

On Some Chinese Terms of Abuse

(Collected by Frank Huang)¹

By

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1.

It is well known that some societies have a rich treasure of terms of abuse which are used with gusto talking to and about people, while other societies are quite unimaginative in this respect. Some societies have developed a language in which class differences are expressed by special words or special grammatical structure. The use of the wrong level of language can function as abusive language and no specific terms of abuse are needed. Societies also seem to differ in their choice of topics in their abusive language. In some societies the most popular abusive expressions allude directly to sex, in others to the anus, and still other societies prefer reference to disease or death. For obvious reasons there are few published collections of terms of abuse, so that it is difficult to make investigations beyond internal comparisons within one collection.

The Chinese have always been regarded as highly imaginative in their abusive language. I have heard of a collection of several thousand terms of abuse, collected in Peking, without having been able to see it. The material for this essay was collected by Mr. Huang Yao-hsün (Frank Huang) 黃耀勳, a graduate student at Berkeley, California, whom I asked to collect among

1. I am greatly indebted to Mr. Huang, without whose help I could not have made this study. Mr. Huang, in addition to supplying the Chinese texts of the terms, also gave brief explanations of the meaning and use of the terms which I have integrated into this essay. A grant from the Center of Chinese Studies, University of California, enabled me to enlist Mr. Huang's assistance.

his friends all the terms of abuse known to them. He limited his activity to fellow students from Taiwan, so that this collection might be considered typical only of Taiwan-Chinese of Fukienese origin (Min-nan dialect group). But from my own knowledge I can say that many of these abusive or derogatory expressions are widely known, even in North China. Obviously, the collection is not complete, as the interviewees all come from the more educated section of the population and, therefore, may not have been familiar with the abusive language used among the lower and rural classes. But probably no collection of this type can ever be complete, just as it seems to be impossible to collect *all* Chinese proverbs. New proverbs and new terms of abuse are constantly coined and gain acceptance, while others become antiquated.

The terms of abuse in our collection can be used directly in addressing the other person, or the offence is expressed in form of a short, more or less descriptive statement which can be used in talking to the other person or in talking about another person. Without any changes, some of our abusive expressions can be used as proverbs.

Some have the special form of *hsieh-hou-yü*. This is a type of proverbial expression which occurs also in other societies, but is not as standardized and common as in China. Translating the Chinese, *hsieh-hou-yü* is a "saying in which the last part is omitted", i.e. one says only the first part of the proverb, and the listener completes the rest in his mind from memory:

Eastern Boddhisattvas cross the river (omitted: they can hardly protect their own bodies)—The other is himself so vulnerable that if he does a certain action against another person, he himself will be attacked for the same action.

A great herd of cattle (omitted: but can't be used)—a useless, lazy man.

A number of our expressions refer to stories and are understandable only when one knows the background:

Ch'en San polishes the mirror—A man who is so much in love that he becomes the slave of his beloved. This refers to the most famous Fukienese folk drama, the story of Ch'en San 陳三 and Wu-niang 五娘, in which the lover disguised himself as a mirror polisher only in order to get into the house of his beloved.

Ch'iu Wan-she fires the big cannon—big noise and nothing happens. Refers to a popular figure, the wealthy Ch'iu of Taiwan.

With stinking excema, you are afraid of the barber—a man who is afraid that his weak points might become apparent. Refers to the story of Chu Yüan-chang, founder of the Ming dynasty, who had a bad excema of the scalp. Hairdressers who had the bad luck to hurt him (which was almost unavoidable) were executed and hairdressers who talked about his disease were executed as well, according to the story.

Enfeoffment as God—a man who shows off. This is the short form of the title of a famous popular novel which describes unending fights between heroes and between deities.

I found no clear references to folk-songs or to riddles, as I had expected to find. The expressions differ greatly in length (Table 1), but short, especially two-word terms are the most common form. One can say that expressions which include one, two, or three words are "basic", insofar as such expressions are

Table 1: Length of the Expressions of Abuse
(Number of words in 325 expressions,
in percentages)

One word	1%
Two words	23
Three words	15
Four words	18
Five words	12
Six words	12
Seven words	6
Eight words	6
More words	7

not structured. Expressions with four words can usually be divided into two interrelated two-word terms, such as:

(You) cross (the) river, pull out (the) bridge—ungrateful person.
Three (times you) work, four (times you) stop—person who does not persist.

Bad lips, bad nose—girls who use dirty language.

(In order to) release a fart, (you) pull (down your) trousers—a man who does unnecessary work.

Five-word expressions have the length of a line in a classical five-word poem and some of them have the structure of the poem, a sequence of two words followed by three:

(Whoever) gets a boil, is not afraid of inflammation—A person who has done a bad action, is not afraid to commit further, similar actions.

After death, (you will have) no coffin—implies that the person will find or should find a violent death. (The word for “coffin” consists of two words.)

(You) *eat people, cannot eat enough*—A person who cheats others continuously.

(If) *you die, no person will cry*—he has no descendants who could feel sorry about his death.

Similarly, many of the six-word terms split into two inter-related expressions of three words each:

(A) *big household, has no hearth*—people who are accustomed to small, simple conditions cannot adjust to new situations (such as a bride from a poor family does not recognize the hearth in the groom’s house, because it is so much bigger than the one she knew).

(You) *ask people (to) cry, but no tears come*—a man without descendants, for whom one has to pay people to cry at his funeral, and such mourners shed only false tears.

Eating does not fill, hunger does not kill—a person in modest conditions.

(You) *ate your fill, (yet) say you did not eat*—a liar.

(You have a) *stinking anus opening, (and are) afraid (that) others close (it)*—A person who has some weaknesses and is afraid that people will remind him of it.

The Ta-chia river—no cover covers it—A person who is furious cannot be contained.

Seven-word expressions often are constructed like lines in a classical seven-word poem, i.e. a three-word expression is followed by a four-word expression:

(You are) *not yet wealthy, but afraid (that) thieves (might) steal*
—A person who is over-fearful.

One kind (of) rice, feeds hundred kinds (of) people—People are all alike, but some are worse than others.

But there are also other terms which start with a four-word phrase, followed by a three-word phrase. Eight-word terms usually consist of two four-word, and ten-word expressions of two five-word phrases. Thus, most of the longer expressions, but not all of them, have a rhythmic structure, but very few of these have a rhyme in addition.

2.

An analysis of abusive language can proceed along several lines. I decided to answer first the questions: “What objects

occur in the terms of abuse, and what is their manifest meaning in this context?" This, then, is in part a contribution to the study of symbolism in the Chinese language. Secondly, I examined the activities which are mentioned in the terms. Thirdly, I asked the question, "Who uses the terms against whom?" Whenever it was relevant I clarified the allusions to specific attitudes or behavior traits at which the abusive term is aimed.

More than a third of our 325 abusive expressions compare the abused person with an animal. Of course, the statistics in this field are difficult to interpret, because the actual number of abusive terms of any category is only one element of importance and one would have to know also the frequency of usage.

The worst curse which mentions an animal, doubtlessly, is the generalized "*Animal*", or "*Pig, dog, animal*", or "*Animal in dress*", because it denies the other person the dignity of a human being.

It is hard to find out why specific animals are mentioned and not others. Among the domesticated animals, it seems that those which are most common are most often mentioned, but then we miss any reference to numerous domesticated birds which are kept as pets in many Chinese families. The tiger, to speak of the wild animals, does not occur in Taiwan and the monkey is rarely seen. But the monkey is familiar to every Chinese from the role of the monkey Sun in the novel *Hsi-yo chi*, and the tiger is an age-old symbol of male power and strength. The animals seem to be associated with definite traits which refer to their shape (monkey), their strength (tiger), their sexual behavior (cat, perhaps horse), or to character traits which they are supposed to have (dog, pig, oxen, etc.). One might say that the animals in these expressions are those which are very much on the mind of the average Chinese; but then, we should assume that also in Chinese dreams we should find the same animals for the same reason. This is, however, not the case.² The cow, for instance, which plays a considerable role in our expressions did not occur in dreams. Dreams contain more ferocious, fabulous animals than do the terms of abuse.

Let us now look at some details. Our expressions contain references to the following domesticated animals: dogs, cows, and chickens (12 or 11 terms each), to the pig (8 times), horse

2. See my unpublished article "Social Interaction and Social Values in Chinese Dreams".

(4), cat (3), and duck (2), and one each to sheep, donkey and camel. The last are not surprising as donkeys and camels do not exist in Taiwan. Horses, sheep and ducks are quite rare in Taiwan, though at the present time, duck-breeding is a major enterprise.

We will now give a few examples of expressions in which animals are mentioned. In general, each animal seems to symbolize some human trait, but we always find a few expressions in which the comparison seems to allude to a different quality of the animal. We have given a few such deviant examples for the cow, chicken, and cat. The dog seems to be an image of a subservient animal, a kind of slave, a low animal, connected with the male sex. It is put together with the pig (4 times) into one expression, such as:

A pig eats, a dog sleeps (in your house)—referring to the bad, disorderly management of a house.
The pig does not eat (you), the dog does not want (you)—a bad person (woman).

Expressions in which the dog alone is mentioned are:

Even a dog wags its tail as thanks for being fed—but an unfilial child does not.
When (you) beat the dog, (you) should think of its master—think of the consequences of your actions.
(You have) a human heart and a dog's liver—a behavior unworthy of a human.
(You are) a dog which eats glutinous rice (used for ceremonial food)—such fine food does not make the dog finer and better.

The ox or cow seems to be a symbol of stupidity and laziness:

(Your) cow house—a disorderly household of lazy people.
(You) lazy cow which produces much excrements and urine—lazy people who always talk about their work.
(You have) a good flower planted in cow shit—a beautiful daughter given in marriage to an ugly man.
(You) big stupid ox—people who work but do not think.
(You) herd of cattle—lazy, of no use.
The cows are numerous, but cannot plough the field—many workers, achieving little.
(She) sells stinking beef—that prostitute !

The chicken, too, seem to symbolize stupidity, but small-size:

- (You) *featherless chicken act in great fashion*—a person without abilities pretends.
- White, white rice fed to sleepy chicken*—good things wasted on stupid children.
- (You) *chicken woman*—old women who put their noses into everything.
- (You) *son of the chicken's son*—people who produce work of low quality.
- (You) *chicken with the oblique beck want to eat good rice*—persons want something for which they are not qualified.
- If the rooster crows, it is his nature; if the hen crows, she deserves to be killed*—Unchastity is man's nature, but you, as a woman, should be punished, because for women it is against nature. Sometimes only the second part is used. Can also be used as a proverb (S. Ikeda Toshio, *Taiwan no katei seikatsu*, Tokyo 1944, p. 168).

The pig seems to symbolize fertility, dirtiness and eating too much:

- (You are a) *mother pig*—a woman who is always pregnant.
- (You are a) *fat pig*—a fat person.
- (An) *overfed pig gets fat, an overfed dog gets lean, an overfed child (like yours) gets sick*—mothers overfeed their children.
- (You put) *vegetables in the basket for pig's excrements*—inappropriate behavior.

The few expressions in which the horse occurs, may point towards sexual symbolism:

- (You are like) *peach blossoms, postal horses*—women who love adventure and dislike to stay home.
- (You are a) *horse's brother*—people who work for prostitutes, cheap persons.
- (You are) *standing on a high cliff and look at horses which kick one another*—a man who loves to see others fighting, without attempting to mediate.

The cat, in contrast to the dog, seems to symbolize the female:

- (You are a) *black dog, black cat*—a modernistic male lover bites, a modernistic female lover scratches.
- (You are) *a good cat which serves eight houses*—like a woman with many lovers.
- (You) *three-pound cat bite a four-pound rat*—cannot judge its abilities.

A great number of wild animals are used in these abusive

terms, with the following connections: "camel" indicates laziness; a "bald donkey" means a stupid monk. Here "bald" refers, of course, to the shaven head of Buddhist monks; the donkey itself may refer to the supposed secret sexual activities of monks, though I am not sure of this. The expression "kid" (=young goat) refers to people who are afraid of getting wet.

The most frequently mentioned wild mammals are monkey (7 times) and tiger (5 times). The monkey symbolizes ugliness:

Skinny monkey—a skinny person.

Not like a monkey, not like an oyster—ugly girl.

Monkey with red buttocks—girls who make themselves up.

Monkey head and rat ear—persons with bad character.

The tiger, on the other side, symbolizes power:

Tiger head and rat tail—big beginnings, but later not much else.

Tiger moustache—people who take advantage of others.

Tiger penis—people who talk empty talk.

Tigers, dragons, leopards—hooligans.

The fox occurs once as a crafty animal, the racoon as a night animal, the snake as being slow. The rat is mentioned twice, the deer once.

Wild birds are rarely mentioned in our terms of abuse; an often used expression is "Old wild goose" for the madame of a house of prostitution. Surprisingly the *nightingale* which in the West and in the Near East symbolizes romantic love, is a word of abuse criticizing women who sleep during the day and get active in the night.

Fishes, on the other hand, are more commonly used:

All (your) fishes in the pond flew away—You talk nonsense.

(You show) filial piety, but give stinking fish—a person who pretends to be filial but serves the parents rotten things.

(You are) a whole bowl of fishes, but all heads (only)—an organization without leadership.

(You) keep a goldfish—a woman with a lover.

Eel—a hooligan who always slips away.

Black turtle—cuckold.³

3. The widely-used expression "King Eight" is, according to some, a taboo expression for the word "turtle" and refers to cuckolds. In the literature, there is dissent. In Sung-time 王八 (King Eight) is mentioned as the name of a person (*I-chien-chih* 26, 7a). Therefore, the word can hardly have been a word of abuse at that time. Other

Insects or animals which the Chinese would define as belonging to the category of 'ch'ung' are not often used in derogatory expressions. Children who tend to cling to their mother are called "leach", and if they stand around bothering their mother "Maggots in the outhouse". An aggressive, dangerous woman is a "bee king", while a "honey-seeking bee" is an inconsistent, flirtatious man.

Plants are mentioned only in twelve expressions and almost all of them are edible plants; for example:

- (You) cabbage in the 6th month (its inside is hollow)—a person who talks nicely but has no (good) heart.
 (You) collector of pomegranade seeds—too covetous (he collects even the tiny seeds).
 (You) gourd on the beggar's back—gives a false impression (he looks like a famous saint, but is just a beggar).

The supernatural beings, to our surprise, also occur in terms of abuse. Six terms refer to ghosts. For instance:

- (You) hunger-ghost—child who eats too much.
 (You) small-size ghost—person who cannot eat much.
 If a good friend asks, you do not move: if a ghost requests, you start running (towards it) even during the night—person who does not follow the advice of others (his good friends) but listens to bad advisers.
 (You are) a poor ghost who fears nothing more than man—hard-hearted men.

Otherwise, only Buddhist deities are named:

- (You are) a poor Kuan-yin Buddha, secretly eating the pickled prawns—This refers to the custom to offer the deities nice food, but the sacrificer later takes this food home and eats it, not leaving it to the deity to eat. The person is as hungry as the deity.
 (You have) Buddha feet—a vagrant, who has himself fed by others. The Boddhisattvas are believed to roam around all the time, like vagrants, in order to get sacrifices.
 (You are) a clay Boddhisattva, crossing the river (who will be

sources, however, say that Wang Pa was the name of the eighth son of Wang Chien of the tenth century. As this son was a rascal, the name became a term of abuse (*Chien-hu chi*, *kuang-chi* 4, 12b). The same source also gives the explanation that the word is wrongly written and should be written 忘八, meaning "one who forgets all eight (virtues)" or "one who forgets the eighth (virtue, namely shame).

dissolved by the water)—people who get into trouble by their own faults.

Here we are astonished to find no expressions involving the King of Hells (Yen-lo) or his goalers who play a prominent role in dreams and in popular literature, nor any wish to see the other person condemned to life in a hell or other place of punishment.⁴ Curses in which the wrath of god or other supernatural being is implored are also missing in our collection.

Expressions in which the other person is compared to a product of human work, such as a door, a pot, a hearth, a piece of clothing, etc. are quite common (37 expressions).⁵ Some examples:

(You have) raised the door on the wrong side—refers to a big door with two wings, which are not of the same height; a married couple which does not get along with one another.

(You) fix electric lights in the toilet—you have no feeling for style. Electricity belongs into the living room, not into the toilet.

(You) want to eat a big bowl, but crush the bowl—you never have enough, are too greedy.

(You) marionette, (you) puppet—people who have no initiative and always have to be manipulated by others. Often used to criticize children.

(You) buy excrements and sell gold—used against businessmen.

(You) toilet bucket at the roadside—used against prostitutes.

(You) throw the bowl and fling the chop-sticks—you are too nervous. Said against young girls.

After death (you will) not have a coffin—this indicates the wish the other person may die a violent death, such as drowning, being murdered, etc.

By far the most interesting category are expressions which contain a reference to people and to parts of the human body (79). These expressions refer often directly without the use of symbolism to the behavior or other traits for which the addressed person is abused. They do not spare fathers, mothers and wives, and such phrases understandably, hurt more than any other abuse.

4. See note 2 and my *Erzählungsgut aus Südost-China*, Berlin, 1966, p. 9.

5. Some of these expressions contain allusions to more than one object, such as in one of the following examples, a part of the human body (excrements) is mentioned, together with an object, produced by human work (gold). Thus, the different categories do not add up to 100%, but to more than 100%.

Let me give a few examples of derogatory terms which refer to persons:

- (You) *without father, without mother*—to or of a child with bad behavior.
- (Your) *father a head, mother a load*—to or of a daughter-in-law who did not receive a good training.
- (I) (your) *old father*—does not imply homosexuality, but is a weaker, more humorous version of the following abuse:
- (I) *your wife*—which destroys the honor and social status of the cursed man.
- (I) *your mother's vagina*—destroys not only the honor of the addressed in a way which is worse than the above curse, but it also implies that the cursed person is the (extramarital) son of the curser and, therefore under obligation to honor him as father.⁶
- (I) *your mother's three-storied house*—still stronger than the last term.
- (You) *long-haired wife*—used against the sister-in-law.
- (I) *your big sister, your little sister*—destroys the honor of the family of the addressed.
- Sister Seven, sister Eight*—refers to women who belong to gangs.
- Call (him) older brother, call (him) younger brother*—refers to members of gangs.
- Never became a man*—implies that the other person is an animal.
- Stinker*—nobody likes him.
- Guest-brother*—the lover of a married woman.
- Small man*—low-class man with dishonorable behavior.
- Earthen emperor*—landed gentry which behaves as if they were rulers.
- Stinking baby*—i.e. a baby in diapers, not yet a grown-up person.
- Brother Hsü*—men who are lady-killers.
- (You) *yourself have no flesh, but you envy the big anus of the other (person)*—a person who wants to have what he does not have a right to get.

Among the expressions referring to a part of the body, the genitals occur most often:

- Vagina itch*—you or that prostitute!
- I let you lick my big penis*—degrades the social status of the other.
- My penis is bigger than your head*—ridicules the other.
- (You) *press your balls with your legs*—has no wife and, therefore, his house is in disorder.

References to the anus are not rare, such as:

6. See also H. S. Levy (transl.), *Sex Histories, China's First Modern Treatise on Sex Education*, Yokohama 1967, p. 103.

(You) stinking anus—(you) un-reliable man.

Nice face, but stinking anus—to or of people who appear to act nicely but have a bad heart.

The face is a symbol of the status of the person in society.

Thick face skin—a shameless person.

Wet face—person without feeling of shame, who, when spat at, lets it dry.

Among the abuses referring to parts of the head, we find the expression “(You) blind person”, which means “(You) stupid person” and not “may you be blind,” as people in the Near East say so frequently.

About half of the expressions in our collection contain reference to activities, though some expressions contain allusions to more than one activity. Here, the most important activity which is alluded to is intake of food or preparation of food (29% out of a total of 167 different activities). The importance of food in Chinese material has been observed by a number of authors in different fields: we found that in folk narrations and in dreams⁷ food or preparation of food was often mentioned and seemed to be a preoccupation of the average Chinese. It might be remarked here that references to beverages are in all these cases very unusual, and that alcoholic drinks or alcoholism in general are missing in our terms of abuse as well as in the folk literature and dream material. Next in frequency are references to sexual activities (14%), followed by references to anal and eliminatory functions (11%). Death and sickness come next (10%).

In spite of what I said earlier about the difficulty of interpreting these statistics, I have the impression that terms of abuse in which death or sickness is mentioned are less common in China than in other societies, for instance, the Near East. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that only one of our expressions had an open reference to birth and none referred to marriage. More than a third of all references to activities dealt with social life: allusions in the expressions were made to a social behavior (9%), professional work (8%), every-day behavior and actions (5%), stupid actions (5%) and religious activities (3%).

The picture changes greatly if we ask, “what personal or

7. See note 2.

social traits of the other person are criticized in these terms of abuse?" A single expression may criticize more than one trait or, in other words, the expression can be used in more than one situation. Thus, our 325 terms allude to some 380 traits in the other person; this may be an underestimation since it is conceivable that some terms may be used in still other situations to criticize still other traits. But with all such precautions, it seems that the stupidity of the other person was most often the object of abuse (15% of 387 traits), i.e. persons are criticized because they do not know how to act, how to behave appropriately. Only in a very few cases we get the impression that it is a lack of education which made the man act stupidly, while in general he is seen as stupid by nature. Second in numerical importance is criticism of dishonest, unreliable behavior (12%). This is followed by bad manners, by inconsiderate behavior and by criticisms of the sexual behavior of the other (each around 10%). With the exception of stupidity, all other traits are social traits which become obvious only in interactions between persons. Personal traits, such as physical appearance or physical abnormalities (4%), food habits (3%), laziness (6%), senility (2%), childishness, death and sickness (all less than 1%) are evidently of less interest and are less often criticized than the social traits. Yet, within the social traits, one notices the absence of a number of traits which one might have expected to find: no expressions criticize homosexual behavior or other abnormal or unusual sexual behavior, political behavior, behavior towards animals. Criticisms of religious and ceremonial behavior are very rare, and criticisms of family relations are by far not as common as one might have thought (4%). Finally, criticisms of wealth and of corruption are rare and cowardice is condemned in only one expression. Of course, these omissions may simply be the result of the limitation of our collection. But from my own experience I have the feeling that the same omissions would occur in other Chinese collections covering other geographic areas. But be this as it may be, I hope that larger collections and field observations will soon be made so that these questions can be solved.

3.

One gets the impression that these terms with some exceptions can be used by either men or women in the appropriate

situation. Nine expressions with open reference to sex can be used only when they refer to males and only towards males. One other expression can be used by males only when they refer to their sister-in-law. This is matched by four expressions which only women can use when they mean to hurt their husbands:

(You have) a protruding belly, short life.

(You are) a corpse on the roadside.

(You are) half-ways dead.

(You) old chopped-off head.

Two further expressions are used by women towards children. I have no indication whether all the other expressions could be used really by anybody. Probably it is largely a matter of social class and of status whether in a given situation a person would use one of these expressions or not. This may be fairly complicated as, for instance, a man of the lower classes might feel free to curse another member of his class in strong terms that a man of the upper classes would not use towards another member of the upper class. The same man, however, might use the same strong term to a person of a status lower than his own. Incidentally, the terms are not only used when addressing another person, but also when talking of somebody, and a number of the terms can be used in reference to animals or addressing animals.

For a number of our expressions there are indications of the sex of the addressed person. When men are cursed either by their wives or by other men (34 expressions), the main topics of criticism are aspects of their sexual behavior (11), or an implication that the addressed man is of a social status much lower than the speaker (11). When women are cursed (33 expressions), their sex behavior is the aim (17 terms); poor manners of behavior are also a frequent reason for being abused. Children (22 expressions) are abused typically for poor behavior and manners. Characteristically there are 3 expressions blaming children who eat too much, but none blaming children for not eating.

Different professions receive their special terms of abuse, in addition to sharing in the general wealth of terms. The most common recipients are businessmen (14 expressions). They are attacked for their love of profit or their attempts to cheat customers:

Cheap brings no good merchandise—merchants always cheat, therefore cheap wares are bad.

(You are of the) people who do business which kills others, but nobody makes business in which he has a loss.

(You make) one-time business—a merchant can cheat a customer only once.

(You make) capital one, profit nine—merchants who want to gain too much money.

Without meanness, no businessman.

(You are a) cheater of boys and old men.

(You) rise and fall according to time—merchant who thinks only of gain, has no moral principles.

The second most criticized professionals are the prostitutes (9 expressions), whose whole profession is cursed as dishonorable:

A woman who earns her food.

(She) carries corpses away.

A stinking whore.

(You are) by everybody.

(Your) vagina itches.

(You have a) broken vagina.

Monks and nuns are a common aim of ridicule in Chinese tales and jokes. Our collection has only two swear-words used against them:

Bald donkey—a monk.

Nun, wife of a monk—refers to their alleged immorality.

I am sure that collectors who pay special attention to the professions would be able to bring large numbers of expressions which ridicule or criticize men and women in different jobs.

4.

This essay cannot achieve more than to introduce the field of Chinese terms of abuse. The collection of abusive expressions used here refers only to one area of China and I have the impression that it contains only a small part of existing terms of abuse. All conclusions are, therefore, tentative. The expressions are usually short and not structured but when they are longer, they are often similar to proverbs in their form and structure. The expressions attack normally the social behavior of the other person and tend to degrade the addressed person socially. The frame of reference varies greatly: animals as well as objects and

humans are used to be compared with the addressed person. It seems notable that plants are infrequently mentioned, and that domesticated animals are predominant over wild animals. If the expression refers to family members the stress is not upon the cursed person's father, mother or wife, but rather on the social status of the abused person in relation to the speaker. Rarely, a person is compared with a child. Curses which ask deities or demons to punish the addressed person, and curses which wish sickness or death on the other person are not common. These and other traits which seem to be characteristics for Chinese terms of abuse would stand out much more clearly if Chinese terms were compared with abusive terms in other societies.