Homonymic and Synonymic Collisions in the Northeastern Jiangsu Dialect*
- On the Formation of Geographically Complementary Distributions -

Ray Iwata
Kanazawa University

This paper is devoted to the classical issue of linguistic geography, “mots en collision (words in collision)”, based on the linguistic survey carried out in the dialect border area in northeast Jiangsu. Two complementary distributions are observed: one is between Map 2 (knee) and Map 3 (clod) with regard to the single form “kʰə tʰəu”, and the other between Map 4 (elbow) and Map 5 (shoulder) with regard to a set of synonyms, “kʰy” and “kuai”, both meaning “curved”. These are elucidated in terms of conflict between the two dialects, northern and southern, and are interpreted as resulting from homonymic and synonymic collisions. It is claimed that Chinese etymological study should be established on the basis of linguistic geography.

Key words: linguistic geography, homonymic collision, synonymic collision, phonetic attraction, complementary distribution, etymology

* Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the CEALC regular meeting (Tokyo, March 2003) and at the lecture delivered in the Beijing Language and Culture University (Beijing, June 2004). I am indebted to the organizers, Mitsuaki Endo and Zhiyun Cao, as well as the participants, for their helpful comments. My thanks are also due to the predecessors of linguistic geography in Japan, in particular, Ookawa et al. (1991-7) and Matsubara & Yokoyama (1958). Thanks to them, we Japanese students can read the Japanese translations of the classical works by Gilliéron and Dauzat. The maps appearing in this paper are from a Window-based map drawing system, SEAL (System of Exhibition and Analysis of Linguistic Data). I thank the authors, Chitsuko Fukushima and Yusuke Fukushima, who kindly provided me with this system.