

# Taiwanese Cantillation Prosody and the Standard Tradition of Regulated Verse

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Prosody is the organization of literature by sound and cantillation is the expressive intoning of a text. Taiwan has a living tradition of cantillation, in which traditional literature — but particularly *shī* — has a musical interpretation elaborating the tones of individual syllables in Taiwanese literary pronunciation. In Taiwan, as in other parts of the Sinosphere, it is often said that traditions of this kind are the authentic sound of pre-modern and especially Táng literature. But how does the prosody innate to Taiwanese cantillation actually relate to the prosodic rules we know about in the written Chinese tradition?

This paper analyzes recent Taiwanese performances of *shī* by Bái Jūyì 白居易 and Yuán Méi 袁枚 in the *Tiānlàidiào* 天籟調 school to argue that this tradition contains much that is incompatible with the organization by sound of traditional *shī*, either regulated or unregulated. Tone-categories, rhyming, assonance, and melisma and diæresis all behave differently in Taiwanese cantillation from what we know of the standard tradition. Only *píng*- and *zè*-tones at cæsuras are paid systematic attention, as long and short syllables. On the whole, the Taiwan cantillation tradition should be thought of as a conservative and highly literate interpretation of earlier texts, but not as the perpetuation of authentic Táng sound.

This talk is documented with recordings of recent performances in the *Tiānlàidiào* school.