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Some Insect Names in Modern Pekinese

When speaking of modern Chinese languages and dialects, phonetic differences are always strongly emphasized. Chinese themselves seem to pay less attention to lexical differences than e.g. to tone variations in dialects. It is, however, clear that lexical differences are very important and that they often concern the basic vocabulary. Yuan Jiahua was among the firsts to characterize briefly lexical differences between main groups of Chinese dialects. In his *Outlines of Chinese Dialects* (see bibliography at the end of this article) he gives, though occasionally, a short comparison of words for 'mosquito' and 'fly' in Modern Standard Chinese (hereafter abbreviated as MSC) and in the Xiang dialects of Shuangfeng, Huangqiao and Changsha. It is just this remark of Yuan Jiahua which inclined me to compare some popular insect names in Modern Pekinese (hereafter abbreviated as MP) and in MSC, especially the polysyllabic ones. There are only a few monosyllabic insect names in MSC and in MP and moreover they are identic in both languages like the most popular word *cán* 蚕 — 'silkworm'. As I am interested first of all in the peculiarities of MP, I do not discuss here words which are the same in MP and in MSC (not to speak of minor differences in phonetics), such as for instance *wénzi* 蚊子 — 'mosquito', *càngyìng* 苍蝇 — 'fly', *zhàměng* 蚂蚱 — 'grasshopper', *tiàozǎo* 跳蚤 — 'flea'. Examples from other Chinese languages and dialects are given only to show the structural variety of this type of words.

Generally speaking, there are three main structural types of such words: 1) binoms, i.e. words composed of two monosyllabic elements coordinated, determinative or reduplicated; 2) impressive or such which have an impressive element; 3) periphrastic or such which have a periphrastic element. All these types occur both in MP and in MSC as well as in other Chinese dialects, although with different frequency.

I. Binoms

a) Non reduplicated

1. Dragonfly

MP *málang* 蚂螂 or 马郎 or 马螂 MSC *qīngtīng* 蜻蜓.

The etymology of the MP word is not clear. Popular etymology seems to indicate something like 'the horse insect' which does not sound good for a dragonfly. Possibly *málang* (with stressed first syllable and the second in neutral tone) is in MP treated as having a suffixe-like *-lang*, comparable to *-lang* in MP *shikelang* 屎壳郎 — 'dung-beetle' and *dāolang* 刀螂 — 'praying-mantis'.

A kind of dragonfly is in MP called *diàomálang* 吊蚂螂 i.e. 'a hanging down dragonfly' (because when resting it remains with its head on a branch as if suspended, it is said). This is a good example of a MP insect name with a periphrastic element as determinative part. Another MP name for dragonfly is also periphrastic (see below III.9).

It is interesting to note that words for dragonfly differ from dialect to dialect so that MP is not an exception. Frequent are various impressives: a) simple, like *tintin* 叮叮 in the dialect of Wuhan, b) used as determinative, like *laliko* noted by Nakajima Motoki in the Huitong dialect of the Xiang group (the word is obviously related to MP *làlàgǔ* — 'cricket', see below II.6), or c) prefixed like *yangmami* 洋蚂蚁 given by Yuan Jiahua as dragonfly in the Shuangfeng dialect (apparently related to *yanmiemie* 洋蚂蚁 in the dialect of Changsha). Among various names for dragonfly there are also names of obscure etymology like Xuzhou dialect *tç'in ser* 青丝儿 (with 青 used probably for 蜻). A kind of dragonfly having black and yellow spots is called in Xuzhou *lǎhup'i* 老虎皮 — lit. 'tiger-skin'. This is a good example of purely periphrastic name.

2. Locust

MP *màzha* 蚂蚱 or 蚂蚱 or 抹蚱 or 蚂蚱 MSC *huángchóng* 蝗虫.

Like *málang* is of obscure etymology. A kind of small locust is in MP called *màzhaduēr* 蚂蚱犍儿 or *màzha'ār* 蚂蚱鞍儿. The first is etymologically not clear, the second may be periphrastic with the meaning of 'the locust's saddle' i.e. so small as a saddle for a normal-size locust. Moreover, a kind of bird (I couldn't identify it) eating locust is called *màzhaying* 蚂蚱鹰 i.e. 'locust-hawk' or 'locust-eagle' which is a kind of periphrastic name.

Words for locust differ also in Chinese dialects. They are mostly periphrastic, if I dare to say so. Xiang dialect of Shuangfeng has for instance *autiəkəu* 禾跳犍 (with *gǔ* 犍 instead of *gǔ* 蚱) — lit. 'insect jumping in the rice'. The dialect of Yongding (Xiayang) of the Min group has *ts'oumang* 草蝗 — lit. 'grass locust'. N.B. the difference between locust and grasshopper is not quite clear in China: the authors of *A word-list for the survey of Chinese dialects* give the names for locust and for grass-

hopper under one item; and *meng* 螞 means in Old Chinese 'small locust or grasshopper'. Nakajima Motoki notes *puton* 布 虫 as the Huitong dialect name for locust. This is of rather obscure etymology, but may be periphrastic ('a kind — *pu* — of the worm *ton*'). Xuzhou dialect *mazi* 蚂 子 is a structure with suffix-like MP *wènzi* — 'mosquito' and many others.

3. Earthworm

I am aware of the fact that earthworm is not an insect at all, nevertheless I am discussing here the words for earthworm, because it is in Far East notoriously classed among insects. Nakajima Motoki, for instance, has not only earthworm among insects, but snail, snake, lizard, scorpion and others, too (cf. pp. 146–149), whereas bat is classed by him as fowl (p. 142) and crocodile, whale and crabs appear among fish.

MP *qūshan* 蚯 虫 or 曲 虫 MSC *qiūyǐn* 蚯 蚓.

MP *qūshan* is etymologically a binom composed of two coordinated parts 'earthworm and earthworm', just like MSC *qiūyǐn*, but it seems that popular etymology tend to treat the first part of the MP binom as determinant with the meaning of 'bending, wriggling'.

Etymologically the same word *qūshan* occurs in many other Chinese dialects from Wuhan, where it is pronounced *tç'iou san* to Xining where it is known with the pronunciation *tç'y šā*. In this last dialect we have also *mjtç'yšā* 泥 曲 虫 — lit. 'mud earthworm', an enlarged periphrastic form. The dialects of Henan have another word which is not clear. It sounds in Luoyang *tç'ytç'yan* 蚯 蚰 and in Jiyuan *tç'y?tç'yan* 蚯 蚰. The Huitong dialect of the Xiang group has an interesting periphrastic form: *t'aunyton* 土 魚 虫 — lit. 'earth fish worm'.

b) Reduplicated

4. Spider

MP *zhūzhu* 蛛 蛛 MSC *zhūzhū* 蛛 蛛.

The MP form is rather reduplicated than purely impressive, although the difference is not clear. The same word is used with different pronunciation in various dialects like these of Jiyuan, Luoyang, Xining, but it occurs also in the Min languages (e.g. in the dialect of Pinyang in Fujian). Reduplicated nonimpressive binoms are rather seldom among insect names.

Some dialects have words of different etymology e.g. the Huitong dialect *posi* 罟 丝, Xuzhou dialect *luət fusi* 罗 蛛 子 — lit. 'net-spider'.

II. Impressives

5. Cricket

MP *qūqur* 蟋 蟀 MSC *xīshuài* 蟋 蟀

The same word appears in the dialect of Wuhan, similar forms are known from other dialects like Xuzhou *tɕ'yartɕ'yər* 虫儿虫儿 and in the Pingyang dialect from the Min group we have *cyøcyø:ŋ* 零 零 儿 with a very peculiar type of suffixe which is equivalent of MSC and MP *er* (this suffix makes the vowel of the second syllable long and finished with -ŋ).

Other words for cricket belong to the periphrastic type: 1) Xiang dialect of Shuangfeng has *tsatɕikau* 火土鷄 娃 — lit. 'stovechicken'; 2) Xiang dialect of Huitong has *tɕitsatsɪ* 华鸡 鸡子 — lit. 'chicken hood' or *tɕitsatsɪ* 华鸡 鸡子, which is probably better i.e. lit '(the one who is) pecked by chicken'. The Yongding (Xiayang) dialect of the Min group has *ts'autsi?tsi* 草螂子 which has 虫郎 — 'centipede' instead of 虫郎 'to chirp' — lit. '(the one who is) chirping in the grass'. Xuzhou dialect common name for cricket *iouluɾ* 油 麻 儿 is rather obscure whereas a kind of a big cricket is in this dialect called *tafütɕ iə* 大 飞 禽 — lit. 'great flying bird' which is a good example of a periphrastic name.

6. Mole-cricket

MP *làlàgǔ* or *làlàgū* 拉拉 虫 古 or 辣 辣 虫 古 MSC *lougū* 虫 古 虫 古

It is obviously the same word as the Huitong dialect *laliko* — 'dragonfly' noted by Nakajima and it is an impressive determining *gū* — 'mole-cricket'.

Other dialects have interesting periphrastic names like Wuhan *t'oukoutsɪ* 华 土 狗 子 — lit. 'earth dog' or Yongding (Xiayang): *t'iloufi* 地 老 虎 — lit. 'earth tiger'.

7. Cicada

MP *jiniäor* 秀 鸟 儿 or 虫 立 了 儿 or 唧 鸟 儿 MSC *chán* 虫 卓 or *zhīliǎo* 知 了 or *zhīliǎor* 知 了 儿

All these forms are doubtless different notations of the same word with typical Pekinese hesitation between *n* and *l* (MSC *nìngkě* 宁 可 — 'rather' is in MP pronounced *lèngkě*). Possibly all these forms are originally impressive subsequently etymologized as: *jī* 唧 — 'to chirp' and *niǎo* 鸟 — 'bird'. Thus the periphrastic meaning is: 'chirping bird' or 'humming bird'. It must however be said that Wuhan *tsua* 知 了 or *tsi·i* is certainly related to MP.

A kind of small cicada is in Xuzhou called *fuliang* 伏 凉, because it makes a noise similar to the sound *fuliang* as it is explained. The same kind is also called *tɕiätiəlou* 金 蛰 蛸 — lit. 'golden cicada'.

8. Praying mantis

MP *dāolang* 刀 螂 MSC *tāngláng* 螳 螂

The MP form is not clear. It may be dissimilated *tāngláng* which is quasi-impressive of the *tieyun* type. The Pekinese form has a characteristic hesitation between aspirated and unaspirated (as in *húdu* 胡 塗 instead of *hútu*). Pekinese *dāolang* may also be understood as something like 'knife mantis'.

Other words for praying mantis are also difficult to interpret like these noted by Nakajima (*malangk'ang* and *lautongkuang*).

III. Periphrastic

9. Dragonfly

MP *lǎoliúlǐ* 老琉璃 MSC *qīngtīng* 蜻蜓MP word means lit. '(old) colored glaze' with prefixed *lǎo*.

10. Dung-beetle

MP *shikelang* 屎壳螂 MSC *qiāngláng* 蜣螂The MP word has a periphrastic part *shǐ* — 'dung' determining *kelang* — 'beetle'.

It is remarkable that words of this type are not frequent in MP. They are much less frequent than in other Chinese dialects. Wuhan dialect has for instance *t'eisuts'on* 推屎虫 — lit. 'pushing dung insect' which is a very good periphrastic name (with a rather seldom V-O determining N). MP has a very restraint number of periphrastic insect names and — as far as I know — it has also only a small number of such animal names (e.g. *yèmaohu* 夜猫虎 — lit. 'night cat-tiger' instead of *biānfu* 蝙蝠 — 'bat' or *yèmaozi* 猫子 — lit. 'night cat' instead of *māotóuyīng* 猫头鹰 — 'owl').

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