

# On Etymology of the Appellation “Da man-er” (大嫚儿) in Qingdao Dialect

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## Abstract

The appellation to call a girl in Qingdao dialect is “da man-er” (大嫚儿), which is supposed to derive from German word “Damen” phonetically, according to: (1) remarkable similarities in meaning, pronunciation, and consistencies in commendatory or derogatory senses; (2) different preferences for people in different ages; and (3) the insertability of modifiers (adjectives or nouns) for “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿) and the non-insertability for “da man-er” (大嫚儿). Therefore, nearly 100 years during the changing processes, “da man-er” (大嫚儿) has a series of derivations commonly referring to the appellations of “girl”, such as “man-er” (嫚儿), “man gu zi” (嫚姑子), “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿) and even the formation of “xiao (小) + adj/n + man-er” (嫚儿).

## Keywords

Da man-er (大嫚儿), appellation, Qingdao dialect, lexical expatiation

In 1891, the Qing government set up a fortification system in Qingdao, and by 1990, a new division of seven districts, two counties, and three cities was gradually formed. It is adjacent to the Yellow Sea to the east and south of Qingdao, and to the northeast and north of Yantai. It is adjacent to Laiyang, Zhaoyuan, and Laizhou, and to the west to Changyi, Gaomi, Zhucheng, and Wulian, and to the southwest to Rizhao. Qingdao dialect belongs to Jiaolaoqian dialect. Due to its special history of German occupation, there are a few foreign words in the vocabulary system, reflecting the particularity of Qingdao regional culture.

For example, the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿), commonly used in the old dialect of Qingdao to refer to “girl”, is very distinctive. *Big Dictionary of Chinese Dialect*: “da man-er (大嫚儿), noun, girl (young woman). Jiaolao mandarin. Qingdao, Shandong” (Xu and Miyata 1999: 288). With “man-er” (嫚儿) as the root of the word, the appellation of “girl” in the

Qingdao dialect also has a variety of compound forms, such as “little man-er” (小嫚儿), “old big man-er” (老大嫚儿), “little man-er man-er jia” (小嫚儿嫚儿家) in which “jia” (家) is a affix. *Big Dictionary of Chinese Dialect*: “man-er” (嫚儿), noun, name of girl. Jiaolao mandarin. Zhucheng, Shandong. Give birth to a ~. Shandong Laiyang (Xu and Miyata 1999: 6968). *The County Annals of Laiyang*: a girl was called ~, also called girls” (Wang 1935).

However, in the retrieval of Chinese language materials in ancient and modern times, we did not find the use cases for referring to “girl” in the literature by “man-er” (嫚儿), even in the vernacular novels such as *Xing Shi Yinyuan Zhuan* (醒世姻缘传), Xu

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*Jinpingmei* (续金瓶梅), and *The Complete Works of Pu Songling* (蒲松龄全集), with the characteristics of shandong dialect.

In addition, there is no mention of “man-er” (嫚儿) in the *Shandong Dialect Study* edited by Mr. Qian Zengyi (2005) and *Atlas of Chinese Dialect (Vocabulary Volume)* edited by Mr. Cao Zhiyun (2008). From the existing dialect materials, apart from the dialects of Qingdao and its surrounding areas, the reference to “girl” with the root of “man-er” (嫚儿) has not been used in other dialect areas.

As a basic appellation, the geographical distribution is so narrow, which is rare in the northern region. Therefore, this paper tries to discuss the origin and diachronic development of “da man-er” (大嫚儿) in Qingdao dialect.

### TEXTUAL RESEARCH ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF “DA MAN-ER” (大嫚儿)

After Germany occupied Qingdao in 1897, it was colonized for nearly two decades, and Qingdao was built into a “model colony”. In daily communication, because the Germans were in a dominant position, and so, the people of Qingdao naturally followed the Germans to learn German, especially with the influx of the German army and urban construction personnel, Germany also sent some missionaries to “care” the souls of the Germans and to preach to the local people.

Under the impregnation of settlement environment and foreign religious culture, it inevitably includes in Qingdao dialect of some of the German words, such as “gu li” (古力) (German Gully transliteration word, means “the sewer”) and its local derivative “Guli Gai” (it means “lower manhole cover”). In addition, there are “Pi” (啤) (German “bier” transliteration word), “lamu” (拉姆) (German “alarm” transliteration word, refers to the “alarm”), and so on.

By German Bible and other literature, we found that there is a appellation in German, namely

“Damen”, which calls “young woman”, is very similar with the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) that is read as [ta<sup>42</sup> mār<sup>213</sup>] on the phonetic and semantic in the Qingdao dialect. We think it should be the etymology of the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) in Qingdao dialect, namely the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) is from the German, and it is the product of modern Qingdao colonization.

### Both Are Highly Similar in Meaning and Emotion

The word Damen is the plural form of Dame, and it is often used in German to refer to “lady”. *Duden: Deutsches Universalwörterbuch* (Zhao and Zhou 2013: 456): “①lady, meine Damen und Herren! Ladies and gentlemen! Die Dame seines Herzens. His ideal woman; ②cultured woman: sie ist eine Dame. She’s a cultured lady”.

With the corresponding, the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) in Qingdao dialect has the following several kinds of usage<sup>1</sup>: ①girls, especially strange girls: Hey, “da man-er” (大嫚儿), how much is the Spanish fish? ②girls who are grown up, educated, or sensible: Your girl has now grown up, she is a big girl. ③especially refer to a virgin: My daughter is a ~, she has not been married.

It can be seen that Damen in German is very similar to “da man-er” (大嫚儿) in Qingdao dialect in both pronunciation and meaning. And it should be noted that during the period of German occupation, Germany was at the end of the feudal dynasty, and the word Damen was widely used because of its reference to “noble women”. In addition to the general reference to “women”, they also have similar references in a certain context. As mentioned above, “da man-er” (大嫚儿) can specifically refer to “a virgin” in the Qingdao dialect and is more commonly used. However, this term is usually not mentioned in the German dictionary, but we find that Dame(n) refer(s) to “a virgin” in the textual research of German Bible.

With the influx of German missionaries and the construction of churches and schools by the Germans, the words in the Bible would inevitably have some influence on local residents. However, because of the responsibilities and beliefs of missionaries, in the communication with local residents, the communicative language was inevitably marked with the mark of the Bible. Therefore, the use of Damen as a “a virgin” in the German Bible inevitably affected the meaning of the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) in Qingdao dialect.

*The Bible*, about Isaiah (Isaiah 47: 1), says: “Babylon, du junge Dame, steig herab von deinem Thron! Ja, setz dich in den Staub, du Tochter der Chaldäer! Alle nannten dich die Zarte, Feine - doch diese Zeiten sind vorbei!”.

In addition, from the naming of the virgin Mary and church, it can be seen that the word Dame highlights the female’s “sanctity”. For example: Notre Dame; Notre Dame de Paris; Cathedral Notre-Dame. *Duden: Deutsches Universalwörterbuch*: “Notre-Dame [nɔtrə dam] f.- the virgin Mary (Jungfrau Maria’s French written)” (Zhao and Zhou 2013: 1662).

Here, “Jungfrau Maria” is synonymous with “Notre-Dame”, only in a different way. The word “Jungfrau” in German means “virgin”, that is to say, the word “dame” in reference to “woman”, can mean “a virgin”. “Notre Dame” refers specifically to Mary, or Virgin Mary, as worshippers call her “Blessed Virgin Mary”. With the introduction of Christianity and Catholicism, the word “Dame” naturally retained some of the language of the Bible when it was introduced.

Correspondingly, the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) is also commonly used to refer to “a virgin” in Qingdao dialect, and even the prefix “old” (老) can be added to refer to “old virgin” who is older and unmarried. *Shandong Dialect Dictionary*: “老大嫚儿 [lǎo<sup>55</sup> tā<sup>42</sup> mān<sup>213</sup>] the eldest young woman who is unmarried (Qingdao, Gaomi)” (Dong 1997: 154).

Due to China’s long-standing feudal ideology and excessive emphasis on female chastity, the concept of the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) for “virgin” has been retained prominently. Such as:

(1) 也 个 半 掩 门 子 按 天 提 杭 裤 子 就 装 大 嫩 儿。  
Nie ge ban yan men zi an tian ti hang ku zi jiu zhuang da man-er.

That prostitute pretends to be a virgin when she puts on her pants trousers every day.

In example (1), the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) refers specifically to the virgin. Later, with less emphasis on female chastity, “da man-er” (大嫚儿) gradually changed from merely referring to “a virgin” to referring to “unmarried woman”. Such as:

(2) 老 尹 他 儿 银 家 离 了 一 回 子, 又 找 了 个 大 嫩 儿。  
Lao Yin ta er yin jia li le yi hui zi, you zhao le ge da man-er.

Lao Yin’s son had a divorce and married a girl who had never been married.

In example (2), the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) refers not specifically to a virgin, but to an unmarried woman. In addition, in German, Damen, in addition to referring to “women”, sometimes emphasizes “fast-growing and educated women”, with a distinct positive sense, which is completely similar to the “da man-er” (大嫚儿) in Qingdao dialect. In the Qingdao dialect, in addition to using “da man-er” (大嫚儿) or “man-er” (嫚儿) to call a girl, it also often uses “da man-er” (大嫚儿) to mean “grown up, educated woman”. Such as:

*Lang’s De-Han Double Dictionary* (朗氏德汉双解大词典): “Eure Tochter ist schon e-e richtige Damen. 你们的女儿可真长大成人了。” (Ye 2000: 359).

(3) Qingdao dialect: 懈 阊 女 都 长 成 大 嫩 儿 了。  
Xie xie nǚ dōu zhǎng chéng dà mān er le.

Nen gun nv dou zhang cheng da man-er le.  
Your girl has already grown up.

### The Using Tendency of Different Age Groups

The investigation of different age groups can be made based on the diachronic comparison under the synchronic plane, and the comparison results can also reflect the changing process of language to some extent. In Qingdao, the older generation born and bred in Qingdao usually uses the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) to refer to “girl” or “strange woman”, while using “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿), it means “little girl”. Such as:

(4) 大 嫩 儿, 你 驻 趣 赶 儿 再 个 来 吧。  
Da man-er, ni zhu zan gan er zai ge lai ba.  
Little girl, you had better come back later.  
(5) 你 生 了 个 小 嫩 儿 还 是 小 小 儿?  
Ni sheng le ge xiao man-er hai shi xiao xiao er?  
Did you give birth to a little girl or a little boy?

The middle aged people rarely use the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) to call a girl [they feel that is rude, flirtatious, which is directly related to “da man-er” (大嫚儿) for “virgin”], while they use “man-er” (嫚儿) and some use “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿) instead. And the younger generation basically does not use “da man-er” (大嫚儿), but generally uses the word “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿).

This difference in the use of different age levels indicates that in the time level, the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) was first used before the more commonly used “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿). In addition, from the perspective of meaning, the word “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿) used by the old school and the new school of Qingdao dialect is not the same; the former refers to a little girl, while the latter is a general term which refers to a girl or a woman. In a sense, its determinative word “xiao” (小) is from the real to the virtual.

### Investigation of the Degree of Tension Between “Man-er” and Adjective Prefix

In the Qingdao dialect, while making up words with the root of “man-er” (嫚儿), a common phenomenon is that some modifiers are added to give the reference a certain emotional color, such as “xiao lang man-er” (referring to the amorous girl). Modifiers (adjectives or nouns) that can be selected are open, but are limited by some syntactic formats. This limitation is embodied in the following aspects: the insertability of modifiers (adjectives or nouns) for “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿) and the non-insertability for “da man-er” (大嫚儿).

For example, when adding modifiers to “da man-er” (大嫚儿), only adjectives can be added, and they must be placed before “da man-er” (大嫚儿), which is not only limited by the grammatical format, but also has few optional adjectives. On the contrary, when adding a modifier to “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿), it can be a noun in addition to an adjective. In format, the modifier is usually inserted between “xiao” and “man-er”, while it is not appropriate to put it before “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿). As shown in the following Table 1:

This situation shows that the word “da man” (大嫚) when entering the Qingdao dialect was entered as a single morpheme word integrity. The initial, “da” (大) and “man” (嫚) were not a real speech morpheme, but foreign syllable, and the relationship between them is very close, also cannot insert into other components between “da” (大) and “man” (嫚), just accepting the Chinese grammar reform of the system which is added suffix “er” (儿) to become a retroflex final.

“Xiao man-er” (小嫚儿), on the other hand, is flexible and varied, but is usually inserted only between “xiao” (小) and “man-er” (嫚儿). If modifier is placed in front of “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿), it is against the combination rhythm and does not correspond to the sense of language.

**Table 1.** The Control of Combination Situation of “Man-er” (嫚儿) and Adjective Prefix

Xiao + modifier + man-er	Modifier + xiao + man-er	Modifier + da + man-er	Da + modifier + man-er
小矮嫚儿	*矮小嫚儿	矮大嫚儿	*大矮嫚儿
小傻嫚儿	*傻小嫚儿	傻大嫚儿	*大傻嫚儿
小猴子嫚儿	*猴子小嫚儿	老大嫚儿	*大老嫚儿

Notes: An asterisk (\*) indicates that the syntactic combination is non-syntactic standard. “小矮嫚儿” means a small and short girl. “小傻嫚儿” means a small and silly girl. “小猴子嫚儿” means a small and naughty girl. “老大嫚儿” means a girl who is the eldest and unmarried.

This further supports the claim that the word Damen in German is the source of the word “da man-er” (大嫚儿) in Qingdao dialect.

## CONCLUSIONS

Language is a mirror of social culture. After the German colonization in Qingdao in 1898-1915, some colonial traces are inevitably left upon the culture, and the loanwords in Qingdao dialect are the concentrated expression of such colonial traces. When loanwords enter the Chinese system, they generally undergo a process of “collision—fusion—derivation”. In the Qingdao dialect, calling a “girl”, in Chinese originally has ready-made words, that is “gu-niang” (姑娘), but due to the dominant position of German in daily communication, local residents keep borrowing the word “da man” (大嫚) in German in daily communication to highlight their cultural level and social status.

At first, two terms should coexist with each other, but in the daily communication with the word “da man” (大嫚) having increased frequency of usage, in pragmatic competition the loanwords “da man” (大嫚) gradually prevailed, thus gradually became the standard form, while the Chinese inherent words were gradually abandoned by local residents; this is the collision between loanwords and Chinese inherent words, and such collisions reflect the penetration and influence of foreign language upon

Chinese language.

However, in the process of the two forms of coexistence and competition, the fusion of foreign words and Chinese inherent words would also occur. For example, “man-guzi” (嫚姑子) that is a new form of expression for calling a girl in Qingdao dialect is the product of the fusion of the two forms.

When the heterogeneity of “da man” (大嫚) entered the Chinese system, it would naturally be transformed by the grammar system of Chinese language, which made the component of “da” (大) gradually become real from the virtual and induce the derivation of “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿). During this period, the meaning of the component “xiao (小)” was tangible, that means “small”. And because the word “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿) was used so frequently in daily life, it further pushed the meaning of “xiao” (小) from real to virtual. Eventually, “xiao man-er” (小嫚儿) and the more flexible “xiao + adjective/noun + man-er” became common words in the Qingdao dialect to refer to “a girl” as a product of colonial derivation.

## Note

1. The examples in this paper were obtained from two field surveys in May and August 2014. Pronunciation cooperation: Jiang Xiuying, female, 72 years old, primary school; Yin Fenghua, male, 82 years old, junior high school. Both speakers are native to Qingdao and have no experience of going out.

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