

MIECZYŚLAW JERZY KUNSTLER

(Warsaw)

On Pekinese *qūliur*—'curly' and *jūliur*—'numb'

1. As far as I was able to find it out the Pekinese word *qūliur* (1)¹ was first noted by Jin Shoushen (2) in his *Beijingshua yuhui* (3), published in 1961, and then it was noted by Song Xiaocai (4) and Ma Xinhua (5) in *Beijingshua ciyu lishi* (6), edited by Suzuki in 1982. The dictionary of Pekinese words and expressions picked up from Lao She's works—*Lao She zuopinzhongde Beijingshua ciyu lishi* (7), published recently by Yang Yuxiu (8), does not mention the word, but it means that the writer simply did not use it. Needless to say that the word *qūliur* is unknown to the dictionaries of Modern Standard Chinese, Chinese as well as Western² including the latest edition of *Xiandai Hanyu cidian* (9).

1.1. Jin Shoushen gives the meaning of the Pekinese *qūliur* as 'winding, crooked, curved' and illustrates it by the following two examples:

a) *ni huade zhema quliur guaiwanrde, zen neng suan ge zhixian* (10)—'you have drawn it so winding and crooked, so how could it be taken as a straight line?'

b) *ni zhege toufa, zenmo zhida quliur* (11)—'as to your hair, why is it ever curly?'

In this latter sentence *qūliur* has simply the meaning of 'curly' but for Song and Ma it has also only the meaning of 'winding and crooked, crooked and not straight'. Their unique example is:

c) *zhe haizi shi tiansheng quliur toufa* (12)—this child has natural curly hair.

¹ Numbers in brackets refer to the list of Chinese characters at the end of this paper. The *pinyin* romanisation of MSC is used without any modification. Phonetic transcription is used when necessary.

² To say the truth it is noted in the great four-volume *Chinese-Russian Dictionary* as a dialectal form pronounced *quliur* with the meaning of 'trace, footprint, chain of footprints'. Here this cannot be taken into consideration as we do not know to what dialect it belongs and consequently how it is really pronounced in this dialect (the pronunciation given by the dictionary is quite obviously a simple projection into MSC of the two characters). Moreover the given meaning is rather far from the meaning of the Pekinese *quliur*.

This is another prove that the word means first of all 'curly' that is 'winding in semicircles'. As I see it this meaning is basic for the Pekinese *qūliur*. It is not 'crooked zigzag-like' nor 'meander-like' but just 'semicircle-like' i.e. 'curly'.

1.2. Up to now no etymology of this Pekinese word has been proposed. It seems rather clear that the second character at least is in this case used quite arbitrary. The basic meanings: 'slide, glide, smooth, sneak off, slip away' has no relationship with the meaning of the whole. Thus the second character in *qūliur* appears only in its phonetic function.

2. Before we propose an etymologic interpretation of the Pekinese *qūliur* we must say something about another Pekinese word which is phonetically similar. It is the word *jūliur* (13) noted by Jin Shoushen who gives the following meanings of it: 1) 'winding', 2) 'to shrink, to stiffen, numb'. The first meaning is illustrated by the following example:

d) *zhe gen shenzi da juliur le* (14)—'this cord is twisted (entangled)'.

The second meaning is illustrated by:

e) *hao leng tian, ba wo shou dou dong juliur el* (15)—'these are very cold days and my hands are numb with frost'.

So far Jin. Song and Ma have however no *jūliur* at all, but they have recorded another word, unknown to their predecessor. This is *jūluanr* (16) having the following two meanings: 1) 'to have finger and toes numb with frost and cannot stretch them', 2) 'crooked and bend, winding'. The first meaning is illustrated by the following example:

f) *zhe tianr zhen leng, shou dou dong juluanr le* (17)—'its very cold these days, so hands are numb with frost'.

The second meaning is illustrated by:

g) *zhe haizi toufa zhen you yisi, tianshengde dai juluanr* (18)—, 'the hair of this child is very fine, it is in a natural way curly'.

Jūluanr (16) appears also in *Xiandai Hanyu cidian* (9), but only with the meaning of 'frozen stiff, numb with cold' and is qualified as a dialectal expression. The same dictionary gives *jūluan* which is explained as 1) 'to have muscles shrunk and it is impossible to stretch them out', 2) 'to be a stickler for (form)'. The latter meaning is qualified as literary. The explanations of *Xiandai Hanyu cidian* concerning *jūluan* are a little bit disappointing, because the expression is known also as having the meaning of 'cramp, spasm, to writhe'.

It seems really important indeed what Bai Wanru (19) writes in his *Etymological notes on the Beijing dialect—Beijing fangyan benzi kao* (20), published in 1979 in *Fangyan* (21). Under the entry *jū* (22), written also (23),—which is not used as monosyllable in the dialect of Peking—the author gives the expression (24) which is read either *jūlianr* or *jūluanr* and has the meaning of 'numb, stiffen'. Bai also indicates that the character *jū* (22) is in *Guangyun* (25) explained as 'to have hands and legs cold', whereas in *Jiyun* (26) it is given the meaning of 'legs sprain from cold'.

3. Thus—as we see—in Modern Pekinese we have two words phonetically similar: *qūliur* and *jūliur/jūluanr/jūlianr*. The first seems to mean mainly 'curly, winding,

crooked', the second meaning first of all 'numb with cold, stiff'. Synchronically it seems quite admissible to say that phonetic resemblance of the two words caused probably an interference of semantic fields and therefore the second word is also used with the meaning of the first, although the inverse does not happen. It is quite possible, however, that the problem is more complicated as synchronic analysis seems to indicate.

Let us point out that the phonetic variants of *jūliur* in the dialect of Peking are very important to the interpretation of *qūliur*.

4. Now we must mention two interesting articles published in *Zhongguo yuwen* (27) in 1978 and 1979. The first of them is the article by *Zhang Qingchang* (28) concerning Mongol loan-words in Chinese—*Mantan Hanyuzhongde Mengyu jieci* (29), where among others the author proposed a Mongol etymology for the word *qūlian* (30)—'circle, ring'.

The following year *Li Baoduan* (31) published his article about the words *hulan* and *qūlian*—*Guanyu "hulan" he "qūlian"* (32). *Li* rejected *Zhang's* etymology and interpreted *qūlian* as a bisyllabic form of the word *quān* (33). The author says that a regular bisyllabisation by means of adding an *-l-* should give rather [*tɕ'ylyan*] than [*tɕ'ylien*], but the syllable [*lyan*] being absent in—as he says—"many regions"—it was replaced by [*lien*]. He remarks moreover that even today elderly people in North-East regions use the word [*tɕ'yliɛɪ*] that is (34) 'little golden rings or circles'.

4.1. The discussion between the two Chinese linguists seems to prove first of all that both of them did not know that the word *qūluan* (35) was noted already in the third chapter of a work intitled *Rongzhai suibi* (36) written by the famous Souther Song scholar and writer *Hong Mai* (37) who lived in 1123–1202. *Hong Mai* says clearly that *qūluan* (35) is the same as *quān* (33). If *Zhang Qingchang* knew that the word *qūluan*, which is obviously an earlier form of *qūlian* (30) is much older than the Mongol rule in China, he would not perhaps seek Mongol explanation for it. If *Li Baoduan* knew that *qūluan* exists and was already noted by *Hong Mai*, he would certainly not speak about the hypothetic [*tɕ'ylyan*] as better than [*tɕ'ylien*]. *Li Baoduan* does not seem however to see any remote causes of such a bisyllabic form as *qūlian*.

Thus in Pekinese the evolution *quān* (33) > *qūluan* (35) > *qūlian* (30) is quite admissible and it appears parallel to *juān* > *jūluanr* > *jūliur*.

5. The problem however is not as simple as it may appear at first. To admit that *quān* > *qūluan* > *qūlian* and *juān* > *jūluanr* > *jūlianr* > *jūliur* means that *qūluan* and *jūluan* are dimidiated (if we may use P. A. *Boodberg's* term) forms of *quān juan* respectively. In order to be dimidiated, in Archaic Chinese *quān* and *juān* would to have initial consonant clusters of the type *kl-*, *k'l-*, *gl-*, *g'l-*. As far as B. *Karlgren's* reconstructions are concerned this is not true. The phonetic series *juan* (38)—'roll, scroll' and all cognate words, including *quan* (33) have no consonant clusters at all.

6. It is well known that in many cases there is a contradiction between *Karl-*

green's reconstructions based mainly on *xiesheng* and *fanqie* evidences on the one hand and dialectal evidences on the other hand. The problem is known at last since Paul Yang's *On the reconstruction of Old Chinese based on modern dialect data* (1971). It was recently discussed again by Marjorie K. M. Chan in her *Initial consonant clusters in Old Chinese* (1984). To say it briefly today it is out of question that in many cases dialectal evidence clearly indicate an Old Chinese consonant cluster where the reconstructions do not admit its existence and that dialect data cannot be neglected.

In the case of the phonetic series *juān* (38) the existence of consonant clusters was already pointed out by N. C. Bodman (see his *Historical linguistics in Current Trends in Linguistics*). Bodman shows that the word *klian*—'roll, scroll' in the Wuming dialect of the Chuang language is evidently borrowed from Chinese and thus something like *kwljar/kwljan* should be admitted for (38) or (39). Anyway long before him Katherin P. K. Whitaker (*Characterisation of the Cantonese dialect with special reference to its modified tone*, 1952) postulated initial consonant clusters in this series.

7. To all dialectal evidence indicating consonant clusters in this series we may add some more examples.

a) [*kuə'lye*] written (40) (it would be thus pronounced *kūlián* in Pekinese) was noted as having the meaning of 'circle, ring' in the dialect of Taiyuan as described by Wang Lida (41) in his *Taiyuan fangyan cihuide jige tedian he rogan xucide yongfa* (42).

b) [*kuə'* (54) *lye* (53)] written (43) is considered by Zhao Bingxuan (44) in his *Taiyuan fangyanlide fanyu pianci* (45) as bisyllabic form of [*te'ye* (53)] (that is MSC and Pek. *quān* (33)).

c) The same author treats the Taiyuan dialect word [*k'ua* (55) *lye* (11)]—'ring, circle' written (40) as a bisyllabic form of [*te'ye* (11)] (that is MSC and Pek. *quān* (33)) and he identifies it with the word *qūlian* (30) used by Sui Jingchen (46) in his *Gaozu huan xiang* (47).

Similar and evidently cognate words were quite recently noted in the dialect of Fuzhou as described by Liang Yuzhong (48) in his *Fuzhou fangyande "qiejiaoci"* (49):

d) [*kuo luon*] is considered to be a split form of [*kuon*] (with regular *-ŋ* in the place of *-n*) written (38) and having the meaning of 'to roll up'.

e) [*k'ua luan*] is given as a dimidiated form of [*k'uan*] written [33] and meaning 'to roll'.

8. All these and many other similar examples seem clearly to indicate that the whole series of cognate words have had in AC an initial consonant cluster which was dimidiated and in this form preserved in many Chinese dialects, Mandarin as well as Southern. Some indications of consonant clusters in this word-family may be seen in such colloquial binoms as *gūlu* (50)—'a wheel, to turn round, to roll', especially in connection with such AC words as *g'lwār/g'lwər* or *g'lwān* (51)—'turn round as a wheel' and other doubtless cognate words like *liwān* (52)—'a wheel'.

The colloquial *gūlu* is particularly interesting as it is frequent in various Northern Chinese dialects such as Shanxi [*xuə'luāe*] or [*kuə'lua*] written (51) and meaning 'to turn up, to roll'. Moreover, this word is cognate of Tibetan *k'or-lo-* 'circle, disk, wheel' and perhaps also *sku-ru*—'a paddle-wheel'. Thus we have even external evidence for old dimidiated forms testifying to the existence of ancient clusters, for dimidiated forms occur in Tibetan too.

9. Phonetic difference between the Pekinese unstressed syllables [*liɛr⁰*] and [*liuər⁰*] is minor which makes the evolution quite possible. Thus for both Pekinese words we have:

quan > *quluan(r)* > *qulian(r)* > *quliur*

juan > *juluan(r)* > *julian(r)* > *juliur*

where *quan* and *juan* are dimidiated and were probably *k'liwan* and *kliwan* respectively.

The semantic evolution: 'to roll, bend, curved > cramp, spasm stiffen > numb' seems quite admissible, especially since the first syllable of the dimidiated form was noted with the character (53) which caused additional interference of meaning.

As far as 'curly' is concerned its semantic relationship with 'to roll, bend curved' and 'ring, circle, wheel' seems quite apparent. The fact that the first syllable of the dimidiated form was noted with the character *qū* (54)—'bent, crooked' also played some role in the semantic evolution of this word and finally greatly differentiated it from *jūliur*.

List of Chinese Characters

1. 曲溜儿
2. 全受申
3. 北京话词汇
4. 宋孝才
5. 马欣华
6. 北京话词语例释
7. 老舍作品中的北京话词语例释

8. 杨玉秀
9. 现代汉语词典
10. 你画得这么曲溜儿拐弯儿的, 怎能算个直线
11. 你这个头发, 怎么直打曲溜儿
12. 这孩子是天生曲溜儿头发
13. 拘溜儿
14. 这根绳子打拘溜儿了
15. 好冷天, 把我手都冻拘溜儿了
16. 拘攀儿
17. 这天儿真冷, 手都冻拘攀儿了
18. 这孩子的头发真有意思, 天生的带拘攀儿
19. 白宛如
20. 北京方言本字考
21. 方言
22. 钩

23. 拘
24. 鉤 牽
25. 广 韵
26. 集 韵
27. 中国语文
28. 張清常
29. 漫谈汉语中的蒙语借词
30. 曲连
31. 李葆瑞
32. 关于“胡闹”和“曲连”
33. 圈
34. 曲连儿
35. 屈 牽
36. 溶 齋 隨 笔
37. 洪 迈

38. 卷

39. 捲

40. 窟联

41. 主立达

42. 太原方言词汇的几个特点和若干虚词的使用

43. 骨联

44. 赵秉璇

45. 太原方言里的反语骈词

46. 曠景臣

47. 高祖足乡

48. 梁玉璋

49. 福州方言的“切脚词”

50. 轱辘 or 车轱辘 or 车轱 or 轱辘

51. 轱

52. 轮

53. 驹

54. 曲