ZEN IN THE ART OF INSULT

NOTES ON THE SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS
OF ABUSIVE SPEECH IN LATE MIDDLE CHINESE

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During the Late Táng and Five Dynasties periods a new type of text appeared among adherents of the Buddhist Chán Schools, written in predominantly colloquial Chinese and making use of the dialogue form to express ideas. These texts are commonly referred to as *Recorded Sayings* (*yǔlù* 語錄), and early forms of this genre were usually embedded in another type of Chán texts, the transmission texts.

It is assumed that an important source for the compilation of *Recorded Sayings* were notes made by Chán monks of speeches made by their master and of dialogues during teaching situations.

Although rather informal notes may have been one of the sources and motivations for compiling the *Recorded Sayings*,[1] the records of the utterances and deeds of the Chán masters often seem to be stylized and edited for rhetorical purposes. As such *Recorded Sayings* are not merely transcriptions of dialogues which actually took place (there is often a gap of several hundred years between the death of a master and the editing of his 'utterances'), but rather a religious and pedagogical tool used for propagating one's teachings, lineage, and for establishing the canonical status of the former masters.

The authors of the *Recorded Sayings* skilfully recreated (or sometimes more accurately created) the interaction between the masters and their

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[1] In the preface of *Zǔtáng jí* 祖堂集 (952 A.D.; *ZTJ*) the compilers emphasize that one of the motivations for compiling the text were the numerous scattered notes on the teachings and actions of Chán masters that were in danger of being lost in the course of time. In addition they state that the clarification of Chán lineages and the differentiation of 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' were important factors behind the compilation of *ZTJ*. In this article I will not discuss the genre features and the rather problematic term *Recorded Sayings*. For a recent article on this issue see Poceski 2004:53. For a short introduction to the development and features of *Recorded Sayings*, see also Anderl 2005.

students in teaching situations, trying to add a sense of the 'actuality' of these recorded events. In order to achieve this, an elaborate system of modal and rhetorical markers is employed in this kind of text.

In this paper I will focus on a certain rhetorical setting within which many important colloquial markers appear: abusive or insulting speech.[2] Abusive speech can already be found in texts written in Literary Chinese (LC), but its occurrences are rather limited and additionally the range of modal markers and syntactical patterns used to express insults and abusive speech or action is rather limited and restricted. LC does not seem to have the flexibility to fully convey face-to-face insults. With the appearance of the Táng vernacular literature and the use of the colloquial language in these texts, the number of specific modal modifiers and syntactic patterns expanded significantly.

Abusive speech does not, however, appear in all vernacular genres. Why is it so common in the *Recorded Sayings* genre? The answer to this question can be found in the very genre features of the *Recorded Sayings*. Consisting mainly of dialogues, they predominantly record the verbal interactions (sometimes also describing physical actions) between Chán masters and their disciples.[3] Frequently, the *reaction* of a master towards a disciple's speech act, behaviour, or display of understanding is one of the focal points in these texts. There is a great range of possible reactions, the most common ones including a straightforward answer, a counter-question, an answer seemingly disconnected to the question, demonstrative ignoring (often indicated by silence or walking away) of the questioner, physical reactions such as beating, spitting, dragging, etc., and, very importantly, insults and abusive speech. In texts such as *ZTJ*, *JDCDL*, and the *Recorded Sayings* of the Sòng, face-to-face insults are an important feature. In the first part I will illustrate some frequently employed syntactical patterns, while the second part deals briefly with the semantic contents of some of these abuses and insults.

1. *Syntactic structures*

1.1 *Sentence-final particles*

There are a number of sentence-final particles that are regularly used in this type of speech acts. Most common are sentence finals that convey imperative mood. In the following example the colloquial sentence final particle *zhe* 著 is used:

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[2] I will also include occasional examples of abusive actions rather than restricting myself only to face-to-face insults in the discussion of the topic.

[3] Occasionally, also the interaction between two masters, or between masters and officials or lay persons is described.

(1) *ZTJ* 7.2*; Yanagida* 3.080; *Wu/Gu*:242
招慶云：　　　　　Zhāoqìng said:
"是什摩心行，　　"What kind of attitude is this,
　推　　　人　　　向　　　泥　　　裏　　　著！"
　tuī　　*rén*　　*xiàng*　　*ní*　　*lǐ*　　*zhe*
[[vt^{DRAG}<+n^{PERSON}]<[vt^{COV.DIR}<+[n^{MUD}<n^{LOC{INSIDE}}]]]<p^{SF.IMP}
Drag that person into the mud!"

1.2 *Imperatives and prohibitives*

Imperatives and prohibitives are frequently used in insulting speech, either directly ordering or prohibiting the addressee to do something, or instructing others to inflict certain unpleasant actions on the addressee.

In the following example there appears first an unmarked imperative ("Get out!", consisting of verb and verbal complement), followed by a prohibitive marked with *mò* 莫 (p^{IMP.NEG}):

(2) *ZTJ* 15.11; *Yanagida* 2.034; *Wu/Gu*:130
問：　　　[Then Lóngyá] asked:
"如何是菩提？"　　　"How is *bodhi* (enlightenment)?"
師便咄云：　　　The master thereupon cursed him, saying:
"出去！　　　　　莫　　　向　　　這裏　　　痾！"
　chū-qù　　　　*mò*　　*xiàng*　　*zhèlǐ*　　*ē*
| [vi^{ACT{LEAVE}}<v^{postadV.DIR}]^{IMP} | + | p^{IMP.NEG}>[[vt^{COV.LOC}<+ n^{2{here}}]>vi^{ACT{SHIT}}] |
"Get out! Do not shit at this place here!"

1.3 *Exclamation particles*

In *ZTJ* the exclamation particle *duō* 咄 is very commonly used in abusive speech. It is nearly exclusively used to mark a negative attitude towards the addressee (or occasionally more generally marking a certain dissatisfaction on the part of the speaker; as such it also frequently appears in addresses directed to the monks' assembly).[4]

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[4] *Duō* is also used as main verb meaning something like 'to shout cursingly, to curse, cry out in anger, scold'. According to *Hànyǔ dàcídiǎn* (p.1575) the earliest meaning of *duō* is 'to curse at' (*Guǎnzǐ* 管子). From the late Hàn onwards it occasionally appeared as an exclamation particle (e.g. *Shǐjì* 史記). In addition, the verb was used when calling after a subordinate (who had to reply with *nuò* 喏). However, at first glance, *duō* seems to have been relatively rarely used prior to the late Táng in secular literature. On the other hand, there are plenty of

(3) *ZTJ* 20.4; *Yanagida* 5.139; *Wu/Gu*: 450

後道吾參師，	After Dàowú had come to see the master,
不禮拜便問：	he did not bow but immediately said:
"什摩生？"	"How is it?" (i.e. what about the truth)
師云：	The master said:
"無位。"	"There is no rank."
吾云：	[Dào]Wú said:
"與摩則同空去也。"	"If it is like this then that's the same as emptiness."
師云： The master said:	

"咄，   這   屠兒！"
 duō   *zhè*   *túér*
| p^{EXCL} | + | n$^{PRO.DEM\{THIS\}}$> n$^{2\{BUTCHER\text{-}SUFF\}}$ |
"*Oh*, this butcher!"

1.4 *Demonstrative pronouns*

Close-range demonstrative pronouns, most commonly *zhè* 這, frequently appear in abusive expressions. By using them the master avoids directly addressing the dialogue partner, adding to the notion of contempt.

(4) *ZTJ* 16.3; *Yanagida* 1.173; *Wu/Gu*:105

師書一"佛"字，	The master wrote the Chinese character for 'Buddha' (Fó 佛)
問道吾：	and asked Dàowú:
"是什摩字？"	"Which character is this? "
吾日：	Wú said:
"是'佛'字。"	"It is the Chinese character for 'Buddha'. "
師日： The master said:	

"咄！   這   多口   阿師。"
 duō   *zhè*   *duōkǒu*   *āshī*
| p^{EXCL} | + | n$^{PRO.DEM}$>[v$^{2adN\{GARRULOUS\}}$>n$^{HUM\{MASTER\}}$] |
"Oh! This garrulous monk!"

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examples in sūtra translations (e.g. *Zēngyī āhánjīng* (Skr. *Ekottarāgama*), T.2, no.125:579c: 咄、此愚人像如沙門。"*Duō*, this stupid (ignorant) person looks like a monk!").

   Duō is a common exclamation particle in the *Recorded Saying* literature of the Sòng and later periods, occasionally it is reduplicated, or even appears four to six times in a row (e.g., *Rújìng héshàng yǔlù* 如淨和尚語錄, T.48, no.2002:136a18："咄咄咄咄！"乃出去。).

1.5 *Complex modifications of a head-noun*

The example below is *collective blame* as part of a sermon. Note the complex modification of the head noun *hàn* 漢 'fellows' (here referring to the monks of the assembly).

(5) *ZTJ* 16.3; *Yanagida* 4.133; WU: 364

"盡　　是　　一　　隊　　喫　　酒糟　　漢。

jìn　　shì　　yī　　duì　　chī　　jiǔ-zāo　　hàn

p$^{QUANT.S\{all\}}$>[vt^{COP}<+[[v$^{adN.NUM}$ > n$^{\{group\}}$]>[[vt$^{\{eat\}}$ <+ n$^{2\{wine\ drag\}}$]>n$^{HUM\{fellow\}}$]]]

"[You] are all *a bunch of wine-drag eating fellows*.

與摩行腳，　　　　　　　If you practice like this,

笑殺而去。　　　　　　　then this is so ridiculous that you (or: I) rather should leave [from here]. [??]

Note the following example where the noun *kuáng* 狂 ('lunatic') is modified by a postposed verbal phrase (*kuáng* functioning like a 'pivot' here):

(6) *ZTJ* 4.7; *Yanagida* 1.173; *Wu/Gu*: 105

師曰：　　　　　　　　The master said:

"汝　　只　　是　　狂　　被　　袈裟。"

rǔ　　zhǐ　　shì　　kuáng　　bèi　　jiāshā

n^{PRO2SG} :> [p$^{adV\{just\}}$ > [vt^{COP} <+ [n$^{HUM\{lunatic\}}$ < [vt$^{\{wear\}}$ <+ n$^{2.PHON\{monk's\ robe\}}$]]]]

"You are just a lunatic dressed in monk robes."

(7) *ZTJ* 5.2; *Yanagida* 2.006; *Wu/Gu*:114

師便咄：　　　　　　　The master then cursed:

"這　　　　多口　　　　　新戒，

zhè　　　duōkǒu　　　　xīnjiè

n$^{PRO.DEM\{THIS\}}$ > [v$^{2adN\{MANY-WORDS>>GARRULOUS\}}$ > n$^{2\{NEW-PRECEPT>>NOVICE\}}$]

"This (= you) garrulous novice!"

出去!"　　　　　　　　Get out!"

1.6 *Coverbs*

In *ZTJ* there appear two 'exotic' coverbs[5] that exclusively seem to be used in order to describe physically abusive actions. They are highly specialized and

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[5] I will not discuss the question here why I prefer the term 'coverb' instead of 'preposition'. Although to certain degree grammaticalized, 'coverbs' have in my opinion preserved some verbal features and behave differently to fully grammaticalized preposition. On coverbs in LMC see Anderl 2005B:266-384, for a theoretical discussion especially pp. 368-384.

usually indicate that a body-part is affected by an action in an unpleasant way.[6] In the following example *mò* 驀 is used to indicate the body-part which is spat at:

(8) *ZTJ* 5.8; *Yanagida* 2.026; *Wu/Gu*:125

師	便	驀	面	唾。
shī	*biàn*	*mò*	*miàn*	*tuò*

n$^{\{MASTER\}}$:> [v$^{adV\{THEREUPON\}}$>[[vt^{COV} <+ n$^{\{FACE\}}$] > [vt$^{\{SPIT\}}$]]]

The master thereupon spat into his face.

The example below, cited in its context, beautifully illustrates the dynamic interaction between masters and disciples as they are dramatically recorded in the *Recorded Sayings* genre. It also nicely illustrates the rather difficult situation into which the student is forced by the master:

(9) *ZTJ* 15.9; *Yanagida*: 4.103; *Wu/Gu*

每見僧參，　　　　　　Each time a monk came for a visit

驀	項	便	杈	云：
mò	*xiàng*	*biàn*	*chà*	*yún*

[vt^{COV} <+ n$^{\{NECK\}}$] > [p^{adV} > vt$^{\{FORK>>STRANGLE\}}$] | + | vi$^{ACT\{SAY\}}$

[the master] would 'fork' (i.e. strangle) his neck, saying:[7]

"那個魔魅教你出家？" 　 "Which demon told you to renounce home?"

那個魔魅教你受戒？ 　 Which demon told you to receive the precepts?

那個魔魅教你行腳？ 　 Which demon told you to be an itinerant monk?

道得亦杈下死， 　　　　Are you able to tell, I strangle you to death,

道不得亦杈下死。 　　　if you are not able to tell, I also strangle you to death.

速道速道。" 　　　　　 Speak up quickly, speak up quickly!"

The coverb also survived in later *Recorded Sayings* texts:

(10) *GUZUN*, ZZ., no. 118:666b7

"我	早	是	將	一	塊	屎
wǒ	*zǎo*	*shì*	*jiāng*	*yī*	*kuài*	*shǐ*

n^{PRO1SG} :>[v$^{adV\{ALREADY\}}$>[vt$^{COP.EMPH}$ <+[[vt$^{COV.OBJ}$ <+[[v^{adN} n$^{postv(NUM)and}$]>n$^{\{SHIT\}}$]+>

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[6] The origin of this coverb (LMC: ma:jk) is unclear and its usage seems to be restricted to Chán texts of the Late Táng and Sòng periods (e.g. *ZTJ, JDCDL, WUDENG, GUZUN*). The original meaning of *mò* is 'get on a horse', and it is also used as adverb 'suddenly, abruptly'. It was suggested that *mò* possibly is a phonetic loan for a Southern dialect word, however, I doubt this interpretation (see Anderl 2004:313,316-317; Song Yinsheng 1996:289).

[7] *Chà* (*chā*) 杈 usually refers to a 'fork' (or 'tree branch'), but here it is used as verb and illustratively refers to the action of 'forking' one's hands around a person's neck in order to strangle him.

騫　　　口　　　抹　　　了。"
mò　　*kǒu*　　*mǒ*　　*le (liǎo)*
[[vt^{COV} <+ n$^{\{MOUTH\}}$]>vt$^{\{SMEAR\}}$]]<v(p)$^{postadV.PERF}$]]
"I have already smeared a piece of shit on your mouth."

Coverb *lán* 攔 has a nearly identical function. It marks body parts that are subject to physical assault (there are also cases where the two coverbs are used strictly parallel), e.g.:

(11) *ZTJ* 7.2; *Yanagida* 2.095; *Wu/Gu*: 161
師拈得把草，　　　　　　　The master took a clump of grass
攔　　　面　　　與　　　一　　　擲；
lán　　*miàn*　　*yǔ*　　*yī*　　*zhì*
[vt^{COV} <+ n$^{\{FACE\}}$] > [vt$^{\{GIVE\}}$ <+ [v$^{adN.NUM\{ONE\}}$ n$^{ACT\{THROW\}}$]]
and threw it into [his] face;

Since both of these coverbs were used in a nearly identical function and did not have a similar pronunciation, I assume that they are *not* phonetic loans for a colloquial southern word. Although they structurally behave like coverbs, they do not seem to be pure grammatical markers (indicating direction or marking the object) but probably also convey some kind of semantic contents. Tentatively, I assume that they are used in some kind of extended meaning: *mò*: '(get on a horse >> move abruptly forward) >> attacking, assaulting'; *lán*: '(obstruct >>) obstructing (>> assaulting)'. This interpretation seems to be likely especially in the case of *lán* since it is often used with main verbs such as 'to grasp' (e.g. *bǎ* 把, *bǎzhù* 把住, *qín* 擒).[8] Occasionally this restriction is neutralized and *lán* is also used with other main verbs (e.g. *zhì* 擲 'to throw'; *tà* 踏 'to kick; thread'). This extended usage was probably motivated by an analogy to *mò* which is used in a similar syntactic and semantic environment. *Lán* and *mò* are important examples of a frequent phenomenon when dealing with Chinese historical grammar, i.e. many 'grammatical markers' are highly semantically restricted and often only appear in environments that fit the semantic origin of the function words.

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[8] Both Song Yinsheng (1996:291) and Ma Beijia (2002:89) interpret the two verbs as 'coverbs indicating direction'.

2. *Notes on some semantic features*

Semantically, abusive speech can be divided into several main groups: insults in the Buddhist context, insults which challenge the intellectual capacities of the addressee, remarks inviting to physical abuse, and other ridiculing and belittling comments.

2.1 *Insults in the Buddhist context*

The following example is cited in its context because it nicely illustrates the style of reprimanding comments that frequently appear in the *Recorded Sayings*. First, the master places the addressee outside the circle of students of Buddhism, accusing him of being a mere 'commoner' (having a wife and children). The insulting tirade reaches its peak when the master locates the addressee not only in hell but also refers to him as *sediment* (*zhāzǐ* 渣滓) *of hell*:

(12) *ZTJ* 15.1; *Yanagida* 4.073; *Wu/Gu*:327

師呵云：	The master scolded him, saying:
"徑山和尚內外嚴護，	"Jìngshān's is dignified throughout,
理行相稱，	principle and conduct are in harmony in him,
道'一切悉無'即得。	and when he says 'none of it exists' then that's right.
公具足三界凡夫，	You, Sir, [on the other hand] suffice to be a *commoner in the three realms*,[9]
抱妻養兒，	embracing a wife and begetting (or: raising) children,
何種不作？	what seeds did you not produce (i.e. what kind of actions did you not perform that bind you to the cycle of birth and death)?

是地獄粗（渣）滓，
shì dìyù zhāzǐ
[You are/this is] the *sediment* (*residues*) *of hell*,

因什摩道'一切悉無？'	based on what do you say 'none of it exists'?
若似徑山聽公道無。"	How could I let Jìngshān hear your words!"

Also in the following example, cited in its context, the addressee – although being a monk – is referred to as 'commoner':

(13) *ZTJ* 4.7; *Yanagida* 1.181; *Wu/Gu*: 108

雲嵒請師浴，	Yúnyán asked the master to take a bath

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[9] *Sānjiè* 三界, the 'three realms' of desire, form, and formlessness which comprise all types of existence.

師曰：	[but] the master said:
"我不浴。"	"I won't take a bath."
進曰：	[Yúnyán] said further:
"為什摩不浴？"	"Why won't you take bath?"
師曰：	The master said:
"無垢。"	"[I] am not dirty."
進曰：	[Yúnyán] said further:
"無垢卻須浴。"	"Although not being dirty you still should take a bath!"
師曰：	The master said:
"這蒼生，	

zhè cāngshēng (lit. born as commoner)
"*This* (= you) *commoner*!

無垢浴什摩？"	Why taking a bath if one is not dirty?"
進曰：	[Yúnyán] said further:
"爭那如許多孔竅何？"	"You certainly have many cavities (>> organs of perception)!"[10]

2.2 *Insults that challenge the intellectual capacity of the addressee*

In the dialogues the master frequently raises doubts concerning the intellectual and spiritual capabilities of the addressee. This kind of insults are among the most frequent ones, e.g.:

(14) *ZTJ* 7.1; *Yanagida* 2.083; *Wu/Gu*:155

對云：	[Fǎzhì] answered:
"咄！	"*Duō*!
隨根漢！"	

suígēn hàn
Retarded fellow/fellow of slow wit!"

In the following example the master insults a recluse who had impressed the emperor on one of his travels and was subsequently invited to the court. After the master's 'testing' of his skills he gives the following harsh judgement:

(15) *ZTJ* 3.11; *Yanagida* 1.120; *Wu/Gu*:74; *Fo*:146

| 師 卻謂代宗曰： | The master told Emperor Dàizōng: |

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[10] *Kǒngqiǎo* 孔竅 'lit. cavities >> organs of perception (eyes, nose, mouth, etc.)'. On the interplay of modal markers, including interrogative pronouns, modal verbs, sentences final particles, etc. see Anderl 2004B:434-435 and Anderl 2006. *Cāng* 蒼 originally means 'vegetable; green' and from the Hàn period onwards it could refer by extension to the 'common people'.

"問山不識山，	"Asking him about mountains, he did not have any knowledge about mountains,
問地不識地，	asking him about the earth, he did not have any knowledge about the earth,
問字不識字，	asking him about Chinese characters, he did not have any knowledge about them,
問筭（算）不解算，	asking him to count, he was not able to count;

何處引得這个個朦（＝ 蒙）漢来?"

héchù yǐndé zhè gè mèng hàn lái

from where did you bring this *dumb fellow* along?"

2.3 *Insults which suggest physical abuse of the addressee*

Occasionally the master's insult invites the physical abuse of the addressee or the third person referred to. The following is a drastic example where the master suggests that a fellow-master be 'strangled'. Naturally, this is only a rhetorically intensified method of disapproving of the fellow-master's opinion.[11]

(16) *ZTJ* 14.7; *Yanagida* 4.054; *Wu/Gu*: 315
　"縛殺者個漢。"
fù-shā zhè gè hàn
"(Tie up>>) Strangle this fellow to death!"

(17) *ZTJ* 16.6; *Yanagida* 4.140; *Wu/Gu*: 368

| 僧東話西話， | The monk jabbered about this and that |
| 師喚沙彌： | and the master shouted at the monk: |

　"拽出這個死屍著。"
zhuāi-chū zhè gè sǐ-shī zhe
"Drag this dead body out!"[12]

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[11] That is a least what I assume. At any rate, to my knowledge there are no records of actual cases of pedagogically motivated homicide in the history of Chinese Chán (in contrast to religiously motivated suicide or self-mutilation). The pedagogic aim in the Chán context is defined as triggering a mental state in the disciple which goes beyond conventional mental activities (often referred to as *wúxīn* 無心 or 'No-mind', this again leading to an experience of enlightenment, *wù* 悟). In many Japanese Zen monasteries (occasionally rather harsh) physical abuse has been one of the options as a means of encouragement in the teaching methods of Zen masters or senior monks to this day.

[12] Compare also the following example, *ZTJ* 16.3; *Yanagida* 4.131,06; *Wu/Gu*: 363:
師乃呵云： "這賊漢，悔不預知。若知，則便打折腳。" The master then scolded him, saying: "*This thievish fellow*, I regret that I did not anticipate this. If I had known then I would have *broken his legs*!"

In the *Recorded Sayings* there is frequent reference to physical attacks by the master, often *without a preceding verbal insult*. The most common actions are hitting (*dǎ* 打) and slapping (*guó* 摑), other–somewhat less common forms–include spitting, pushing, dragging, and kicking.

2.4 *Other ridiculing or belittling comments*

There is a large range of other belittling or offending remarks employed in the dialogues. Frequently the addressee is compared to an animal, or his actions are compared to the actions of an animal:[13]

(18) *ZTJ* 7.3.85; *Yanagida* 2.113; *Wu/Gu*: 171

師問僧：	The master asked a monk:
"什摩處來？"	"Where do you come from?"
對云：	[The monk] said:
"不涉途中。"	"Not wading through the middle of the road."
師云：	The master said:
"咄！這蝦叫。"	

duō zhè há jiào
"*Duō*! This shout/voice of a frog!"

Other examples can be found in *JDCDL*, T.51, no. 2076:286b: *chòu lǘ hàn* 臭驢漢 'stinky-donkey fellow'; ZTJ; *Yanagida* 2.034; *Wu/Gu*:130: 師騎卻頭云： "者畜生什摩處去來？" The master squeezed [the monk's] head between his legs as if riding on a horse: "You, this (domestic) animal, where have you gone to?"

　　Another very popular insult is 'wild-fox spirit' (*yěhú jīng* 野狐精), indicating a mind of deception and deceit.[14]

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[13] Frequently, the master's attitude towards a disciple is already marked by the term of address, e.g. *āshī* 阿師, which has rather negative connotations.

[14] See for example *Yanagida* 5.102,08; *Wu/Gu*:430. Compare also the following example of a belittling comment: *ZTJ* 7.3; *Yanagida* 2.101; *Wu/Gu*:164: 學人再申問，師云： "虛生浪花漢。" The student put forth his question a second time and the master said: "Superfluous fellow who has spent his live in vain." ([?] *lànghuā* 浪花 ('spray (of a wave) >> flower that does not bear fruit >> superfluous'; compare German 'Abschaum').

Final remarks

In the so-called *Recorded Saying* genre, abusive and insulting speech – in various degrees of intensity – became an important feature of the rhetorical structure of the dialogues. In order to recreate the actual situation of the speech-act and the situational context, syntactic constructions typical of the colloquial language of that time as well as many vernacular expressions and a large range of modal markers are employed. The flexible syntactic features of the written vernacular served as ideal tools to record this kind of speech acts, employing apposition, multiple modification of the head noun, colloquial sentence-final particles, specialized coverbs, specific usage of close-range demonstrative pronouns, and rhetorical questions where sentence initials, interrogative pronouns, modal verbs and sentence finals interact. In this short paper only a few of these features have been considered.

Although insults also appear in other forms of traditional Chinese literature, they seem to play a special role in the *Recorded Sayings* in terms of their quantity and their syntactic and semantic features. This fact is directly connected to the genre features of the *Recorded Sayings*. They mainly record the interaction between masters and disciples, and insulting or abusive remarks clearly were regarded as a legitimate pedagogical tool in teaching students, in line with other common reactions mentioned in the introduction to this paper.

Often the force of these insults is relativized since they are employed as pedagogical devices (or expressed in Buddhist terminology: 'skilful means', *fāngbiàn* 方便), and in the *Recorded Sayings* this kind of tough behaviour of the master is occasionally described as originating from the mind of a (soft-hearted) grandmother (*lǎopó xīn* 老婆心).[15] The rhetorical structure often suggests that the student actually *expects* to be insulted or even physically abused – as an indication that he is taken seriously by the master.

Since the dialogue partners are usually on differing hierarchical levels, face-to-face insults are usually unidirectional, i.e. in the direction from the master towards the students. There are exceptions, however, and there are rare examples where the disciple (often a master *in spe*) returns the insult, using this device to claim equal status with the master in terms of his spiritual understanding. There are also rare examples of mutual insults by two masters (*accusatio mutua*), but on the other hand these outbursts can often rather be interpreted as acts of mutual confirmation. Finally, there are

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[15] Compare *ZTJ*, *Yanagida* 3.072; *Wu/Gu*:238: 師云：＂山中和尚近日老婆心，教人向未開口已前會取。＂ The master said: "Preceptor Shānzhōng recently has the mind (heart) of an old granny, teaching people he has not yet opened his mouth and they have (already) understood."

cases where the master inverts or questions the hierarchical relationship face-to-face with high officials or even emperors, using ridiculing or sarcastic remarks.

Insults often appear in the mild form of collective blame as part of a sermon addressed to the whole assembly of a monastery. In these contexts insults may be interpreted as a means of collective encouragement.

Semantically, insults can be divided in several groups. Most commonly, the addressee's lack of understanding is highlighted through insults hinting at poor (or completely lacking) intellectual and spiritual capacities. Frequently, the addressee is belittled in the Buddhist context, e.g. as being engaged in impure activities such as a 'butcher' or 'slave', being a fake monk, resident of hell, etc. Also common are comparisons to animals or typical behaviour or features attributed to animals, as well as with features attributed to animals in the folk-mythological context (such as the 'deceitfulness' typical of a fox). Occasionally, the master suggests that the addressee or a third person should be physically damaged as a consequence of the person's deviant behaviour or lack of understanding.

Symbols and grammatical abbreviations[16]

	clause border
|A| + |B|	coordinated clauses
|A| > |B|	clause A modifying clause B
[…]	rectangular brackets marking phrasal boundaries
{XXX}	brackets marking semantic contents (e.g vt$^{\{EAT\}}$ transitive verb with the semantics 'to eat')
A > B	A modifies/specifies B
A < B	A is modified/specified by B
A >> B	B is an extended/derived meaning of A
A >>> B	A developed historically into B
N :> V	N is the subject
N ::> V	N is the topic
N +> V	N is a preposed object
vt <+ N	N is a direct object
vt <++ N	N is an indirect object
vtt	ditransitive verb
n	noun
N	noun phrase/nominal expression

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[16] Some of the abbreviations of grammatical categories (not the symbols) are freely adapted from Christoph Harbsmeier's *Thesaurus Linguae Sinicae* (TLS). However, any inconsistencies concerning the word-for-word transliterations are the sole responsibility of the author of the article. The rather unusual form of the transliteration of example sentences is experimental in nature, with the aim of enhancing a greater commitment not only in defining word categories, but also the relationship between the constituents of the clauses. Since this is a preliminary attempt, without doubt many problems can be raised concerning the definitions and the analysis. In the section on semantics, no syntactic analysis is provided.

n^2	disyllabic noun
n^{LOC}	'localizer' (relative place word)
n^{PRO}	pronoun (e.g. $n^{PRO.DEM}$ 'demonstrative pronoun')
p	particle (e.g. $p^{NEG\{NOT\}}$ 'negation particle')
p^{EXCL}	exclamation particle
v	verb
V	verb phrase/verbal expression
v^2	disyllabic verb
v^{adN}	adjective
v^{adV}	adverb
$v^{POSTADV}$	verbal complement (e.g. $v^{postadV.DIR}$ verbal complement of direction)
vi	intransitive verb (e.g. vi^{ACT} intransitive verb conveying an action)
vt	transitive verb
vt^{COV}	'coverb' (appearing in the structure $[vt^{COV}<+ N]>V$)
vtt	ditransitive verb
vt(t)	ditransitive verb with the indir. object deleted
vtV	transitive verb taking verbal objects (e.g. vtV^{MOD} 'modal verb')

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[*ZTJ* =] The first number refers to the number of the *juàn*; the second number refers to the biographic entry in the respective *juàn*; afterwards there is reference to two editions of *Zǔtáng jí*; all translations of the example sentences are my own.

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