

Studies in Honor of Jerry Norman PLEASE SEE CORRECTIONS AFTER P. 516. Note that page numbers in this final draft are 4 pages lower than the published version; otherwise, the content is identical.

Motivation and Nonsense in Chinese Secret Languages *

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Modern theorizing about secret languages generally looks to Michael Halliday's 1976 essay "Anti-languages". This paper considers some of Halliday's views in light of a variety of secret languages from China. It is found that not all secret languages are associated with underclasses, nor is semantic redundancy a consistent feature of theirs. For those reasons, it is proposed that Halliday's generalizations may apply to codes with large lexicons, especially as documented in print by law enforcement or for popular edification, but those generalizations do not necessarily hold for all oral codes in actual use, nor for numeral codes or for ciphers. Most importantly, although many codes exhibit metaphor as the mechanism of secrecy, there seems to be an element of arbitrariness as one of the motivations for forming code words — in short, nonsense, rather than any coherent principle. This paper also reviews a number of published Chinese secret languages and presents original short reports on the varieties Faho and Chūndiǎn, along with material from some lesser ciphers and numeral codes, and comments on the presence of morphemes of both popular and learned origin in Chinese codes.

Key words: secret language, trade argot, fieldwork, Chinese, China, dialects, nonsense, arbitrariness, metaphor, underclass, overlexicalization, M.A.K. Halliday, code, cipher, Faho, Chundian, Sibao, Fujian, She language, alterity

1. Foreword: Secret languages and the search for 'popular' language

The practice and teaching of dialectology and historical linguistics by Jerry Norman focus on 'popular' as opposed to 'learnèd' language — the part of language

* The Faho data in this paper was originally presented at the Conference on the Local Languages and Local Cultures of China, University of Pennsylvania, 26-27 April, 1997, Philadelphia; the numeral code data was originally presented at the Fourth Annual Yuen Ren Society Conference on Chinese Dialect Fieldwork, University of Washington, 7 February, 1998, Seattle. I am grateful to Karen Steffen Chung for attentive reading at an early stage of the manuscript, and to Charles Ettner and Natalie Kacinic for useful comments in April, 1997, and March, 2009, respectively.

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whose origins and path of transmission have lain in the low diglossic register, rather than the high. Popular language is the most meaningful object of comparative-historical study, because it preserves the oldest linguistic affiliations. But it is not a simple thing to carry out that sort of research; one needs to elicit real words and utterances in considerable detail and variety, and from them extract popular morphemes. Nor is it easy to guess ahead of time which subject-areas will yield rich lodes. I have spent more hours than I care to say in temples and graveyards of Fújiàn and Taiwan, observing activities and interrogating caretakers and undertakers as to the names of objects and processes particular to their professions, only to conclude that the religious life of the Mìn- and Hakka-speaking world is a poor place to find language that is distinctive and low-register at the same time. Most specialized religious words are of learned origin, and all the religious words of popular origin are evidently also found in ordinary, non-specialized contexts.

Secret languages, however, promise something much further out of the ordinary than other parts of life. Anyone spending time among farmers and working people in the markets of the Chinese countryside becomes aware of the ubiquity of these things. It did not surprise me that there should be secret languages, since the way information travels in China always seemed very different from what I had encountered in the urban West. As a foreign fieldworker in the countryside and small towns, I never ceased to be amazed at how rapidly news passed between people. Not only were all of *my* movements among villages well known across (apparently) a large part of the prefecture where I was working, but people could also rattle off all sorts of personal facts about local public figures, including what seemed to me rather private information. Evidently certain kinds of information could spread with great freedom, long before the Internet and inexpensive cellular devices. And yet it was never possible for me to tap into those channels of fervid exchange, unless by chance someone went out of their way to tell me a bit of news. In the end, I became interested in studying cryptolects, which seemed to me part of my hosts' occulted networks of information exchange and a potential mine of language of non-learned origin.

I offer this paper now in honor of Jerry Norman, as an example of something that lies outside the dichotomy of popular vs. learned. In keeping with the Norman tradition, this paper is fully documented with original field data. But in the interest of the general reader's ease, the main argument is presented on the following few pages, and most data and its discussion are relegated to appendices.

2. Secret languages in general: the motivation of encrypted forms

A secret language differs from modern encryption in that it ordinarily does not involve automation. Users have to be able to encode and decode messages on the fly — orally or sometimes in writing — without recourse to special tools, such as computers, slide rules, or a rare edition of Grimmelshausen of which a duplicate is in the possession of one's counterpart on the 'other side'.

Functionally speaking, secret languages are of two varieties: codes and ciphers. A code features individual lexical substitutions while a cipher is a regular process that can be applied widely to all or most of every utterance.

The model of all ciphers for English speakers is Pig Latin. Chinese has a similar type of cipher known as the *fǎnqièyǔ* 反切語, described in detail and variety by Yuen Ren Chao (1931).

Table 1. Example of a Běijīng 'fǎnqièyǔ' cipher, Chao (1931)

/pu ⁴ /	→	/p-/ + /-u ⁴ /	→	/pei ⁴ ku ⁴ /	(Pinyin <i>bù</i> → <i>bèigù</i>)
/tuŋ ¹ /	→	/t(u)-/ + /-uŋ ¹ /	→	/tuei ⁴ kuŋ ¹ /	(Pinyin <i>dōng</i> → <i>duìgōng</i>)
/lian ² /	→	/l-/ + /-ian ² /	→	/lei ⁴ kian ² /	(Pinyin <i>lián</i> → <i>lèigían</i> !)

Such ciphers are based on China's native linguistic science and have been known for centuries — the idea of the *fǎnqiè* cipher is already attested in the 16th century, when Chén Dì 陳第 (1546–1617) recommended it to the military commander Qī Jìguāng 戚繼光 (1528–1587), organizing Fújiàn people against the Wōkòu 倭寇 pirates.

Generally speaking, ciphers make heavy use of affixation and especially infixation, metathesis (rearrangement of sounds), and the systematic deletion, insertion, or alteration of sounds. One feature of a cipher is that it may produce sounds that cannot otherwise exist in the mainstream language, such as *gián* /kian²/ in Table 1.¹ They are typically of special interest to phonologists, since they can reveal native analysis of syllable structure or phonology (e.g. Yip 1982, Li 1985). The rules of a cipher are usually easy to transfer to other languages, but the specific forms created are not distinctive and are not directly transferable to other languages; all words can undergo the process and specific forms are created on the fly, so there is no great need to remember them individually.

A code, on the other hand, depends on the principle of relexification: individual words and phrases are usually replaced only selectively within longer utterances. In Chinese, at least, the motivation for individual code words is often semantic —

1 Unaspirated stop initials do not occur in Běijīng tone /2/, and moreover initial /k/ does not occur before /-i-/; a syllable */kian²/ would be articulated as *gián* [tɕ⁴ien 35] in normal Běijīng phonology.

specifically, metaphoric — and rarely specific to any particular language or dialect; because of the powerful de-phoneticizing sieve that is the Chinese writing system, code words in a standard written form are usually independent of speech sounds and can ‘jump’ across dialects with ease, by graphical calquing.

Because of its ‘defective’ (phonologically underspecified) script, Chinese also has a distinctive type of secret language of its own. Consider the names of the numerals one through ten in the Sūzhōu code described by Yuen Ren Chao (1892–1982), shown in Table 2. Chao does not explain them, but with a little imagination we can do so ourselves.

Table 2. *Sūzhōu numeral code (Chao (1931:312))*

- 1 (一): 旦底 ‘the bottom of the sunrise’, i.e., the bottom part of the character for ‘sunrise’ 旦 is the character for ‘one’ 一;
- 2 (二): 挖工 ‘digging labor’, i.e., the character for ‘labor’ 工 with the vertical stroke ‘dug out’ of it is the character for ‘two’ 二;
- 3 (三): 橫川 ‘horizontal river’, i.e., the character for ‘river’ 川 turned on its side looks like the character for ‘three’ 三;
- 4 (四): 側目 ‘sideways eye’, i.e., the character for ‘eye’ 目 turned on its side looks like the character for ‘four’ 四;
- 5 (五): 缺丑 ‘deficient and ugly’, i.e., the vulgar character for ‘ugly’ 丑 with a short vertical line removed from the upper right corner looks like the character for ‘five’ 五;
- 6 (六): 斷大 ‘broken big’, i.e., the character for ‘big’ 大 with its two legs broken off looks like the character for ‘six’ 六;
- 7 (七): 皂底 ‘bottom of trough’, cf. ‘one’; ‘trough’ is an old definition of the written word 皂, but ‘soap’ is a more current possible meaning (as in *xiāngzào* 香皂 ‘perfumed soap’);
- 8 (八): 公頭 ‘male end (of a two-part connection)’, i.e., the top of 公 ‘male’;
- 9 (九): 未完 ‘not yet done’, i.e., not yet to 10; the homophonous form 未丸 ‘not yet a round thing’ is also used (note that both characters 完 and 丸 seem to subsume the graph for ‘nine’ 九, or something like it, which is not quite a complete 丸);
- 10 (十): 田心 ‘the middle of a field’, i.e. the middle of the character for ‘field’ 田. (‘Ten’ is considered a numeral in Chinese.)

The motivation for these forms is graphic punning, something that alphabetic scripts cannot manage. But even if the motivation is not semantic in the strict sense, this is still a code because it involves relexification rather than a regular process. Ciphers do

not have to be phonological — we can imagine a purely graphic cipher, for instance — but in a Chinese code there is typically no evidence of the original sound of the spoken language. So in Table 2, there is no evidence at all that Sūzhōu dialect was the immediate source of the code, nor whether it came to Sūzhōu from some other dialect.

Ciphers generally use fairly simple encryption processes. The relexification in a code, however, might easily become a burden on the memory as vocabulary increases. But metaphor and association can provide easy mnemonic tools for remembering codes, and that is evidently why they are so common in Chinese codes. For examples, consider some words from a Shānxī barbers’s argot shown in Table 3. And although the original source includes phonetic transcription, note that only characters and English glosses are provided below. Apart from regionally restricted elements, such as nominalizing prefix *kəʔ* 圪 and suffix *-r* 兒, there is nothing distinctively Shānxī-like about the metaphorical elements in this code.

Table 3. *Shānxī barbers’s argot, metaphorical examples (Hóu Jīngyī 1988)*

<i>secret language expression and what it seems to mean</i>	<i>actual meaning</i>
抓不住 ‘can’t get hold of it’	‘fish’
頂蓋兒 ‘cover for the top’	‘hat’
圪翻翻 ‘the flipped thing’	‘pan-fried flat-bread’ (<i>lào bǐng</i> 烙餅)
水上飄 ‘floats on water’	‘tea leaves’
刺條 ‘prickly long thing’	‘cucumber’
半升穀 ‘half a peck of grain’	‘wife’s brother’
嚎天的 ‘the one who wails to Heaven’	‘police’
小板凳兒 ‘small bench’	‘young son’
沙包 ‘gizzard’	‘belly’
盤子 ‘plate’	‘face’
苗兒 ‘seedlings’	‘hair’
硃砂 ‘cinnabar’	‘blood’
黑塔 ‘dark pagoda’	‘buttocks’
把兒 ‘handle’	‘penis’
捏的 ‘the thing that pinches’	‘vagina’
蹲 ‘to squat’	‘to sit’
加 ‘to add’	‘to eat, drink; ride (car)’
發 ‘to emit’	‘to walk; lose one’s temper’
曬 ‘to sun-dry’	‘to sell’
曬捏的 ‘sun-dries the thing that pinches’	‘prostitute’

In a much smaller number of forms, shown in Table 4, punning is used to connect a word to its secret-language form. In a pun, to be sure, the sounds of a specific language are at issue. But such examples are only a minute part of reported Chinese codes. Most are outright metaphors. There are published collections (such as those of Sūn Yībīng 孫一冰 1993, Qū Yànbīn 曲彥斌 1996, and Shào Guāng 少光 et al. 1998) each of which lists many thousands of words in various regional codes. Although place of origin is generally listed, essentially all of the words in those sources are motivated metaphorically, without phonetic transcription. The market for such books is not limited to speakers of any regional dialect or language, and the reader's appreciation of individual words is in the nature of word-play. A very substantial proportion of the metaphors in the collections are not a simple substitution of one common word for another ('seedlings' for 'hair' or 'plate' for 'face', as in Table 3); rather, they consist of a longer phrase that suggests the concealed word in a circuitous fashion. Many of them recall the *xiēhòuyǔ* 歇後語 'after-a-pause expressions' long popular as a form of word play.² The need for opacity encourages users of a secret language to turn to metaphors that are considerably more remote than such simple substitutions, and in using them there must be a considerable cognitive price to pay in order to create an environment of linguistic secrecy with one's in-group.

Table 4. *Shānxī barbers's argot, punning examples (Hóu Jīngyī 1988)*

<i>secret language</i>	<i>meaning</i>
滴水 'it drips water'	'soldier' (<i>bīng</i> 兵; pun on <i>bīng</i> 冰 'ice')
搬不動 'can't move it'	'surname: Chéng 程' (pun on <i>chén</i> 沉 'heavy')
對口 'to match closely'	'lye' (<i>jiǎn</i> 鹼; pun on <i>jiǎn</i> 剪 'to cut with scissors [a tool in which two <i>kǒu</i> "cutting edges" fit closely together]')
不透風 'won't let air in'	'salt' (<i>yán</i> 鹽; pun on <i>yán</i> 嚴 'stringent' > 'tightly closed' [嚴密])

2 The 'after a pause' expression is so called because it involves a pun that you only grasp after a moment. Here is an example heard in the movie *Biànlǎn* 變臉 [*King of Masks*] of Wu Tian Ming 吳天明: a street performer is asked to reveal the secret of one of his tricks. He replies, "*Jīnpén dǎshuǐ, yínpen zhuāng* 金盆打水, 銀盆裝 [draw well-water with a golden basin, hold it in a silver basin]." By this, he means "please forgive me." How? The apparent sequel to "Draw well-water with a golden basin, hold it in a silver basin" is *yuánliàng* 圓亮 'round and shiny'. But the sounds of *yuánliàng* also mean 原諒 "please forgive me". Another example: Your friend visits your house and sees your rare Western Zhōu bronze, with a flawlessly cast 400-character inscription. When she admires it, you say, "*xīzǐ shī* 蠍子屎 [scorpion-droppings]." The apparent sequel to "scorpion-droppings" is *dúfèn* 毒糞 'poisonous dung'. But *dúfèn* is a pun on *dúfèn* 獨份 'one of a kind', which is what you actually mean. Another example: your college holds a search for a new Dean. When the person you supported is chosen, you say, "*yān luóbo fāngzai yǐzi shàng* 醃蘿蔔放在椅子上 [a preserved radish is on the chair]." What you mean is: *xiánzhě zàiwèi* 鹹者在位 'the salty one is in its place' → *xiánzhě zàiwèi* 賢者在位 'the wise one is ensconced' (Smith 1902:246; see Kroll 1966 and Rohsenow 1991 for more examples). An example in English: someone asks you what you thought of a controversial new movie. You say, "I felt like James Bond's martini, in reverse..." (meaning: stirred but not shaken).

3. Social function and the question of overlexicalization

The prime philosophical study of secret languages is Michael Halliday's "Anti-Language" (Halliday 1976) which aims to explain the general relationship between form and function, that is, the relationship between the structure of secret languages and how they are used.

As for function, Halliday's sources describe the extreme case of communities of people living permanently on the fringe of larger society: examples include the criminal underworld, underclasses generally, and especially permanent itinerants, such as the Travellers in Ireland. Substantial records of the secret languages of such groups have been in existence for a long time, because of the professional interest of law enforcement.

As for form, which must include the motivation of individual utterances, Halliday notes that secret languages tend to involve only partial relexification, because the secret language normally must coexist with some mainstream language (1976:571). The records he has examined also exhibit redundancy, which he interprets as overlexicalization: many synonyms coexist and there is a tendency toward "verbal competition and display" in the societies that use secret languages. He further observes that varied derivational processes may be used to create individual forms but, taking the larger view, all anti-language expressions are "metaphorical variants", because they coexist as synonyms of some mainstream expression (1976:578-9). What Halliday means by 'metaphor' is central to his conception of 'anti-language', but it is not simple. He says that anti-language is the "vehicle of resocialization" which creates an "alternate reality" for its speakers (1976:573, 575). It is the language of an "anti-society" which stands in a metaphoric relationship to mainstream society, just as "anti-language" does to mainstream language (1976:578). I shall return in the next section to the question of metaphorical variants. On the evidence of Chinese secret languages, however, some of Halliday's other views merit revision.

First, not all Chinese secret languages are *hēihuà* 黑話 'black [=criminal] argot' or used by an underclass. Criminal varieties certainly do exist — for instance, the Hong Kong 'Triad' (*sānhéhuì* 三合會) language discussed by Stanton (1895), Bolton and Hutton (1995), and others — but the majority attested in print are actually *hánguà* 行話 'tradesmen's jargon' whose use is limited to business situations. So it does not follow that secret language always goes along with a need for 'resocialization', 'alternate reality', and an 'anti-society'; it is not necessarily 'anti-language', although sometimes it may be.

No one would dispute that one of the main functions of human language is to make salient the boundaries between one group of people and another, and that people perceiving themselves to be ‘others’ turn naturally to language as a way of reinforcing their identity.³ But that does not mean that alterity is the only possible impetus for a secret language — and Halliday’s general claim does not do away with our obligation to examine details.

Second, we see that in the matters of relexification and overlexicalization, Halliday is clearly referring to codes, rather than ciphers. Ciphers are generated on the fly through a regular phonological process, not producing fixed expressions that can stand in a regular relationship to synonyms in mainstream language. Strictly speaking, a cipher does not have a lexicon.⁴

In particular, what appears to be overlexicalization is probably a side-effect of reliance on word-lists, which emphasize comprehensive cataloging and blur the character of functional inventories of words in actual use. Word-lists are typical of the working materials compiled by police forces, which value completeness (or its appearance) over philological niceties such as precise dating and provenance. Modern popular collections published in China include material going back as far as the Sòng dynasty, and there is clearly a long tradition of anthologizing past collections, perhaps precisely for the pleasure of word-play mentioned above. Word-play itself helps to define an in-group, of course.

As for actual usage, however, the majority of individual Chinese secret languages described in print are simply not overlexicalized. Most are no more than minimal

3 Recall Derek Bickerton’s comment: “So far, the only attested cases of relexification (the Media Lengua, Anglo-Romani) have occurred where the speakers concerned already had a language which linguistically, if not socially, was perfectly adequate for their communicative purposes (Quechua, Romani). There thus seem to be good sociolinguistic grounds for assuming that relexification [...] only occurs when a new language is invented for social-boundary marking or similar purposes” (1988:281).

4 Note, however, that the cipher used in the mid-20th century by Taiwan plains aborigines was initially learned by rote; see Melissa Brown (1995:374-8). The reverse situation is also attested; consider the following. My principal Běijīng informant recalls that in the 1940’s a kind of cipher became popular in which only the initial of each syllable was used to represent the whole syllable. These initials were always pronounced in tone /1/ [55] and with the same null finals used in “bopomofo”, the Mandarin Phonetic Symbols: *-i* ([ɿ] after retroflex sibilants, [ɿ] after plain sibilants, [i] after palatal sibilants); zero after vowels and semi-vowels, *-o* [oə] after labials, and *-e* [ɤə] after all others. So *zhàoxiàngjī* ‘camera’ would become ㄓ ㄠ ㄐ ㄧ ㄓ ㄧ ㄥ ㄐ ㄧ ㄥ; *túshūguǎn* ‘library’ would become ㄊ ㄨ ㄕ ㄨ ㄎ ㄨ ㄎ ㄨ ㄎ ㄨ ㄎ; *Zhào Yuánrèn* ‘Yuen Ren Chao’ would become ㄓ ㄠ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ ㄣ; note that the syllables *tē* and *rī* so produced are meaningless syllables, not found in real language. This cipher could hardly be used for long utterances, but it was useful for disguising individual words, much as Anglophone parents may disguise a word from their young children by spelling it aloud. As an extra level of disguise, the ‘spelled’ Běijīng word could be replaced with another word that had the same initials: *túshūguǎn* ‘library’ > *tēshīgē* > *tàishīgōng* ‘Imperial record-keeper’. This is an example of a cipher being used to generate reusable code words.

numeral codes for use in trade, like that shown in Table 2 above (although varying immensely). Appendix I at the end of this paper reviews a number of numeral codes and discusses their features. To summarize here, numeral codes typically contain only the numbers 1-10 and none that I am aware of contains any synonyms. It seems that codes with large inventories may match Halliday's description more closely than ciphers or codes with small inventories. Perhaps a distinction of scale would salvage Halliday's definition of 'anti-language' without violating the evidence of Chinese usage.

Halliday's generalizations draw heavily on examples from criminal and underclass cryptolects documented by law enforcement sources, leading him to give codes more weight than ciphers and to fail to see overlexicalization as an artefact of his sources of evidence. But without rigorous observation of these codes in living usage, it unsafe to assume that the whole lexicon is redundant for purposes of display merely because synonyms abound in recorded collections.

Even in the absence of observation *in vivo*, one comes to doubt the likelihood of overlexicalization after examining full records of individual secret languages, such as reported by Hóu (1988), or those of Faho 花毫 and Chūndiǎn 春典, presented in the Appendices II and III to the present paper. My field records for Faho, collected with several informants, contain no synonyms at all; the Chūndiǎn materials from a published source contain a small number, while those supplied by my informants contain only one. It appears common for the attested lexicons of individual codes to be rather limited, in contrast to the more comprehensive materials Halliday examined. I recorded 103 different Faho forms, while Chūndiǎn, as collected by me and also documented by Chén Gāng (1985) contains 111 forms, not counting *érhuà* 兒化 variants. For comparison, Hóu lists about 200 words in the barbers's argot, in more than one dialect. Faho actually represents several different words of mainstream language with the same single expression in code. That may turn out to be a common situation in living usage. Redundant, selective relexification is exactly the same type process described for the elaborate 'mother-in-law vocabulary' of Dyirbal by Robert Dixon 1983 and 1990; mother-in-law vocabulary, like Faho, functions in a strongly gendered environment.

4. 'Metaphor' and arbitrary motivations

Above, I have described disagreements with Halliday on two questions of function: who uses secret languages and whether or not these languages are necessarily overlexicalized. But there is a third issue, a most serious one.

Halliday explains the relationship between form and function this way:

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Anti-language [...] is itself a metaphorical entity, and hence metaphorical modes of expression are the norm; we should expect metaphorical compounding, metatheses, rhyming alternations, and the like to be among its regular patterns of realization. (1976:579)

In the context of anti-language as a “vehicle of resocialization” that creates an “alternate reality” for its speakers, Halliday’s expression “metaphorical modes of expression” seems really to mean “coded language at a remove from normal language” and is not limited to true metaphor. Strictly speaking, in spite of appearances, Halliday is not making a generalization or prediction about motivation. Almost anything could be incorporated into a secret language and termed a “metaphorical mode of expression.” But that would be to avoid the whole question of the basis on which individual forms are chosen to stand for other words. Motivation is not only of interest for pure etymology; any inquiry we may wish to make about the histories of different secret languages requires us to be able to consider their structures in depth, without simply paving over all the flora under the single label ‘metaphoric’. For myself, as I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, I began recording secret languages in the hope of uncovering an unrecognized source of popular morphemes with an ancient pedigree, for the purpose of comparative-historical study — and in order to do that I need more detail than just knowing that a given secret language is a ‘metaphorical entity’.

As a matter of fact, published Chinese numeral codes never seem to involve true semantic metaphor (something that numbers may be too abstract to allow), but do include these various motivations:

Table 5. *Types of motivation observed in Chinese numeral codes*

- 1 graphic substitution, in whole or in part (for instance, 六 ‘six’ is replaced with its formal written form, 陸 ‘land’, which is then replaced with a semantically related or graphically constituent form, such as 土 ‘land’);
- 2 ‘punning’ graphic metaphor (for example, the code shown in Table 2; there are diverse kinds);
- 3 *fǎnqiè* using understandable two-syllable words (for example, Macao Cantonese /jy² tsi⁶/ 如此 ‘thus’ for /ji⁶/ ‘2’, /sin¹ kəm¹/ 升金 ‘a peck of gold’ for /səm¹/ ‘3’, etc.; see Wáng 2000:20-21; this appears to be an isolated numeral code with unique forms, rather than part of a more comprehensive *fǎnqiè*-based cipher);
- 4 independent words and halves of known pairs (for example, *huáng* 簧 suggests *èrhuáng* 二簧 ‘“two-reed” opera’ and therefore ‘2’; *bǎo* 寶 ‘treasure’ suggests *sānbǎo* 三寶 ‘the three Buddhist “treasures”’ and therefore ‘3’);
- 5 alliteration (an example of alliteration is *yòu* for *yī* ‘1’, *àn* for *àr* [=èr] ‘2’, *sū* for *sān* ‘3’, *shǎo* for *sì* ‘4’, *wāi* for *wǔ* ‘5’, etc.);
- 6 random associations — (for example, in a list of ten words forming a sentence, each one stands arbitrarily for one of the numbers from one to ten).

No fewer than these six types of motivation are attested in Chinese numeral codes. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the very smallest codes turn to every imaginable strategy to achieve secrecy.

In two larger codes examined in the Appendices to this paper — Faho and Chūndiǎn — there are many examples of the camouflaged metaphor whose literal meaning is comprehensible in normal language, as described in Section 2 (above) for the Shānxī barbers’s argot, and as found in most published Chinese collections intended for the popular market. That is evidently a widespread feature of Chinese secret language. But it is instructive that other things are happening in Faho and Chūndiǎn at the same time.⁵

5 For the record, there are other kinds of secret language in China. One widespread cipher is the elimination of all non-tonal material from a word or phrase. The remaining tone contours are hummed or whistled, much as drumming can broadcast the pitches of a Jabo phrase in Liberia (see Herzog 1945). Instead of saying *Luó Jièruì* ‘Jerry Norman’, a Mandarin speaker might hum [35 35 52]. I have observed this crude cipher in use in various parts of China and Taiwan. In Western Fújiàn, I have also heard about (but never witnessed) the marketplace practice of negotiating prices through the familiar Chinese finger-signals for the numerals ‘1’ through ‘10’, but with the buyer and seller having one hand each together inside a bag, so that no one else could follow the prices being

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In Faho, another large component of the recorded lexicon is of unknown motivation, both to the informants and to me. That includes words that appear to be the result of tone change or of phonetic garbling through a *fǎnqiè*-like but evidently ruleless process; there are also several words that contain phonologically ‘impossible’ elements, which the informants could not explain; and there are a very large number of words that appear to contain ordinary Sìbǎo morphemes but whose overall motivation is simply opaque. These categories are detailed in Appendix II as part of the field report.

Chūndiǎn exhibits no attested cases of phonological irregularities, and a sizeable portion of the examples have clear metaphorical motivation. In a number of others, however, it is hard to feel persuaded that metaphor is really involved. These cases are discussed as part of Appendix III.

As a guiding principle, any but the most transparent example of metaphor ought to be distrusted when we study a language. Metaphor is so essential to the human mind that we cannot help but turn to it when explaining things. Human beings, and especially linguists, crave order — we always think we have discovered the truth when we find order. But imposing order is not the same as discovering order that is already there. By transcribing oral language into Chinese characters, unless primarily phonetic characters are chosen, we are imposing potentially metaphoric interpretations on the data; we have the ability to explain anything once we think we know the answer, especially an obscure metaphor.

That being so, the fact that many Faho and Chūndiǎn forms are only partly transparent to speakers makes it hard to avoid the idea that deliberate nonsense is also a part of their formation. To be sure, part of the effectiveness of ‘camouflaging’ metaphors derives from the fact that they sound like nonsense to everyone except the initiated. Beyond the mere appearance of nonsense, Faho contains a number of expressions that actually violate normal Sìbǎo phonological rules and therefore cannot be rendered accurately in etymologically valid characters — they are quite literally nonsense in terms of Sìbǎo phonology. Faho was apparently never written down, which might explain why not all the syllables correspond to standard syllables.

In the case of Chūndiǎn, which is documented mainly in Chinese characters, one wonders why those hands committing words to writing did not always turn to etymologically valid characters, assuming their informants understood the metaphors. Evidently some Chūndiǎn words, too, were opaque to its speakers; they were, to all appearances, simply arbitrary nonsense that had acquired a meaning within Chūndiǎn.

manually ‘discussed’.

In the end, then, to see “metaphorical modes of expression” in the construction of secret languages may be to imagine more system there than actually exists. At the very least, the motivation of words need not be salient for language to flourish. At worst, speakers of a secret language create the appearance of nonsense in order to open a private communication channel among them; it seems that at times they have turned to actual nonsense in order to accomplish that.

5. Last thoughts: is there a place ‘outside’ the popular-learnèd dichotomy?

As to my original question about popular versus learnèd morphemes, secret languages have turned out to be a wild goose chase. Because of Sìbǎo’s ethnic history, there has been speculation that these opaque words originate in an older non-Hàn language, but (as discussed in my report) I have concluded that there is nothing to support that. In fact, there are clear cases of learnèd Sìbǎo morphemes being used in the construction of Faho words, suggesting that Faho is a relatively recent creation in the historical context of Chinese language of Fújiàn. Many of the numeral codes discussed in Appendix I also contain learnèd words; if a code is reduced to standard Chinese script, even one that originally used popular words could end up being read in a learnèd register.

More so than ordinary spoken language, an utterance in code must be considered a kind of composed text. In order to achieve secrecy, codes are constructed of all the linguistic resources available to speakers — including morphemes of both popular and learnèd origin and certainly including nonsense. It would be surprising to find a code containing only words whose origin was both distinct and coherent in historical-comparative terms — it would suggest conscious preservation of a separate stratum of language, akin to the use of foreign loanwords as code. In reality, codes are a hodgepodge of available and fabricated material.

So it seems that, whatever their value within society and whatever pleasure they may bring to outsiders examining them, Chinese secret languages are not a promising area for the historical linguist in search of new veins of ancient ore. It seems they are more likely to be made up of nonsense.

Appendix I: Some numeral codes and the question of register

I mentioned in connection with the numeral code in Table 2 that there is ordinarily nothing about a graphic code that points to any specific dialect of Chinese. Many Chinese local languages have attested numeral codes; is it generally true that sound is

irrelevant to their organization? And if not, where do the sounds of code words turn out to lie on the scale of ‘popular’ vs. ‘learnèd’, introduced at the beginning of this essay?

A wealth of short reports on numeral codes have appeared in China. See particularly the discussions of Cáo Déhé 1995 and Sūn Yībīng 1994, and also the survey of regional examples by Wáng Zhìjiā 2000. There is also a charming series of tiny reports on trade argots published by Hé Chánghuá between 1994 and 1997. But because these codes are almost always described in Chinese characters without phonetic transcription, it is usually impossible to draw any conclusions about what oral forms are actually being represented.⁶

However, both characters and sound are supplied for three interesting numeral-codes from Taiwan, hidden in Âng Uî-jîn’s delightful book on traditional customs (1986:185). Âng is an indefatigable fieldworker and his data, from the Taipei area, should be considered reliable.⁷ These examples tell us something surprising about the oral nature of these codes.

Âng records a market shop-keeper’s argot with graphic motivation. It uses characters that bear a close graphic resemblance to the numerals: the numerals one through ten are 大天春西語立化分旭田. The first three characters have one, two, and three horizontal lines, respectively; the bottom of the fourth character 西 contains the character 四 ‘4’; the character 五 ‘5’ appears in the upper right corner of the fifth character 語; and so on and so forth.

Âng also cites an ox-seller’s argot whose ten component morphemes (‘1’ through ‘10’ are 天下平口水龍門不見開) form a sentence that seems to mean something like “for the world’s ordinary spittle (i.e., language), the Dragon Gate is not opened”.⁸ There are sporadic graphic similarities between these characters and the characters of the numerals, i.e., 口 and 四 ‘4’, 不 and 八 ‘8’, 見 and 九 ‘9’, and phonetic similarities between some of the readings, i.e., 龍 /liŋ²/ and 六 /liok⁸/ ‘6’, or 不 /put⁷/ and 八 /pat⁷/ ‘8’. To some imaginations, 下 ‘below’ for 二 ‘2’ may recall the Seal script (*xiǎozhuàn* 小篆) form of the character 下. But as a system, the relations between numeral and name, or between the names of each numeral in normal language and in code, are neither the result of phonetic rules nor of free association.

6 A single exception is Wáng 2000:20-21 for a *fānqiè*-based code.

7 Two of these, the shop-keeper’s and vegetable-seller’s argots, are also attested in Ôgawa (1932). But Ôgawa lists the words individually, rather than as sets.

8 “Spittle” (口水, recorded by Âng as /kh³ sui³/) for ‘language’ after the Minnán dialect expression /ho³ khau³ sui³/, literally “good spittle”, defined in Douglas (1899:463, under *sui*) as ‘good at talking people over, esp. with a little falsehood’. This is a learnèd expression comparable to Mandarin *kǒushuǐ* 口水; the popular word for “spittle” is /tshui⁵ nuã⁶/.

The vegetable-seller's argot recorded by Âng appears to be a mix of different principles. '1' through '10' are 幼色冬真任皆才別欠臺. Some of the numerals are represented graphically (任 is reminiscent of 五 '5'; 臺 has 十 '10' at the top), some perhaps phonetically (才 /tsai²/ for /tshit⁷/ '7', 別 /pat⁷/ for /pat⁷/ '8'⁹), some metaphorically (幼 'young, immature' for 'one'; 欠 'to owe, to lack', for '9'; compare "not yet done" for '9' in the Sūzhōu code, above), and the others by all appearances arbitrarily.

On the question of learned vs. popular morphemes, it is significant that the phonetic values that Âng records for these code words are all in *wéndú* 文讀 'reading pronunciation', rather than ordinary colloquial Taiwanese. So it seems these must be considered learned forms. The sounds Âng heard for these argot numerals in his fieldwork were the sounds of the reading pronunciation, not the usual spoken sounds; thus he has recorded the learned /thien¹/ as the name of the character 天 for 'sky' rather than the popular /thī¹/, /khɔ³/ for 口 'mouth' instead of /khau³/ or /tshui⁵/, /tai⁶/ for 大 'large' instead of /tua⁶/, and so on. So these codes are literary concoctions; through their written forms they could be calqued into any other language written in the Chinese script. As with the Sūzhōu code of Table 2, there is little or nothing about them that points innately to Mǐnnán. Consider some other examples, from original fieldwork of my own. Table 6 shows three numeral codes that I collected in the field. The three dialects to which they belong are closely related and spoken near each other; their overall likeness suggests a common origin or long co-evolution.¹⁰ Unlike the code in Table 2, graphic or semantic motivation for the actual words is largely unknown, because the codes were transmitted and collected orally. All of my informants explained the name of the numeral 1 as corresponding to *jiān* 尖 'pointed' and of 6 as *tiān* 天 'Heaven'; '10' happens to be the same as the pronunciation of *shí* 十 '10' in traditional local (*i.e.*, not standard) Mandarin.

As with Âng's examples, all three are learned forms, associated with the written language. But apart from the fact that the codes are clearly related, it is also interesting that the Shìzhōng and Kǒngfū forms for '2' and '4' seem to be the reverse of the Lóngyán forms. None of my informants could explain the motivations of the various

9 Chinese has a whole set of distinctively complex forms of the numerals used to prevent forgery, in which 捌 is the usual form for 8.

10 All three dialects are linguistically of the Mǐn 閩 group and are spoken in Western Fújiàn Province. Lóngyán's 龍岩 code is known as /ti¹⁷+a³⁵ pie⁴/ {豬仔白} 'pig vernacular' (perhaps Pig Latin also originates with dealers in swine?); next to this I have placed a swine-dealers' argot from the township of Shìzhōng 適中, to the south of the Lóngyán county seat, where a related dialect is spoken; next to that is a numeric code used by ox-dealers in Kǒngfū 孔夫, a nearby region in Yǒngdìng 永定 county that speaks another closely related dialect. Field sources for all dialects documented in this paper are detailed in the References.

forms cited here or, in most cases, the characters that they must have been associated with at one time. It is hard to escape the impression that we are in the domain of the great-grandfather of all language, the great lord *l'Arbitraire du Signe*.

Table 6. *Examples of closely related numeral codes from original fieldwork*

	<i>Lóngyán</i>	<i>Shìzhōng</i>	<i>Kǒngfū</i>
1	/tsiam ¹ /	/tsiam ¹ /	/tsiaŋ ¹ /
2	/hui ¹ /	/giau ¹ /	/iau ¹ /
3	/tsan ⁵ /	/tsam ¹ /	/tsiaŋ ⁵ /
4	/giau ¹ /	/phi ¹ /	/fui ¹ /
5	/gin ² /	/gin ² /	/ieŋ ² /
6	/thian ¹ /	/thin ¹ /	/thiaŋ ¹ /
7	/sian ³ /	/sin ⁵ /	/siaŋ ³ /
8	/lai ² /	/lai ² /	/lai ² /
9	/kiup ⁸ /	/kiok ⁸ /	/kioʔ ^{7b} /
10	/sɿ ⁴ /	/tsiam ¹ sɿ ⁴ /	/sɿ ⁴ /

Curiously, two other systems coexist in *Lóngyán* alongside the one in Table 6. These are shown in Table 7 — one used by businessmen that is called /hue35 pie4/ ‘merchandise vernacular’ {貨白}, and one which is used by ordinary people and has no special name. My superb informant said that to the best of his knowledge this third system is used only in partial form — there are names only for the numerals 6 through 9. The various forms are shown in Table 7. To the right of these I have added a second system from *Shìzhōng*, which is in common use in the community, and to the right of that, for comparison I have added the forms from ‘Faho 花毫’, a secret language used in *Liánchéng Sìbǎo* 連成四堡, on which I report in detail in Appendix II. Where possible, I have guessed at the meanings of the code words, based on my limited knowledge of these dialects (about two and half years of intensive field study and many more of comparative-historical work).

Table 6. examples of barely related numeral codes from original fieldwork

	<i>Lóngyán 2</i>	<i>Lóngyán 3</i>	<i>Shìzhōng 2</i>	'Faho'
1	/giu ⁵ / 'small'	—	/tau ³ / 'peck-measure'	—
2	/lii ² / 'come'	—	/bai ² / 'eyebrows'	/tʂa ¹ / 'dry' ?
3	/ka ¹ / 'add'?	—	/tʂuan ¹ / 'river' (J)	/phaŋ ⁵ /
4	/ti ¹ / 'pig'?	—	/su ¹ /	/si ¹ /
5	/tʂō ¹ / 'upper'?	—	/thu ³⁷ /	/bo ¹ /
6	/lo ² /	/a ¹²⁴⁷ kaŋ ^{17+a} / 'male duck'	/lu ² /	/lɛ ² /
7	/tʂa ² / 'wood'	/kua ⁷ tʂau ³ / 'mow grass'	/sio ³ guan ^{1+a37} / 'small bend'	/hɔ ² / 'shoe'
8	/mǎi ⁷ / 'small'	/bai ^{24+a} / 'eyebrows'	/se ⁵⁷ be ^{35+a37} / 'small horse'	/phe ⁷ / 'piě 撇 pen-stroke'
9	/guan ¹ / 'bend'	/guan ^{17+a} / 'bend'	/tua ¹ guan ¹ / 'large bend'	/vaŋ ¹ / 'bend'
10	/giu ⁵ / (= '1'!)	—	—	/kho ⁷ / 'shell'

All the words for '9' (九) appear to mean *wān* 彎 'bend' (suggesting the shape of the graph 九) and in three codes there is a likeness among the words for '6'. Beyond that, these codes seem barely related, even though they are used in places not very distant from one another. Note that whereas Halliday has suggested that synonyms reflect overlexicalization for the social effect of epideixis in an anti-language, these are not synonyms but competing systems, used by different groups of people.

Unlike Âng's examples and those in Table 6, varieties 'Lóngyán 2', 'Lóngyán 3', and 'Shìzhōng 2' all appear to be popular forms. (For Faho, it is not possible to distinguish popular from learned forms for these words.)

In sum, both learned and popular morphemes seem to be in use in Chinese numeral codes.

Appendix II: A Field Report on Sibǎo Faho, with notes on the motivation of words

In 1994 I recorded a secret language in Western Fújiàn, in Sibǎo Township of Liánchéng County 福建連城四堡.^{1 1} The secret language of Sibǎo is called /fa¹ ho²/ in

1 1 In the local dialect, the syllable *bǎo* 堡 is read as equivalent to Mandarin *bǎo* and not to the canonical reading *pǔ*.

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Sibǎo dialect proper. (In what follows, I reserve the name “Sibǎo” for ordinary Sibǎo dialect and romanize the secret language as “Faho”.) This name “Faho” translates in Sibǎo to ‘fine hairs of a flower’ 花毫, which is evidently nonsense. In Mandarin, Faho is simply called *ànyǔ* 暗語 (‘dark language’), one of several generic Chinese terms for ‘secret language’. My informants insisted that “Faho” is not a Faho name for the secret language or anything else; it is the Sibǎo name, they say.

Knowledge of Faho was carefully kept secret from outsiders in traditional times. For a long time it was so closely guarded that it was taught to sons but not daughters, because Sibǎo was patrilocal. Local women always married out of their own clan, which (as in most of rural Fújiàn) normally meant out of the village; it was feared that outsiders might learn the secret through marriage with Sibǎo women. Faho is also said to be understood in the neighboring township of Chángjiào 長校 (in Qīngliú 清流 County) but nowhere else. My informants reported that Chángjiào has similar customs but a very different spoken language, and there seems to have been much intermarriage between the townships; however, Chángjiào was closed to me at the time of my fieldwork, and I have not been able to verify any of this.

If Faho is secret, then how was I, an outsider, able to record it? There was a happy consonance of several factors: because I was the first foreign linguist to visit the region and had official credentials; because my informants were Communist Party officials who had sufficient standing in the community to take responsibility for revealing it an outsider; and perhaps especially because it no longer has much use as a secret language. For Faho has fallen into disuse; most men younger than 50 in 1994 no longer knew much of it.

Sibǎo men made their livelihoods through two important trades in traditional times. One was the carving and export of woodblocks for printing books, the other was itinerant metalworking.^{1 2} The woodblock industry died out after the mid-20th century, but skilled smiths could still be found in Sibǎo at the time of my visit and were much sought in other parts of the Prefecture. My informants said that members of both trades used Faho when they were away from Sibǎo and unsure of who might understand their private discussions. It was not used by farmers nor ordinarily within Sibǎo itself. Faho was normally used in public situations away from home, when working or attending to tasks with an official flavor (in Mandarin, *zuòshì* 做事 or *bànshì* 辦事). It was considered particularly inappropriate to use Faho within the family or in the presence of

1 2 Books were not actually printed in Sibǎo, but the woodblocks were carved there. As with the township of Jiànyáng Shūfāng 建陽書坊, in Northern Fújiàn, Sibǎo is deep in the mountains, and so was an ideal place for this kind of production because it was remote and difficult for censors to track down.

a guest. Faho speakers had a special “warning greeting”, /lɔ̃² tsə¹/, which they used to alert another speaker that Faho was to be used.

At the time of my fieldwork, Sibǎo people lived in the penurious shell of what had once been an important cultural center, and Faho was the subject of some of their expressions of local pride. One local official reported that Faho was spoken in the same way everywhere in Sibǎo, even in villages that speak noticeably different forms of Sibǎo; it is the real common language of Sibǎo, he asserted. But it seems to me that Faho could never have been a real common language because its lexicon is too limited. Possibly, of course, the material I recorded is only a fragment of what was once a much more extensive secret language, and time has eroded the lexicon to the small corpus shown here.

But I have several reasons for doubting that. For one thing, my informants always teased me when I asked for words that they felt were outside the domain of secret language. “There are no words like that in Faho,” they would tell me several times an hour, “It is just *hánghuà* [trade argot].” For another thing, they were usually in agreement about whether or not a word existed in Faho and if so how to say it. One would occasionally remind the other of a word, but on the whole they agreed about which Sibǎo words did not have Faho forms.^{1 3} And, as mentioned in the main body of this paper, in the absence of the comprehensive documentation characteristic of law enforcement, it seems that individual people know only a relatively small number of words. Faho may have had more words in earlier times, especially words having to do with Sibǎo’s now defunct trades, and of course some words may still survive in sites and households that I did not visit, but it seems unlikely ever to have been a whole and independent language.

Who needs a secret language?

There is a puzzle associated with the existence of Faho. The ordinary local speech of Sibǎo — not Faho — is notorious across the whole of Liánchéng county because everyone claims to find it incomprehensible. Why would people whose neighbors already cannot understand them need an extra layer of secrecy in the form of a secret language? And although Chángjiào people can understand ordinary Sibǎo dialect, Faho could not serve to conceal Sibǎo thoughts from Chángjiào ears, because Chángjiào people also speak Faho. Moreover, the smiths often worked in big cities far away such as Xiàmén 廈門 and Zhāngzhōu 漳州, where the native speech is totally unlike anything

1 3 The end of this Appendix contains a list of *elicitanda* for which, after special inquiry, no Faho forms could be found.

spoken in any part of Liánchéng. Why would anyone need a secret language when working in a place where their native language was already incomprehensible? It may be, of course, that Sibǎo's reputation as the home of an impenetrable dialect has to do with Faho, not the native Sibǎo dialect.

In Sibǎo itself, there is another theory about its reputation for impenetrability. A number of local people told me that Faho is the old aboriginal language spoken there before the arrival of ethnic Chinese people. It is well known to Sibǎo people that their local culture shows traces of something non-Hàn — the most obvious sign is the ornate clothing (including embroidered robes and bright pink socks and hair-bindings) worn by women over 60 (at the time of my visit in 1994), and there are also elaborate and colorful pieces of headgear that until recently were worn by infants on ceremonial occasions. Some of this garb is distinctly un-Chinese looking and Sibǎo people know it. It has been widely speculated that Fújiàn's native "Hàn" societies retain a substantial substrate from older aboriginal culture, especially of the culture known today as 'Shē 畬 nationality' that survives today in Eastern Fújiàn, a recent migrant from Western Fújiàn, where Sibǎo is located. In any case, the Sibǎo men I interviewed did not by any means admit either to being aborigines or descended from them; but I heard from a number of them that their society retained some "ethnic minority" culture. This was a matter of considerable pride for them, all political considerations aside.^{1 4} One young man called Faho "*wōmen de jiābǎo* 我們的家寶 [our heirloom]" (he was too young to have learned to speak it).

Based on my sample of the secret language, there is not much likelihood that Faho itself is an old aboriginal tongue; some of the words are straightforward metaphors typical of other Chinese secret languages and many others are compounds of recognizable Hàn elements. In the other direction, I have found no obvious similarities between Faho and the Hakka language of the Shē living in and near Fújiàn (Huáng and Lǐ 1963, Luó Měizhēn 1980, Norman 1988) or the traditional language of the Shē as it survives elsewhere (Máo Zōngwǔ and Méng Zhāojí 1982, 1985, and 1986, Chén Qíguāng 1984, Gān 2005, Lín et al. 2006, Lǐ Yúnbīng 1997). There are some words in the Shē language that are clearly related to forms found in Mǐn and to a lesser extent Hakka dialects of Western Fújiàn, but when those words occasionally appear in my notes they are for ordinary Sibǎo dialect, never for Faho.^{1 5} In other words, Western Fújiàn Mǐn and Hakka may have a Shē substrate, but Faho does not. Faho is clearly

1 4 The material advantages of claiming ethnic minority status in China in recent decades are well known.

1 5 For example, 'spider' /khio² sio¹/, /khia² sia²?/; 'head' /the² la²/; 'breast' /lɔŋ¹ phu²/; 'thatched shed' /miaoŋ² lɛ²/, 'to strike with the flat of the hand' /pho²/, and perhaps others. Sibǎo has fewer of these words than in other Mǐn and Hakka dialects of Western Fújiàn, however. A few odd likenesses that might be found between Faho and Shē words are haphazard and must not be considered correspondences.

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based on the regular Sībǎo language itself. Claims of great age are also made about Shelta, the secret language of the Irish Travellers, which many in Ireland believe to be a survival of Old Irish or some other indigenous language of remote antiquity.¹⁶ And the name Pig Latin, too, sounds as if it is a debased form of the language of the Roman Empire.

Faho has another peculiarity, surprising in a trade argot, in that it lacks words for things that must have been very important to the community. Although everyone in Sībǎo swears that it was used by smiths and in commerce, there are no words for metals other than ‘tin’ and ‘gold’ — no ‘copper’, ‘silver’, ‘iron’ — there are no words for ‘carved woodblocks’, ‘to carry on a shoulder yoke’, or ‘price’. My informants were quite sure when they told me there were no Faho words for any of these things.¹⁷

I do not wish to speculate past the reach of my data, but perhaps the fact of Faho, rather than its internal details, owes something to the contact between Hàn and non-Hàn people in Fújiàn’s past. Is it possible that the Sībǎo community is in whole or in part descended from a Shē community, and that Faho was originally used by Seriah, sinicized Shē people to keep the Hàn Chinese from understanding them? That is not as unlikely as it may sound, as there is at least one such example in Taiwan. Among the Sinicized plains aborigines of western Taiwan (in Tainan county), a straightforward *fānqiè* cipher called /kin¹² tsio¹² pe^{1268+a}/ ‘“banana” talk’ was used in traditional times to keep Hàn people from understanding them, since they no longer knew their own ancestral language.¹⁸ It is curious that so profoundly literary a mechanism as *fānqiè* should end up in the mouths of aborigines as a way of keeping secrets from their Hàn neighbors. Is it possible that the people whom Qī Jiguāng organized to fight the Wōkòu included large numbers of Shē, and that, thus brokered by aborigine mercenaries, the *fānqiè* cipher should have gained an important place among aborigines of both Fújiàn and Taiwan? Another possibility is that Faho was used by Sībǎo men to keep what they had to say secret from their women, although none of my male informants suggested this, and none of the Sībǎo women I interviewed expressed any resentment of the fact that they were not allowed to learn it. “Faho is just a men’s thing,” one woman told me (using a mildly pejorative word for ‘men’).

16 See MacAlister (1937:130-224, especially 153-164) and Cleeve (1983).

17 Another anomaly is that although Faho tends to contain only very general words and to use one word for two or three in ordinary speech, there is no general Faho word for ‘meat’: informants describe the word for ‘pork’ (/phue⁶ lo³/) as semantically opaque, but ‘beef’ (/gan⁶ ka¹ si¹/) contains the Faho word for ‘ox’ (/gan⁶ ka¹/).

18 I surveyed banana talk during a field trip to rural Tainan with the anthropologist Melissa Brown (see Brown 1995:374-8), and found its mechanism to be essentially the same as the *fānqiè* cipher described by Paul Jen-Kuei Li 李壬癸 (1985) in use among Hàn people in northern Taiwan.

Documentation of Faho, with comments on the motivation of words

Individual words in Faho have a variety of motivations, itemized below. Although a number of examples are metaphors, Faho often appears to achieve secrecy by simple arbitrariness.

One of the most striking elements is the large number of words that contain noun suffixes also found in Sībǎo. I identify six such suffixes sharing the interesting feature of being associated with words for male animals or human beings, although in Faho they do not contribute that meaning and by all evidence are completely empty syllables:

1. /ku³/. In ordinary Sībǎo, a suffix for males of certain animals: /ke³ ku³/ ‘male dog’, /ku¹ ku³/ ‘gelded boar’; /ge² ku³/ ‘male carabao’; the morpheme is probably comparable to {牯}.
2. /ka¹/. In ordinary Sībǎo, learned for ‘household’ {家}; in real popular lexicon it occurs as the suffix for ‘stud boar’: /ku¹ ka¹/.
3. /ko¹/. In ordinary Sībǎo, learned for ‘elder brother’ {哥}.
4. /tsə³/. In ordinary Sībǎo, ‘son’, as well as a common noun suffix.
5. /lo³/. A common Hakka suffix, found in the names for certain kinds of people, especially men, and often pejorative in sense. It is rare in my Sībǎo data, but one example is /tʃhaŋ² bɛi² lo³/ ‘man’s father-in-law’ {丈門佬} (*yuèfū*). Compare *lǎo* in the common Western Fújiàn Mandarin form *wàiguólǎo* 外國佬 ‘foreigner’, which is pejorative.
6. /səŋ¹/. In ordinary Sībǎo, ‘grandson’ {孫}; it is also homophonous with a learned form {生}, occurring mainly in /sāi¹ səŋ¹/ ‘doctor, teacher’).

Examples containing these suffixes will be found later in this Appendix. In addition, there is a seventh important suffix, attested principally in place-words:

7. /phēi⁵/. Unknown in my Sībǎo records, although probably homophonous with the learned word *pìn* {聘} ‘to hire, invite’; it is found in Faho place-words, substituting for the regular Sībǎo suffix /the²/ {頭} in the same environment:

/guə⁶ phēi⁵/ ‘outside’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /guə⁶ the²/ {外頭}.) Apparent motivation: ‘outside’ + (unknown).

/lə⁶ phēi⁵/ ‘inside’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tə³ the²/ {裡頭}.) Apparent motivation: learned word ‘inside’ {內} + (unknown).

/he⁶ phēi⁵/ ‘behind’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /puə⁵ the²/ {背頭}.) Apparent motivation: learned word ‘behind’ {後} + (unknown).

- /ha¹ phēi⁵/ ‘beneath, under’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ha¹ the²/ {下頭}.) Apparent motivation: ‘beneath’ + (unknown).
- /tshāi² phēi⁵/ ‘front, in front’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tshāi² the²/ {前頭}.) Apparent motivation: ‘front’ + (unknown).
- /ʃaŋ⁶ phēi⁵/ ‘on top of’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ʃaŋ⁶ the²/ {上頭}.) Apparent motivation: ‘top’ + (unknown).

The same /phēi⁵/ appears in the following three other words:

- /tshi⁶ phēi⁵ ka¹/ ‘oneself’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tshi⁶ ka¹/. Apparent motivation: The Faho form is the Sībǎo word with /phēi⁵/ infixes.
- /liɑŋ¹ si⁶ phēi⁵/ ‘to talk, to say things’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /kaŋ³ va⁶ si⁶/ {講話事}.) Apparent motivation: (unknown) + things said {事} + suffix for ‘stud boar’ {家}.
- /tshian⁶ phēi⁵/ ‘cooked food, dish of food’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tshue⁵/ {菜}.) Apparent motivation: unknown.

Note that learned morphemes such as /lɿ⁶/ {內} and /he⁶/ {後} appear in the Faho examples; others occur in the rest of the material. If Faho was intended to be written down or used by people who could write, the presence of learned morphemes would have been especially useful.

Two other morphemes common in Faho as suffixes are /lɿ²/ (the Sībǎo word for ‘earth, soil’ {泥}) and the common Sībǎo noun suffix /li³/; they occur in a number of common Faho words, such as /lɿ² ʃi²/ ‘man’, /ca¹ tǎi⁵ lɿ² tsə³/ ‘child’, /tso² lɿ²/ ‘morning’, /tshāi¹ kuəŋ⁵ lɿ² tsə³/ ‘senior person’, /paŋ² lɿ²/ ‘full, sated’, /lɿ² tʃo⁵/ ‘sweet potato’; and /khe⁷ li³/ ‘son, male child’, /khe⁷ li³ tsə³/ ‘boy’, /tshə⁵ kuə⁷ li³/ ‘chicken’, /tʃhi² li³/ ‘girl, unmarried young woman’, /bo² ko⁷ li³/ ‘person surnamed /ba³/ Mandarin {Maa 馬}’. Although these two suffixes are not associated with words for male things in ordinary Sībǎo dialect, they do appear in the Faho words for ‘man’, ‘son, male child’, and ‘boy’.¹⁹ It is not clear exactly what this emphasis on male suffixes means, but perhaps it has something to do with the fact that Faho is spoken only by men. In any case, the heavy use of these suffixes is not a feature of ordinary Sībǎo language.

Other processes attested in the motivation of Faho words are tone change, something reminiscent of a *fǎnqiè* cipher, and clear examples of metaphor. These are discussed below, one by one.

Since Faho (and Sībǎo) words are not normally written down, characters are placed

19 /lɿ²/ also occurs in the warning greeting /lɿ² tsə¹/, mentioned above.

in curly brackets ({ }) to indicate that they represent etymological forms in the written tradition that are plausible on phonological grounds. When a standard etymological character cannot reasonably be found, the place-holder “□” is used.

Phonetic garbling 1: Tone change

- /fəŋ⁵ səŋ¹/ ‘red’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /fəŋ² səŋ⁷/ {紅色}.) Apparent motivation: change of tone on ‘red’ {紅} + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
- /laŋ⁵ səŋ¹ / ‘blue’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /laŋ² səŋ⁷/ {藍色}.) Apparent motivation: change of tone on ‘blue’ {藍} + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
- /vaŋ⁵ səŋ¹/ ‘yellow’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /vaŋ² səŋ⁷/ {黃色}.) Apparent motivation: change of tone on ‘yellow’ {黃} + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
- /hǎi⁵ səŋ¹/ ‘salty’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /hǎi²/ {鹹}.) Apparent motivation: change of tone on ‘salty’ {鹹} + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
- /si¹/ ‘four’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /si⁵/ {四}.) Apparent motivation: change of tone on learned word /si⁵/ ‘four’; compare popular form /si⁵/ ‘four’.
- /khue² si⁷?/ ‘fast, rapid’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /lia⁷?/ {□}.) Apparent motivation: unknown; first syllable is reminiscent of the learned Sībǎo word /khue⁵/ ‘fast, rapid’ {快}.
- /ŋ² khəŋ² saŋ¹/ ‘unwilling’ (*bú yuànyì* 不願意). (Ordinary /ŋ² guǎi⁶ i⁵/ {□願意}, /ŋ² khəŋ³/ {□肯}.) Apparent motivation: perhaps tone change on /ŋ² khəŋ³/, plus an unidentified suffix.
- /ho⁵ i⁵/ ‘good’, ‘tasty’, ‘beautiful’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ho³/ ‘good’ {好}, /ho³ ʃi⁷?/ ‘tasty’ {好食}, /tsiaŋ¹/ ‘beautiful’ {精}.) Apparent motivation: perhaps tone change on /ho³/ ‘good’, plus an unidentified suffix ({意}?).

Phonetic garbling 2: *Fǎnqiè*-like forms

- /kěi¹ gi² si⁷?/ ‘today’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /kěi¹ pu¹ gi⁷?/ {今晡日}.) Apparent motivation: first syllable of ‘today’ plus the reversed *fǎnqiè* of ‘day’ {日}.
- /tshɛ⁶ gi² si⁷?/ ‘yesterday’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tshɛ⁶ pu¹ gi⁷?/ {□晡日}.) Apparent motivation: first syllable of ‘yesterday’ plus reversed *fǎnqiè* of ‘day’ {日}.
- /thǎi¹ kaŋ¹ gi² si⁷?/ ‘tomorrow’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /thǎi¹ kaŋ¹ gi⁷?/ {天光日}.) Apparent motivation: ‘sunrise’ {天光} + reversed *fǎnqiè* of ‘day’ {日}.

- /laoŋ² sěi³/ ‘bed’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /saŋ²/ {牀}). Apparent motivation: reversed *fǎnqiè* of ‘bed’ {牀}.
- /khau² lɛ?⁷/ ‘bad’, ‘bad-tasting’, ‘ugly’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /fɛ⁶/ ‘bad’ {壞}; /fá⁶ ʃi?⁸/ ‘bad-tasting’ {壞食}; /tsha¹/ {差}, /khɛ?⁷/ ‘ugly’ {□}). Apparent motivation: perhaps *fǎnqiè* of /khɛ?⁷/ ‘ugly’ {□}.
- /gio³ səŋ¹/ ‘few, little’, ‘stingy’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ʃo³/ ‘few, little’ {少}; /sio³ khi⁵/ ‘stingy’ {小氣}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}; or perhaps reversed *fǎnqiè* of /sio³/ ‘small’.

Note that none of these examples represents a regular *fǎnqiè* cipher — they merely look as though such a cipher was the inspiration for them. Perhaps Faho originated in a true cipher which was later replaced by code forms.

By way of digression, let me point out four Faho words that violate the rules of ordinary Sībǎo phonology. Such cases may point to the workings of a cipher or exotic origin; here, I do not have a satisfactory explanation for them. In all cases I have rechecked the forms carefully to ensure that there is no mistake in transcription.

Unexplainable forms containing phonological irregularities

- /kiǎi² lo³/ ‘liquor’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tsəu³/ {酒}). Irregularity: ordinary Sībǎo dialect does not allow unaspirated /k-/ in tone /2/. Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘man’ {佬}.
- /tso² lə²/ ‘morning’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tʃo¹ ʃěi²/ {朝晨}). Irregularity: ordinary Sībǎo dialect does not allow unaspirated /ts-/ in tone /2/. Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘plough’ {犁} or ‘soil’ {泥}.
- /paŋ² lə²/ ‘full, sated’. Sībǎo /pɛ³/ {飽}. Irregularity: ordinary Sībǎo dialect does not allow unaspirated /p-/ in tone /2/. Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘plough’ {犁} or ‘soil’ {泥}.
- /kiai?⁸ ʃi²/ ‘money (general word)’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tshǎi²/ {錢}). Irregularity: ordinary Sībǎo dialect does not allow unaspirated /k-/ in tone /8/.

Examples of metaphor are of two kinds: those that seem clear to me based on their use of attested Sībǎo morphemes, and those that seem outlandish to me but were offered by my informants. For a long time I was at a loss to understand the latter. They may be relics of a mnemonic learning process, or simply the result of the universal human tendency to rationalize what we do not understand. I have listed these two types under separate headings, noting those actually suggested by informants:

Metaphor 1: Clear cases

/bo ² ko ⁷ li ³ /	‘person surnamed Maa 馬 (‘horse’)’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ba ³ / {馬}.) Apparent motivation: ‘the one without horns’ {無角□}
/kia ⁷ /	‘to buy’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /bə ³ / {買}.) Apparent motivation: ‘to pick up with chopsticks, have (something) stick to one’s fingers’ {夾}.
/kio ⁷ hɑ ¹ si ¹ /	‘shoe’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /hə ² / {鞋}.) Apparent motivation: ‘threads beneath the foot’ {腳下絲}.
/fāi ⁵ /	‘to sell’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /bə ⁶ / {賣}.) Apparent motivation: ‘to deal in’ {販}?
/ga ² lo ³ /	‘cooked rice’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /phuəŋ ⁶ / {飯}.) Apparent motivation: ‘tooth’ {牙} + suffix ‘man’ {佬}.
/gaŋ ⁶ ka ¹ si ¹ /	‘beef’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ge ² giəu ⁷ / {牛肉}.) Apparent motivation: Faho ‘ox’ + ‘threads’ {絲}.
/iāi ¹ /	‘drunk’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tsi ⁵ / {醉}.) Apparent motivation: ‘submerged’ {淹}.
/liəu ¹ ko ¹ /	‘snake’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ʃa ² / {蛇}.) Apparent motivation: ‘to slither’ {溜} + suffix ‘elder brother’ {哥}.
/mion ³ tsə ³ /	‘cloth’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /pu ⁵ / {布}.) Apparent motivation: ‘net’ {網} + suffix ‘son’ {子}.
/paŋ ¹ səŋ ¹ /	‘quilt, coverlet’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /phi ¹ / {被}.) Apparent motivation: ‘to turn over’ (翻) + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
/phio ⁵ səŋ ¹ /	‘white’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /pha ⁷ sə ⁷ / {白色}.) Apparent motivation: ‘to bleach’ {漂} + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
/pə ³ muə ³ ku ³ /	‘fish’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /gu ² / {魚}.) Apparent motivation: ‘wiggle the tail’ {擺尾} + suffix ‘male animal’ {牯}.
/thāi ⁶ /	‘to void (bodily waste)’, ‘to give birth to (said of human beings)’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /o ¹ / ‘to void (bodily waste)’ {屙}; /kiəŋ ¹ / ‘to give birth to (said of human beings)’ {供}.) Apparent motivation: ‘to pay (rent, a debt)’ {佃}.
/than ³ səŋ ¹ /	‘inexpensive’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /phāi ² gēi ² / {便宜}.) Apparent motivation: ‘open’ {坦} + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
/via ⁶ lo ³ tsə ³ /	‘pig’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ku ¹ / {豬}.) Apparent motivation: Informants say the first morpheme is related to the Sībǎo expression /via ⁶ via ⁶ tsiu ¹ / ‘to scream and throw tantrums’; Followed by suffixes ‘man’ {佬} and ‘son’ {子}.

- /vaŋ² kho⁷ tsə³/ ‘unhulled rice’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ku⁷/ {穀}.) Apparent motivation: ‘yellow husk’ {黃殼} + suffix ‘son’ {子}
- /vu³ i² tsə³/ ‘tea’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tsha²/ {茶}.) Apparent motivation: ‘Wǔyí [the famous tea-producing mountain in northernmost Fújiàn]’ {武夷} + suffix ‘son’ {子}.

Metaphor 2: Dubious metaphors suggested by informants

- /lāi⁵ ka¹/ ‘bowl’, ‘plate’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /vaŋ³/ ‘bowl’ {碗}; /phaŋ² tsə³/ ‘plate’ {盤子}.) Apparent motivation: ‘to stand on tiptoe’ + suffix for ‘stud boar’ {家}. Informants suggest the meaning “stand on tiptoe” and say this suggests fragility to them.
- /pāi¹ ku³/ ‘peanut’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /faŋ¹ the⁶/ {番豆}.) Apparent motivation: ‘stripes’ {斑} + suffix ‘male animal’ {牯}. Informants suggest the meaning “striped” and say that it suggests the way peanut roots are pulled into parallel lines when peanuts are being harvested.
- /tsēi⁵ bo¹/ ‘tobacco’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /iāi¹/ {煙}.) Apparent motivation: ‘to seep into’ {浸} + ‘the hair’ {毛}. Informants suggest this etymology, saying that smoke seeps into one’s hair when one smokes.
- /ʃāi²/ ‘to sleep’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /fe⁶/ {睡}.) Apparent motivation: ‘virtuous’ {賢}. Informants suggest this etymology.
- /liau² kēi¹/ ‘dog’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ke³/ {狗}.) Apparent motivation: Informants suggest that it is “Mandarin” for “chats about sutras” (*liáojīng* 聊經), meaning that “a dog knows nothing.”

The remainder of the data

Below are words whose motivation is unexplained — both by myself and by the informants — and so appears to be arbitrary.

- /ba³/ ‘expensive’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /kui⁵/ {貴}.) Apparent motivation: {馬} ‘horse’.
- /bo¹/ ‘five’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ŋ³/ {五}.) Apparent motivation: {毛} ‘hair’.
- /khe⁷ li³/ ‘son, male child’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tsə³/ {子}.) Apparent motivation: (unknown) + Sībǎo suffix /li³/.
- /khe⁷ li³ tsə³/ ‘boy’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /lo³ thə¹ li³/ {老胎}.) Apparent motivation: Faho ‘son’ + suffix ‘son’ {子}.

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/khio ² sio ¹ /	‘urine’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /gio ⁶ / {尿}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/kia ¹ tǎi ⁵ lə ² tsə ³ /	‘child’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /se ⁵ nēi ² li ³ / {細□□}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘plough’ {犁} or ‘soil’ {泥} + suffix ‘son’ {子}.
/ke ¹ tǎi ³ /	‘small’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /se ⁵ / {細}). Apparent motivation: ‘hook’ {鉤} + ‘spot’ {點}.
/fan ² səŋ ¹ /	‘firewood’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /tshio ² / {樵}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
/fi ⁷ səŋ ¹ /	‘gold’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /kēi ¹ / {金}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
/fo ⁵ /	‘thousand’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /tshāi ¹ / {千}). Apparent motivation: ‘goods’ {貨}?
/fəŋ ⁷ /	‘to eat, drink, smoke’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /ʃi ⁷ / {食}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/gan ⁶ ka ¹ /	‘ox (male or female)’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /ge ² / {牛}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix for ‘stud boar’ {家}.
/go ² /	‘to burn’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /tʃho ¹ / {燒}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/ho ⁶ lan ⁵ /	‘beggar’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /tho ³ ʃi ⁷ 8 kha ⁷ / {討食客}, /kia ⁵ fo ⁵ tsə ³ / {□□子}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/hə ⁵ səŋ ¹ /	‘feces’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /ʃi ³ / {屎}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
/hə ² /	‘seven’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /tshi ⁷ / {七}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/kho ⁷ /	‘ten’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /ʃi ⁷ / {十}). Apparent motivation: ‘shell’ {殼}.
/kuə ⁵ ko ¹ /	‘husband’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /lo ³ kəŋ ¹ / {老公}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘elder brother’ {哥}.
/kuəŋ ³ thoŋ ² ku ³ /	‘vehicle (general)’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /tʃha ¹ / {車}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘male animal’ {牯}.
/lan ³ i ² ko ¹ /	‘clothing’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /saŋ ¹ / {衫}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘elder brother’ {哥}.
/lə ¹ ki ¹ /	‘house’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /vu ⁷ / {屋}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/lə ² /	‘six’. (Ordinary Sibǎo /tiə ⁷ / {六}). Apparent motivation: (unknown).
/lə ² i ⁵ /	‘to know, understand’ (<i>zhīdao</i> 知道, <i>dǒngdé</i> 懂得). Sibǎo /ʃe ⁷ tə ⁷ / {識得}, /ʃo ³ tə ⁷ / {曉得} Apparent motivation: (unknown) + ‘idea’ {意}?

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/lɛʔ ⁷ tʃɑŋ ¹ /	‘to walk’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /hɑŋ ² / {行}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + ‘spread’ {張} (?).
/la ² səŋ ¹ /	‘tin’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /sia ^{ʔ7} / {錫}). Apparent motivation: (unknown; appears as second syllable in ‘head’ /the ² la ² /) + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
/lɔ ² tsə ¹ /	(greeting used to alert another speaker that Faho is to be used) Apparent motivation: ‘plough’ {犁} or ‘soil’ {泥} + (unknown).
/lɔ ² tʃo ⁵ /	‘sweet potato’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /faŋ ¹ ʃi ² / {番薯}). Apparent motivation: ‘soil’ {泥} + ‘to shine’ {照} (?).
/lɔ ² ʃi ² /	‘man’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /lo ³ pa ^{ʔ7} li ³ / {老伯}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/maŋ ¹ saŋ ¹ ku ³ /	‘tiger’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /lo ³ fu ³ / {老虎}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘male animal’ {牯}.
/phaŋ ⁵ /	‘three’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /saŋ ¹ / {三}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/phe ^{ʔ7} /	‘eight’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /pae ^{ʔ7} / {八}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/phuɛ ⁶ lo ³ /	‘pork’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ku ¹ giəŋ ^{ʔ7} / {豬肉}). Apparent motivation: ‘to roast (peanuts)’ {焙} + suffix ‘man’ {佬}.
/pia ^{ʔ7} səŋ ¹ /	‘wife’, ‘woman’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /pu ¹ giaŋ ² / ‘wife’ {□娘}; /pu ¹ giaŋ ² li ³ / ‘(married) woman’ {□娘□}). Apparent motivation: ‘wall’ {壁} + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
/pəʔ ⁷ i ² tsə ³ /	‘gummy paste made of glutinous rice flour’ (Mandarin <i>ciba</i> 糍粑). Sībǎo /tʃhi ² pa ¹ / {糍粑} Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘son’ {子}.
/sio ¹ ko ¹ /	‘paper money’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /tʃe ³ phio ⁵ / {紙票}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘elder brother’ {哥}.
/ti ⁶ tsi ³ /	‘water’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /fi ³ / {水}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/to ^{ʔ7} so ^{ʔ7} /	‘much, many’, ‘generous’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /to ¹ / ‘much, many’ {多}, /tiaŋ ⁶ thɛ ⁶ / ‘generous’ {量大}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/tsāi ¹ ko ¹ /	‘rat’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /lo ³ ʃi ³ / {老鼠}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘elder brother’ {哥}.
/tsaŋ ⁵ pa ^{ʔ7} /	‘salt’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /iäi ² / {鹽}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
/tshāi ¹ kuəŋ ⁵ /	‘large, big’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /thɛ ⁶ / {大}). Apparent motivation: unknown.

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- /tshāi¹ kuəŋ⁵ lə² tsə³/ ‘senior person: official, especially an official higher in rank than the speaker, elder within the family’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /kuaŋ¹/ ‘official’ {官}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘plough’ {犁} or ‘soil’ {泥} + suffix ‘son’ {子}.
- /tshio¹ səŋ¹/ ‘evening’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ia⁶ pu¹/ {夜晡}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
- /tshə⁵ kuəŋ⁷ li³/ ‘chicken’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /kə¹/ {雞}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
- /tsa¹/ ‘two’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /gi⁶/ (name of the numeral) {二}, /tiəŋ³/ (counting form) {兩}). Apparent motivation: unknown.
- /tu⁷ lo³ tsə³/ ‘uncooked rice’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /bi³/ {米}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix ‘man’ {佬} + suffix /tsə³/.
- /tʃhi² li³/ ‘girl, unmarried young woman’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /lo³ muə⁶ li³/ {老妹 □}). Apparent motivation: (unknown) + suffix /li³/.
- /tʃo⁵ pae⁷/ ‘egg’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /luaŋ³/ {卵}). Apparent motivation: ‘to shine’ {照}? + ‘eight’ {八}?.
- /tʃəŋ¹ ku³/ ‘old (not young)’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /lo³/ {老}). Apparent motivation: ‘to spread’ {張}? + suffix ‘male animal’ {牯}.
- /vaŋ¹/ ‘nine’, ‘ten thousand’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /kiə³/ ‘nine’ {九}; /vaŋ⁶/ ‘ten thousand’ {萬}). Apparent motivation: ‘curved, bent’ {彎}.
- /ʃa² lo³ tsə³/ ‘duck’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /a⁷ tsə³/ {鴨子}). Apparent motivation: ‘snake’ {蛇} + suffixes ‘man’ {佬} and ‘son’ {子}.
- /ʃa⁷ səŋ¹/ ‘to die’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /si³/ {死}). Apparent motivation: ‘stone’ {石} + suffix ‘grandson’ {孫}.
- /ŋ² gio² tə⁷/ ‘not to know, not to understand’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ŋ² ʃe⁷ tə⁷/ {□識得}, /ŋ² ʃo³ tə⁷/ {□曉得}). Apparent motivation: ‘not’ + (unknown).
- /ŋ² lə² i⁵/ ‘not to know, not to understand’. (Ordinary Sībǎo /ŋ² ʃe⁷ tə⁷/ {□識得}, /ŋ² ʃo³ tə⁷/ {□曉得}). Apparent motivation: regular negative particle + Faho /lə² i⁵/ ‘to know, understand’.

Addendum: Words unattested in Faho

As an aid to future work on Faho, and to illustrate some of the semantic area not covered by it, I list below those words that I tried to elicit but for which I could not get forms. The English gloss is enclosed in parentheses, followed by the romanized Mandarin form used in elicitation. Words are listed alphabetically by romanized form,

with monosyllables before compounds (*bǐ* before *bízi*), tone secondary to letters (*hòutiān* before *hóuzi* and *qiáomài* before *qiāoménn* but *shú* before *shǔ* before *shù*), with initials rigorously distinguished (*sǔn* and all *s-* words before *shàng* and all *sh-* words), and with compounds in order by component syllables rather than as unanalyzed sequences of letters (*dìdì* before *diàn*, *fénmù* before *fēng*).

A: *ái*: ‘short in height’; *āngzāng*: ‘dirty’; *āo*: ‘protruding’; **B:** *báitiān*: ‘daytime’; *bàizi*: ‘rice darnell’; *bàn*: ‘half’; *bàn*: ‘lobe (of a citrus fruit)’; *bānjiā*: ‘to move (one’s household, belongs)’; *bǎng*: ‘to tie, bind’; *báo~bó*: ‘thin’; *bào*: ‘to embrace’; *báozi*: ‘hailstone’; *bēi*: ‘to carry on the back’; *bèi*: ‘“-fold”’: measure word for extent more than’; *běibian*: ‘north’; *bēizi*: ‘cup, glass, mug’; *bèn*: ‘stupid’; *bǐ*: ‘pen, writing implement’; *bízi*: ‘nose’; *biān*: ‘side’; *biānfú*: ‘bat (kind of animal)’; *bǐng*: cake: ‘cake’; *bìng*: ‘sickness’; *bófù*: ‘father’s brother’; *bómǔ*: ‘father’s brother’s wife’; *bùjiēshí*: ‘insubstantial’; **C:** —; **CH:** *cháyè*: ‘tealeaves’; *cháng*: ‘long’; *chángzi*: ‘intestines’; *chóngzi*: ‘bug’; *chuán*: ‘boat’; *chuízi*: ‘hammer’; **D:** *dàjiā*: ‘everyone’; *dàizi*: ‘bag, pocket’; *dàizi*: ‘belt, strap’; *dàng*: ‘to pawn’; *dāo*: ‘blade, knife’; *dàozi*: ‘rice (the plant)’; *dǐ*: ‘bottom’; *dìdì*: ‘younger brother’; *diàn*: ‘a store’; *diàn*: ‘mattress’; *diāobǎn*: ‘carved woodblocks’; *dōngtiān*: ‘winter’; *dōngxi*: ‘thing’; *dǒuli*: ‘leaf rainhat’; *dú*: ‘poison’; *dǔbó*: ‘to gamble’; *duǎn*: ‘short in length’; *dūn*: ‘to squat’; **E:** —; **F:** *fàng*: ‘to let go, put’; *fàngpì*: ‘to fart’; *fénmù*: ‘grave, tomb’; *fēng*: ‘bee’; *fēng*: ‘the wind’; *fù*: ‘wealthy’; *fùqīn*: ‘father’; **G:** *gāng*: ‘steel’; *gāng*: ‘ceramic storage pot’; *gāo*: ‘tall’; *gěi*: ‘to give’; *gōngde*: ‘male (of an animal)’; *guā*: ‘melon’; *guāizhàng*: ‘walking cane’; *guǐ*: ‘ghost, demon, ghou’; *guō*: ‘wok: cooking pot’; **H:** *héshàng*: ‘monk’; *hézi*: ‘box’; *hēisè*: ‘black’; *hòutiān*: ‘the day after tomorrow’; *hóuzi*: ‘monkey’; *húzi*: ‘beard’; **J:** *jìnnǚ*: ‘prostitute’; *jìnnǚyuàn*: ‘house of prostitution’; *jiǎ*: ‘false’; *jiàqián*: ‘price’; *jiǎo*: ‘foot, leg’; *jiǎoyìn*: ‘footprint’; **K:** *kuàizi*: ‘chopsticks’; **L:** *lǎobǎn*: ‘boss’; *lǚ*: ‘aluminum’; **M:** *mǎ*: ‘horse’; *mǎyǐ*: ‘ant’; *màn*: ‘slow’; *màozi*: ‘hat’; *mén*: ‘door’; *māo*: ‘cat’; *mǐduì*: ‘foot-operated rice-pestle’; *mǔde*: ‘female (of an animal)’; *mùbǎn*: ‘wood, board’; **N:** *nàge*: ‘that’; *niǎo*: ‘bird’; *nǚxù*: ‘son-in-law’; **O:** —; **P:** *píngzi*: ‘bottle’; **Q:** *qímǎ*: ‘to ride astride’; *qiánnián*: ‘the year before last’; *qiáomài*: ‘buckwheat’; *qiāoménn*: ‘to knock on the door’; *qiézi*: ‘eggplant’; *qín*: ‘strummed musical instrument’; *qīng*: ‘light in weight’; *qīngsè*: ‘blue-green’; *qù*: ‘to go’; *quē*: ‘to lack’; **R:** *rè*: ‘hot in temperature’; **S:** *sǔn*: ‘bamboo shoot’; **SH:** *shàng*: ‘to ascend’; *shēn*: ‘deep’; *shì*: ‘(the copula)’; *shǒu*: ‘hand’; *shú*: ‘to redeem (something pawned)’; *shù*: ‘to count, calculate’; *shù*: ‘tree’; **T:** *tián*: ‘rice-paddy’; *tiāo*: ‘to carry on a shoulder-yoke’; *tiě*: ‘iron’; *tóng*: ‘copper’; *tóu*: ‘head’; *tǔ*: ‘to vomit’; **W:** *wǎng*: ‘net’; *wàngjì*: ‘to forget’; *wèng*: ‘ceramic storage pot’; *Wú*: ‘surname Wú 吳’; **X:** *xǐ*: ‘to wash’; *xifù*: ‘daughter-

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in-law'; *xiàwǔ*: 'afternoon'; *xiāngzi*: 'carton, crate'; *xiǎotānfàn*: 'street- or market-vendor'; *Xú*: 'surname Xú 徐'; **Y**: *yāpiàn*: 'opium'; *yātou*: 'female servant'; *yī*: 'one'; *yínzi*: 'silver'; **Z**: *zǎo*: 'early'; **ZH**: *zhàng*: 'account'; *zhǎo*: 'to look for'; *zhège*: 'this'; *zhǐ*: 'paper'; *zhōngwǔ*: 'noon'; *zhúzi*: 'bamboo'.

Appendix III: Field Report on Běijīng Chūndiǎn, with notes on the motivation of words

The city of Běijīng has a secret language called Chūndiǎn (written 春典) that used to be well known locally and of which I have been able to record a few forms. Chūndiǎn is a secret language of itinerants and street people (*jiānghú hēihuà* 江湖黑話) but many older Běijīng people know some words in it. If it did originate as a true secret language, it is now merely another variety of local slang — a clear case of the introduction of a substantial new body of lexicon into a mainstream language. The name Chūndiǎn apparently comes from the Chūndiǎn word *chūn* 'to say' (perhaps derived from *chún* 唇 'lip'?) plus Mandarin *diǎn* 'a canon, dictionary' (*diǎn* appears in some Chūndiǎn expressions in the sense of 'line of work', e.g., *jīndiǎn* 'the fortune-telling profession', Chén Gāng 1985:135).

My materials for this secret language are sketchy. See the references for details of my sources. Many of these forms are also found in Chén Gāng (1985), and I have occasionally consulted Xú Shìróng (1990). After my own materials, I have included other Chūndiǎn matter culled from Chén Gāng, for fuller consideration. I hope it will be seen that there is a much higher percentage of metaphoric slang in Chén Gāng's material than in what my informant offered. I must say that as much as I enjoy reading Chén Gāng's book, I have reservations about some of the forms included there; in general some of the entries in his dictionary seem to have been taken from other, less comprehensive books on Běijīng dialect, and it is not clear how descriptively accurate his materials are. Chén Gāng has also included *liúmánghuà* 流氓話 'hoodlums' cant' and forms of slang from many other parts of society. Of course, other kinds of Běijīng slang may contain words that originated in Chūndiǎn, and those cannot be identified and included here.

In fieldwork, these forms were originally notated phonetically and later converted to Pīnyīn. Tones are notated objectively, which has two consequences: first, neutral tone is transcribed without a tone mark, meaning without evidence of etymological tone; second, etymological tone /3/ is transcribed as /2/ when it changes, as it does before actual /3/ or before an original /3/ that has become neutral. Běijīng words are alphabetized by whole syllables, with tone considered only when there are no other

distinctions; so *chǔtōu* before *chuāng* (*chu* before *chuang*) but *bàigǎr* before *báiqián* (*bai + g* before *bai + q*, regardless of tone). In the case of *érhuà* 兒化 (rhotacized final) syllables, no attempt is made to restore etymological /-i/ or /-n/, so Mandarin *pár* 耙兒, *páir* 牌兒, and *pánr* 盤兒 would all be recorded here as *pár* [p^haɿ]; there is no distinction in my informant's accent, as opposed to *pánggr* 旁兒 [p^hɛ̃ɿ]. Pinyin does not always make accurate distinctions with respect to *érhuà* in tones /1/ and /2/ (e.g., [ɛɿ] 兒而 vs. [ɜ:ɿ] 兒蛾), but we seem to be stuck with it.

Metaphor 1: Clear cases

diǎr (suffix meaning 'person'). Apparent motivation: perhaps 'spot' {點兒}, i.e., an insignificant singleton? Attested in:

huódiǎr 'wealthy person'. Chūndiǎn *huó* 'prosperous' + *diǎr*.

shāitángdiǎr 'foreigner'. Chūndiǎn *shāitáng* 'foreign' + *diǎr*.

niànzhāodiǎr 'blind person'. Chūndiǎn *niàn* 'to lack' + *zhāo* 'eye' + *diǎr*.

hǎi 'to be very plentiful'. Apparent motivation: perhaps 海 '(as abundant as) the sea'.

huǒ 'good, prosperous' (used chiefly as a modifier). Apparent motivation: Mandarin 火 'fire' → 'like a roaring fire'? Attested in:

huódiǎr 'wealthy person'. Chūndiǎn *huǒ* + *diǎr* (suffix for person).

kěn 'food'. Apparent motivation: apparently *kěn* 啃/齧 'to gnaw'. Chén Gāng (1985:148) gives a form in tone /4/, which informant rejects.

lǎoqiāngr 'father'. Apparent motivation: 'old spear', suggesting an experienced hand; cf. Mandarin *lǎoqiāng* 老槍 'opium or tobacco addict'; cf. also Běijīng *pāi lǎoqiāngr* 'to put on airs, act more important or knowledgeable than someone else'.

mǎzi 'person' (has derisive sense). Apparent motivation: suggestive of 碼子 'token, chit'. Cf. Běijīng *límǎzi* 裡碼子 'one's own in-group' (Chén Gāng 1985:173). Attested in:

kēleng mǎzi 'country bumpkin'. *Kēleng* is otherwise unknown.

pǎi (verb for occurrence of different forms of weather). Apparent motivation: suggestive of Běijīng *pǎi* {迫} '從上衝下 [to rush downward]' (Chén Gāng 1985:210) Attested in:

pǎijīn 'to rain'. Chūndiǎn *pǎi* + 'gold'.

pǎiyín 'to snow'. Chūndiǎn *pǎi* + 'silver'.

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pǎi diūzi ‘the wind blows, there is a breeze’. Chūndiǎn *pǎi* + 丟 ‘to toss’ + noun suffix *zi*.

shuǐ ‘bad, low-quality’. Apparent motivation: apparently Mandarin 水 ‘water; watery’.
Attested in:

shuǐmǎzi ‘poor person’. Chūndiǎn *shuǐ* + *mǎzi* Chūndiǎn for ‘person’.

shǎitáng ‘foreign’ (a modifier). Apparent motivation: perhaps 色糖 ‘colored sweets’, alluding to their striking appearance and the ease of stealing from them. Attested in:

shǎitángdiǎr ‘foreigner’. Chūndiǎn *shǎitáng* + *diǎr* (suffix for ‘person’).

shǎitáng lizi ‘foreign-style magic show’. Chūndiǎn *shǎitáng* + Běijīng *lizi* 利子 ‘戲法 [magic]’ (Chén Gāng 1985:177).

yáng ‘south’. Apparent motivation: *yáng* 陽 is common in place-names that are on the southern side of a mountain; perhaps that is the motivation of this word. But no pattern is formed with the names of the other directions.

zhāozi ‘eye’. Apparent motivation: perhaps from Mandarin *zhāo* 昭 ‘clear, bright’. Attested in:

niànzhāodiǎr ‘blind person’. Chūndiǎn *niàn* ‘to lack’ + *zhāo* + *diǎr* (suffix for ‘person’).

Metaphor 2: Possible cases

chūn ‘to say’. Apparent motivation: perhaps derived from *chún* 唇 ‘lip’, with change of tone? Chén Gāng 春 ‘springtime’ with no obvious meaning; glossed “把內部機密告訴(某人), 傳 [to reveal secret information to (someone), spread]” (1985:41). this second meaning is foreign to my main informant. Cf. Běijīng *dānchūn* ‘to speak alone, without accompaniment’ (said of a *xiàngshēng* comic performance).

dào ‘east’. Apparent motivation: the names of “east” and “west” together are *dàoqiè* which sounds like “to steal” {盜竊}; perhaps the words for the four cardinal directions *dōngxī nánběi* originate in a fixed saying in Mandarin.

guǒshí ‘female person’. Apparent motivation: apparently 果實 ‘fruit’, but the word for ‘male’, *sūnshí* has no obviously parallel meaning. The first syllable appears to be attested in:

cāngguo ‘old woman’.

shéguo, kùguo ‘prostitute’.

mótou ‘mother’. Apparent motivation: *cf.* Mandarin *mótou* 魔頭 ‘fiend; tyrant’.

qiè ‘west’. Apparent motivation: see discussion under *dào*, above.

sūnshí ‘male person’. Apparent motivation: *sūn* is apparently 孫 ‘grandchild’. But if *sūn* is in contrast to *guǒ* in *guǒshí* ‘female person’, its motivation is not clear.

Attested in:

yīngzhǎo sūn ‘prosecutor’ (*bàn’àn guānrén*). Apparent motivation: first word is ‘eagle’s talon’.

Opaque examples

chǔ ‘money’. Apparent motivation: unknown; homophonous with ‘pestle’ {杵}. Attested in:

niànchǔ ‘to have no money’. Chūndiǎn *niàn* ‘to lack’ + *chǔ*.

hāisǎ ‘traditional Chinese gown’ (*chángpáo*). Apparent motivation: unknown. Cf. Běijīng *sár* ‘disheveled or ragged clothes’. The second syllable is attested in:

hùtier sǎ ‘suit, either Zhongshan-style or Western’. Běijīng *hùtiěr* ‘butterfly’ + *sǎ* (*cf.* Mandarin *húdié* 蝴蝶 ‘butterfly’).

mì ‘north’. Apparent motivation: unknown.

niàn ‘few, to lack, of low quality, bad’ (used chiefly as a modifier). Apparent motivation: unknown. Attested in:

niànchǔ ‘to have no money’. Chūndiǎn *niàn* + *chǔ* Chūndiǎn for ‘money’.

niànzhāodiǎr ‘blind person’. Chūndiǎn *niàn* + Chūndiǎn *zhāo* ‘eye’ + *diǎr* (suffix for ‘person’).

niàn kěn ‘to have nothing to eat, to go hungry’. Chūndiǎn *niàn* + Chūndiǎn *kěn* ‘food’.

niàn zànzi ‘fool’. Second part of word unknown.

páiqín. ‘brother’ (not attested as a free form). Apparent motivation: unknown. Attested in:

shàng páiqín ‘elder brother’. Chūndiǎn ‘upper’ + *páiqín*.

xià páiqín ‘younger brother’. Chūndiǎn ‘lower’ + *páiqín*.

zuànxī ‘afraid’. Apparent motivation: unknown.

The following forms are generally unknown to my informants but appear as *jiānghú* ‘itinerant’ cant in Chén Gāng (1985). In some cases my principal informant feels she can understand these expressions, though she declines say she ‘knows’ them. I include them as an effort to gauge the extent of this language known to an ordinary person, and from that the extent of overlexicalization in Chūndiǎn. There are a few

synonyms but my principal informant, who learned this material in daily life growing up in Běijīng, seems to know only one synonym as part of the material she supplied to me: two words for “prostitute”.

Metaphor 1: Clear cases

ānzhuāng ‘to have something to eat’. Apparent motivation: 安裝 ‘to install’. Informant explains this as [the police] put an extra man on a case (“[jǐngchá] jiā yíge rén lái jiǎnchá fànren”). She notes the word *guàzhuāng* ‘to tail’.

bǎ chǔ ‘to give money’. Apparent motivation: 把 ‘to grasp’ + ‘Chūndiǎn ‘money’. Informant can understand this expression.

bàigǎr ‘to bow before one’s leader’ (said of beggars). Apparent motivation: ‘to bow’ + ‘leader’s staff’. Informant feels this expression means ‘to continue doing something’. She says there is a custom of using a staff (*gǎr*) to move the beggars in a troupe along, and when one leader retires, the next one has to bow to the stick before taking it. Used jokingly in the past in the expression *jiùcǐ bàigǎr* ‘let me give it to you here and now’.

báiqián, *báiqiár* ‘a kind of daylight burglar’. Apparent motivation: ‘white (→ daylight)’ + ‘take with pincers’; cf. *hēiqián/hēiqiánr*. Informant understands *qián* as ‘money’, hearing this word to mean a kind of pickpocket (*báiqiánzéi*), so-called because they use a sharpened copper coin (*tóngbǎn*) to slit open pockets.

bāoguō ‘to take out a loan on someone else’s behalf’. Apparent motivation: ‘to wrap up’. Informant hears this as a regular Běijīng expression meaning “Let me handle the whole affair” (“*shìqing quánbù guī wǒ le*”). Can also be abbreviated to a single syllable, *bāo* 包, common throughout the Mandarin world for ‘to take full financial responsibility for’ (e.g., when chartering a bus or suite of rooms).

bì niánzi ‘to take part in a con; associates in a con’. Apparent motivation: *bì* 比 ‘to join, side by side’ (as in *bijiān* 比肩 ‘to work shoulder to shoulder’) + Chūndiǎn *niánzi* ‘shill’. Informant hears this to mean ‘to form a group (said of people), usually for something nefarious’.

chāzi ‘short knife’. Apparent motivation: 叉子 ‘trident, fork’, also something sharp that can be stuck in.

chǔménzi ‘trick for making money’. Apparent motivation: Chūndiǎn ‘money’ + ‘trick, way’.

chǔtou ‘money’. Informant prefers the form *chǔ*, given above. There are various compounds such as *hēichǔ*, *diàochǔ*, etc. Apparent motivation: Chūndiǎn ‘money’ + noun suffix.

chuǎng yáozi ‘to break into a house at night’; also *chuǎng yuànzi*. Apparent motivation: ‘to force one’s way into a brothel’. These appear to be normal Mandarin.

cuánzi ‘pickpocket’. Apparent motivation: nominalized form of Mandarin *cuán* 攢 ‘to gather (money)’.

diào chǔ ‘to be tricked into spending money unnecessarily’. Apparent motivation: ‘to catch/be caught with a hook’ + Chūndiǎn for ‘money’. Informant says ‘to borrow money’.

gǎr ‘troupe of beggars’. Apparent motivation: 桿兒 ‘staff’. Informant says this is the *quánzhàng* 權杖 ‘staff of authority’ held by the leader of a troupe of beggars.

guàzhàng ‘the itinerant martial arts profession’. Apparent motivation: 褂子 ‘short jacket’ + 行兒 ‘business, profession’.

guāndōnghuò ‘dead child, wrapped in a bag made of rushes and discarded’. Apparent motivation: 關東貨 ‘Manchurian goods’.

hāyāo ‘to suffer a heavy gambling loss’. Apparent motivation: ‘to stoop’ + ‘the waist’. Informant knows a form *hāyāo*, ‘to bend over’, especially ‘to bow to’ (= Mandarin *wānyāo*). The sense ‘to suffer a heavy gambling loss’ is a *xīhòuyǔ*: when you bow too deeply you ‘*táibuqilái*’ (can’t straighten up again = can’t pay off your debts).

hēichǔ ‘amount of money paid in excess of what should have been paid’. Apparent motivation: ‘black’ + Chūndiǎn *chǔ* ‘money’. Informant: ‘any illicit money’, also ‘any receiptless expense’.

hēiqián, *hēiqiár* ‘night burglar’. Apparent motivation: ‘black (→ night)’ + ‘take with pincers’; cf. *báiqián/báiqiár*.

jiàzhuang ‘corpse of a murdered person’. Apparent motivation: Mandarin 嫁妝 ‘dowry gifts, trousseau’.

jiān ‘real, authentic’. Apparent motivation: Mandarin 堅 ‘firm’.

jūnchǔ ‘to divide a sum of money’. Apparent motivation: ‘evenly divided’ + Chūndiǎn for ‘money’. Informant says she can understand this, though it is new to her.

kāikēngr ‘to start working as a prostitute’ (Chén Gāng: ‘kāishǐ dàng yuèhù 開始當樂戶’). 開 ‘to open’ + 坑兒 ‘the pit’.

kuì ‘to pay a bribe; a bribe’. Apparent motivation: Mandarin 餽 ‘to give as a gift’.

lǎochái ‘former policeman or detective who has become a vagabond’. Apparent motivation: noun prefix + 柴 ‘tough’.

lǎoróng ‘the profession of being a thief’. Apparent motivation: noun prefix + *róng* Chūndiǎn ‘to steal’.

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láoruǎr ‘a kind of pickpocket’? Not listed separately; mentioned under *wúlǎo* (Chén Gāng 1985:286). Apparent motivation: noun prefix + *ruǎr*, defined in Chén Gāng (1985:238) as a kind of basket or bag used in weighing; the meanings ‘bag’ and ‘pocket’ are represented with the same word *kǒudài* in northern Chinese.

lǐmǎzi, *lǐdàorde* ‘one’s own in-group’. Apparent motivation: 裡碼子 ‘inner’ + ‘token, chit’, 裡道兒的 ‘inner’ + ‘way’ + (noun suffix).

lǐngkòng ‘to shill: to pretend to be an ordinary customer in order to entice real customers to spend their money’. Apparent motivation: 領 ‘to elicit’ + 空 ‘inexperienced’.

ní ‘to be in difficulties’. Apparent motivation: 泥 ‘mud’. Informant rejects this as Chūndiǎn, and feels it is just a slang usage of *wǎini* 崴泥 ‘to get bogged down in mud’ → ‘to be in difficulties’.

niāntuǎn ‘to keep silent and say nothing’. *Niān* 拈 ‘to pinch’ + a Chūndiǎn syllable that may mean ‘to be skillful of speech’ (see *tuǎngāng*, below) → ‘to keep one’s mouth shut’.

niánzi ‘shill: the secret assistant of a con artist; secret plant in the middle of an unsuspecting audience’; cf. *yuán niánzi*, *lā niánzi*, *niár*; *tǔ niánzi*. Apparent motivation: nominalized form of *nián* 黏 ‘to stick to’.

pándào ‘to use secret language to see if the hearer is of one’s party’. Apparent motivation: 盤 ‘to examine closely’ + ‘way’ ~ ‘to say’. Informant says she can understand this, and adds that in Běijīng this expression is used especially to mean ‘to gauge someone’s level (mutually, usually)’.

páotuǐde ‘person leading the vagabond’s life’. Apparent motivation: 跑腿的 ‘errandboy’.

piáo ‘human head’. Apparent motivation: 瓢 ‘gourd dipper’. Informant can understand this.

piáobàzi ‘boss, leader’. Chūndiǎn ‘head’ + 把子 ‘gang member’. Informant can understand this.

qièxiàng ‘person in one’s own group who comes from elsewhere’; ‘beggars fleeing to Běijīng from elsewhere with their whole families’. Apparent motivation: Běijīng dialect *qiè* ‘exotic’ + *xiàng* ‘appearance’. Informant cannot confirm this form, but confirms *qiè* as meaning ‘elsewhere’: *qièkǒu* means ‘accent from elsewhere in the north, especially Manchuria; *hěn qiè* means ‘non-local sounding (of speech) — used only of northerners, e.g. people from Héběi, Shānxī, Shāndōng, etc., never Jiāngsū or Zhèjiāng, etc.’.

sǎoliàngzi ‘to steal in the morning’. Apparent motivation: 掃 ‘to sweep’ + 亮子 ‘transom’.

shěn ‘to tell the fortune of’. Perhaps 審 ‘to examine’.

shùnzi ‘bachelor’. Apparent motivation: 順子 ‘one for whom things go smoothly’.

tiē ‘to attract marks for a con’. Apparent motivation: ‘to stick to’. There is another form *tiēxuē*: to assist in attracting marks; often used as *tiēxuē bì niánzi*. Informant accepts the expression *gěi biérén tiēxuē* as regular Běijīng slang, meaning ‘to talk about how wonderful someone is’.

tǔ niánzi ‘person who specializes in cheating small sums at gambling’. Apparent motivation: ‘local’ + Chūndiǎn ‘skill’.

wòdàn ‘a plant or spy’. Closely related to *wòdǐ*. Apparent motivation: 馱蛋 ‘reclining’ + ‘egg’ → ‘poached egg’, i.e., something to be handled gently.

wòdǐ ‘a plant or spy’; ‘to get information about one’s enemies’. Apparent motivation: 馱底 ‘to rest at’ + ‘the bottom’. Informant insists that only the verbal definition is correct: ‘to supply this information’; the person who does this is called *wòdǐde*.

wúlǎo ‘the five kinds of objectionable people’: *lǎoyuè* ‘con man who cheats at gambling’, *lǎohér* ‘long-time itinerant’, *lǎoróng* ‘thief’, *lǎoruǎr* (unknown; see above), *lǎochái* ‘ex-policeman’. This expression is not familiar to my main informant.

xǐ ‘a mark: a con-artist’s victim’. Apparent motivation: nominalized form of *xǐ* 洗 ‘to wash’ (cf. *English to take to the cleaners*).

yèchaháng ‘person who makes a living displaying martial arts’. *Yècha* 夜叉 ‘yaksha, a kind of ferocious monster (of which the female is said to be even more horrible than the male)’ + *háng* ‘profession’.

yèzi ‘paper money’. Apparent motivation: 葉子 ‘leaves’.

Metaphor 2: Possible cases

génian ‘to keep silent’. Apparent motivation: 隔年兒 ‘the year after’, perhaps suggesting a long period of silence; Chén Gāng has *génian*, written 格念 (1985:90). Cf. *niāntuǎn*.

jīndiǎr ‘the fortune-telling profession’. Apparent motivation: ‘gold’ + ‘canon, dictionary’.

jīnmǎimai ‘the profession of telling fortunes by facial structure specifically’. Apparent motivation: ‘gold’ (see previous entry) + ‘business’.

tǎle ‘to have heavy gambling losses’. Related to *tā* 塌 ‘to collapse’? Or is this the same morpheme as ‘pagoda’, i.e., ‘one’s debts are like a pile of money’?

tǔ ‘to die’. Apparent motivation: ‘the earth’, or perhaps ‘to vomit’.

tuǎngāng ‘to make a living by one’s verbal skills’ (“*mài kǒuchǐ* 賣口齒”). On *tuǎn* see *niāntuǎn*; *gāng* can have the meaning of skilled: *gāngkou* means ‘a gift for verbal persuasion’ according to Chén Gāng (1985:86).

Opaque examples

bǎhuáng ‘to give [a customer] a look of appraisal’ (said of fortune-tellers, etc.). Apparent motivation: 把 ‘to grasp’ + (unknown).

cǎimér ‘professional magician; magic as a profession’. Apparent motivation: 彩門兒 ‘ornate gateway’ — nature of metaphor unknown.

chī géniar ‘to work a con taking advantage of religious belief or a belief in supernatural forces’; cf. *génian*. Apparent motivation: Mandarin *chī* 吃 ‘to eat’ + Chūndiǎn *géniar* ‘to keep silent’; nature of metaphor is unclear.

huàguō ‘street performer’. Apparent motivation: unknown.

lǎohér ‘long-time itinerant’. Apparent motivation: unknown.

lǎoyuè ‘person who lives on winnings from cheating at gambling’; also called *liǎdiǎr*. Informant can accept both forms. Apparent motivation: unknown.

pímér ‘the profession of selling medicines as an itinerant’. Apparent motivation: unknown.

qiàngpár ‘fortune teller who reads people’s faces’. Apparent motivation: (unknown) + common slang word for ‘face’.

qiāotuō ‘to help out during a con’; ‘to find out information about a fortune-teller’s mark’. Apparent motivation: unknown. Informant offers a possibly unrelated form: *qiāoda qiāoda*: = *dǎting dǎting, wènyiwèn* ‘to ask around, try to get information’. Informant’s form sounds as though it means something like ‘to knock at various people’s doors’.

róng ‘to steal’. Chén Gāng writes 榮 ‘glory’ (1985:236); motivation unknown.

tiǎohàr ‘to sell medicinal herbs’. Apparent motivation: ‘to elicit’ + nominalized form of *hài* 害 ‘harm’ or *hàn* 汗 ‘sweat’.

wānggantiáo ‘a kind of gambling game’. Apparent motivation: unknown. More commonly known as *tào qiānzi*.

wǎgelàng ‘to die’. Apparent motivation: unknown. Not known to informant, who offers a slang word *gěrlǎng*: ‘to die’, which she says is in imitation of the sound of the stick beaten to time the paces of pall-bearers. There is a more widely known slang word *gěrpì* also ‘to die’, apparently 囔兒屁 ‘belch’ + ‘fart’.

xīngr ‘a con: a trick for conning someone’. Chén Gāng writes 腥兒 ‘strong, unpleasant smell of fish or flesh’. Apparent motivation: unknown.

References

Contains the following sections:

- A. Conventions
- B. Sources for Dialect Forms Cited
- C. Bibliography

A. Conventions

Mandarin is romanized in Pinyin.

Transcription of dialect forms is neither wholly phonemic nor wholly phonetic. The Chinese syllable is divided into the three constituent elements of initial, final, and tone, without further subdivision. Tone is ordinarily given in phonemic form: tone categories are written in superscript after each syllable. The system of tone numbering followed here is:

1 <i>yīnpíng</i> 陰平	2 <i>yángpíng</i> 陽平
3 <i>yīnshǎng</i> 陰上	4 <i>yángshǎng</i> 陽上
5 <i>yīnqù</i> 陰去	6 <i>yángqù</i> 陽去
7 <i>yīnrù</i> 陰入	8 <i>yángnrù</i> 陽入

Note that this is different from the system common in Taiwan and native to the Southern tradition in China. When two or more tone categories are indistinguishable because of tone sandhi, I have written both numbers (as in Lóngyán's word /hue³⁵ pie⁴/, where the first syllable is etymologically /hue⁵/ but indistinguishable from /hue³/ in context).

Tone contour is written in subscript or between square brackets [], using the widely known Chao tone numbers (1 is low, 5 is high).

B. Sources for dialect forms cited.

Běijīng 北京, formerly also Běipíng 北平. The dialects spoken in this city provide the phonological and syntactic basis for the standard language called Mandarin in English, but differ from it considerably in some areas of lexicon. My principal informant for Běijīng dialect forms is Mrs. HUANG Yi [Huáng Yì] 黃虞, born 1929, a native of the Xīzhimén 西直門 district, during 1994-1997 in Seattle. Most of the Chūndiǎn forms were originally supplied by her brother, Mr. Kenny Huang [Huáng Gēng] 黃庚, born 1926.

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Kǒngfū 孔夫. Village in Kǎnshì 坎市 Township (as of 1993 — it has since been redistricted), in Yǒngdìng 永定 County, near the border with Lóngyán (q.v.). The dialect is clearly a branch of the Lóngyán variety of coastal Mǐn. Principal site: Kǒngfū Sìfáng 孔夫四房. Principal informant: Mr. Zhāng Quánfú 張泉福, b. 1943, college history teacher. Survey by myself, 1993-1995. More detail about Kǒngfū may be found in Branner 2000 (Koongfu).

Lóngyán 龍岩. City in western Fújiàn, whose dialect belongs to the northern variety of Mǐnnán. Principal site: Xībēi Tiáowéi 西陂條圍, a village near the city limits, whose speech is essentially that of the city proper. Principal informant: Mr. Chén Yízhì 陳一致, 78? suì in 1992, village intellectual. Survey by myself with Yeo Shujen, 1992-5. An in-depth study of Lóngyán's linguistic affiliation appears in Branner 1999. On visits to Lóngyán in 2004-2006, I found that Tiáowéi had been all but razed to make way for new roads, as Lóngyán expands well past its traditional limits. As for the nominalizing and diminutive suffix *-á*, which has various sandhi phonotactic effects, I transcribe it simply as “+a”: /a¹²⁴⁷ kaŋ¹⁷+a/ ‘male duck’.

Mǐnnán. The best attested variety is the dialect of Amoy, a.k.a. Xiàmén 廈門. See Douglas (1899), Ōgawa (1932). Âng (1986) eschews Taiwanese dialect diversity, writing in the slightly different (but all in all quite similar) Mǐnnán dialect that is now common in many parts of Taiwan. I have adapted the romanization systems in both books to IPA, using the phonetic values described in Tung (1960:737-791). Ōgawa's transcription is very awkward because it is based on the conventions of Japanese *katakana*; however, it can be related directly to Douglas's romanization. As for the nominalizing and diminutive suffix *-á*, which has various sandhi phonotactic effects, I transcribe it simply as “+a”: Mǐnnán /kin¹² tsio¹² pe¹²⁶⁸+a/.

Shìzhōng 適中. Township in southern Lóngyán County (q.v.). The dialect sample is related to the speech of Lóngyán and Kǒngfū. Principal site: Bǎofēng Yīzǔ 保豐一組. Principal informant: Mr. Xiè Háng 謝杭, 72 suì in 1995, retired middle-school teacher. Survey by myself with the assistance of Yeo Shujen, 1995. More detail about Shìzhōng may be found in Branner 2000 (“Shyhjong”). As for the nominalizing and diminutive suffix *-á*, which has various sandhi phonotactic effects, I transcribe it as “+a³⁷” here: /sio³ guan¹+a³⁷/ ‘small bend’.

Sìbǎo 四堡. The northernmost township in the county of Liánchéng 連城, in the western part of Fújiàn Province, on the southeast Chinese coast opposite Taiwan. The dialect is similar to the somewhat better-attested dialect of Nínghuà 寧化 County to the north. All materials are from my own field notes, collected in August-September, 1994 *in situ*, with the assistance of Yeo Shujen. My main informants for Faho were Mr. Zōu Guóchéng 鄒國成, born 1939, a retired village official from the village of

Zhènbiān 圳邊, and Mr. Bāo Fāshēng 包發生, born 1937, a township official from Shàngyángbèi 上洋背. Mr. Zōu was my principal informant for ordinary Sībǎo dialect; his accent is a very conservative variety said to be unique to his village, and is not entirely typical of the whole Sībǎo region or even of younger speakers from his own village (this is a very common situation in rural Fújiàn). But there is a very close overall systematic resemblance between his speech and Mr. Bāo's. The phonetic contour values of the seven tone categories in Sībǎo and Faho are:

/1/: [2̣33], level tone with a slight rise toward beginning;

/2/: [21], short and low, falling;

/3/: [24], rising;

/5/: [55], level, very high and seeming to rise even higher;

/6/: [44], level, lower than /5/ higher than /1/, but easily confused with these two tones;

/7/: [554̣?], very slight drop, has final glottal stop;

/8/: [33?], [332?], level or with slight fall at the end, has final glottal stop

Common Chinese tone {4} does not exist independently in Sībǎo; tone {4} words with sonorant initials are normally found in tone /3/, those with other initials occur in tone /1/.

The voiced stops /b/ and /g/ (and /g/'s allophone [j]) are slightly prenasalized, and the flap /l/ appeared to be faintly nasalized: [ɾ̃].

/g/: [j] before [i], [e]; before nasalized finals, [ɲ], e.g., [ɲẽi²].

/k/: [c] before [i], [e].

[kh]: [ch] before [i], [e].

While finals are recorded here with considerable phonetic precision, eschewing phonemic analysis finer than the level of the final. (Having been lost at dusk in the wooded hills of Western Fújiàn, I am well aware of the utility of having a relatively close phonetic transcription readily to hand.) The transcription should be clear; note that /ɐ/ and /a/ are indeed in contrast.

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中國隱語中的動機與武斷性

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近代學者關於「隱語」的理論一般以 M.A.K.Halliday（韓禮德）先生的“Anti-languages”一文作為基礎。本文以中國的若干隱語為例，對韓先生的一些觀點進行討論。本研究發現，隱語未必與低賤階級有關，也不見得體現「過度詞彙化」。因此本文主張對韓先生的一些觀點稍做修改與補充。執法機構所搜集的或流行讀物所刊登的「黑話」等隱語，多半記錄得非常詳細，詞彙量既豐富且體現「過度詞彙化」。但一般的口語行話、數字編碼及密碼並非如此。最重要的是，中國的不少隱語雖然以比喻為實現隱秘性的機制，不過，「武斷性」（即隨機性）還是創造編碼詞彙的一個主要動機。本文另外提供關於「花毫」與「春典」兩種隱語的簡報，並介紹幾種小規模的密碼與數字編碼。最後，作者也就「民間來源」與「書面來源」兩個相對的概念提出一點心得。

關鍵詞： 隱語，行話，田野調查，漢語，中國，方言，隨機性，武斷性，比喻，低賤階級，過度詞彙化，M.A.K. Halliday（韓禮德），編碼，密碼，花毫，春典，福建四堡，畚語，他者性

Corrections to David Prager Branner, “Motivation and Nonsense in Chinese Secret Languages.” In Anne Yue-Hashimoto and W. South Coblin, eds., *Luó Jiérui xiānsheng qīzhì jìn sān shòuqìng lùnwénjí* 羅杰瑞先生七秩晉三壽慶論文集, (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2010), 469-516.

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p. 474, column 2, row 3 of Table 4: after “two *kǒu*” add character □

p. 484, below table, line 2: /hue³⁵ pie⁴/ should be /hue³⁵ pie⁴/

p. 489, para. 2, line 4: remove “Seriah,”

p. 489, para. 2, line 7: before “Sinicized” add “Seriah,”