Language Policies Under Zhu Yuanzhang and Zhu Di Regimes: A Comparative Perspective

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Abstract: This study attempts to examine the differences of the language policies formulation and implementation during the two significant early periods of Ming dynasty (1368-1644). It uses a historical comparative perspective to understand the processes involved in language change. In order to deal with the relationship between Mongolian and Chinese and to develop a system to regulate language use for Chinese, the early Ming government enacted a series of language policies. There were both similarities as well as differences in the policies made by Zhu Yuanzhang and Zhu Di, the two paramount rulers of the Ming dynasty. Whereas the policies during Zhu Yuanzhang time manifested in repression of Mongolian through implementing acculturation measures such as intermarriage between Mongol and Chinese, Zhu Di paid more attention to language harmony characteristic of liberalism toward Mongolian language. Zhu Yuanzhang standardized written language based on the authoritative Nanjing speech. He set up an education system to propagate both a national lingua franca and a vernacular with the latter playing important role in promoting the technological advancement. Zhu Di’s regime was also remembered for its efforts in promulgating foreign language education policies, thus on the one hand to establish a rapport with neighboring countries in East Asia, southeast Asia and the inner Western Asia, and on the other hand, to promote the international spread of Chinese language in these regions.

Keywords: Language Policies in the MING Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, Zhu Di

1. Introduction

Few scholars paid attention to the language policy of Ming dynasty. Johannes s. Lotze is one of famous one. This paper has many wonderful discussions, such as a clear description of multi-language translation in the Ming dynasty, but there are also some problems [1]. Firstly, from the practice of language translation in the empire, this paper argues that there is a plan of language status in the early Ming dynasty. It is a covert language policy. In fact, the government has issued an overt one. Secondly, the article holds that the policy of opening up in Ming dynasty is the heritage of Mongolian culture. This is not entirely true. China’s worldview came into being during the Western Zhou dynasty (1046-771 BC), at that time China already had translation officers called Xiangxu. Due to the yuan dynasty’s developed international trade and more frequent international exchanges, translation may be more important than the previous dynasties. Based on the translation language practice in Ming dynasty, this paper proved the open language policy at that time. But the initiators of language policy and planning (LPP) are not particularly concerned. Language planning is first the behavior of the government from the top to down; on the other hand the bottom-up behavior of the public also can lead to language planning.

Zhu Yuanzhang put an end to the Yuan dynasty (1206-1368) with a history of nearly 160 years of rule, especially over the reign of non-Han culture by the Kitans, Nuzhens, Mongolia for nearly 400 years. So that he made a significant contribution for the purity of Chinese language. Zhu Di exploited the Marine silk road to spread Chinese civilization to Southeast Asia and far west, opened the Chinese language and culture communication channel with the world. The common “Hongwu Yongle” title usually connected in literature because the two paramount rulers created a foundation in Ming dynasty. But there are a lot of differences about the language policy between the two rulers.
2. Policies on Relations Between Mongolia and Han

The main language is not equal to authoritative one in a country. Although Chinese was the national language in Yuan dynasty, Mongolian is the official language On behalf of the Chinese Government to deal with international relations. Chinese only could be used in the aerie which completely not understand Mongolian such as Fujian province.

There were more talents with bilingual or even multi-lingual in Mongolian and other ethnic minority. While less bilingual talents in Han due to the racial discrimination of ruling class. Even Xu Heng worked for the government also must rely on the translator when talking with Kublai Khan.

For new Ming government, it needed to fully recover Chinese to authoritative position in the national life. Zhu Yuanzhang and Zhu Di did a lot of work, but they were different on language policy.

2.1. Language Policy in Zhu Yuanzhang Time

Zhu Yuanzhang repressed Mongolian in the political field in order to quickly recover Chinese to authoritative position all over the country. The government took strict policies for Mongolian in the territory of localization; meanwhile took limit policy to use Mongolian during the war.

2.1.1. Repression Policy [2]
At the beginning of Zhu Yuanzhang times, the founder of the popular Chinese in China is something hybrid language stained with Mongolian which Zu Shenglee and other scholars named haneryanyu [3], that its upper being Chinese, while Mongolian as bottom. In February of the first year of Hongwu, Zhu Yuanzhang explicitly banned all the things about Mongol such as trappings, language and surname.

2.1.2. Limit Policy
The Ming government for Mongolian restriction policy within the territory through the main measures of the intermarriage Han. He said Mongolia and Semu people were not allowed to marry with its congener but only to Han people.

Under the condition that Mongolian was forbidden strongly, every Mongolian family which straddled in the central plains learned Chinese. Each Mongols had been renamed Chinese name. They quickly promoted into the upper society through the imperial examination, or through business.

In order to consolidate national safety, Zhu Yuanzhang set up military institution in the whole country and immigrated many Chinese to protect the motherland. Hongwu seven years Hezhou Wei was set and the following year renamed Shanxi Xing Dusi that administering aeries involved in Tibet and Xinjiang. All the local officials in the form of family, and official positions could be hereditary [4]. As Daming Huidian recorded there were seven guards on the northwest of the border: Anding, Aduan, Quxian (Zhu Yuanzhang built first), Chijin Menggu, Handong, Handongzuo, Hami. The old rule system from the Yuan dynasty reserved at all the border guard and Shanxi Xing Dusi. Mongolian held the principle while Chinese took the deputy together. All the local officials were empowered by the emperor.

The political system of the northwest frontier played an important role to keep Chinese with characteristic in Yuan dynasty till today some dialects such as Tang Wang speech in Gansu Dongxiang autonomous county and Hezhou speech in Gansu province Ningxia state still exist this kind of Chinese.

2.1.3. Convenience Policy
At the beginning of the Ming government was established, the core task was to eliminate remnants of Mongolia. Since unavoidable war, then the communication had to use the Mongolian language. Chinese characters substituted Huihe writing. Hongwu 15 years in the first month, Zhu Yuanzhang ordered Huoyuanjie and Mayichihei to translate Mongolian into Chinese. So Chinese version about the Yuan secret history and Huayi Yiyu had come down from Ming dynasty.

After this reform, the system that recording foreign language by Chinese characters was preserved, and was inherited by "Siyi Guan" which the institution about translation and education from Zhu Di time.

After Zhu Yuanzhang times, Han nationality identity was generally recognized by the upper class themselves. They had alert to the heart of the alien.

The authority of standard Chinese (in comparison with hybrid Chinese) set up soon. It can be observed from the fact that the language style was different in the secret history of Mongolia.

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‘Because he is the eldest son, the monarch chose some people who good at archery with courage, strength, braveness to follow him. If there was a place he wanting to go, he could conquer it and none could excel them, so they were named Zheuerqin.’

The first paragraph is selected from the translation of the 30th part in Ming dynasty. The substantive verb “bū” of Mongolian was translated into Chinese “you” in the last sentence, while the past tense was translated into “lai”, and Mongolian speech verb which marking direct speech bit on the end into “medao”. These elements had the characteristics of literal translation in the Yuan dynasty.

The second paragraph from the translation of section 139 in Ming dynasty. The preposition “yin”, “yu”, the personal pronoun “qi”, the scope adverbs “dan”, “jie” and the conjunction “gu”, are typical classical Chinese words. This reflected that translation establishing the new standard in the early Ming dynasty [5].

“Thirty sorts of Yuankan Zaju” after the Ming dynasty renamed Yuan Quxuan. The two plays are separated by about 300 years, there are 13 common repertoires. It is obvious that the northern Chinese composition replaced by southern components, such as personal pronoun “an” in “zan”, A-not-A questions with “ke VP” [6, 7].

2.2. The Language Policy in Yongle Period

Zhu Di had conquered Mongolian 5 times in person to give a heavy blow for the Mongolian remnants. But the policy was very loose for domestic ethnic, he took a lot of preferential policy, such as giving them Chinese surname, relaxed the restrictions on Mongolian language at the same time. For northwest frontier, Zhu Di continued to use the political system established till Yuan dynasty to Zhu Yuanzhang’s time which made Mongolia as its main ruler. He also made Uygur language communicate with central Asian. All the new measures created harmonious atmosphere in great northern of China.

2.2.1. The Tolerance Policy

Mongolian had been used to living in Beijing for hundreds of years ruling. Some people especially senior officials were not adapting to living in prairie, so a lot of people wanted to go back to the mainland. As long as they were willing to yield, Zhu Di made them fill Beijing, Hebei, Shandong and other internal hinterland, and did not require them to give up their own language. This can be confirmed from the fact that because of Qiao Xin’s remonstrating in Ming Hongzhi years the emperor agreed to ban "Hú Yú" in Beijing.

Zhu Di fully trusted senior officials who yield to the government, gave them Chinese surname, allowed them dwell on the north border. All the measures strengthened Chinese influence on border area.

2.2.2. The Development Policy

Timur who described himself son-in-law of the Mongolian imperial family reigned over central Asian from Hongwu period on the western regions of China. Zhu Di conveniently titled the Yuan dynasty royal descent at the head of the Hui, Uygur, Halahui (a Muslim Mongolian), and other tribes. They were responsible for the contact with western 17 countries, all central Asian languages were translated into Chinese through Hami, so Uighur served as the bridge between the central Asian and Chinese language.

2.3. Language Situation About Mongolian in Ming Dynasty

From national language situation of Ming dynasty, it was successful for language status planning by Zhu Yuanzhang and Zhu Di. Tongshi and Yizisheng who understood Mongolian were less in the Ming dynasty. The Mongolians who lived within the territory were assimilated, while upper classes of the Mongolian still understood Chinese and Chinese character. This can be confirmed from historical records that the emperor Yingzong was captured at Tumubao: when the emperor was detained in north, due to the eunuch Yuan Bin and Haming could read, they communicated with Mongolian upper classes, and then they made a contribution on the emperor’s returning. At that time the supreme commander Yexian could speak Chinese. In his speech there were some key words with character of pidgin Chinese in Yuan dynasty such as the subjunctive mood “He” and imperative mood particles “Zhe “.

As Mongolian who lost power, the main policy of Zhu Yuanzhang was assimilation. While Zhu Di paid more attention to established harmonious language life.

3. The Policy of popularizing Chinese

It was the main task to establish standard Chinese in Zhu Yuanzhang times. The intellectual class chose to follow the reading sound which continued from Song dynasty. Under the effect of implicit language policy, because of Nanjing special political and cultural status, its’ voice became the representative of mandarin. It was important to improve the international status in Yongle period to communicated Chinese in the field of political and diplomatic, commercial trade, and many other areas.

3.1. The Policy of Popularizing Chinese in Zhu Yuanzhang’s Time

3.1.1. The National Standard Written Language

It was the main task to establish national phonetic standard in Hongwu period. This problem also triggered disagreement among Zhu Yuanzhang as a politician and Song Lian as a scholar. They agreed to spread the phonetic of central plains, but what part of the speech on behalf of the central plains was different for them. Qie rhyme should be roughly the phonetic at the beginning of Sui dynasty, from the preface of Lu Fayan, maybe retain old Chinese phonology. From Tang rhyme in Tang dynasty till Guang rhyme in Song dynasty belonged different versions of Qie rhyme. Time changed but books for rhyme without
changing, so it was distant between the sound of speech and written language. *Zhongyuan rhyme* in Yuan dynasty on behalf of central speech represented the phonetic of the northern mandarin in the 14th century [8].

From *Hongwu Zheng rhyme*’s preface, it was different from either *Qie rhyme* system or *Zhongyuan rhyme*. Song Lian emphasized it was based on the phonetic of central plains and abandon some dialectal ingredients.

Due to the war in the north, limited by historical conditions, the vast majority of the talents were from the southern at the beginning of Ming dynasty. So their speech inherited from Hangzhou dialect in Southern Song dynasty.

Although the compilation of the book were pundits, Zhu Yuanzhang was not approved, after a while he published another rhyme book named *Yunhui Dingzheng*. It was obvious that *Hongwu Zheng rhyme* was far more from the phonetic of central plains. Until the second year of Yongle, XieJin also continued to offer another one.

While historical facts didn’t transfer by Zhu Yuanzhang's will, the rhyme books offered by later scholars lost. Because it cited the Mongolian word rhyme, so was boycotted by intellectuals of Ming dynasty. *Hongwu Zheng rhyme* never declined in Ming dynasty.

Chinese spread to the overseas, especially for the session of the Chinese government, standardized on *Hongwu Zheng rhyme*. This fact was recorded by Korean historical materials.

After Korea Shizong king came to power, he attached great importance to cultural development, he also created Korean character. Till Shizu times it had taken Korea more than 20 years to learn Chinese, all written language based on *Hongwu Zheng rhyme*.

Baokui Ye thought *Hongwu Zheng rhyme* "recorded and preserved the phonetic of written language in fourteenth century. And the mandarin sound system was established, with the aid of the rhyme book, and gained popularity with the help of the official rhyme in Ming dynasty [9].""

**3.1.2. Nanjing Speech Become the Authoritative Chinese Dialects**

It was common practice that capital speech being an authority in every dynasty. Zhu Yuanzhang strongly wanted to restore the phonetic of central plains, but Nanjing was not in the central plains. *Hongwu Zheng rhyme* couldn’t satisfy his desire. But he also understood the city was a model for all over the world, the beginning of Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang made a special project on Nanjing customs, and fostered the national custom repair.

Nanjing imperial academy was the reception of foreigners to learn Chinese since Hongwu period, so Nanjing speech spread all over the world.

Zhu Di moved the capital to Beijing, brought a large number of immigrants from Nanjing, from high-ranking officials to artisans. Where was the capital either Nanjing or Beijing the Ming emperors hesitated for a long time. At Zhengtong six years (1441) the royal family decided Beijing as its capital. Many emperors in Ming dynasty attached great importance to the Nanjing construction.

Because of the role of implicit language policy, Nanjing speech had been the standard of oral communication of the Ming dynasty. All intellectuals in Ming dynasty had very strong sense of identity with speaking mandarin, as an example He Liangjun recorded a scholar named "Yayi", because he could speak fluent mandarin and was confident. All people respected for someone who could speak "mandarin".

It can be concluded that the phonetic of written language were decided by official language policy. Nanjing speech as authoritative dialect was the result of the implicit language policy, which including language attitudes, cultural standpoint, ideas related to ideology, all the things be called "language and culture".

**3.2. The Policy of Popularizing Chinese in Zhu Di Period**

**3.2.1. Foreign Trade Pushing Chinese Language Popularizing**

As early as in Han dynasty, Chinese people began to travel Nanyang, participating in its economic development. Several immigration in history was associated with the northern war, such as the western Han dynasty, Tang dynasty, Southern Song dynasty, Ming dynasty. Only immigration in the early Ming dynasty and Qing dynasty derived from commercial economic development.

Before the Ming government set up maritime silk road, the strait of Malacca nominally belong to Siam (Thailand), the noble named Bailimisula in Sumatra had established Malaccan kingdom in 1401, and in the third year of Yongle (1405) recognized by Zhu Di. The major strategic decision changed the fact that the strait full of pirates unable to normal trade. Zheng He sailed Xiyang forth or back as Malaccan kingdom for transition.

Due to the right place there were a lot of people in Fujian and Guangdong travelling with Zheng He. As many people gathered for trade, there was a Chinese regime on Nanyang. After Java knocked Sanfoqi (overseas translation Shilifoshi) out, the government couldn’t rule it completely, so a lot of Chinese inhabited there. Old port (today's giant port of Indonesia) regime set up by Daoming Liang from Guangdong. In five year of Yongle, Ming government set up here institution "Old port Xuanwei Si", the first ruler was Shi Jinqing as he was a Cantonese. Chinese and Chinese dialects were spread around Nanyang, until today there are a lot of Min dialects of loanwords in Philippines language.

**3.2.2. Popularizing Chinese Language by Political Friendship**

At the beginning of Ming dynasty, the difficult task was to defense the nation. After government operated business at Southeast Asia from Song dynasty till Yuan dynasty, most countries depended on the Chinese porcelain, iron and other supplies. All the states established friendly relations with Chinese and the association between them unceasingly. In February of Hongwu two year, the messengers of Java to Fujian province just know the Yuan dynasty had perished.
Timur who established an empire as the core of Persian culture strengthened their military force by cavalry in the northwest. In November 1404, he led army to attack the Ming government. Because he himself died midway, the empire fell into a power struggle, they couldn’t advance on China. In order to further political forces against Mongolia residues and safeguard national sea and inland, Ming government must establish friendly relationship with Southeast Asia and the western regions. Zhu Di sent a powerful lineup to connect with other counties, such as Zheng He, Wang Jinghong to Xiyang (sailing 6 times at Zhu Di age), Chen Cheng to Xiyou (2 times in Zhu Yuanzhang times, 3 times at Zhu Di age), Li Da to western region; Hai Tong to Mongolia; Hou Xian to Tibet; YuShi Ji to Japan, etc. The envoys had a good level on Chinese, were responsible for reading imperial edict to the destination (or area).

With the communication between China and foreign countries, Chinese also spread towards the world. Korea, Japan, Vietnam were the members of Han culture at early days. Every kingdom of friendly relations with the Ming government had received Chinese letters. Some countries had set up Chinese inscription, according to the history of Ming dynasty such as Poluo (ancient brunei) Yongle tablet; Boni (now Brunei) Yongle tablet; Malacan (the ancient kingdom of Malacca strait) Yongle tablet; Kochi (now southwest India cochin area) Yongle tablet. In fact, Zhu Di's popularizing Chinese language policy was very successful. According to the Korea record of the history of Lichao at the beginning of Ming dynasty Zhu Yuanzhang was very angry at the envoys' pidgin Chinese. Zhu Di used diplomacy policies to obtain concubine from Korea to improve relations between the two countries, so Korea's Chinese soon changed into a normative one.

For an example an envoy named Yuan Minsheng in his speech dealing with diplomatic affairs there were some characteristic words such as noun of locality behind names "Duimian""Gendi", mood particles "He", which common in Yuan dynasty. While in Yongle 22 years he relayed Zhu Di's words to Korea emperor, mood particles "yi", "wei" and the scope adverbs "jie", auxiliary pronoun "suo" were elegant Chinese words.

4. Language Education Policy

Ming government relied on a set of comprehensive control system that made Confucianism concretize, such as from the important things of imperial superstructure, to the small document format, etiquette, and even clothing, household life and so on. The characteristics of language education policy in Zhu Yuanzhang’s time were to establish a hierarchy system of education. The system was favorable for disseminating Confucianism from the upper ruling class to the ordinary people, and spreading national lingua. The language style about science and technology inherited from the former generation, and vernacular was spread. The characteristics of language education policy in Zhu Di’s time was to establish special institution to learn the minority languages and foreign languages, which improving the ability of national language.

4.1. School Education Development in Zhu Yuanzhang Times

The system of education in Ming dynasty included school of the county, state, local place even at military institution on borderland and in the middle of the county which named Guozhi Jian. And some colleges were good at martial arts, medicine, yin-yang theory (major in astronomy calendar). Royal families set up special institution to bring up noble. In addition to martial arts, medicine, yin-yang theory, translation (belong to Siyi Guan), other schools at all levels had uniform teaching content, which everyone learning all the classics, national laws, the rite and music system. Imperial examination promoted school education in every three years of Ming dynasty.

Through such initiatives, Zhu Yuanzhang gained social talent who behave well and understood social norm. The people who had the same studied content gathered, following the same written language standard. They promoted the mandarin of Ming dynasty on both written and spoken language. The writer Luo Rufang said no matter where were you from you should dress the same and no matter where were you from you should speak the same language. When Matteo Ricci arrived in China he obviously felt the regularity of Chinese mandarin. He said in addition to the various dialects of different provinces, there was a kind of spoken language known all over the entire empire, which used between the residents of every province as well as all the chief executive.

4.2. Advocating Colloquialism to Promote Science and Technology

To strengthen the Confucian and exclude Buddhism, Taoism was the purpose of Ming government's cultural policies. The central policy was a bit loose after mid-Ming dynasty. But the Ming government didn’t advocate classical Chinese unify the whole country, and written language should base on the specific communication object. Before Zhu Yuanzhang obtained the national power he had thought nobles should read classical Chinese books, while common people were suitable to read colloquialism, farming skills and commercial trade books especially should be published by colloquialism. He ordered his secretary to use classical Chinese writings (Hengci) for men with education, vernacular (Zhici) for private citizens. Science and technology literature were published by easy classical Chinese from middle age, so the language policy made by Zhu Yuanzhang had historical inheritance.

This policy also influenced the language planning in neighboring countries, for example the book Nongsang Jiyao written in Yuan dynasty was introduced into Korea in the Ming dynasty. The Korean government required experts in their own popular saying explanation.

4.3. Foreign Language Education in Zhu Di Time

Zhu Di’s regime was also remembered for its efforts in
promulgating foreign language education policies. He established the institution Siyi Guan to teach civil citizens foreign language (including minority language), from the beginning 8 languages later adding according to Ming Huidian.

There were at least more than 20 languages which Siyi Guan contacted, foreign language such as Korea, Japan and Ryukyu, Burma, Annan (Vietnamese), Zhancheng (now the southern dialect of Vietnamese), Zhenla (Cambodia), Siam (Thailand), Java (the Java language), Sumatra (ancient Indonesian), Malaccan (ancient Malay), Nanzhang (Lao), Sulu (ancient Filipino) etc; main national ethnic minority languages such as Tartary (Mongolian), Nuzhen (Nuzhen language, Manchu predecessor), Gaochang (Uygur), Huihui (Persian), Xifan (Tibetan), Hexi (Tangut), Baiyi (Dai), Babai (Shan), Xitian (Sanskrit), Luoluo (Yi) [10].

Imperial academy in Yuan dynasty contacted foreign language mainly referring to Arabic and Persian, which mother tongue of some merchants from central Asia. Most of them believe in Islam, from the western land or sea central Asia to China engaged in commercial trade.

To guarantee of national security was the main purpose of foreign language education policy made by Zhu Di, which was quite different from maritime trade in Yuan dynasty. Some famous translators such as Fei Xin, Ma Huan, Pu Rihe who comprising with Zheng He belonged to Hui nationality, and all of them could speak Arabic. But in Ming dynasty because Arabic wasn’t on the list of country's foreign language education, and Confucian classics was taught in the field of education, which only leading to a large number of businessmen switch to Chinese. The last time toward Xiyang, Zheng He forced to search for translator still able to speak Arabic in Shanxi province. After emperor Xuande, Arabic had become extinct in China, which leading to navigation plan to western burst.

In a word Zhu Di foreign language education policy was successful. With the improving of China's ability to deal with international affairs, Chinese had become an important language in international communication. Since Zhu Yuanzhang period, the government attached great importance to the international influence of Han culture. Hongwu 21 years Ryukyu kingdom requested change clothes custom according to the Ming history records, China played an important role on peace and justice especially in Southeast Asia. Zhu Di send a letter written by Chinese to urge Siam (Thailand) Malaccan Sumatra and Zhancheng keep the peace.

In the western regions, especially with Timur empire friendly exchanges had been developing smoothly, Chinese wasn’t strange to central Asian countries. There were some letters still preserved in Iran which Zhu Di sent to the fourth son of Timur Shahalu, the ninth year of Yongle’s letter written in Persian, the 16th year of Yongle’s one in Persian, Arabic and Chinese three characters [11].

5. Conclusion

The language of the early Ming dynasty policy primarily to adjust the relations of Mongolian and Chinese, to establish Chinese own specification system. The policies during Zhu Yuanzhang time manifested in repression of Mongolian through implementing acculturation measures such as intermarriage between Mongolian and Chinese, which was the feature of narrow nationalism.

Zhu Di paid more attention to language harmony. Zhu Yuanzhang set up an education system to propagate both a national lingua franca, and actively promoted the southern mandarin; Zhu Di established foreign languages education system, and cultivated a large number of foreign language talents for the national security and trade. From the microscopic, the Ming government advocated individuals and families to learn foreign language; on medium, attached great importance to trade and political communication; on macro, spread Chinese culture. These policies build a harmonious world of political ideal through languages harmony [12].

China as the country loving the peace of the world, even Han culture was numerous in Ming dynasty; we never took action to infringe upon other countries. Today Chinese government resumes the glorious history of “one belt one road “, and will make new contributions to world peace. For this purpose we should strengthen the culture construction at southwest rim land, and southeast coastal language, to make them connected other countries with the Chinese government. Meanwhile we should pay more attention to investigate the trade languages which used in neighborhood all the way along to strengthen foreign language education in the field of economy and trade. Furthermore we must strengthen Chinese status in dealing with the international affairs, especially at international conference, in the government communication documents.

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