. Because the two protagonists are step-brothers, the terms for older and younger siblings (*beix* and *nuengx*) are also frequently in parallel opposition. Other kin terms such as father and mother, mother-in-law and father-in-law, patrilateral relations and affines, also

appear, since the plot includes the narrative about the old king's remarriage to a widow, conflict between the mother-in-law and her son-in-law, Hanvueng, and Hanvueng's subsequent death at the hands of his step-brother, Covueng. Hanvueng's ascent to the sky and his installation as a sky god further generate a set of parallel relations between the earthly domain of his step-brother and the heavenly realm he governs. Before his death, Hanvueng's sojourn in the land of Geu (Jiaozhi, present-day northern Vietnam) generates a horizontal geographic opposition between Geu and his father's old domain.

Natural Kinds

To what extent do we find paired concepts in the *Hanvueng* text in which, metaphorically, there is a relation of identity between two concepts or entities, as is well documented for some Austronesian areas? Zhuang texts seem to lack the kinds of "double names" found in Austronesian ritual languages, that is, paired names referring to the same entity (Fox 1988:168). What we do find is natural kinds with overlapping semantic fields. We have room here for only one example: the parallelism between the crow and eagle. The crow and eagle are recruited by Covueng to serve as messengers to his step-brother Hanvueng in the realm of the sky; they make their first appearance in the text at lines 1034-35, and they remain part of the narrative almost until the final resolution near the end of the scripture (lines 1349-50). *Langzyiuh* ("eagle") and *lang'a* ("crow") are found in parallel relation a total of nine times, while *yiuh* ("eagle") and *a* ("crow") are paired a further 21 times. The puzzle is how birds that are so seemingly different in size and habits can be regarded as "the same."[39] Both are carnivores, but eagles soar and seize live prey, while crows are black and eat carrion. Part of the explanation has to do with Zhuang ethnobiological classifications, and part to do with the identification of the species involved. It is interesting that *langz* is used with reference to both crows and hawks. This head noun seems to be connected with the Buyang word for "hawk," a word that is also found widely in the languages of mainland Southeast Asia.[40] Its use here is poetic, and it is not usually found in the Zhuang spoken register. The Zhuang word for "crow," *a*, however, is also used for large black raptors such as kites, even though the primary referent is crows.[41]

The Zhuang word that is usually glossed as "eagle" is *yiuh*, a Han loan from *yào* 鷂 ("hawk"), which is usually used in Zhuang to refer to short-winged hawks such as sparrow-hawks. As a generic noun-head for compound bird names, however, *yiuh* has a coverage that is much wider, including vultures and kites. Among the raptors found in the Guangxi area are a number of large, black or dark-colored species, including eagles and kites. Among these, the black-eared kite (*Milvus lineatus*) is reported to be the most common raptor in China, and is particularly salient because it is large and black. It is sometimes out of place in a text such as this

[39] For further detail, see Holm and Meng (2015:337-38).

[40] Buyang is a Kadai language related to Gelao, Lachi, and Laha. On the Buyang presence in Zhuang areas, see Holm (2003:160-61).

[41] In Bouyei the usual word for crow is *al* or *duezal*, but the word *al* is also used for kites, as in the phrase *al daz saic* ("The kite seizes the chickens").

to make a specific identification, rather than a more general one, but at least the size, color, and habits of this bird fit the context and the parallel relation with crows (Holm and Meng 2015:429).

Both eagles and kites have the habit of soaring high above the ground, and perhaps, it is to this habit that they owe their mythical prominence. In contrast, crows are mythically salient because they "announce funerals"—unlike magpies, which "announce weddings." Elsewhere in Zhuang verse, *a* ("crows") and *yiuh* ("hawks") are found in parallel relation. In the "daytime songs" (*fwenngoenz*) of Pingguo county, crows and hawks appear in their role as messengers (Luo Hantian 2009:51):

Geiq saenq hawj duz a,	Entrust a letter to the crow,
Geiq sa hawj duz yiuh,	Entrust a piece of paper to the hawk,
Yiuh lawz rox daeh sa,	Which is the hawk who knows how to carry paper,
A lawz rox daeh saenq?	Which is the crow who knows how to carry a letter?

The role of messengers is, of course, the role the crow and eagle play in the present text, as well as that of intermediaries between earth and sky.

Chinese-Native Parallels

Finally, let us look briefly at the question of parallelism between native and Chinese-derived words and concepts. An "inter-ethnic" dimension to parallelism is also found in other cultures in the Southeast Asian area. In the Indonesian archipelago, James Fox (1974:80-81) noted the pairing of words from the eastern and western divisions of the island of Roti within dyadic sets. Further afield, comparable pairings of terms from local and dominant languages have been documented.[42] Sometimes such pairings are not immediately obvious. Let us return to our first example, the opening lines of the text:

Sam gaiq sam vuengz ciq	The Three Realms were established by the Three Kings,
Seiq gaiq seiq vuengz caux	The Four Realms were created by the Four Kings.
Vuengz caux laep caux lienz	The Kings made the darkness and made the light,
Vuengz caux dien caux deih	The Kings made Heaven and made the Earth.
	(H1-4)

The point of interest here is that lines 1 and 2 both refer to cosmological schemata, but they are different in origin and reference: the first is Chinese or Buddhist and the second is indigenous.[43] Likewise, the "darkness" and "light" of line 3 refer to macrocosmic phenomena, as do the "Heaven" and "Earth" of line 4, but these pairs belong to different cosmogonic traditions, *laep*

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[42] See in this volume Kerry Hull on Spanish terms in Ch'orti' Mayan ritual discourse and Eila Stepanova on Russian terms adapted into the register of Karelian laments.

[43] The Three Realms of the first line are a reference either to the Buddhist Triloka or to the Taoist Three Realms, while the Four Realms refer to the Sky, Earth, Seas, and Forested Mountains, each with its spirit owners. For full discussion, see Holm (2004:69-70).

and *lienz* being indigenous categories and *dien* and *deih* being Chinese. It seems as if here in each couplet we do not have two statements that can be said to metaphorically represent a single meaning, rather two statements that are "about" "the same" category but represent separate traditions in dialogic relation to each other (Mumford 1989).

This is, however, to view the matter from a scholarly, philological viewpoint. Different folk interpretations circulate locally, and also among Zhuang scholars. According to one interpretation that appears in print, the word *gaiq* in the first two lines is not a Han Chinese borrowing meaning "world" (Standard Chinese *jiè* 界), but the generalising classifier *gaiq* meaning either "lump" or "kind of stuff").[44] There is ample evidence elsewhere in the *Hanvueng* text that local people, including the priests, who were literate after their own fashion, were often not able to tell which words were Han borrowings and which were native words. On this level then, lines 1 and 2, and lines 3 and 4, could indeed be understood to be "about" the same thing.

Elsewhere in Zhuang ritual texts, these Chinese-native parallels are more salient. As I have noted in an earlier study on a cosmogonic scripture on buffalo sacrifice (Holm 2003:36-37):

> A particularly interesting feature of the parallelism in these texts is the way in which indigenous Zhuang concepts are frequently brought into parallel relation with terms borrowed from Han Chinese. Thus the Han terms *dien deih* "Heaven and Earth" in one line are followed in the next line by the Zhuang terms *mbwn ndaen* "heaven and earth"; the Han borrowing *bek singq* "the Hundred Surnames" (that is, the common people) is followed by *bouxminz* "the people" *nienz* "year" (from Ch.年 *nian*[2]) is used in parallel with the indigenous word *bi* "year," *gangj* "to speak" (from Ch.講 *jiang*[3]) matches *naeuz* "to say," *loh* "road" (from Ch. 路 *lu*[4]) matches *roen* "path," and so on.

I continue (37):

> The incorporation of Han borrowings into the Zhuang lexicon—and the incorporation of Taoist concepts into the language of the *bouxmo*—affords a poetically useful wealth of synonyms, but one suspects something more deliberate at work here. It suggests the inter-ethnic dimension of such pervasive grammatical and rhetorical parallelism was constitutive of a relational conception of their own cultural identity.

Such pairings are also found in the *Hanvueng*, but their importance seems to be much less obvious than in the buffalo-sacrifice scripture from Donglan. The purpose of the latter, which is not explicitly stated, was to draw a continuous line of connection between the narrative of successive Chinese sage kings who created the world and civilization, and the chronicle of the succession of native chieftains who ruled the domain of Donglan—in other words, through narrative juxtaposition, to turn a southern barbarian chiefly house into the legitimate inheritors of a Chinese line of descent.

With the *Hanvueng* scripture, we are not concerned with the Chinese state, but rather with the chiefly domain itself and its governance. The essential point is the nature of chiefly political

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[44] Zhang Shengzhen (1991:41 n.10); translated in Holm (2004:64 n.8).

power and position, which are seen as stolen, with the present incumbent chieftains permanently in the debt of the rightful rulers in the sky, and under obligation to pay annual rent and send sacrificial gifts. To draw out the implications in terms of current scholarly paradigms, this scripture is not about "the Chinese state and local society" nor does it describe a trajectory of "Chieftains into Ancestors," as the title of a recent book by Faure and Ho (2013) puts it. Rather, what we have here is a trajectory of "Chieftains into Sky Gods." Sky gods, it must be noted, are altogether different: ancestors can be assimilated, and can be understood as Chinese, or as retrospectively Chinese, but the sky gods remain fundamentally and irretrievably Thai. If the *Hanvueng* scripture is to be read as a charter myth, it is a charter myth for the institution of annual royal sacrifices to the sky gods, as practiced until recently by the Thai-style polities in mainland Southeast Asia (Archaimbault 1991).

I infer from this that Chinese-native parallels may be a common feature in Zhuang parallel verse, but it would be unwise to generalize too readily about its significance, as I did in the 2003 passage quoted above. Prevalence of such a device in any particular ritual text is likely to be partly a function of the overall purposes of the ritual.

Conclusion

In this essay I have surveyed some characteristics of the use of parallelism in the *Hanvueng* text, and presented a typological overview. This kind of synoptic overview is not one that is part of the cultural knowledge of the Zhuang people themselves, certainly not in this form. Rather, what I have presented is a kind of read-out of what the vernacular priests actually do, as exemplified in this selected text that is recited in particular ritual circumstances. What we have found in this analysis is that priests rely primarily on poetic couplets in strict parallel relation to each other, as the bread and butter of ritual recitation, but then also subject poetic lines in this basic mode of operation to variation: additive variation, in the case of sequences of three or four strictly parallel lines; off-centered variation, as it were, in the case of quasi-parallel lines; elaborated variation, in the case of four-line ABAB, ABBA, and AABB patterns; and extended repetition, in the case of longer sequences of lines with shared beginnings, ends, or middle sections. Finally there is one example of "macro-parallelism," a long series of lines repeated further on in the recitation, with appropriate variation in wording. Given the additional requirements of interlocking waist-and-tail rhymes, these longer sequences are impressive pieces of verbal art, as well as rhetorically powerful, and they give the impression of being fixed sequences of lines rather than the product of extempore versification at some time in the past. It is their fixity, of course, which allows the possibility of macro-parallelism.

The resulting typology is descriptive rather than theoretical, but it nevertheless is useful as a tool for assessing whether particular types or degrees of variation in parallelism co-occur with certain contexts and content, or operate as distinct rhetorical strategies with particular effects. Such typologies may also highlight constraints on parallelism in the form of variations that are rare or do not occur. It can thus become a tool of wide applicability with the potential to produce new insights into the traditions to which it is applied.

As a second step, I have subjected this typology to re-evaluation from the perspective of the ongoing performance of the recitation as it emerges in time. This brings back into consideration a variety of emic perspectives, including those of the reciting priests, family members, and audience. In this re-evaluation, we have found that there is a tendency for some typologically distinct categories to merge, to be seen as "much the same thing" at the point of their delivery in real time and as perceived by those present at the ritual. In a sense, this approach through performance reunifies (line-based) parallelism as a pervasive and fundamental structuring principle of the oral-poetic discourse. This is not to say, however, that this re-evaluation tends toward unity, or results in the collapse of all categories. Rather, it tends to highlight the acoustic, rhetorical, and emotive contours of the performance within its cultural context, and allows us to see more clearly the often high degree of artistry in the performance from a culture-internal perspective.

I have given some examples of the way in which strictly parallel couplets and more complex poetic formations are employed for rhetorical effect, along with lines that are not parallel. The role played by non-parallel lines is actually a matter of some importance. Given the length of the text and the relatively long time it takes to recite it, what does one do, within the structural constraints of five- and seven-syllable verse and chanted recitation, to provide sufficient variation so that the effect does not become soporific? The interruption of the smooth rhythm of parallel lines one after the other, the frustration of the expectations of the parallel line to follow, and the interruption of the sonic flow of rhymed and alliterative verses serve as a form of punctuation, alerting both audience and performer that something different is on its way. As we have seen, such non-parallel lines are employed at key transition points in the narrative, and extended runs of uninterrupted non-parallel and non-rhyming lines can be used to great effect, heightening narrative and poetic tension.

We can begin to see here how the frustration of conventional expectations of parallelism or rhyme may serve, along with other means such as interludes or sudden sounds (such as that of the thunder block), to alert the assembled audience to changes in mood or to major transitions, as a form of rhetorical counterpoint. The poetic structure as a whole can then be described as one in which pervasive parallelism is punctuated by anti-parallelism. This aspect of the typology and re-evaluation I have presented here may well be worth further study.

I have also provided some examples of the categories of words and concepts that are brought into parallel relationship with each other. This is very preliminary, but it serves to show at least that the tradition is one in which there are pairings of words that are conventional, such that the appearance of one of the pair in the first line will lead to anticipation on the part of the listeners that the other member of the pair will follow in the next line. This is particularly the case in this tradition because the paired words almost always appear in fixed order. Indeed, it would be possible to produce a dictionary of Zhuang ritual language composed of such conventional pairings, along the same lines as James Fox has produced for Roti in Indonesia.

Finally, I discussed examples of parallelism between Chinese and vernacular mythic models. It is interesting here that we find indigenous concepts pervasively paired with Chinese, and we could refer by analogy to Fox's discovery of local and metropolitan lexemes brought into parallel relation in Rotinese. In our text, however, there is evidence of both invocation and of divergence, of move and counter-move. There are times when it seems as if the temporal and

spiritual power of the Chinese state is being invoked, to be harnessed for local ritual purposes, but then, at least here, the text moves on to give an account of political power, its origins, and its own links with celestial powers and the unseen realm that are quite otherwise. I have written elsewhere of how Zhuang culture exhibits two faces simultaneously, one facing towards the capital of empire and the other resolutely autonomous and in charge of its own domain (Holm 1999). Here we have another example of the same two-fold orientation.

In ongoing social life, "inside" and "outside" perspectives are found in parallel relation to each other at every level. The village community exists for itself, but also exists in relation to outsiders. The family likewise has its own micro-culture, which exists in relation to those of other families in the village community. "People like us" exist in relation to "people who are not like us." All of this is continuously articulated in the ongoing discursive life of the community. Likewise, people do not talk about the basic facts of social life *in vacuo*, but in parallel relation to entities in the natural world. Girls are like dry-land crops, boys are like wet-field rice, children are like flowers, and family and kin are like plants with roots and branches. These habits, taken together with evidence from the text under consideration here, suggest that underlying the surface phenomena are pervasive patterns of dialogicality in Zhuang semantics, religion, and cultural life.

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